

IPSWICH VISION AND TOWN DEAL BOARD



GOVERNANCE REVIEW

JUNE 2023

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About the review

This review was commissioned via a report from the Chief Executive of Ipswich Borough Council to the March 2023 Ipswich Vision Board. The commission is as follows:

1. A deeper review of the Vision Board's governance is required to ensure that the Board is fit for purpose and as effective as possible. Ipswich Borough Council's Assistant Director for Governance has been asked to carry out a review which takes into consideration:
 - Government guidance on Town Deal Boards
 - Good practice in other Town Deal Boards
2. The review will consider:
 - The role / purpose / responsibilities of the Board
 - The membership of the Board
 - The role / purpose / responsibilities of any Task Groups
 - The relationship between the role of the Board and the Council as "accountable body" for the Town Deal
 - Integration of requirements of the Public Procurement Regulations etc into efficient and effective decision making

The review has been carried out by:

Shirley Jarlett, Assistant Director for Governance and Monitoring Officer at Ipswich Borough Council. Shirley is a practicing solicitor with over 20 years' experience of public sector governance at a range of County, District and Borough councils.

Helen Pluck, Chief Executive of Ipswich Borough Council. Helen is an experienced partnership governance specialist who prior to joining Ipswich Borough Council worked with troubled partnerships across England to resolve disputes, determine common strategic goals and develop the right working conditions for successful partnership, as well as carrying out a range of corporate governance inspections on behalf of the Audit Commission.

Principles of Strong Partnership Working

Successful partnership working requires the following attributes and behaviours from participating partners:

Support - each member needs to feel a sense of support and optimism about the partnership. This helps to sustain the motivation to work in partnership to achieve common goals and make Ipswich better.

Rewarding - each member must see a “reward” from working in partnership. This means that partners need to be valued for their contribution and significance.

Trusting and cohesive - partners need to know that the relationship is collaborative, loyal and solid with concerns of partners being recognised and addressed collaboratively and with mutual respect

Open - partners need to communicate with each other and be consistently attuned to what’s happening within and outside the partnership and the impact that may have on the partnership and its members

Protective - Partners need to feel that they are in an environment and arrangement that will not let them fail but where collective learning from difficulties enables progress and improvement

Catalyst - the partnership should act as a space where each member can grow and develop and where it is safe to generate innovation and creative solutions

Committed - members should be fully committed to supporting the partnership and its work both in and outside of formal settings

In addition the members of and participants in the Partnership are expected to adhere to the (Nolan) Principles for Public Life:

Selflessness - Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

Integrity - Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

Objectivity - Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

Accountability - Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

Openness - Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

Honesty - Holders of public office should be truthful.

Leadership - Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour and treat others with respect. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

Ipswich Vision and Town Deal Board - Purpose & Functions

The Ipswich Vision Board was created in 2015 with a purpose to drive the town forward, turning it around both physically and in terms of its future prospects, and so making the most of its many advantages.¹

The partnership consisted of eight partners:

- Ipswich Central
- Ipswich Borough Council
- Suffolk County Council
- New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership
- Suffolk Chamber of Commerce
- University of Suffolk
- The Ipswich MP - Tom Hunt
- All About Ipswich

(The list order reflects the order of logos on the cover of “Turning our Town Around”)

In 2020 the Ipswich Vision Board subsumed the responsibilities of the Town Deal Board meeting government guidelines for applying for and being awarded a Town Deal. At this point the Ipswich Vision Board defined its purpose as:

1. To help drive forward long term, inclusive economic and productivity growth in Ipswich.
2. Ensure successful delivery of the Town Investment Plan and the Ipswich Town Deal projects.
3. Ensure that Town Deal progress is monitored and that Town Deal work is coordinated with the activities of other key economic stakeholders and groups in Ipswich (e.g. Ipswich Vision, the Ipswich Strategic Policy Area group, the Ipswich Transportation Task Force).
4. To lead on any partnership work required in the lead up to any other major regeneration bids to Government (e.g. ‘Levelling Up Fund Bid(s)').

