

**Coatbridge Town Board Meeting Notes
Summerlee Museum of Scottish Industrial Life/by Teams
13 August 2024**

Attendees: Cllr. Allan Stubbs, Cllr. Geraldine Woods, Christopher Moore, Frank McNally MP, Gavin Whitefield, Chief Inspector Graeme McLaughlin, Jacqueline Smith (virtual), Liz McCutcheon, Yvonne Lindsay, Willie McBride

Apologies: Fulton MacGregor MSP, Kirsty Struthers

Observers: Chris Bateman, Pamela Humphries, Stephen Penman (all North Lanarkshire Council), Eilidh Henderson, Eva Voulgaridou (both Page Park)

Item	Summary	Actions
1	<p>Introduction and Welcome</p> <p>GW welcomed attendees to the meeting and welcomed FMcN, recently elected MP, to his first Board meeting.</p>	
2	<p>Minutes from previous meeting</p> <p>The minutes of the previous meeting were proposed as an accurate reflection of the meeting by GW and seconded by CM.</p> <p>GW advised that one outstanding action remained from the previous meeting – the production of a ‘how to’ guide for Board members to declare interests and gifts. This will be considered at a subsequent meeting due to immediate pressured on Board time to progress development of the Long-Term Plan.</p>	CB
3	<p>Progress update</p> <p>CB noted that the Board has had three separate workshop sessions and a walking tour of Coatbridge since its last formal meeting. This included a session which considered the findings from extensive public engagement carried out earlier in the summer. CB further noted that consultants and the council have been working at pace, with a view to submitting an agreed document to the UK Government (UKG) on 1 September, however UKG has recently announced that the submission deadline has been extended to an as yet unconfirmed date. Civil servants have advised that all UK Government funding decisions will be confirmed at the Autumn Statement on 30 October and that it is unlikely that there will be confirmation that the Long-Term Plan for Towns programme will continue (and any subsequent announcement around submission deadlines) before this date. CB advised that while there remains a risk that the programme does not proceed, the additional time provided will allow for further development of the Plan, including potentially to carry out further public consultation on a draft Plan as the Board has previously suggested it would like to do. There was general agreement that, if timescales allow, an agreed draft Plan should be published with further engagement carried out during a period of public consultation. Options for this engagement will be</p>	CB

	<p>considered and presented to a future Board meeting in advance of the Autumn Statement.</p> <p>AS asked for confirmation of funding received so far and whether there is any financial risk to the council in developing the Plan. CB advised that the council has been awarded £250,000 in capacity funding for use in developing the Long-Term Plan and that approximately £73,000 has been spent or committed so far. There is therefore no risk to the council from further progressing with this work.</p>	
<p>4 and 5</p>	<p>Long-Term Plan for Coatbridge draft and Outline Investment Plan draft (items taken together)</p> <p>EV provided a comprehensive presentation outlining the contents of the first draft Long-Term Plan for Coatbridge and an outline of projects for potential inclusion in the associated Investment Plan (presented under ‘areas of intervention’ section of the Plan), noting that costings associated with these projects were high-level and indicative only. EV stated that the draft complies with UK Government guidance on the prescribed content, structure and order for Long-Term Plans for Towns, though this may in parts seem somewhat illogical.</p> <p>GW thanked EV for the presentation and the significant work that has been undertaken to develop the draft and invited Board feedback. To ensure all Board members had the opportunity to contribute to the discussion, GW asked for contributions to be made and for CB, EH and EV to consider and revert back to the Board.</p> <p>PH advised that she would like to see the strategic and development context sections strengthened to make a stronger connection with the previously approved Town Vision and the recent investments made in Coatbridge, in particular in education. PH further advised that the high-level costings identified for some of the transport-related projects seemed low in relation to actual costs for similar projects currently being undertaken by the council. She also noted a concern that, in its current draft form, the Plan may be too broad and ambitious, that the Board would have to consider any revenue implications arising from any new developments and that perhaps the focus should be on how the Plan makes the most of the many existing assets which Coatbridge has and how it can support activity for young people.</p> <p>FMcN shared these concerns and felt that the Plan should focus more on projects which are deliverable and within the gift of the Board, though recognise the important enabling role the Long-Term Plan would have in levering in further investment. FMcN further asked for the Plan to be updated to identify work done to engage with hard-to-reach groups (or that further work is undertaken where this has not been achieved).</p> <p>In a similar vein, AS stated that the document was very detailed and had a lot of really positive ideas but that some of the proposed interventions would not deliver value for money and that there should</p>	

