



Minutes of Newton-le-Willows Neighbourhood Board

Friday 9 May 2025 14:30 – 16:30

Newton Sports Club, Crow Lane East, Newton-le-Willows, WA12 9XE

Invitees			
Name	Initials	Role	Organisation
Board Members			
Chris Hickey	CH	Chair	Mercury Hampton
Councillor Anthony Burns	AB	Leader of the Council	St Helens Borough Council
Mark Palethorpe	MP	Chief Executive	St Helens Borough Council
Councillor Richard McCauley	RM	Cabinet Member for Inclusive Growth and Regeneration	St Helens Borough Council
Ian Lewis	IL	Investment Manager	Liverpool City Region Combined Authority
Amie Louise Parsonage	ALP	Portfolio and Partnerships Officer	Merseyside Police and Crime Commissioner
Community & Co-Opted Board Members			
Alex Myhill	AM	Community Representative	Riddling Rack
Joanne Edge	JE	Community Representative	Newton Sports Club
Debbie Taylor	DT	Business Representative	Es Paradis Salon & Domestic Abuse WA12 CIC
Paul Romanko	PR	Business Representative	United Utilities Water Ltd
Fiona Ruddy	FR	Third Sector Representative	Newton Community Centre
John Unsworth	JU	Cultural, Arts, and Heritage including Sports Groups Representative	Sea Cadet Corps
Reverend Chris Stafford	CS	Faith Representative	Team Rector at St Peters, Emmanuel Wargrave, and St John's
Local Authority Representatives			
Mary Jefferson	MJ	Head of Regeneration and Growth	St Helens Borough Council
Mark Bingley	MB	Programme Lead – Earlestown	St Helens Borough Council
Rachel Bebbby	RB	Project Officer	St Helens Borough Council

Matthew Valentine	MV	Project Officer	St Helens Borough Council
Apologies Received			
David Baines MP	DB	Member of Parliament, St Helens North	Member of Parliament, St Helens North
Jon Julian Smith	JJS	Chief Inspector, St Helens	Merseyside Police

Item	Title	Lead
1.	Welcome and Introductions	CH
2.	Declarations of Interest	CH
3.	Minutes of the previous Neighbourhood Board meeting held on 21 March 2025	CH
4.	Neighbourhood Plan Programme Update	MB
5.	Any Other Business	All

1. Welcome and Introductions

Chris Hickey (CH) acknowledged apologies received from David Baines MP and Jon Julian Smith.

CH welcomed Mark Palethorpe (MP) to the Neighbourhood Board in his new role as Chief Executive of St Helens Borough Council. MP introduced himself to the group within his new role, and CH welcomed Members and introductions were given around the table for MP's benefit.

2. Declaration of Interest

CH informed members that no declarations had been received ahead of the meeting and invited Neighbourhood Board Members to present any new declarations relevant to the agenda items.

No declarations were declared.

3. Minutes of the previous Neighbourhood Board meeting held on 21 March 2025

CH noted the minutes from the previous Neighbourhood Board meeting on Friday 21 March 2025 are agreed and live on the Council website. CH then provided an overview of the key discussions and endorsements from the previous Board, including:

- Board noted the updates of the prospectus and milestones for the Plan for Neighbourhoods initiative.
- Board approved the approach to freeze Board membership until such time that the Regeneration Plan is developed, and a Skills Audit can be undertaken aligned to the projects defined in the Investment Plan.
- Board approved the proposal to alter the 'default' area boundary.
- Board approved the endorsement of the Engagement Strategy, Communications Plan and additional expenditure presented.

4. Neighbourhood Plan Programme Update

Mark Bingley (MB) gave an overview that this Agenda item would be split into three elements – providing an update on consultation, programme milestones, and the recommendations and endorsements sought by Board.

Update on consultation

MB explained a promotional 'Education Video' had been produced and published by the Council to provide information about the initiative and encourage people to take part in the consultation. For the benefit of those Board Members who had not yet viewed the video, MB played the promotional item.

MB thanked those Board Members who contributed to the creation of the Education Video, noted it is a powerful and important part of the endorsed Engagement Strategy, and promotes the opportunity for the community to learn more about Plan for Neighbourhoods and the consultation process.

MB provided an overview to Board Members on the Newton-le-Willows Plan for Neighbourhoods consultation progress, noting that the period of consultation runs from Monday 7 April 2025 to Sunday 18 May 2025. MB noted that as of the date of this Board meeting, the online consultation platform has received approximately 1500 views with 921 navigations through the website, resulting in 122 contributors through the online survey or through comments.

MB added that in addition to the online platform, the public consultation has enabled 357 people to directly engage so far through the pop-up events and drop-in sessions, with further engagement still planned.

MB outlined that the Project Team will continue to push participation by contacting key stakeholders such as community groups, heritage groups, and businesses until the consultation closes. Thanks were given to Board Members who have worked pro-actively across the consultation period in supporting consultation events and delivering 7,500 flyers to businesses, residents and community groups, with a special thanks given to Reverend Chris Stafford (CS) for his efforts.

MB assured Board that the final consultation numbers will increase ahead of completion, however MB stated that circa.500 people engaged to date is very

positive and exceeds other consultations across the borough. In addition, the richness of some of the contributions in extensive face to face conversations offers real value to the Board.