At this point the membership of the Ipswich Vision Board was widened to include the original eight partners and:

- The MP for Central Suffolk and North Ipswich - Dr Dan Poulter
- Ipswich and Suffolk Small Business Association
- Clinical Commissioning Group
- Progression Sessions
- New Wolsey Theatre
- A place for a young person representative
- A place for a community organisation

¹ Foreword to “Turning our Town Around - The ambitious vision to progress the revival and renewal of Ipswich town centre 2021-25” [Ipswich Vision 2021-2025 by Ipswich Central - Flipsnack](#)

In understanding a partnership, it is as important to understand what the partnership isn't as well as what it is.

The Ipswich Vision Board is not:

- a formally constituted legal entity
- a formal decision-making body
- a scrutiny or audit body
- an entity which can direct the actions of any partnership member
- the accountable body for Town Deal or other funding

The Ipswich Vision Board is

- A voluntary coming together of partners for the betterment of Ipswich
- A partnership which fulfils a specific purpose in relation to the Ipswich Town Deal

The dual role that the Ipswich Vision Board has requires two aligned but separate governance arrangements. One that focuses on meeting the requirements of the government's Town Deal and one that covers non-Town Deal matters.



In March 2021, the Vision Board agreed to update its Terms of Reference to include the following responsibilities and arrangements which heavily focus on the Town Deal:

Responsibilities:

- Co-ordinate the development of business cases for the 10 Ipswich Town Deal projects - with a view to submission of all of them to HM Government by 31st March 2022.
- To oversee the delivery of the 10 Ipswich Town Deal projects, ensuring that they deliver the expected outcomes for Ipswich

- Influence stakeholders to ensure there is sufficient resources and co-investment to deliver the Town Investment Plan and the 10 projects.
- The Board can set up 'sub-groups' (such as Task Forces) to lead on any aspects of its work where it considers that appropriate.
- Advise on other strategic economic interventions across Ipswich to ensure coordinated and effective delivery, and to identify gaps and opportunities and to drive forward new initiatives.
- To decide whether to support / endorse any relevant funding bids for the Ipswich Borough area (e.g. bids to the Government's Levelling Up Fund).
- To adhere to The Seven Principles of Public Life (I.e. the 'Nolan Principles').

Meeting Frequency - The meetings will be quarterly unless the Board decide to meet more frequently.

Decision Making - The Board is not a legal entity in its own right. However, its views are important and will be documented within published minutes. Ipswich Borough Council is the accountable body for Town Deal arrangements with the Government

Chair: Term and responsibilities - The Chair has the casting vote on any matters voted upon (in addition to their normal vote as a Board Member). The Chair will agree the Agenda of each meeting - and the draft minutes of each meeting - with the Borough Council prior to publication. The Chair's term of office will expire on 30th November 2024. In the event that the Chair is absent - for whatever reason - the Vice Chancellor of the University will Chair the meeting / item (as Vice-Chair of the Board) and if they are also absent then those in attendance will elect a temporary chair from within the private sector attendees present.

Accountable Body and Board Administration - Ipswich Borough Council is 'lead council' and 'accountable body' for the Town Deal process / funding will organise and administer the meetings. In doing so the Borough Council will be supported by an Operations Group made up of representatives of the Core Members (and chaired by the Chief Executive of the Local Enterprise Partnership)

Public Access - Board papers and minutes will be publicly available (unless there is a reason for them to be kept confidential - with the Borough Council determining this in accordance with its normal 'Committee paper' rules).

Register of Interests - A publicly available register of interests will be maintained.

Note: the geographic extent of Ipswich for the purposes of the Town Deal proposal matches exactly the boundary of Ipswich Borough Council.

The remainder of this review sets out proposals for two governance arrangements - one for the Town Deal and one for non-Town Deal activity. It then brings the two sets of arrangements back together into a cohesive whole providing a framework for Ipswich Vision to move forward.

