

Margate Town Deal Board Minutes

- Date:** Friday 10th July, 2020 at 3.30pm
- Venue:** Virtual meeting
- Present:** Graham Razey OBE (Chair), Cllr Ruth Duckworth, Madeline Homer, Adam Bryan, David Smith CBE, Victoria Pomery OBE, Sir Roger Gale MP, Eddie Kemsley, Sam Causer, Richard Ash, Stephen Darrer
- In attendance:** Louise Askew, Iain McNab, Natalie Glover, Charlotte Crowley, Alison Murray
- Apologies:** Lesley Game, Jesse Tomlinson, Lesley White

This meeting was held virtually through video conference due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed members of the Board, noting today was an opportunity to move towards the next steps in creating an Investment Plan. The Board should still be submitting its plan in October. Today is a chance to introduce the Delivery Partner support from MHCLG.

Previous Minutes: They are online and there was no further comment.

2. Government Guidance

LA noted the new revised guidance document from Central Government and FAQs had been circulated with all members:

- This is designed to provide a template for the Town Investment Plan, for projects we can put forward and gives the Board an idea of the information Central Government want from the Towns.
- The Board had previously agreed to submit plans in October, there is then an expected two months period to develop the Heads of Terms in conjunction with Central Government. The board will then have up to 12 months develop the Business Cases, with funding potential being available from January 2022. It is not known whether funding would be ready before this point.
- The guidance shows a focus on sustainable economic growth, prosperity and productivity as well as 'levelling up'. The Board needs a clear and strategic vision demonstrating what the town fund will deliver in the short, medium and long term and what it aims to influence, such as urban regeneration, skills infrastructure and connectivity.

- An example of a strategic project might be how Thanet District Council could use its main offices in Cecil Street in the future, changing its use to provide economic growth in the town centre involving the process of this deal.
- The Board want to leverage more than £25m in the longer-term regeneration strategy.
- The Board discussed the number of projects that we should be shortlisting in the Investment Plan and it was suggested that it should be about three key schemes.
- In terms of match funding, there is no set percentage of funding from other sources required in the presented projects, but we should be looking at all public sector funding available, talking to other investors and seeing what they might be doing
- It is vital for this Board to have a strategic vision of what Margate should look like in the future, this does not need to be wholly what will be delivered through the Investment Plan. It will need to have evidence as the basis of its strategy.
- Central Government will also want to see how this Board has effectively achieved community engagement, through the use of effective stakeholder engagement, to give its project proposals legitimacy.
- It is important to note that this is a capital programme, small revenue projects may be considered, but this is the exception rather than the rule. This should lead the Board's potential vision; we want to use capital intervention to transform Margate.
- The Chair questioned whether there is anything in this new guidance to suggest the three previous themes (hospitality/seasonality), health and wellbeing, public spaces diversification of the economy) would not be eligible in regard to how much Central Government was stressing the need for the schemes to be capital projects.
- LA suggested that we might need to consider how we deliver health and wellbeing through capital programmes, without revenue funding. It was suggested that a sports and recreation project, for example, could be financially viable, but it depends how the Board spends the money.

RG suggested the Board needed to progress. We should begin the process of inviting bids from local people for projects (not financial bids), so that we can assess and develop three that are the most viable to be ready to present.

- The Chair proposed a two/three week window, as an open call to projects, then the Board will come together to share a long list of what they might be. We are interested to get the Board Members views which will allow us to shortlist the ideas.
- The Chair said we should be focused on trying to submit the Investment Plan in October rather than January, as this will put us ahead of other towns.
- SC pointed out that there was no suggestion within the guidance that there was a disincentive to submit proposals at the later deadline and that it was vital to demonstrate community engagement. A two week window for the public to submit proposals may not be enough. We don't want Central Government to reject ideas because they were not based on enough community engagement, especially now public meetings are not possible so it's hard to see how many people or communities are reached.
- SD voiced concern that two-three weeks for community engagement might not be enough.
- The Chair explained: project being submitted is only part of the engagement process and the community will be engaged throughout the development of the investment Plan. We won't rush to develop the more substantial ideas - these will be developed in a structured

way over several months, with community engagement being at the core of the honing process.

