

## Margate Town Deal Board Minutes

- Date:** Friday 15 May, 2020 at 10am
- Venue:** Virtual meeting
- Present:** Graham Razey OBE (Chair) , Cllr Ruth Duckworth, Madeline Homer, David Smith CBE, Victoria Pomery OBE, Sir Roger Gale MP, Eddie Kemsley, Sam Causer, Richard Ash, Cllr Lesley Game, Stephen Darrer, Jesse Tomlinson, Rupert Williamson, Rose Moore, Rhiannon Mort
- In attendance:** Louise Askew, Natalie Glover, Charlotte Crowley (Iain McNab communicated via email to Louise Askew)
- Apologies:** Adam Bryan, Cheryl Potts, Nicky Bentley

The meeting was held virtually through video conference due to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

### 2. Introduction to the Community Representatives

Following the selection process, the Board welcomed two community representatives, Stephen Darrer, an active Cliftonville community member with a varied professional and voluntary background, and Jesse Tomlinson, a Politics and International Relations student from the University of Kent who also has previous voluntary experience.

### 3. Department for Culture, Media and Sport call for evidence

Louise Askew presented the information to the Board.

- The Department for Culture, Media and Sport have launched an inquiry as to how COVID-19 will impact their sectors, which are some of the largest sectors in Thanet, particularly hospitality and tourism.
- To do this, they have launched a five-question survey asking organisations to feed back to central government how they have been heavily affected by the pandemic.
- It was agreed the questions would be shared with the Board, who could share this onward to other organisations and connections if necessary, to build a response showing the impact of the pandemic on coastal towns to central government.
  - What has been the immediate impact of Covid-19 on the sector?
  - How effectively has the support provided by DCMS, other Government departments and arms-length bodies addressed the sector's needs?

- What will the likely long-term impacts of Covid-19 be on the sector, and what support is needed to deal with those?
- What lessons can be learnt from how DCMS, arms-length bodies and the sector have dealt with Covid-19?
- How might the sector evolve after Covid-19, and how can DCMS support this.
- The deadline for responses is the 19th of June.
- Sir Roger Gale MP noted a carefully coordinated response would hold more weight and the Board should provide a variety of responses that compliment, rather than contradict, one another.
- Victoria Pomery OBE added that the response(s) should be evidence-based and that this Board should provide their evidence in their answers of the questions, as should other organisations across Margate and Kent. Individual businesses will want to respond too.
- Board Members are to assist smaller businesses in submitting their responses to these questions, guided by Thanet District Council with the use of a 'how to' guide, and a 'things to consider from our perspective'

Graham Razey will assist Louise Askew in handling this.

#### **4. Stakeholder engagement**

Members of the board have been sent the final brief, to be signed off in this meeting.

- In the circulated brief it was suggested that several board members should sit on the procurement review panel.
- Consultant-led stakeholder engagement is necessary as the Council does not have the capacity to facilitate this themselves. Additionally, the Board agreed that this is an exercise that should be independent.
- Sir Roger Gale asked where the funding was coming from to support this activity. It was identified as coming from the capacity grant provided to support the delivery of the Town Deal Board, Investment Plan and Business Case.
- Madeline Homer explained that a condition of the council being given this money to create the Town Deal bid is that it must follow correct processes, one of which is procurement of contracts. Consultants are experts, but we should only use them when we have to.
- Deadlines to submit proposals will be shared among the Board members as well as put out in the local press and displayed on the website. Members should be alerting those in their network who they know want to submit a brief to be actively preparing to do so.
- The Board is eager to begin this stage to better shape the Investment Plan brief.
- A number of the Board volunteered to support this and Louise Askew will be in touch.

#### **5. Government Guidance**

Louise Askew presented Iain McNab's update to the board as a result of connectivity issues. Iain explained the guidance is currently in draft. It was suggested that the Investment Plan should aim to fit in with Thanet District Council and Kent County Council's recovery plans.