Ipswich Vision Board (excluding Town Deal functions)

In March 2023 the Ipswich Vision Board defined its non-Town Deal purposes as

- To help drive forward long term, inclusive economic and productivity growth in Ipswich.
- To lead on any partnership work required in the lead up to any other major regeneration bids to Government (e.g. 'Levelling Up Fund Bid(s)).

However, Ipswich Vision's published strategies in 2015 and 2021 provide more definition as to what long term inclusive growth might consist of. This can be summarised as:

The Ipswich Vision Board will work together to make East Anglia's Waterfront Town:

- Connected
- Attractive to investors, residents and visitors
- True to its history
- Suffolk's first City

Connected

This means that the Board will collaborate on key projects and activities which support the Connected Town Vision. The Connected Town Vision was adopted by the Vision Partners in 2021 as its future strategy for the development and revival of the wider town centre area, partly in response to COVID and to changes in consumer habits.

This plan aims to capitalise on the compact nature of Ipswich which, for example, positions the railway station, parks, shops, theatres, business premises and the waterfront all within an easy 15-minute walk (or 5-minute cycle ride) of each other. However, to maximise the benefits of this proximity, the partners recognised the need for significant change including more people living in the centre of the town and them having around them all that they might need to live their lives there to the full.

Further detail on the Connected Town Vision can be found - [Connected-Town-Consultation-2021-Overview-Report.pdf \(dccdn.net\)](https://www.dccdn.net/2021-Overview-Report.pdf)

A Connected Town Task Force was set up to co-ordinate the work of the Vision partnership to deliver the Connected Town Vision. This Task Force's purpose is to shape and co-ordinate the delivery of the Connected Town Vision. Its delivery plan and progress against it will be reported to the Ipswich Vision Board, as will revised terms of reference and membership.

Attractive to investors, residents and visitors

This means that partners will work together to plan and deliver activities which go beyond the Connected Town Vision but will help make Ipswich an attractive place to visit, invest in and live. Largely these activities are included in the Town Deal and so it is not proposed that there is a specific Task Force set up for this priority at this point. Should projects be identified by partners which are not included within the Town Deal or the Connected Town Vision and which

support this priority then the Ipswich Vision Board may propose that a Task Force is created at that time.

True to its history

This means that in developing and progressing Ipswich, we must not lose sight of its history or historic importance. There is a rich tapestry of heritage assets throughout the town centre that can play an important part in its future.

The Town Deal only has one project in the investment plan which relates to the town's important history and heritage and that is the Digital Town Centre project which proposes using Augmented Reality to bring the town's history to life. Similarly, the Connected Town Vision does not focus on Ipswich's rich history and heritage.

For one of the oldest towns in England this is insufficient - we should be able to capitalise on the past when developing our future and as such it is proposed that a Heritage Task Force is created which will consider how the town's history and heritage can be used to develop its economic future. This task force will make recommendations to the Connected Town Task Force and the Ipswich Vision Board as well as providing a useful sounding board for partners and projects. If the principle of a Heritage Task Force is agreed then terms of reference and membership will be circulated to the Board in due course.

Suffolk's first City

This means that the Vision partnership will work towards achieving city status at the next opportunity. It will work together to "change the narrative" about Ipswich from one which is perceived as negative to one which is predominantly positive. Opportunities to improve the town's social and physical infrastructure will need to be identified as well as a communications campaign which is delivered through partnership members communications functions.

Much of the work to contribute to this priority will come from the Town Deal, Connected Town and Heritage Task Forces, therefore it is not proposed to create a separate Task Force.

However, a "Positive about Ipswich" brand should be created which all partners can use to celebrate positive news and to which campaigns to change the narrative about the town can be linked. A communications group across all partners is in the process of being set up and will be co-ordinated by Ipswich Borough Council's Head of Marketing & Communications. Terms of reference for this Communications Group will be circulated in due course.

