

Sowerby Bridge Development Board
Minutes of the meeting held 23rd January 2024
6.00-8.00pm at Hollins Mill, Sowerby Bridge

Board members present

Councillor Adam Wilkinson (Chair)
Celia Cullen (Vice Chair)
Councillor Dot Foster
Councillor Simon Ashton
Councillor Sarah Courtney
Sam Irvine
Shelia Eastwood
Phil Hawdon
Sarah Fanthorpe
Lauren Brundell
Stephen Priestley

Also, in attendance

Richard Seaman
Mary Farrar
Emma Carter
Darren Thomas
Rob Shipway
Zakariya Ali
Janice Dawson

1. Welcome and introductions.

The Chair welcomed members of the board and officers to the meeting.

a. Apologies

No apologies submitted.

2. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of the meeting held 26th September 2023

The minutes of the meeting held 26th of September 2023 were agreed as a true record subject to the following amendments:

- Spelling error of Bath Shop
- Craig Broadwith not Craig Whittaker M.P. in attendance list and minutes

Action: ZA to update the minutes of the September meeting and recirculate to the board.

Action: ZA to ensure the Sowerby Bridge Town Board website is updated accordingly.

a. Matters arising.

There were no matters arising.

4. Events panel (Rob Shipway)

RS reported that Council Officers have provisionally secured £10,000 funding from Historic England to support events celebrating the end of the HAZ programme. The Board noted that the events must be completed by June 2024, have a clear heritage theme, and that expenditure must be approved and defrayed by the end of March 2024.

The board welcomed this news and agreed that an events panel should be established, tasked with identifying potential activities, items of eligible expenditure, and potential partners to support delivery. The board noted that officers were due to meet Historic England on the 11th March and agreed that RS should set up two meetings for an events panel in February.

Action: RS to contact Board members following the meeting to seek volunteers to join the events panel.

Action: ZA to set up a meeting events panel in February 2024.

Post meeting note: these meetings have been agreed. An events panel will be convened and will take place on 5th February, with a follow up meeting on 29th February. RS will send out invitations to these meetings.

RS suggested that the next meeting of the Sowerby Bridge Development Board, which was due to take place toward the end of March, should be brought forward so that the board could agree the proposed programme of events developed by the Board. He stressed the need for board approval of the events and proposed expenditure before the meeting of the HAZ project team, on 11th March.

Post meeting note: the next meeting of the Sowerby Bridge Development Board will take place on 5th March, 6 p.m. at the Foundry Street Community Centre.

Asked about order and payment procedures, RS suggested that the events panel identify a lead partner who can act as a lead for the end of programme celebrations and the board identified Foundry Street Community Centre as a possible lead, although noted the need to coordinate with Fire and Water so that the end of programme events complemented other activities in the town. RS reminded the board that the Council's CultureDale team has also allocated £1,500 to the board for events this year. Officers will be attending the next meeting of the board to update details of the Calderdale Year of Culture and opportunities for the Board to get involved in the celebrations.

CC suggested a heritage trail around the town, which could link to the planned improvements to signage and information across the town. This could also include information about points and buildings of interest. RS agreed that this was the type of activity that Historic England would like to see, and spend could include room hire, performance costs, street decorations such as flowers and bunting, as well as food and refreshments

CC suggested audio recordings of walking routes for people who are blind who cannot use QR codes. The board agreed it was important to ensure the events were accessible for all and that the events panel must consider this.

5. Car Parking strategy (Mary Farrar)

MF (Corporate Lead for Transportation and Strategic Infrastructure) delivered a presentation to the board, setting out details of work to deliver a parking strategy for the six towns in Calderdale.

Mary provided a map of the proposed area under review on Sowerby Bridge and the board asked to be allowed an opportunity to review the proposed area.

Action: ZA to circulate the proposed survey area to board members.

Asked how the survey would be conducted, MF informed the board that the consultancy team would collect data and validate collected information from against the ticket machines. Data will be collected various times of the day.

MF reported that the focus of the strategy is town centre parking, not residential areas, or schools. The goal is to understand the dynamic of parking in Sowerby Bridge at various times of the day.

Asked about timescales and reporting, MF reported that the survey would start in Brighouse and Todmorden to support the significant investments underway through the Town Deal programmes there. After completing work in Hebden Bridge, the survey will move on to Sowerby Bridge. The Chair asked for the findings to be reported to the Board and key stakeholders for comment, and communications managed carefully recognising the public interest in parking.

MF confirmed that the strategy is part of a wider ambition to promote use of alternative transport options, including public transport, walking, and cycling. It was suggested that cycling was problematic due to the traffic congestion in the town and the hilly terrain. MF responded that the survey was to help alleviate congestion and that the advent of electric bikes meant that cycling was increasingly a realistic option for some trips.

6. Corridor Improvement Programme (CIP) Mary Farrar

MF provided an update on CIP and public realm works in the town to the Board. She informed the board that Hollings Mill Lane would be closed to traffic for up to 3 weekends in May to allow works to proceed to improve the road surface on Corporation Street.

