

Minutes

Meeting	Ipswich Vision Board
Date	Friday 12 th September 2025
Time	09:00 hrs
Location	Ipswich Borough Council, Orwell Room, Grafton House

Items:

1.0	Present: David Ralph, Chair of Ipswich Vision Board (Chair) Helen Pluck, CEO, Ipswich Borough Council [IBC] (HP) Becca Jackaman, Progression Sessions (BJ) Alan Pease, Principal, Suffolk New College (AP) Neil McDonald, Leader of IBC (NMCD) Jenny Higham, Vice Chancellor, University of Suffolk (JH) James Fairclough, Director of Operations and Place, IBC (JF) Sharon Earp, Representative for Patrick Spencer (SE) Andrew Cook, Executive Director for Growth, Highways & Infrastructure, SCC (AC) Lee Walker, CEO of Ipswich Central (LW) Julia Rusek, IBC (Minutes)
2.0	Apologies: Jack Abbott, MP for Ipswich (JA) Paul West, Councillor, Suffolk County Council [SCC] (PW) James Davey, Director, Ipswich Small Business Association (JDa) Patrick Spencer, MP for Central Suffolk and North Ipswich (PS) John Dugmore, Chamber of Commerce (JD)

		Action
--	--	---------------

3.0	Declarations of Interest: Nothing to declare. JF will review the declarations; however, as there are no new members on the Board, no issues are anticipated.	JF
4.0	Minutes of the last Meeting: The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as an accurate record.	
5.0	Devolution Update (AC Updates): Since the last Board meeting in June, significant progress has been made. Previous concerns surrounding the lack of information from the Government have now been remedied with confirmation being received on instruments, legislation, and transfer of services. The blue light services, including the police and ambulances, are scheduled for April 2027. The only outstanding matter is the Mayoral Budget which had not been announced prior to the summer. This will confirm the capacity funding over the first 4 years and the Mayoral Fund. At present, there are no anticipated deviation from the plan and progress is being made on a written basis. Councils and Cabinets have been agreed. The signing of statutory instruments will begin when Government is ready. It is expected that the Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA) will be established in early 2026, likely February, with Mayoral elections proceeding in May 2026. Large quantities of work are being undertaken in Norfolk and Suffolk, covering matters encompassing transport, environment, planning, business and company architecture, for example, finance and payroll, to ensure readiness. A Sponsor Board will lead and advise on delivery. AP questioned whether the funding figures would remain fixed over 30 years as this would not make them inflation-proof. AC confirmed that this is a starting point. Once the MCCA and Mayor are established, further opportunities can be explored. AC also noted that all DPP areas, for example, Surrey and Sussex are all held to the same statutory instrument and deal. Chair queried whether the allocations are based per capita. AC confirmed this. Chair questioned the Local Government Reorganisation.	

	AC informed that this is not contingent and a separate project. SCC have published their case and other Districts and the Borough will publish theirs on Monday. This will be monitored, and the official submission will be completed on the 26th of September. Consultation is expected over the Christmas period (November until January), with a decision in March, just prior to the mayoral process. Nothing currently indicates delays. HP noted that unless any structural changes occur, the election is expected to continue as planned in May. AC added that if an announcement is not made in March then the mayoral process will occur after the elections. Chair questioned if there is a possibility to negotiate a better deal. AC informed that this is not possible. SE questioned what would occur if Norfolk do not support the deal. AC confirmed that a rejection would result in Suffolk going to the back of the queue for devolution, with potentially less favorable terms in the future. Both counties must approve the deal to proceed. LE questioned when political parties will announce their candidates. AC informed that the Conservatives have their preferred candidate. The Green Party have nominated their representative. It is understood that Reform is currently taking applications. NMc added that Labour will announce their representative shortly, the Liberal Democrats are still awaiting candidates, and no independent candidates have been declared. It was noted that in electoral law terms, candidates do not have to declare their candidacy until late March/early April.	
6.0	Project Updates: Waterfront Project: AC reported the Waterfront project is underway with consultants, supported by the University and IBC to explore opportunities to develop the waterfront as a tourist area. The initial phase has concluded, and a workshop will occur on the 22nd of October to review options and possibilities for the area. This will continue with identifying individuals to develop a case study. A consultant report, visual materials and proposals will possibly be brought into the next Board meeting in December to ensure all members understand the project. Invitations to the October workshop are extended to all Board members and external stakeholders have already been invited.	