Additional Task Forces

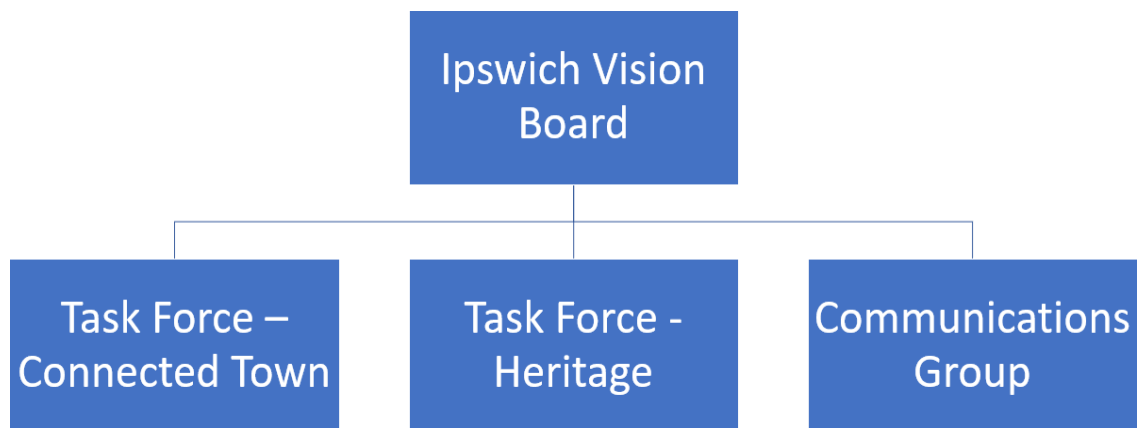
From time to time the Ipswich Vision Board may decide that it needs one or more additional task forces to focus on a specific matter not covered by an existing group.

Meetings frequencies & membership

It will be for the Task Forces themselves to determine the frequency of their meetings and other arrangements such as venues etc.

Membership of each Task Force should be determined by the Chair of the Task Force in consultation with the Ipswich Vision Board

Governance Structure (exc Town Deal related matters)



Vision Board Terms of Reference (excl Town Deal related matters)

- To provide a clear Ipswich Vision to which all partners are fully signed up
- To receive updates from its task forces involved in the delivery of the Ipswich Vision
- To provide a strategic steer to its task forces
- To provide a sounding board to member partners on strategic matters (where the partner has decided to seek involvement from the Ipswich Vision Board)

Ipswich Town Deal Board

The Vision Board includes the functions of the Ipswich Town Deal Board and these must meet the government's requirements. These requirements are:

1. upholding the Seven Principles of Public Life (the Nolan Principles)
2. developing and agreeing an evidence-based Town Investment Plan
3. establishing a clear programme of interventions
4. embedding arrangements in local plans (where appropriate) and undertaking Environmental Impact Assessments and fulfilling duties on public authorities under the Equalities Act, in particular, and the public sector equality duty.
5. coordinating resources and engaging stakeholders
6. ensuring communities' voices are involved in shaping design and decision making at each phase of development
7. ensuring diversity in its engagement with local communities and businesses
8. helping develop detailed business cases
9. overseeing each step of agreeing a Town Deal, and overseeing compliance with the Heads of Terms Agreement with government

As the Town Deal Programme moves into its delivery phase, it is important that Town Deal governance is reviewed. Items 2, 3, and 8 above are no longer relevant once all the business cases are signed off by DLUHC. Clear governance is essential for the operation and delivery of the Towns Fund to enable accountability and transparency.

The Town Deal guidance from government dictates that the Town Deal board should have a private sector Chair.

As accountable body Ipswich Borough Council's own governance plays a key part - in particular in respect of decision making and Contract Standing Orders.

The Town Deal Board is not an incorporated body and Ipswich Borough Council remains the accountable body for the Towns Fund in Ipswich.

