



The Prince's
Responsible
Business Network



A Town Deal for Lead Councils Guide

WHAT'S THE TOWN DEAL?

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FOREWORD

When the Government published its Towns Fund Prospectus in November 2019, it outlined the difficulties facing many UK towns: ageing populations, a lack of economic opportunity, limited investment, poor transport and digital connectivity, retail decline, the closure of leisure facilities, and low levels of social mobility.

Now, as the unprecedented impact of a global pandemic weighs disproportionately on these same towns, the Towns Fund presents an increasingly critical opportunity to, first, cement some of the significant and rapid changes to the ways communities collaborate (that we have witnessed during the emergency response to COVID-19) and, second, aid long-term recovery and prosperity.

Business in the Community (BITC) is the oldest and largest business-led membership organisation dedicated to responsible business. We have a long history of working with business and the wider community to build thriving places for people to live and work.

BITC's [Place Leadership Team](#) brings together business, civic leadership and the third sector to make a long-term, transformative impact on communities. We bring business skills to bear on challenges and opportunities within neighbourhoods, working with community concerns and aspirations. In our pilot places, we

facilitate and contribute to a deliverable vision which lifts ambition and develops confidence in that vision by working with partners to deliver it.

We have worked with business leaders and communities over the last three decades on a wide range of place-based activity – from retail-led regeneration and collaboration of the Prince's Charities in Burnley, to our Business Connector and Healthy High Streets programmes. So, we are well-placed to help Lead Councils maximise the Town Deal opportunity by bringing the most appropriate local influencers around the table.

Learnings from our three established (Blackpool, Wisbech and Lowestoft) and two emerging (Bradford and Rochdale) place pilots, as well as our work with Lead Councils on Town Deals to date, are distilled here to assist Lead Councils in working with businesses to unlock the full collaborative potential of their communities through the Towns Fund.

Lord Bassam, Co-Director, Place
Baroness Valentine, Co-Director, Place



INTRODUCTION

Purpose of Guidance

This guidance has been prepared as a supplementary resource to the Government's [Towns Fund Prospectus](#) (which sets out practical advice for Lead Councils), and Further Guidance (which provides additional information on developing an Investment Plan and the nature of projects in scope for funding).

This guidance assists Lead Councils to bring together a Town Deal Board with an optimum balance of skills, influence, insight, and resource, that can build trust and achieve a level of collaboration that facilitates long-term, sustainable transformation.

This document sits alongside a separate guide that we have produced for businesses and business leaders wishing to become involved in Town Deals.

Overview of Document

This guidance has been prepared for use by Lead Councils eligible for Town Deals, as well as all tiers of local government working in Town Deal areas. It draws on BITC's experience of working with local stakeholders to transform places and communities over many years.

It does not intend to provide comprehensive detail on all elements of the Towns Fund. Rather, it offers advice for 'getting the best out of business', and suggestions for how to create and run an effective board. Put simply, this guidance will address three main areas:

- **Why** involve business?
- **Who** should be involved?
- **How** to structure a town deal for success

Why involve business?

Economic growth depends on business success, which in turn depends on a thriving local community. Whilst the Government's guidance specifies that boards should be chaired by business and include private sector representation, we recommend that maximising business presence on a Town Deal Board is crucial to creating optimum conditions for long-term, sustainable growth.

Before outlining the types of businesses and the skills and qualities required among Town Deal Board members, this section takes a broader view of the value of the business perspective. This can be viewed through two separate lenses: 'Understanding Needs' and 'Resources & Experience'.

Understanding Needs

- What does a strong local talent pipeline look like?
- How could local transport and connectivity be improved?
- Are there any risks to natural resources that need to be mitigated against or adapted to?
- What is needed to attract more businesses to the area? (Blackpool)

Resources & Experience

- Access to employee, customer, and market insight
- Sector specific expertise that can be brought to bear on issues
- Demonstrated experience of overcoming local barriers

Examples of how businesses have brought these perspectives to bear in their local areas are

included throughout the case studies in the following section.

Who should be involved?

Communities face a complex web of social, economic and environmental challenges, and no one organisation is best placed to disentangle this. Instead, achieving the desired outcomes calls for the combined expertise and resource of a range of cross-sector organisations.

Whilst the benefits of this collective approach are now widely recognised, bringing the most suitable businesses to the table, as well as the best-equipped individuals from those businesses, is often the difference between making temporary improvements and achieving long-term transformation.

Based on the experience of BITC's Place Leadership Team, we have developed criteria for both businesses and individuals, to assist Lead Councils in appointing a Chair and business members for the Town Deal Board.

Which business?

The following questions can be used to help determine the organisations that will provide the required strategic, forward-looking perspective.