- RG reiterated the need to move quickly and that those who are seriously interested will have a proposal at the ready, suggesting the Council could put forward a scheme and others with 'shovel-ready' ideas should be able to put these forward. Schemes will then be open to public comment, but it is vital we press ahead and make decisions.
- MH agreed with RG regarding pressing on with this. Community engagement is important but we are going to be using consultants to undertake this engagement for us and we should have faith in their ability to do this as time is not the issue, but the quality of the engagement.
- RA also agreed with the need to progress with this Deal, as we have projects at the ready and people are already frustrated that nothing has happened so far.
- RD noted the need to manage public expectation, who will be commenting on things that may seem as though they are already decided. How will the consultants engagement match with what we are expecting?
- GR clarified the process: it will be an open call to the public, asking them for their ready-made broader investment plan ideas, sifted down to around three. We won't have three schemes in three weeks time, we will have a lot to discuss and put forward with the investment plan. The reality is that Central Government will choose the ones they like that they want to be funded. This is a broad plan, the second phase of which will be the development of the Heads of Terms in December and January. The Board is not suggesting allowing three weeks to decide three projects, we want a long list, then a medium, then three or four for Business Cases.
- There will be plenty of time to sift through the ideas suggested by the community that need more development, it wouldn't be possible to work out the investment plan in its entirety in one go.
- LA added to this, explaining that the stakeholder engagement activity is key to this process. The open call will help us identify people and projects and talk through with members of the public the reality of their ideas and what will be required from the ideas to fulfil the criteria for this.
- SC commented that the public will need to be guided through how their ideas can be expanded, they shouldn't just be asked to give fully-formed plans as this won't work. The community may not understand how their ideas might be invested in and capitalised upon, which isn't to say that they can't be. We need strategies to work together and helping the public understand how the investment will work will allow us to get the best from them.
- LA highlighted that guidance will be provided that identifies what the government is looking for, alongside the Board's visioning ideas from the following session. The vision needs to be clearly framed and informative to the public so that people can understand whether their ideas can be put forward.

3. Town Deal Delivery Partner Programme of Support

The Chair presented to the Board further information regarding the support programme available to help deliver Margate's Town Deal.

- The Chair, MH and LA met with our Town Coordinator from the Town Funds Delivery Partner. This is a group of organisations facilitated by Central Government to assist towns by providing a range of services and expertise to help facilitate Margate creating its Investment Plan and Business Case.
- We will have access to core services via our coordinator to help us put things together. As they are working with all the towns involved in this process, these regeneration and economic development experts will help the Board establish good practice and connect with other coastal towns, to share advice. By helping each other and providing insight we will be enabling Margate to get the best possible deal.
- Some of these towns will be submitting their proposals at the end of July; from the proposals already submitted we will be able to gain an understanding of what Central Government is looking for, as well as any further FAQs and information to guide us further.

4. Vision

Alison Murray, from ARUP consulting, an organisation involved in the Town Deal Partners consortium and helping to guide Investment Plans, led a discussion asking Members of the Board to create a vision for Margate.

- Alison explained the purpose of the discussion was to think through what the vision should be - by having key phrases that capture what we want, we can formulate statements to give further consideration to.
- There is a strong focus from the government in that they want to see clear and robust visions from the towns, strong ambitions with evidence-based plans and strategies already in place. We should have rough aims for project prioritisation, which are broad enough to get a range of ideas coming forward from the public.
- The Government is requesting that the Town Deal acts as an umbrella for a range of projects.
- The 'vision' depends on the town, doesn't need to be a set number of words or sentences, but we are looking for a statement of ambition, or a way to communicate where we want the investment to focus in the town
- We are looking for a statement to communicate what it is that we as a board are seeking to deliver through the funding projects and the wider impact.

Building on the themes that this Deal Board has already established, a vision will elaborate further, highlighting particular challenges and opportunities that will be the focus in the coming years.

On the theme of seasonality and hospitality:

- RG noted Margate was founded on seasonality and hospitality and we should stick to this ideal. The impact of the Turner Contemporary and Dreamland should be continued to create an art based and community based hospitality project.
- MH believed we needed to create more resilience around seasonality. Margate is creating a vision for itself around culture and is more than just a seaside town. We should want to diversify, with more opportunities for staying through accommodation, rather than just the day visitor economy, beyond the summer season. We should be

looking at how we can create experiences in the non-tourist months, to encourage people to come to Margate all year round.