- Central Government has not changed the focus of the Towns Fund, nor the types of interventions it expects to support. This investment in towns is more needed than ever and it will aim to be flexible and responsive.
- Deadlines have been pushed back for submitting Town Investment Plans to reflect the ongoing uncertainty and the pressures on all partners in the Town Deal Board.
- The situation will continue to be monitored and the Towns Hub lead in the regional office is the Board's first point of contact.
- The Town Deal can be an important tool to help recover from this crisis, enabling the agreement of tailored, strategic investments by the end of the year. Towns in this position should highlight projects they believe are 'shovel ready', and the potential to tie in multiple lines of support to one deal.
- The Town Deal Fund would like all towns to outline in their Town Investment Plan how Covid-19 is impacting the local economy, and how this has been factored into the Board's planning and prioritisation. Priorities may have shifted compared to what would have been done pre-Covid, or the same things could still be critical – the Town Deal Fund wants to understand the local evidence and decision-making.
- This is part of a wider package to support places to respond to COVID-19, including measures to mitigate the immediate impact such as the £13 billion funding to help small and rural businesses and businesses manage their cashflow through this period. Through supporting local economic plans and partnerships, the Towns Fund will help chart a course and lay the groundwork for levelling up over the longer term, to be followed by structural improvements such as UKSPF and the devolution white paper.

Deadlines are expected to be moved back, but there is still presumed to be a deadline for the initial presentation to be in summer, autumn and winter respectively (with the detailed business plan to be agreed following this). Graham Razey OBE noted it was important to get things moving and stick to the Board's initial timescales of submitting a proposal in the autumn.

Iain provided an outline of what needs to be considered for the Investment Plan and a brief structure. Louise will share with the Board in relation to item 7.

## **6. Planning for Recovery**

There was a general discussion around ideas relating to the use of public spaces, how we can extend the hospitality and tourism season and how we can focus on health and wellbeing. The Board was generally in agreement in the need for a positive and ambitious approach, with Members given the opportunity to outline and discuss their ideas about where they now believed the Board's efforts to be focused, with regard to COVID-19.

- Sam Causer noted the need for a quick response and questioned whether the funding could be used for socially-distanced business adaptation grants. (Louise Askew countered that grants may not be permitted under the scheme). Road narrowing or closures could be focused in areas such as the Old Town, with the summer recovery period being used to test options for longer term change, following methods of pedestrianisation similar to Canterbury. Sam questioned how we could use the

architecture around us, particularly encouraging cars to park away from the seafront to reclaim these public spaces, using areas such as the Queens Arms Yard as a 'Food Garden', with the coordination of owners.

- Sir Roger Gale MP agreed that this was an opportunity to examine public spaces in regard to social distancing. Using road space to have restaurant and cafe tables outside may make these businesses more viable; with the help of Kent highways, we could capitalise on on local manpower to come up with something quite exciting.
- Eddie Kemsley noted a key focus could be on Margate's roots of health and wellbeing, with Margate being a place where people would traditionally come for sea air and escape. More of the seafront should be accessible to cyclists and pedestrians, and Margate should be seen as an opportunity to offer people space. To help support smaller businesses continue to trade, we would want to elongate the summer season, especially since we don't know which restrictions will be lifted over the next few months. The weather could be challenging, but large spaces with coverings could be a way for businesses to trade through the autumn. We should take advantage of the predicted 'staycation' boom that is likely to take place in 2021 and 2022.
- Victoria Pomery OBE echoed previous comments, noting this was an opportunity to shape what Margate should look like in the medium and long term and it was important to think about the future. This is a time to rethink our environment and focus on health and wellbeing as well as art and creativity. We need to support artists at this time and engage with communities to play a part in this change.
- Cllr Lesley Game agreed with the need to close roads to bring restaurants and entertainment into the open. We also need to boost morale in Thanet - simple tasks such as children painting a mural will show Margate is a vibrant town. Lets harness the change and make the situation work.
- Richard Ash agreed with the public spaces opportunities in Margate, particularly the chance to use the parade and piazza area to potentially make a decent tented space for cafes and businesses, even putting outdoor heating in parts of the old town. But we should remember that road closures may not be popular with all residents and shops need guidance about how to safely get back on their feet.
- Stephen Darrer agreed, commenting that we need to look at the size of hospitality units in Margate to be able to focus our efforts on how to help them. As a small business owner whilst he is hoping for a rush in July he is aware that this hasn't yet materialised, as people are expecting a second wave. We would also have to work with the many residents of the old town to negotiate bringing businesses outside, and what cost will be associated with this. We need to help those who would normally work in tourism and hospitality to extend the season and get people back into work.
- Madeleine Homer spoke about the importance of recovery in the short, medium and long term, including TDC's recovery as an organisation. TDC supports the ideas being shared with this Board and wants to work with KCC to initiate these. It was noted that the council building on Cecil Street may not need to be used in the same way, and this could provide an opportunity to be used in the Board's Investment Plan. TDC's relationship with the community was a focus in this time of crisis and we want to keep building on that and those principles. It was made aware that restrictions could be lifted quite suddenly and the tourism industry may need to move quickly. We need to continue to build resilience.

