



Hebden Bridge Town Board meeting
Minutes of the meeting held 18th February 2025
Hebden Bridge Town Hall

Attendees

Councillor Katie Kimber
Councillor Sarah Country
Councillor Scott Patient
Councillor Israr Ahmed
Graham Mynott
Carol Stow
Angie Mossman

Others in attendance

Arian Gill
Rob Shipway
Zakariya Ali

1. Welcome and apologies.

Apologies from Councillor Boden, Councillor Durrans.

a. Quorate declaration

The meeting was declared quorate

2. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes from previous meeting

The minutes were declared a true record.

4. HRBF 2025 business support plan (Angie Mossman)

A special rate from Northern Rail and a package to reward people for using trains were discussed, along with a park and ride scheme. AG recognised the importance of incentivising public transport use. CS mentioned the presence of foreign students in Hebden Bridge. There was an opportunity to market to university and foreign students, as well as to Network Rail. Councillor Courtney suggested offering discounts at shops, such as 50p off coffees when presenting a train ticket.

The Chair asked how to take this forward, with RS suggesting Karen Hornby from Network Rail be involved in discussions. In terms of funding, it was agreed that projects and funding would be prioritised at the next meeting of the Board, building on the previous work identifying opportunities and projects. CS suggested a hybrid meeting for those unable to attend in person, while AM confirmed another team member would be present.

The Chair asked whether Rotary could open the car park and agreed to speak with Richard from Rotary to explore the possibility. Councillor Courtney enquired about using it as a park and ride, but the Board noted concerns about safety.

5. Business Engagement Feedback (Angie Mossman)

AM reported concerns among Forum members regarding lower than anticipated spend in local shops. Concerns were raised about the impact of the upcoming flood alleviation works, with established businesses worried, and one deciding to sell. AM suggested a sense of frustration among business owners, with are struggling financially and facing poor trade, which they felt was beyond their control. AM reported businesses have yet to recover from previous floods, leading to a growing number of empty shops.

AM stressed the importance of communication to break the current deadlock, particularly in Hebden Bridge town centre. Councillor Courtney acknowledged that businesses were still dealing with the aftereffects of flooding, the pandemic, and financial strain. However, she was concerned that constantly negative social media would lead to a negative perception of the town, discouraging visitors and shoppers. She emphasised the need to promote the town positively and suggested hosting a business breakfast with support from the Council and West Yorkshire.

Councillor Courtney acknowledged the impact of the flood alleviation work but stressed that it was necessary to prevent further long-term damage. The discussion moved to high rental costs, with one business reportedly paying £2,500 per month before closing. Councillor Courtney suggested speaking with landlords and exploring licensing agreements.

Councillor Patient stressed the importance of business engagement, managing expectations, and ensuring clear communication. The Environment Agency (EA) operates a shop in town, but concerns were raised about its limited opening hours. Issues of communication failure with the EA were discussed, including a willow tree that remained in the river for two months after a storm before being removed. Problems such as cracks in the Keighley Road wall had not been addressed for three weeks. Councillor Patient suggested that the Calderdale Ward Forum should be planned a year in advance to improve communication. GM proposed an annual flood awareness review to evaluate flood gates and other defences.

Regarding business performance, AM confirmed that cafes were doing well, but retail shops continued to struggle. GM examined statistics for Hebden Bridge Town Hall and found minimal change in footfall, though cafés remained unaffected. There was a suggestion to bring in local leaders, including Calder High's headteacher, to discuss the town's economic impact.

The Chair asked whether market traders had been consulted. AM confirmed that they hold monthly meetings on the park-and-ride scheme and have established partnerships. Market traders were performing better, and car parks were filling up. GM questioned whether retail challenges were more significant for domestic stores, such as fruit and vegetable shops, or tourism-focused businesses. AM confirmed that both were affected.

Regarding a proposed meeting with businesses, Councillor Courtney emphasised the need to define the meeting's objectives and determine what success would look like.

Councillor Ahmed noted Hebden Bridge is primarily a day visitor destination, with visitors from Halifax and beyond. Negative discussions about shop closures and road issues could have a significant impact, steering people away from the town.

5. Highways Update (Adrian Gill)

CS raised concerns about community resilience, noting that before COVID, the EA assured sufficient funding and contingency plans, yet the project remains in the planning stage. AG responded that the partnership with the EA is strong, with ongoing discussions about flood risk. He also emphasized that the Council shares responsibility for flood risk alleviation.

A cabinet paper on A-Board planning is expected in June, with input from the access forum to gather feedback and make borough-wide recommendations.

CS raised concerns about a large sinkhole in the south and a burst pipe on Keighley Road. AG clarified that Yorkshire Water is responsible for the sinkhole, but proving responsibility for road damage is complex. The Council, as the highway authority, ultimately ensures road repairs. Based on community feedback, efforts are being made to improve traffic flow and road safety while managing costs and parking constraints. The revised plans were deemed the best compromise by the Board. Proposed changes include double yellow lines for safer pedestrian access, wider parking bays including charging bays and car-share spaces, and a net reduction of three parking spaces.

GM confirmed an update is expected in late 2025 or early 2026, with the Board expressing confidence in the project's progress. Discussions with the Council include converting part of a site into accessible "Changing Places" public toilets while reserving the other half for potential community use, such as a flood storage area. Councillor Courtney suggested exploring funding options through the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) and other available sources.

6. Ambition for Towns (Rob Shipway)

a. External funding officer support

RS reported interest in securing external funding support from Sowerby Bridge and Elland, with further possible interest from Brighouse. However, the preference across the Boards is moving toward external consultancy support.

Action: RS to explore options with other Town Boards to secure advice and support that is cost effective.

7. Any other business

RS highlighted issues related to shops using licences to place items outside, blocking pathways. Items are often placed outside and removed immediately after use, causing obstructions for wheelchair users and other pedestrians. CS noted that such obstructions can cause difficulties for wheelchair users, potentially leading to spine damage. Additionally, vibrations caused by the placement and removal of items have led to a battery disconnection, which required recovery. CS pointed out an obstruction at the pedestrian crossing near where the Olive Branch used to be. The response from Highways was not helpful, stating that it was not an issue and that the crossing was "fine."

CS inquired if there is a scheme for improving disability access and why it cannot be applied for or developed. RS reported a proposal from the Disability Forum for creating a unique scheme for disability access, promoting the town as disability friendly. The suggestion was welcomed and noted for consideration at the next Board meeting.

CS raised the question regarding signs at Bridge Gate, asking if cyclists are required to dismount. AG confirmed that Bridge Gate is pedestrian-only, and cyclists are required to dismount when crossing. AG raised concerns regarding access for blue light services. Specific issues regarding the ability for emergency vehicles to reach areas were discussed.

A discussion took place regarding the potential removal of A-boards or other notices causing obstructions on pavements. Suggestions were made to enforce removal of such items to improve pedestrian access.

8. Date of next meeting

8th of April 2025, Hebden Bridge Town Hall