- EK agreed that the lack of hotels makes Margate a day trip destination. With not enough places to stay people rely heavily on the weather and hold off coming until the last minute. Visitors come predominantly over four or five months; we should be creating ways to encourage visitors to come in the months they don't normally come, and stay for longer.
- SC considered the Theatre Royal, a building not dependent on the weather and the derelict buildings nearby as having the potential to be developed into a contemporary performing arts centre. The Winter Gardens were built for concerts by the sea, but the back windows are blocked, and Dreamland now fulfils its original role. We should be looking to make this an exceptional seaside venue. Also, the lido and skatepark in Cliftonville are popular redevelopment sites amongst those in the community, we should be looking to incorporate this into the Deal too.
- LA encouraged the group to consider in broader terms what they want Margate to look like, in key phrases and terms.

On the theme of health and wellbeing:

- VP noted that health and wellbeing links to arts and supports as well as creativity. The lido and creativity are key, as is the quality of the experience. The better health and wellbeing we have as a society, the more productive we can be. Securing Margate's long term future will support its recovery and we should be aspirational and ambitious.
- RA understood the Winter Gardens to be vital to year-round tourism, as a potential conference or music venue. The lido is a huge project that won't happen overnight and will need partners to help. We need to focus on long term vision but short term gains, and what can bring us immediate effect. The locals are eager to see change.
- Alison here noted the need for projects to achieve a balance between short, medium and longer term
- SC proceeded to share some ideas with the group, showing how investing in Margate's natural environment, from 20mph zones, getting the walpole lido lift working again and other benefits of the previous Jacobs report showed great benefits to health and wellbeing on the people of Margate. This time of emergency could be used to test how the bars and restaurants in the Old Town could trade on the streets if the area was closed to traffic. Public squares could be used for better economic wellbeing, and Northdown road could be replanned to contain trees, cycle routes and wider pavements so the space can be designed around the health and wellbeing of its residents rather than the cars that pass through.
- MH agreed that this principle was not wrong but we should broaden our thoughts around this. Some of our outcomes should be looking to have a direct impact on health and wellbeing
- GR commented on this and encouraged the Board to understand current health indicators and consider changes that would directly impact some of Margate's health statistics

Considering public realm and physical space:

- Some of what is being considered already falls under this category.

- RG believed in the need to be bold, but to not overstretch ourselves. While the pedestrianisation ideas are good, they may spread our efforts thinly and inherently create traffic problems. This strategy should be focused just on the Old Town, Margate high street and the old squares - going beyond this risks creating a public outcry and we want to be considerate in our approach.
- Moving out of the core Margate area could lead to us spreading our net too wide. We should focus our efforts on the Winter Gardens as they belong to the local authority (while the lido is still in private ownership). Taking down the blocked windows would be a good start, but we could go further in creating tailored holidays for all family members, an indoor seaside leisure centre and panoramic restaurant out over the sea, which could be designed and worked up quickly. Coming up with around 12 ideas through which we can sift through to fit the Government's criteria of capital expenditure as well as seasonality, arts and a long term contribution to the town.
- Alison Murray agreed to liaise with Louise Askew to collate the discussion and refine ideas further.
- The aim is to publish the 'open call' to members of the public the week following this meeting, alongside clear information and guidance for the community.
- The Chair informed the Board of the importance of its Members speaking with one voice. While each individual can have their own opinions, and some Members are getting a lot more attention from members of the public than others; going forward it will be important for this Board to debate and decide from the ideas presented what is best for Margate.
- We know that this will be a hard task as it will be difficult to come up with solutions that are feasible and please everyone, but as long as decisions are backed up with substantial community engagement and evidence, we will be able to receive and discuss plenty of ideas from local people and come to decisions with a unanimous voice.

5. Projects Long List

- This was covered in the previous item. LA will work up and share some guidance to send out for the public to be able to put forward project ideas.

- **Next Steps**

Action Point	Responsibility
Sam Causer was encouraged to share the ideas and drawings with the other Members of the Board	Sam Causer
Louise Askew to share a draft guidance note to go with the call for proposals	Louise Askew
Louise Askew to share a draft of the consultants brief for the Investment Plan to those interested in being involved in drafting it.	Louise Askew
Alison Murray to share key points raised in the session with Louise for the Board	Louise Askew