MF agreed to explore problems relating to railings outside the library which had been broken and were leaning into the road.

MF confirmed that work was progressing to improve signage in the town, refurbishing existing signage where possible and introducing new finger posts at key locations. This would be completed at the same time as works on the Market for June 2024.

Asked about plans for the Market, discussions centred on agreeing a new name for the space created by the project. Options included Sowerby Bridge Square, Market Square, the Square.

Action: ZA to add the Market Square as an agenda item for the next Board meeting.

The Chair urged MF to ensure local businesses are kept informed of progress.

7. Active Calderdale (Emma Carter)

EC (Community Project Manager, Public Health) presented a report about Active Calderdale's Community Led Approach and available investment for increasing and improving opportunities for people to be more active in Sowerby Bridge (and Sowerby Village)

Board member brought up point about greenspaces, 250k Dixon scar 140k+ vat can council offset the VAT looking to board to support the project the rest to Active Calderdale.

EC parks and greenspaces is one of the main goals for Active Calderdale, lease renegotiated bicycle track not working, football club expanded a bit and thriving. board member attend meeting at asked to what level would the board support it.

Sowerby Village need more specific data on this, EC it is community led.

Chair asked if EC has had any engagement with Sowerby Bridge Snails. LB asked if other community groups have been engaged, EC responded yes - groups that are not active are being engaged.

EC supports people in developing ideas to support people to be more active then helps them write funding bids which go to a Community Panel for approval.

In Dec'23, 10 submissions - half were approved; others required more work.

Councillor SC asked if there are any support for groups to help writing applications, EC does support applications but just on her own, VAC to get support

EC to contact Frank Darnley to find out if free bid writing courses available

Celia suggested to encourage people to apply for bids.

LB technology Hub to help there is an IT club in Sowerby Bridge.

Baiting's Dam well walk getting popular now better signage to increase activity at different walk paths Crow wood Park Dixy Woods requires signage.

Board member there is a need for someone to take responsibility and put a bid in.

8. HAZ Programme update (Rob Shipway)

Regarding the Shop Front Grant Scheme, RS confirmed that contractors begin on site 26th January 2024, with work to last 8 weeks completing March 2024.

The Chair asked whether any unused HAZ funds could be used to support other shops still interested in the scheme. RS confirmed that the programme team is in discussion with shop owners who had bid for funding to try to ensure all HAZ funding is invested in the town.

Richard S asked RS to contact him to discuss any planning issues, noting the need for Listed Building Consent for the Bull on the Bridge. **Action: ZA to consult with Nathan Canavan to ensure planning are made aware of any issues requiring their input.**

9. Bath shop (Richard Seaman)

Richard S provided an update on work to address concerns regarding the canopy on the former Bath shop. He reported that area is now safe while accepting is not visually appealing. He informed the board that he has an upcoming meeting with colleagues to look at longer-term options to deal with the canopy and shop front.

Richard S informed the board that the chances of a CPO of the building were slim. The board also noted the difficulties officers have had contacting property owner. RS had tried to engage the owner when the Shop Front Grant scheme had been announced, but the programme team had no response despite an offer of up to 80% grant support.

10. Board focus 2024 (Rob Shipway)

RS provided an update to the Board on progress regarding previous discussions on the focus of Board business in 2024. He reported that a local business owner had contacted him to discuss opportunities for local businesses to work together to boost the town. The Board welcomed the idea of using Ambition for Towns funding to promote a business breakfast in the town for local retailers and small businesses.

RS reported that he is working with Boards in Elland and Hebden Bridge to develop similar opportunities. The aim is to initially assess the appetite for a regular forum for local businesses, where they can identify joint opportunities such as event planning. In Elland, the plans include quarterly meetings of the new forum sponsored by the Board, with a small budget for initiatives identified by the forum to support businesses, such as Christmas Hamper as loyalty prizes for shoppers.

The Sowerby Bridge welcomed the idea, supporting the opportunity to promote a local forum for the voluntary and community sector. RS noted the need to identify a lead agency locally who could support these events. He suggested initially working with Foundry Street Community Association for room and event hire, albeit recognising the resource constraints of the group.

Action: RS to contact Sheila Eastwood to discuss how the business and voluntary sector forums can be delivered and what the resource requirements would be.

Action: RS to bring full reports to the next meeting of the board for a business forum and a voluntary sector forum.

A Board member asked about greenspace improvements such as Dixon Woods, RS noted the need to update the masterplan for the town once HAZ was completed and CIP works were fully underway. This was likely to be September 2024.

11. Any other business

Councillor SC informed the board there is a budget consultation exercise underway and urged board members to review and respond to the consultation which can be found at [2024 to 2025 \(snapsurveys.com\)](https://snapsurveys.com).

LB requested that the following to be looked at, the council paid contractor to do work and was not done.

Action: RS and LB to have a meeting to review LB point made.

12. Date and venue of next meeting

The next meeting of the Sowerby Bridge Development Board will be held on 29th February 2024. Prior to this, there will be a meeting of the proposed events panel on 5th February 2024.