

Lowestoft Place Board – Minutes

Wednesday 29th April 2020, 13:00-15:00 | Virtual



| Attendees (Board) | Apologies (Board) |
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| Stephen Javes (Chair) Amanda Ankin (Suffolk Chamber of Commerce) Cllr Ben Falat (Parish Councils representative) Cllr Craig Rivett (East Suffolk Council) Cllr Norman Brooks (East Suffolk Council) Cllr Paul Ashdown (Lowestoft Community Forum) Hayley Mace (New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership) Karen Barclay (BiTC) Keith Moore (Environment Agency) Cllr Nick Gowerley (Suffolk County Council) Paul Ager (Associated British Ports) Peter Aldous MP Phil Aves (Lowestoft Rising) Stuart Rimmer (East Coast College) Julia Nix (Department for Work and Pensions) Steve Hodger (Scottish Power Renewables) | David Carlin (CEFAS) Colin Davies (Marks & Spencers) Cllr Keith Patience (Lowestoft Town Council) Genevieve Christie (Lowestoft Cultural Leadership Group) Emma Butler-Smith (Lowestoft Cultural Leadership Group) |
| Attendees (Officers/Speakers) | Apologies (Officers) |
| Andrew Jarvis Darren Newman Karen Staples Kerry Blair Paul Wood Philip Ridley Emma Bloom Phil Harris Shona Bendix (Lowestoft Town Council) Guest speaker: John Till (Thinking Places) | Nicole Rickard Sue Roper (Suffolk County Council) Jason Benham (BiTC) |

| | Description | Lead |
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| 1. | Welcome, introductions & apologies | Stephen Javes |
| 2. | Placemaking Introduction by John Till, Thinkingplace The development of the Lowestoft Place story started at the beginning of 2019 as part of Making Waves Together/Great Places. This then supported the creation of the initial Place Board. Development of the story has already led us to a place led approach, so we are further on in development than most other towns. The TIP will add value to the story already developed by the stakeholders last year. Lowestoft has the opportunity to celebrate its distinctiveness, and strategies should be place-led. Lowestoft should not try to emulate what other towns are doing, but instead promote what makes Lowestoft special. Lowestoft must be conscious of the role of culture and events, economic and tourism opportunities, and deprivation levels play in Lowestoft. The town investment plan will need to exhibit what Lowestoft has achieved to date, what we want to achieve in the future, by embracing Lowestoft's strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and threats. | John Till |

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| | <p>Coronavirus will mean that people won't want to travel the way they did before, and will strengthen people's attitudes towards the live, work, local ethos. Resilience and sustainability will be important to create a stable economy that people will have confidence to invest in. It needs to be a functional place, ensuring that there are economic and leisure offers, a place people are proud to call home. We have exemplar marine science facilities and offshore renewable energy hubs, and as such we need to release employment land to increase opportunities. We also have enterprise zones which can be developed upon and further this development of economic and job opportunities.</p> <p>We have the opportunity to celebrate our distinctiveness by dividing the town into quarters, and promoting our assets such as medieval streetscapes, the beach and access to the broads. This is something already outlined in the town masterplan.</p> <p>Lowestoft is also in the midst of a cultural renaissance – we have an abundance of cultural opportunities such as First Light, significant cultural and heritage assets including our theatres, museums, and Heritage Action Zone, a strong cultural and creative community, and a council-backed, Lowestoft specific, cultural strategy that aims to enhance this cultural offer.</p> <p>However, there is going to be a need for significant private investment to drive forward much of the economic and employment opportunities, and in order to attract this we will need the Board to consider how they promote themselves.</p> <p>Lowestoft will need to ensure digital strength as well as infrastructure, to support economic growth. East Suffolk Council are already leading on this with the implementation of ultra-fast fibre to the premises (FTTP), meaning that all commercial and residential properties across Lowestoft will be able to access this.</p> <p>The Board support the principles of the vision created by Thinking Places, and were pleased with the progress made to date. could see the link to the engagement strategy which had previously taken place.</p> <p>Comments: Peter Aldous MP – Peter was supportive of the points made by John Till surrounding enterprise zones and celebrating the institutions and frameworks we already have placed within Lowestoft. The Secretary of State for Transport, Grant Shapps has today (29th April) stated that a decision on the future of the proposed Lake Lothing Third Crossing for Lowestoft, will be made by Tuesday 5 May. [Post meeting note; on 30th April the Secretary of State for Transport approved the application for the Lake Lothing Third Crossing].</p> <p>Cllr Ben Falat – was concerned about the absence of reference to the broads and North-East connectivity. Karen Staples advised that the overlying narrative recognises the need to highlight our links to the nature that surrounds us, such as the Broad.</p> <p>Paul Ager - ABP and its owners happy to report that they very much see the importance of Lowestoft Port and the role they can play in Offshore Wind, fishing and many other local activities</p> <p>Stuart Rimmer – It is assuring to these ideas brought forward that developed out of the first couple of workshops to a narrative that stacks up to underpin future investments</p> | |
| 3. | <p>Investment plan update</p> <p>Update from Paul Wood (ESC Economic Development & Regeneration) - ESC have been directly involved in business & community response to COVID-19. To date ECS have paid over £47m to 6000 businesses and 98% applications received have now been paid. In terms of ongoing work, the ED&R team are contacting those businesses who have not yet applied for a grant.</p> | Darren Newman |

