



**Sowerby Bridge Town Development Board**

**Minutes of the meeting held 6 pm on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2023**

**Meeting held at St Pauls Methodist Church**

**Attendees**

Councillor Adam Wilkinson  
Councillor Dot Foster  
Councillor Simon Ashton  
Councillor Sarah Courtney  
Gareth Baigent  
Lauren Brundell  
Sam Irvine  
Sarah Fanthorpe  
Stephen Priestley  
Celia Cullen

**Other in Attendance**

Richard Seaman  
Rob Shipway  
Wahid Rashid  
Darren Thomas  
Zakariya Ali

**1. Welcome and Apologies**

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed Board members.

**a. Apologies**

Apologies received by Phil Hawdon (this is an amendment from the original agreed minutes)..

**2. Dec of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**3. Minutes of the meeting held 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2023**

The minutes were approved as a true record of the meeting.

**a. Matters Arising**

Following discussions regarding governance at the May meeting of the Board, the Board unanimously supported the appointment of Celia Cullen as the new Co-Chair of the Board.

#### **4. Governance**

Rob Shipway provided an update on governance issues as requested at the May Board meeting. He reported an amendment to the terms of reference to emphasise the Board was open to businesses and communities in Trinity and Copley, and others who have a strong interest in Sowerby Bridge, for example property owners who might not live in the town but who have a stake and interest in the town's economic wellbeing.

Rob reported three remaining vacancies remain on the Board, with the Board particularly interested in securing the participation of young people and business.

Celia Cullen proposed membership of the Board for Sheila Eastwood, Chair of Foundry Street Community Centre CIO. The Board unanimously welcomed the proposal and asked Rob Shipway to contact Sheila to introduce her to the Board and invite her to the next meeting.

The Board noted this left two gaps and Rob agreed to circulate an invitation to join the Board to the Chair, and other Board members were urged to explore potential recruits in their networks. It was suggested an approach could be made to the local schools for members of school panels.

**Action: Rob Shipway to arrange to meet Sheila Eastwood.**

**Action: Rob Shipway to issue an invitation to join the Board and maintain the invite on the Sowerby Bridge Webpage.**

**Action: Rob Shipway to work with Janice Dawson when the schools reopen to explore opportunities for youth representation.**

Celia Cullen suggested future Board agendas and papers should be placed on the website along with minutes of the Board to aid transparency, raise awareness of the Board's work, and encourage greater participation and challenge of the Board. The Board unanimously supported the proposal.

**Action: Rob Shipway to add the agenda and papers to the webpage when the papers are issued to the Board.**

#### **5. Events programme 2023 (Fire and water)**

Reporting to the Board, Frank Darnley of Fire and Water provided details of the Cultural programme for 2023. He reported Fire and Water have appointed consultants to support their outreach work into the community.

Key events include 'Slash,' and later in the year, 'Same Sky conference, which will include opportunities to promote local heritage trails. Other events include Youth Theatre, Mini-theatre festival, all at a time of development for the Fire and Water location as a theatre and event space. This is the driving force behind a proposed change of name to the Fire Station Theatre.

The Board noted that the events should be used as much to demonstrate how the town is changing as much as celebrate our unique heritage. Events use community spaces in the town, with a cultural program designed to bring people together. To support heritage trails, there will be maps and posters at strategic sites.

Councillor Courtney noted the opportunity to harness the opportunities offered by the 2024 Year of Culture celebrations. Rob Shipway noted the importance of ensuring the Board worked with Historic England to celebrate the end of the HAZ programme. Historic England has been positive about the core projects in the programme and are keen to work with partners to secure a legacy for the town.

**Action: Rob Shipway to seek Historic England's participation at the next meeting of the Board.**

The Board noted the potential impact of works at the Market and asked for clarification on the timetable for the project. The Board felt strongly that the Market Square must quickly become the focus of events in the town. This area would also be a suitable location for signposting.

The issue of signage was highlighted by the Board, who felt that the town suffered from inferior quality signposting and lack of information. Board members pointed to the lack of information at the Railway station, across the town, and information on points of interest.

## **6. HAZ Shop Frontage Scheme Update**

Rob Shipway updated the Board of progress with the High Street Shop Frontage Grant Scheme. The Board noted that grants had been awarded in principle to 8 properties, subject to finalisation of costs and planning approvals.

The Board noted the scheme designs had been produced by Purcell's Architects, specialists in heritage and conservation.

Asked about timescale, Rob reported that tenders have been drafted for review by the Council's legal team and he expected the procurement process to be completed by the end of September. Works will take place over two phases to allow for full access to shops over Christmas. Phase one will see light touch works from mid-October to end of November 2023, and phase two January to March 2024.

## **7. Ambition for Towns Fund**

The Board discussed the Board's Ambition for Towns budget, which currently stands at £56,000. The Board felt it important to put in place a strategy for how these funds should be used to maximise impact and discussed uses. These included:

### **a. Signage**

Reiterating the need for an upgrade to the signage and information points across the town and from the station to the Canal moorings. The Board noted that issues such as improved signage would spark the interest of local businesses, as well as visitors and residents.

**Action: Rob Shipway and Lauren Brundell to return to the Board with an overview of town centre signage and the potential for improvement.**

### **b. Business planning**

Securing support to upgrade and refresh the masterplan, with a stronger emphasis on smaller but important interventions more likely to receive support from Lottery and similar funders.

### **c. General grants**

The Board agreed with a proposal that the function of the Ambition for Towns budget must be clearly focused on regeneration – projects or ideas that have a tangible regeneration benefit. The Board should not function as a ‘grant funding body’. This followed a recent request to part fund a church tap, something Board members agreed falls outside the remit of the Town’s budget.

### **d. ‘Welcome to Sowerby Bridge’**

Linked to the signage proposals, explore opportunities to put in place better quality signs welcoming visitors to the town, be that by road, train, or cycle. Board members pointed to other works which would make the town more attractive for minor outlays, such as new street furniture, and looked forward to plans for the Public Realm works for the market square.

### **e. Promotional events and tourism**

The Board considered whether funding could be used to promote events to boost town trade, such as a Christmas event. The Board also proposed consideration of Sowerby Bridge as a potential tourist information point in Calderdale.

**Action: Councillor Courtney to explore possibilities with the Calderdale Tourism Board.**

## **8. Active Calderdale**

The Chair introduced Emma Carter to the Board. Emma informed the Board she had started work as project manager for Active Calderdale and has an £82,000 budget for Sowerby Bridge and Ryburn. Emma reported the project was at inception stage so there was little to report at present, but she had already been in contact with local groups and will be in a good place to report progress and the shape of early plans at the September meeting. Emma was signposted to the work of Groundwork at Dixy Woods.

## **9. Any other Business**

The Board asked for more information on the incinerator and the former Bath store (overhang).

**Action: Rob Shipway to seek advice from Planning and Environmental Health.**

## **10. Date and venue for the next meeting**

The next meeting of the Board will be held on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2023, beginning 18.30 pm at St. Paul’s Methodist Church.