	Chair requested an invitation to the workshop. SE commented that this sounds very positive with immense momentum and possibility. AC added that it is important to involve external experts to ensure the vision and attract seed funding from private sector investors. Branding: HP reported that the new brand is due to launch between now and Christmas, subject to legal agreements being finalised. JH questioned how the vision will be shared and how will it be energised. HP informed that there will be a launch event with stakeholders, supported by prior work with partners and marketing professionals across town. The new brand will compliment the existing marketing of organisations, adding a new dimension rather than replacing existing branding. Chair commented that the timing is favorable and can be explained to the new Mayor upon his arrival. Ukreiif: HP reported that the Suffolk stand, led by herself and AC, was successful. For next year, subject to funding, the plan is to have a Suffolk-Norfolk pavilion, even though the Mayor would have only been in position for a short time. Approximately 130 investors and developers were engaged with, and many remain in contact with individual local authorities. Some were returning contacts from last year. It was noted that outcomes from this event can take time; however, some developments are expected to become public next year once appropriate sites, arrangements and developments have been confirmed. As a local authority, appropriate procurement routes must be followed.	
7.0	Town Fund Update <u>Shopping Parades:</u> All outstanding works have been completed. A final push to promote the grants over the summer had limited success. Promotions have now ended, and no further interest has been received. It was agreed that the most cost-effective approach for St Matthews St was to replace the railings rather than repaint them. Suffolk Highways will deliver this, alongside new lighting columns, brick repairs, and living planters on the lighting columns where they can be safely watered without any road closures.	

	Additional railing works identified may result in costs exceeding the budget of £400k, however, sufficient funding is available in the wider local parades budget. A draft agreement and specification have been drafted for SCC to proceed with the works. Works are expected to commence prior to Christmas, subject to road space booking. If not, commencement will follow in the New Year. AC noted that road closures in early December should be avoided. SE commented that works should only take a few weeks so positive results would be visible in a short period. JF clarified that works will be completed in two phases. Hawthorn Drive is nearly ready for planning application submissions. Some groundwater condition concerns exist so core drilling will take place to confirm suitability. There is an estimated budget of £800k, however, more updates will be provided next meeting with delivery timelines. <u>Greening:</u> The construction tender has come back within budget and has been carefully reviewed due to the works being undertaken on a highway. The contract will be awarded shortly. It is unlikely that works will begin prior to Christmas, however, initial works may take place around the Wolsey statue to minimise disruptions to foot traffic. Princes Street will not be started before Christmas. No issues are anticipated with the programme or budget. The works will span 26 weeks, with the latest start being in January and completion by the end of June. A budget of £1.7m was allocated for St Peter's Dock, of which £25k has been spent on designs to RIBA stage 2. IBC has resolved to enter into a development agreement for the redevelopment of St Peters Dock car park, Pauls Silo and the Burtons building, resulting in this project no longer being viable. It is proposed that some of the remaining funds can be retained and utilised for planting opportunities in the town center. These would be permanent and freestanding, similar to the ones on St Nicholas St. Seating opportunities could also be included. The Board agreed to retain up to £175k in the Greener Ipswich Budget from the St Peters Dock allocation to fund freestanding planters in the town centre. It was agreed that IBC will collaborate with SCC to identify suitable locations.	
--	--	--

	The Board agreed to consider proposals for the use of the remaining £1.5m allocation for St Peters Dock later in the meeting. <u>Lloyd's Avenue</u> IBC have consulted on changes to the Traffic Regulation Order and the taxi rank as drivers have raised objections. This will be discussed by the Monitoring Officer and Councilors under delegated authority to decide whether works should be paused. The S278 agreement between IBC and SCC is progressing. The contractor is ready to proceed, subject to S278, although these works will not commence prior to the new year. The contract duration is approximately 8 months, and completion is expected by August 2026. The project is not contingent on resolving driver objections, however, without the Traffic Regulation Order, vehicle restrictions cannot be enforced. Works are expected to commence in January. <u>Prince Philip Bridge:</u> A legal agreement between IBC and SCC has not been finalised yet. Work is ongoing to determine the final terms of the agreement, Design work is progressing with Towns Fund being used as funding for its early stages. This remains a SCC led project. Planning permissions are anticipated to be submitted before the winter and critical paths will be confirmed in due course. A land dedication agreement is in place with ABP. Works are expected on site Spring next year, with a focus on the approach routes rather than the bridge itself, to make the routes fully accessible. Completion is anticipated this time next year. <u>Digital Ipswich:</u> The portal is currently being manufactured and will be shipped shortly. It will be stored by the contractor who will install it on the Cornhill in October. Allowing testing and launch to take place before the half-term holiday. No major launch is planned, instead, a low-key event with key stakeholders will take place. The Portal installation is expected to gain interest over time with engagement growing organically, rather than incur the impact of a larger scale major launch event experienced elsewhere. Digital Binoculars are planned to be installed in November, subject to agreement to relocate the unit at Customs House. It is planned that all units will be installed and live together as this is the most cost effective approach.	
--	--	--