The Board may make recommendations to the Council's Executive from time to time during the development and implementation of the Ipswich Town Deal Investment Plan

The role of Ipswich Borough Council as the accountable body is:

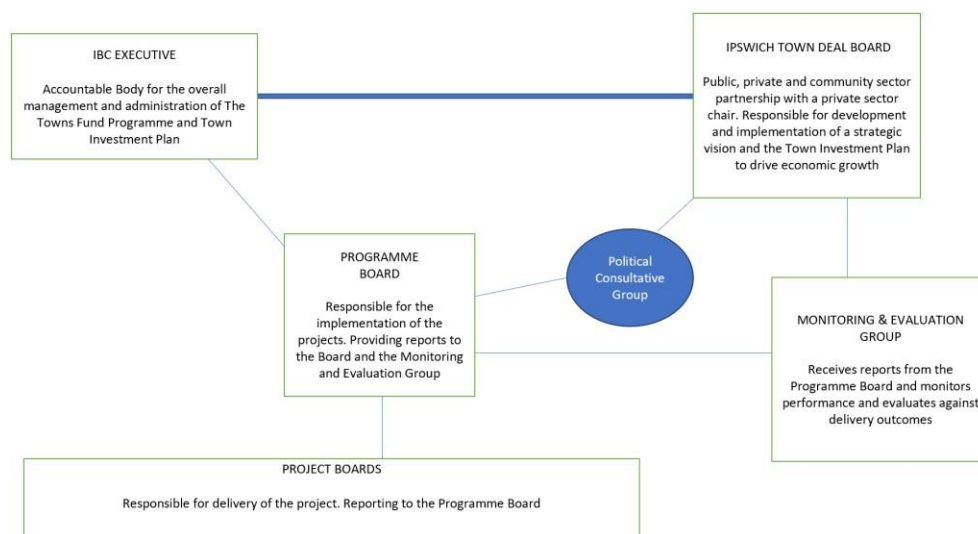
- To be the main point of contact and liaison with Government (DLUHC)
- To receive and account for the Town's funding allocation
- To identify and engage the Board in other funding opportunities that would help to deliver the aims and objectives of the Town Investment Plan
- To provide technical expertise including procurement, project management and project delivery
- To maintain an overview of the planning, development and delivery of development projects, providing a collective, co-ordinated response to issues, challenges and risks as appropriate

- To monitor and review the progress of the programme and effectiveness of the actions and provide timely reports to the Board and Monitoring and Evaluation Group
- To utilise its own governance structure including its decision making ability to deliver the Towns Fund Deal

It is important that the governance arrangements for the Town Deal form a Local Assurance Framework. The key components of this framework for Ipswich are:

- Towns Fund Board - Strategic role, providing vision and oversight
- Programme Board - Led by IBC and chaired by IBC CEO. Comprises senior officers from IBC, SCC and LEP. Responsible for delivery. Point of liaison between Board and Project Boards. Reports to Town Deal Board and IBC. Will procure and manage delivery by Project Boards. Will adhere to IBC's Constitution including its Contract Standing Orders and decision making processes. Will comply with Public Procurement Regulations. May be subject to internal audit. Will comply with Financial Regulations - Statutory Chief Finance Officer will deal with financial management.
- Monitoring and Evaluation - 2 way mechanism to inform and provide feedback between Town Deal Board and Programme Board. This group has also been described as "overseeing the relationship between the Board, the Borough Council (as accountable body for the Town Deal) and the individual project leads - and providing input - as required - to HM Government on project reporting. It is anticipated that New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership will be the lead organisation for this Task Force"
- Project Boards- delivery of specific projects reporting to Programme Board.
- Political Consultative group - the 2 MPs, 2 Councils and the Chair who may be consulted on key issues in lieu of a formal Town Deal board meeting prior to a formal decision on the matter being made by the Ipswich Borough Council Executive or Chief Executive

The Assurance Framework is set out in the diagram below.