- **Who has the largest footprint locally?** A place's major employer has a direct commercial interest in transforming that place. For example, to ensure a strong future talent pipeline, they play a critical role in informing the skills and training provision required locally.
- **Who is invested in immovable assets?** Those invested in infrastructure, such as water, energy, transport or property will have a longer-term outlook, and are better placed to think beyond quick fixes or vanity projects.
- **Who is most sensitive to the local economy?** Retailers, for example, rely on local custom. They possess valuable insight into their customer base, and therefore the community.
- **Who is the most influential business in the area's dominant sector?** They will have specialist insight into the conditions required for further investment.
- **Who represents the future of the local economy?** These businesses will have an acute awareness of, for example, local developments needed to expand an emerging sector and ensure its success. They may bring a welcome, disruptive mindset and helpfully challenge the status quo.

ANGLIAN WATER: CREATING OPPORTUNITY IN WISBECH

In 2013, Anglian Water recognised the role it had to play in broader society in supporting the communities it serves.

Wisbech had struggled to establish direction in post-industrial times and it was clear to Anglian Water that the community faced greater challenges than most other towns. Crucially, Wisbech was at the heart of the company's operating area, meaning there were people and resources available nearby. This included senior leaders from their Tier one suppliers – the @one Alliance.

Increasing career opportunities was one of the key pillars of Anglian Water's long-term strategy for Wisbech. Simultaneously, it identified that among the @one Alliance, there was a need for more mechanical and electrical engineers.

Therefore, the company has worked with the College of West Anglia (CoWA) in the Wisbech Campus to introduce two new courses: Mechanical and Electrical Engineering; and Construction and Utility Operations. Importantly, every student on the courses is guaranteed an interview with one of the alliance companies on successful completion of their course.

To date, over 350 delegates have undertaken these courses, with 40 apprentices now employed by the alliance.

Person Descriptions

Success of a collaboration rests on strong, effective leadership. The Government's prospectus states that a Town Deal Board should be business-led – an approach that BITC advocates based on the experience and learnings of our Place Leadership Team.

A business chair provides independence from public and charitable fund-seeking, roots the approach in an understanding of local economic drivers, and possesses the ability to address complex issues in bite-sized chunks.

Broadly, a chair should:

- Possess **sensitivity** to local needs
- Drive **understanding** of local issues
- Be acutely **aware** of the variation in cultures and motivations within the collaboration
- **Facilitate** openness
- Expertly navigate differences in opinion, **achieving consensus** between members
- Recognise opportunities, whilst **enthusing and empowering** others to bring them to life
- Be a champion for **transparency**, declare conflicts of interest and act in accordance with the [Nolan principles](#).

An example job description is included on page 11 to assist Lead Councils in appointing a chair

Town Deal Board Member:

The type of businessperson who is well-placed to become a board member is someone who:

- **Cares about the town** – this could be someone local, someone with local commercial interests, or someone born locally
- Has **influence over the resources** within their own company – this could be the Chief Executive of a medium-sized local business, or a functional lead for a national business
- Has a **relevant, specialist skillset**, such as digital understanding or marketing
- Can take a **strategic view** on what is best for the town, aside from narrow commercial interests.

TOWN DEAL CHAIR:

PAUL SMITH, BLACKPOOL

“My background is private rather than public sector, having been a commercial lawyer for over 30 years. I was the Global Chairman of law firm Eversheds Sutherland, which has 69 offices in 34 countries, so have a lot of experience in chairing meetings.

I have been working in Blackpool for nearly four years and have built up strong relationships with local business, investors, the Town Council and community groups. I helped guide the make up of the Towns Fund Board to ensure that all the main stakeholders were included.

A strong understanding of the place, its problems and opportunities, and the key players involved are needed. A lot of time is spent joining the dots to get everyone on the same page.

The commitment is to chair monthly meetings and individual one-to-one meetings with Board members to ensure that everyone is fully engaged. I also work closely with Blackpool Council and their consultants to prepare the detailed Investment Plan which contains the detail of the Towns Fund Board bid.”



How to structure for success

The purpose of setting up a cross-sector leadership group is both to understand local issues from a 360-degree perspective and to draw on the skills and resources of those different sectors. Among the mix, there should be insight into the economic, environmental, and social factors, beyond what the data simply suggests. This might be represented by a local business, the Environment Agency, and a leader of a local community project, for example.

This mix of backgrounds requires the chair to be strong in asserting direction. Leadership is at the heart of effective collaboration. For boards to be effective, all organisations need to demonstrate commitment to the overarching vision, above individual organisational priorities. Humility is needed and power needs to be evenly distributed between parties with the realisation that growth and progress is built around high-quality relationships, trust and a central purpose.

Further down the line, early wins will be important for demonstrating credibility and an ability to get things done, which in turn will attract further interest, involvement, and long-term investment. To achieve this requires having people at the table who are used to making decisions.

BOARD MEMBER BIO: KATE SHANE, BLACKPOOL

Kate is Head of Cluster Attractions in Blackpool at Merlin Entertainments Group. This includes Blackpool Tower, Circus and Ballroom, Madame Tussauds, Sea Life and the Dungeons. The Cluster employs up to 350 local people.