<p>be a greater focus on some of the smaller, cheaper physical interventions that his constituents are keen to see and which could be delivered quickly, for example repair works to the public realm in the town centre. AS further asked whether the Board could consider investment in the Coatbridge Outdoor Sports Centre site, for the council to redevelop and manage. There was some discussion around this with SP advising that three community groups had submitted formal Community Asset Transfer bids for the site, which are being considered. Due to the legislative requirements around community asset transfer it is unlikely that the council could consider alternative uses at this time. SP will confirm and update the Board on the status of the site.</p> <p>YL expressed similar views and stated that some of the suggested interventions made in the 'long list' would be unlikely to work in a Coatbridge context – for example, market type events had previously been tried and failed. YL suggested that we could look at alternative uses like community-run cinema for vacant space on the Main Street.</p> <p>CM stated that £19.51m is a modest amount of money to be invested across the next ten years and that any Plan needs to be credible and will likely require a narrower focus than that presented in the first draft. In his view this means that high-cost projects which carry significant financial risks, particularly those which require civil engineering-type works, should be 'dropped off' along with anything else that seems superfluous. CM observed that much of the discussion at this and previous Board meetings has been around improving outcomes for young people and that this should be a key priority for the Plan and would offer particular opportunities to align with wider plans and lever in additional investment. A general consensus was formed around this view and there was further discussion around the types of projects which could be further explored in support of this priority. LMcC highlighted the potential in developing enterprise and skills programmes focused on younger people while GW noted the opportunities to consider wider community use of sporting facilities based in Coatbridge schools. SP will investigate and confirm potential for additional use of these facilities.</p> <p>While in broad agreement with this approach, YL stated that the Plan should retain a focus on supporting the local voluntary sector. There was some discussion around whether this could include grants for core running costs or to support specific activities, with a consensus formed around the latter – with a recognition that community groups should not be reliant on any funding through the Long-Term Plan given that future revenue commitments are likely to be required to support some of the capital works which will be delivered in the next few years. WMcB noted his conflict of interest during this discussion.</p> <p>GW and GMcL made further contributions, sharing the broad sentiments of the Board that the long list of potential interventions should be shortened before any document could be presented to the public and that the first Investment Plan should focus on more readily deliverable and pragmatic options – for example, rather than</p>	<p>SP</p> <p>SP</p>
---	---------------------

	<p>introducing an alternative pedestrian footbridge to connect Main Street and the Faraday Centre across South Circular Road investment could be made in improving the amenity, lighting and security of the existing overpass.</p> <p>GW thanked the Board for their contributions. EH confirmed that these would be considered and reflected in the second draft.</p>	
6	<p>Next steps and resourcing</p> <p>It was agreed that CB, EH and EV will consider the Board's feedback and integrated to a future draft. CB will coordinate and, in advance of the next Board meeting, will provide a revised vision and outline list of interventions for the Board's comment, to allow for a further draft to be developed.</p> <p>It was agreed to have a further discussion around additional works to be undertaken and consultancy support for project development and stakeholder engagement at the next Board meeting.</p>	CB
7	<p>Dates of next meeting</p> <p>There was some discussion around whether Board meetings and activity should continue in advance of a formal UK Government decision on whether the Long-Term Plan for Towns programme will continue. It was agreed that work should proceed, on the basis that the Board should have a well-developed Plan which can be further consulted on in advance of any revised submission date, in the event that funding is confirmed.</p> <p>It was agreed that the next Board meeting, to consider a revised draft, should be scheduled for mid-to-late September with a further meeting to consider potential projects for inclusion in the Investment Plan around four weeks later. This will ensure work progresses in advance of any UK Government decision. CB will coordinate diaries and make arrangements.</p> <p>AS noted that this meeting date had been changed at relatively short notice due to an unavoidable diary clash and asked to ensure future meeting dates were fixed with sufficient notice. GW acknowledged that this was unfortunate and that he would seek to ensure no further issues.</p>	CB
8	<p>Any other competent business (AOCB)</p> <p>No other competent business was raised.</p>	