The specific role of the Town Deal Board is to:

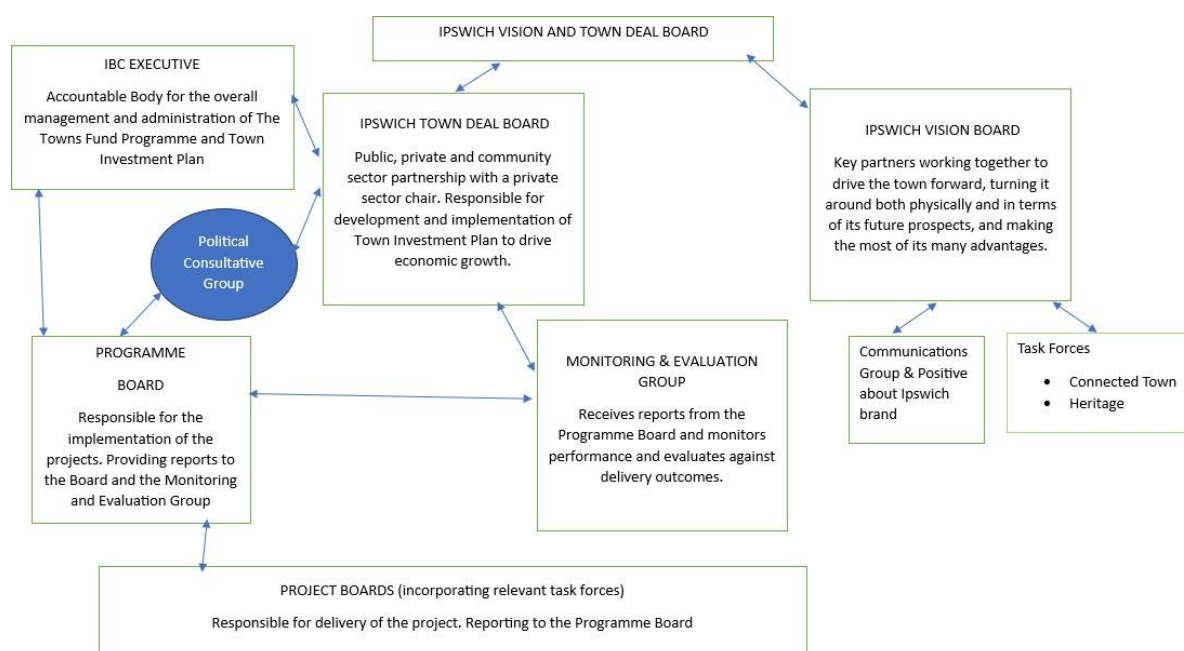
1. Ensure effective co-ordination between the activities and actions of the agencies and organisations involved during the development and delivery of the Town Investment Plan. To serve an advisory function to the Lead Council (Ipswich Borough Council)
2. Ensure the strategy for the Towns Fund is in place
3. To maintain an overview of the planning, development and delivery of development projects, providing a collective, co-ordinated response to issues, challenges and risks as appropriate
4. Identify future funding opportunities that align with the vision and priorities set out in the Town Investment Plan and where necessary, work together to secure additional funding
5. To monitor and review the progress of the programme and effectiveness of the actions

Government guidance sets out that the membership of a Town Deal Board should include:

- A private sector chair
- all tiers of local government for the geography of the town
- the MP(s) representing the town
- the Local Enterprise Partnership
- local businesses and investors
- community/local voluntary community sector representatives
- other relevant local organisations, such as FE colleges or Clinical Commissioning Groups

Bringing Ipswich Vision and Town Deal Board Governance together

The diagram below sets out the whole of the governance arrangements together.



Combined Terms of Reference for the Ipswich Vision and Town Deal Board

Purpose

- To help drive forward long term, inclusive economic and productivity growth in Ipswich. The Ipswich Vision Board will work together to make East Anglia's Waterfront Town:
 - Connected
 - Attractive to investors, residents and visitors
 - True to its history
 - Suffolk's first City
- To lead on any partnership work required in the lead up to any other major regeneration bids to Government (e.g. 'Levelling Up Fund Bid(s))
- Ensure effective co-ordination between the activities and actions of the agencies and organisations involved during the development and delivery of the Town Investment Plan. To serve an advisory function to the Lead Council (Ipswich Borough Council)
- Ensure the strategy for the Towns Fund is in place
- To maintain an overview of the planning, development and delivery of development projects, providing a collective, co-ordinated response to issues, challenges and risks as appropriate
- To monitor and review the progress of the programme and effectiveness of the actions