- Graham Razey OBE pointed out that Margate is highly dependent on public services and we should be looking at how employment practices will change. Extension of the summer season obviously relies on the weather and is impacted by the education cycle, namely the fact that many schools will be aiming to go back in September. But many of the hospitality workforce have children, so this needs to be considered.
- David Smith CBE will communicate with Kent County Council the interest the Board has in closing roads to help socially distant businesses. He noted the need to have a plan for if the virus comes back - our response for the town should be dynamic and optimistic as we are future-proofing. While KCC have their own recovery plan to focus on, they will help Margate to create more investment and remove regulations.
- Cllr Ruth Duckworth mentioned a second wave was a possibility that we needed to be prepared for, but agreed with many of the previously mentioned suggestions. The Cliftonville Lido was brought up as a potential focus for health and wellbeing and a recovery focus point for the district.
- Jesse Tomlinson agreed, and discussed utilising the promenade, using mobile shop fronts and trying to encourage people to operate as usual as much as possible. He also pointed out that there are lots of graduates and unused talent available from young people, who could perhaps volunteer in a recovery capacity to help build on their experiences and help Margate thrive. Young people will be disproportionately affected by this crisis.
- Members put themselves forward to lead/work on the specific subgroups relating to Margate's recovery. Graham to take this forward with Louise.

In summary, there was a lot of agreement among the Board, with the variety of ideas vital to deciding where this Board will focus its efforts.

## **7. Investment Plan Brief for Consultants**

The Board understood the need to develop an investment plan based on evidence and data combined with knowledge and understanding from the Board members.

- Lousie Askew has begun the process of creating a brief for the consultants to pull together and requested board members to join.
- Working with TDC's recovery plan, which would be circulated, the Board could build on this and take account of what to prioritise in the process.
- It is important to show the projected impact of the pandemic on the economy, both the sectors Thanet relies on such as tourism and hospitality and unemployment data.

## **8. Reminders**

The Board were reminded to:

- send a short Bio and picture
- Complete Declarations of interest forms
- Put forward substitutes for agreement of by the Chair
- Complete Declarations of interest forms for substitutes

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
Send a short bio, picture, declarations of interest form and substitute forms to Louise Askew by 1st June (forms available again at request)	ALL by 1st June
Circulate the 5 question survey to send back to central gov	Louise to all
Circulate Stakeholder Engagement Procurement Deadlines	Louise to all
Circulate official government guidance and deadlines when they become available	Louise to all
Circulate Thanet District Council's recovery strategy.	Madeleine Homer/Louise Askew to all
Board members to contact Louise Askew/Graham Razey to volunteer to help create a brief for the consultants	ALL
Contact Graham Razey/ Louise Askew to review those members who put themselves forward to be on the subgroups.	ALL by 1st June