Whilst the town investment plan will take into account the pandemic, the economic situation especially around high streets and retail, is something ESC were already addressing, but it has just accelerated the situation and our response.

Update from Phil Aves (Lowestoft Rising/ESC Communities team) - Some prework had been conducted previously with regards to crisis planning, but the existence of this during the current pandemic has allowed us as ESC Communities team & Lowestoft Rising to respond to the crisis quickly, although we could never have anticipated a crisis like the one we currently face. The response has been adapted as we proceed. Lowestoft made up 63% of all the demand for community support in East Suffolk, and we have been able to address this by ensuring the hardship fund got to community organisations quickly, and our relationships with GPs and pharmacies to ensure that volunteers could collect medication for vulnerable people were developed quickly.

We will need to ensure the lessons learnt from this experience are incorporated into strategies during the recovery phase and future strategies. We are starting to have the conversations about the recovery phase, as there will need to be ongoing support in place for a long time.

The Board thanked Lowestoft Rising and East Suffolk for all their efforts in the response to COVID-19.

Investment plan update

The Government have assured us that they are committed to Town Fund as see this as a long term response to COVID, but we are still awaiting guidance on investment plan and timeframes for submission will be flexible to allow for Local Authorities to respond to COVID-19. ESC are still on target to deliver this by the Summer. As a result of Covid-19, there will be a recovery strand incorporated into the town investment plan, and East Suffolk Council, with the LEP, are looking at a longer term recovery plan.

The engagement Strategy and background research completed, and we have commissioned feasibility studies for a number of projects.

The public have been encouraged to voice how they believe the Towns Fund should be invested in Lowestoft, with ideas submitted on the #MyTown website.

The scoring matrix was explained to the Board in relation to the projects that will be chosen as focus for the town investment plan, with the project objectives forming part of the scoring matrix. The objectives outlined are:

- To overcome barriers to unlock private and public sector investment to enable growth and development
- To improve the quality, sustainability and range of housing stock, future proofing housing demand
- To provide a town which retains and attracts younger people to work and live
- To provide facilities, employment land and premises to capitalise on the continued investment in the offshore renewable's, engineering, maritime and science sectors
- To Invest in infrastructure to meet requirements, that attract private sector investment whilst retaining and growing businesses
- To secure long term, higher skilled jobs that raise aspiration and increase opportunities
- To transform the retail core of the town centre and seafront to increase footfall to grow the economy and provide social space for the community and visitors
- To capitalise on the town's heritage and cultural assets, enhancing the offer for the future, driving economic growth and to enable community cohesion
- To improve digital infrastructure for current and future generations

The matrix itself will be formed of four criteria:

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| | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strategic fit 2. Deliverability 3. Economic impact 4. Additionality <p>All Board members are encouraged to submit ideas for projects. The form for this will follow, but will need to be returned by the 15th May. Projects will then be scored by the end of May, and presented back to the working group and Place Board.</p> <p>Comments:</p> <p>Karen Barclay – BiTC have a business response network to match businesses to community needs, and Anglian Water has launched a £1m Positive Difference Fund to help support communities during these challenging times. Further information about this will be released shortly. Half the fund will be available immediately and the rest for emerging needs later in the year.</p> <p>Stuart Rimmer - Some projects may be 'enablers' which might not score well on the matrix but would create future capacity e.g skills projects which will be essential for recovery phase of COVID response</p> <p>Paul Wood – Whilst the town investment plan is of significant importance in shaping the towns deal, we need to see the plan as just part of a programme of activities to other funding opportunities.</p> | |
| 5. | <p>AOB</p> <p>No items were raised</p> | All |