Kate is also actively involved in other tourism sector roles: she is the lead for Tourism on the Lancashire LEP Board; is on the IAAPA EMEA Advisory Board as well as sitting on the Blackpool Pride of Place board.

Kate is a passionate advocate of Blackpool and is personally committed to creating a better future and opportunities for those who live, work and visit the resort.



BOARD MEMBER BIO: PAUL AGER, LOWESTOFT

Paul is the Divisional Port Manager responsible for three ports based in East Anglia: Lowestoft, Ipswich and King's Lynn.

The UK ports industry is the second largest in Europe and its operations provide critical economic infrastructure for the nation's manufacturers and businesses. Each port offers a well-established community of port service providers.

Associated British Ports' East Anglian ports handle more than three million tonnes of cargo annually and play a vital role in supporting the economy. They contribute £360m per year and support 3,700 jobs in the region, enabling Paul to take a strategic view of development in the region.



CONCLUSION

With 101 communities set to benefit from the Towns Fund, we are presented with an important opportunity to formally embed some of the incredible collaborative efforts of businesses, the public sector and the community that we have witnessed during the pandemic, aiding future economic health and resilience.

This guidance has outlined best practice in bringing business expertise to bear and utilising the Town Deal opportunity to drive long-term, sustainable transformation. To build upon this, over the course of the year BITC's Place team will also be delivering a series of virtual events. These will explore what an effective Town Deal looks like, increase understanding of what it takes to transform a place, and share insight from national and local government representatives, as well as Town Deal chairs and board members.

Please contact our team for further advice or support, and for details of the above events:

Beth Nightingale – beth.nightingale@bitc.org.uk

Evie Park – evie.park@bitc.org.uk

TOWN DEAL CHAIR JOB DESCRIPTION

Role Purpose

The role of the Chair will be pivotal in terms of galvanising Board members and their wider stakeholders, to realise [place]’s potential and ensure that a Deal is delivered with central government. There is funding to bid for, however engagement with the private sector and investors will be required to leverage further funds and deliver a legacy for the Town Board.



Responsibilities

- Lead the group in achieving its objectives, maintain an overview of activity, and champion and support partnership working. The Chair will need to provide leadership for the Board, to inspire, lead and direct the stakeholders to support delivery.
- Act as an ambassador with key stakeholders, local and central government, business and community groups; support all stakeholders to 'join the dots'.
- Oversee the preparation of an investment plan, setting out the strategy and defining projects with measurable objectives.
- Help set the agenda for meetings, drive forward activity, and take decisions.
- The Chair will also have to build strong links with partners across sectors to ensure the Board is maximising activity within the area.

Person Specification

- Proven ability to think strategically.
- Relevant experience of a senior or influential position demonstrating strategic leadership and effectiveness over a significant period.
- Experience of providing effective direction and leadership, including developing, improving, and monitoring corporate business strategies.
- Ability to apply interpersonal, influence and networking skills to build commitment and drive consensus within a wide constituency of business, community, voluntary and political stakeholders and to deliver agreed outcomes.

GRIMSBY TOWN DEAL – A CASE IN POINT

As a place for a new experiment in the regeneration of English towns, Grimsby is a good place to start. High levels of deprivation, lower levels of educational attainment and a coastal community at the end of the line shows a town needing to find a new purpose. What Grimsby also has is a strong sense of community pride and local people very committed to renewing the town and bringing new opportunities for the future.

It was this desire for change that persuaded the local council to seek a new way of working with Government and to secure a town deal. The Greater Grimsby Town Deal was launched in 2018 and was considered the way to develop a modern industrial strategy designed to regenerate the town away from its former reliance on the Port of Grimsby for jobs and employment.

The original deal signed by Ministers, the Council's leadership and the project board had four themes:

- Drive Economic Growth
- Accelerate Housing Delivery
- Transform Grimsby' historic Waterfront; and
- Improve Skills and Educational attainment

It was designed to bring together over £67m of Government and local investment to accelerate the delivery of North East Lincolnshire Council's local plan which set out to create 8,000 new jobs and nearly 10,000 new homes.

Rob Walsh CEO says that the key is ambition not for the council, but for the 'place' and that by building relationships you create credibility and confidence. He also argues that by respecting the towns heritage you can embrace the future. Grimsby is confident because the town board has a committed and influential membership with routes into Government and a clear plan for the future which is shared with the community.

Getting businesses of scale with a national imprint to play a role and the support of the LEP have been key to being taken seriously by Government and trusted to deliver by the various funding departments. The former Chair of the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Lord Chris Haskins played a role too ensuring that LEP funding is in place for the investment programme.

The key messages from Grimsby's Town Deal are:

- Business, council, LEP and Government partnership is critical
- Establish the right mix on the town board
- Ensure the board is well led by a business champion
- Produce an innovative prospectus with ambition
- Create confidence among partners and the community
- Focus on tackling problems through well channelled investment



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Business in the Community

137 Shepherdess Walk
London N17RQ

www.bitc.org.uk

Chairman: Jeremy Darroch

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