	Take-up of the digital trails has been disappointing. There are further trails associated with the binoculars currently out to tender and costs are awaited. No further investment in digital walking trails is planned and existing trails will remain active. There are no ongoing costs associated with them. The most recent app launched in collaboration with Go Jauntly has resulted in 17 downloads. SE noted that the Leicester mayoral office invited journalists to boost press coverage. JF informed that journalists had been invited, and attempts were made to encourage people to do it on live, however, it was unsuccessful. There is also no budget in place for influencer coverage, although, efforts to promote the trails will continue. AC questioned why there is a difference between these trails and similar apps around the country. JF suggested that issues could be associated with the download as people prefer a hard copy paper trail. LW informed that during a separate project, 5000 maps were printed but only 200 were completed. Norwich has a successful online pack with clues for participants, which may be more engaging. NMc suggested a hard-copy paper trial over the summer. JF noted that the Digital Ipswich funds cannot be utilised for this as it is not digital. JF and LW will discuss. The original business case included town center screens. BT have began installing their own. Another company with a national R&D budget will test customer engagement in Ipswich with community engagement hubs. This will centralise responses from surveys and hubs. The system will also be voice-activated to simplify engagement. Overall, approximately £1.3m has been spent, leaving £1m unallocated. <u>Regeneration Fund:</u> Grimwades and another project have been completed. 2 further projects have been agreed and are in the final stages.	JF & LW
--	---	---------------------------

	7 additional projects have expressed interest. If these progress to later stages of verification, the combined scale is significant; however, funding is limited. <u>Suggested Reallocation:</u> Originally, the Regeneration Fund had £11.5k. Currently, there is £4.8k left and expressions of interest are expected soon. The proposed reallocation is: • Transfer £1m from Digital Ipswich. • Transfer £1.5m from Greener Ipswich St Peter's Dock. This will adjust the Regeneration Fund figure to £14m, leaving a new balance of £7.3m. HP confirmed that once the final budget figures are clear, an independent panel will review applications in October. Strong proposals will be invited to present and respond to questions. The Government restrictions on Town Fund monitoring and reallocation have loosened, allowing greater flexibility for smaller-scale fund movements. Projects that are unviable can have reallocations. The Board aims to deliver the original programme; however, due to external issues, not all allocated projects are possible. Reallocation to the Regeneration Fund is considered the most effective approach. It does not appear that all funds have to be committed by March 2026. JF requested flexibility for a 10% budget reallocation tolerance once numbers are finalised. AC supports this approach as it is the most effective use of funds. SE agreed, noting that this aligns with the momentum that branding and will ensure public confidence. Chair agreed and granted permission to reallocate with the suggested tolerances. LW expressed support. HP noted that implementing projects is conceptually viable; however, due to historical reasons, this has been difficult. This also explains why above-ground planters have been relied upon. SE commented that if enough intervention, the impact will be significant. JF confirmed he would discuss timelines for funding, money reallocation, and the altered guidelines with HMCSSG. Chair clarified that the funding reallocation has been agreed by the Board with a 10% tolerance flexibility.	JF
--	--	-----------

8.0	Towns Fund – M&E Update The group has not made and JDa has sent his apologies for this meeting. JF will discuss with JDa upon his return. A new member has joined the group.	JF & JDa
9.	Any Other Business: <u>Broomhill:</u> HP reported that the lottery has withdrawn its grant. It had been agreed that Fusion would be the tenant, and the current lease runs until 2039. Early discussions are underway whether they will retain or surrender the property. Until a surrender occurs, there is no breach and therefore no further actions can be taken. If and when IBC regain control of the site, intentions are to reinvigorate refurbishment plans, apply for funding and progress with delivery. However, this project has several interdependencies which must be carefully managed.	
10.	Dates of Next Meeting: December date TBC.	