Responsibilities

- To oversee the delivery of the 10 Ipswich Town Deal projects, ensuring that they deliver the expected outcomes for Ipswich
- Influence stakeholders to ensure there is sufficient resources and co-investment to deliver the Town Investment Plan and the 10 projects
- To receive updates from Task Forces and other groups charged with the delivery of the Board's priorities
- To advise on other strategic economic interventions across Ipswich with a view to enabling coordinated and effective delivery
- To decide whether to support / endorse any relevant funding bids for the Ipswich Borough area (e.g. bids to the Government's Levelling Up Fund).
- To adhere to the Seven Principles of Public Life (i.e. the 'Nolan Principles') and the principles of good partnership working
- Embedding arrangements in local plans (where appropriate) and undertaking Environmental Impact Assessments and fulfilling duties on public authorities under the Equalities Act, in particular, and the public sector equality duty.
- coordinating resources and engaging stakeholders
- ensuring communities' voices are involved in shaping design and decision making at each phase of development
- ensuring diversity in its engagement with local communities and businesses
- overseeing each step of agreeing a Town Deal, and overseeing compliance with the Heads of Terms Agreement with government

Meeting Frequency

The meetings will be quarterly unless the Board decide to meet more frequently. Meetings will be in person and hosted by a member organisation.

Decision Making

The Board is not a legal entity in its own right. However, its views are important and will be documented within published minutes. Ipswich Borough Council is the accountable body for Town Deal arrangements with the Government.

Chair: Term and responsibilities

The Chair has the casting vote on any matters voted upon (in addition to their normal vote as a Board Member). The Chair will agree the Agenda of each meeting - and the draft minutes of each meeting - with the Borough Council prior to publication. The Chair's term of office will expire on 30th November 2024. The Chair is expected to spend the equivalent of 1 day per week on Ipswich Vision business and the role is funded by a mix of funding from Ipswich Borough Council, Suffolk County Council, Ipswich Central, NALEP and an Enterprise Zone pot.

In the event that the Chair is absent for a Board meeting - for whatever reason - the Vice Chancellor of the University will Chair the meeting / item (as Vice-Chair of the Board) and if they are also absent then those in attendance will elect a temporary chair from within the private sector attendees present.

Accountable Body

Ipswich Borough Council is 'lead council' and 'accountable body' for the Town Deal process / funding.

Board administration and co-ordination

It is proposed that an Ipswich Vision Co-ordinator is employed by Ipswich Borough Council and funded by the institutional members of the Vision Partnership. This post will work with the Chair to co-ordinate the work of the Board including but not limited to the Board meetings.

Public Access - Board papers and minutes will be publicly available (unless there is a reason for them to be kept confidential - with the Borough Council determining this in accordance with its normal 'Committee paper' rules).

Register of Interests - A publicly available register of interests will be maintained.

Note: the geographic extent of Ipswich for the purposes of the Town Deal proposal matches exactly the boundary of Ipswich Borough Council.

Membership of the Ipswich Vision and Town Deal Board

The membership of a Town Deal Board is prescribed in government guidance which requires the following:

- a private sector chair
- all tiers of local government for the geography of the town
- the MP(s) representing the town
- the Local Enterprise Partnership
- local businesses and investors
- community/local voluntary community sector representatives
- other relevant local organisations, such as FE colleges or Clinical Commissioning Groups

Looking at the membership of the current Ipswich Vision Board it can be seen that the Board could be further strengthened in respect of the “other relevant local organisations” and “Local businesses and investors” requirements.

It is proposed that Suffolk New College be invited to join the Board and that key local businesses should also be invited. Board members are asked to consider how this should be done - i.e. open recruitment or closed invitations.

A skills audit should also be carried out to identify whether the Board members have the requisite skills and expertise to cover the Board’s overarching remit and if not how these gaps can be addressed.

Finally, it is proposed that where a Board member (or their recognised substitute) does not attend for two consecutive meetings, the Chair considers whether they should be replaced.