Programme milestones

MB discussed programme milestones and informed Board Members that the first milestone had been reached, with the submission of a terms of reference, Board composition, proposal to alter the 'default' boundary line, and our committed expenditure of capacity funding to date, submitted on 22 April 2025. MB detailed that assessment is to be undertaken by government officers who will revert with feedback and questions on the submission if necessary.

MB detailed a visit from Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) took place on 30 April 2025 with the Project Team (MB and Rachel Bebb) alongside Board Members Chris Hickey (CH), Paul Romanko (PR) and Joanne Edge (JE), as part of Government's efforts to visit all 75 beneficiaries of the fund. MB noted a walking tour was provided of Earlestown, followed by a tour via car of the wider Newton-le-Willows area, before a presentation was given at Mercury Hampton outlining programme achievements to date and milestones ahead. MB provided feedback to Board that Government officers were pleased with the clear vision and programme progress and noted that Newton-Le-Willows Plan for Neighbourhoods programme is a strong innovator in delivery and produced strong examples of best practice.

MB announced the next key milestone for Board is to meet the submission of the Regeneration Plan and 4-Year Investment Plan by Winter 2025.

Recommendations and endorsements

MB stated that a key decision for the Board in this meeting is to vote on endorsement of additional expenditure as discussed at previous Neighbourhood Board meeting of 21 March 2025. The expenditure relates to the updated prospectus provided by Government which expands the scope, specifically the addition of new criteria and feedback loops to the Board as development of the 10-year plan and 4-year investment plan evolves. MB stated the additional expenditure is largely driven by an increase of the investment themes from 3 to 8 within the reformed programme and the additional work involved to be undertaken by Neighbourhood Board Specialists in analysing the criterion to provide a clear local evidence-based needs assessment of investment themes

MB added that this analytical work is critical to inform a Data Pack; that will be presented to the Board summarising the local data set of the area in addition to the consultation results, which will provide a clear and thorough evidence base for the development and selection of potential projects.

MB advised that the Neighbourhood Board Specialists have provided details of a fee uplift due to the extensive additional work required, which was shown to Board. MB reinforced that this uplift has been robustly challenged and is considerably lower than the initial given figure, through challenge and refinement, with confidence given

that the fee reflects value for money. MB announced that a letter has been provided courtesy of CH to indicate the Board's intention is to endorse the uplift, given the key milestone of Winter 2025 and to ensure there is no delay to the programme's progress.

CH added that the uplift is needed to fit the requirements and stated the additional fee reflects good value for money for the Board taking into account the additional work which needs to be undertaken.

Fiona Ruddy (FR) confirmed that the fee uplift is for the additional scope of the project and asked for details of what work will be delivered as part of the package of works.

MB advised the original specification contained the data driven exercise for the 3 investment themes (regeneration, high streets and heritage, transport, and safety and security) which has now expanded to 8 (additional themes being: housing, work, productivity and skills, cohesion, health and wellbeing, and education and opportunity), and therefore additional spend is required for the extra work involved in analysing data sets relevant to the new investment themes.

MB added that in addition to the expanded scope, a series of workshops are now included with Board Members, which can be found at section 4.5 of the agenda pack for June and July 2025 in recognition of Government's new direction to ensure the requirement of additional feedback loops is met.

FR asked for clarity that the additional fee is pertaining to 5 extra investment themes, and additional workshops and asked for the committed expenditure to date.

MB confirmed that the additional fee breakdown was correct and further informed the programme committed spend to date on:

- Neighbourhood Board Specialists initial contract value.
- Additional consultation and engagement activities sought by the Board.
- The appointment of a Project Officer for 3 years.

MB gave a total of the committed expenditure to date, with a decision to be made regarding the fee uplift in reflection of the expanded programme.

FR identified total spend with Neighbourhood Specialists, and wanted to ensure that should the fee uplift be approved, that the Board ensure the Specialists are held to account with respect to value to the programme across the scope of delivery.

Paul Romanko (PR) added that it is the responsibility of the Board to ensure this fee does not increase nor further scope be added beyond what has been agreed.

MB reminded the Board that the Specialists were appointed on a competitive tender of 6 bidders of which the appointed team – Hatch Associates, PLACED and Layer.Studio (bidding jointly) scored the highest through price and quality assessment. MB added that fees to date include consultation, data analysis and development of the 10-year Regeneration Plan and 4-year Investment Plan.

Mary Jefferson (MJ) gave assurances that due to public contract regulations; scope cannot be extended any further. MJ stated the fees accrued to date meet the threshold of what is allowable under public procurement and that if any additional fees were required for further work, the market would need to be retested. MJ added the work to be delivered is a very intensive amount in a short amount of time and that the challenge is correct to be made but the initial contract and additional fees represent good value for spend.

Alex Myhill (AM) noted that it is important for public perception that value for money for the programme funds can be shown.

Joanne Edge (JE) supported this and added that a visual could be created to outline the timeline and all the work undertaken to date which explains the spend of funds, showing where money has been spent and why it is good value. CH added that visuals can bring programmes to life and provide a good display that the fee uplifts over the course of the programme are not excessive to the workload of delivery. CH further added a programme milestone visual was shown at the MHCLG presentation and this would be good to use.

Councillor Richard McCauley (RM) reassured Board Members that when the Investment Plan is brought forward, following the culmination of all evidence collated, it comes together and the value of spend will be clear with measurable outputs.

MB noted that without any physical outputs due to nature of work completed to date, the timing is for publication will need to be managed, but once the Regeneration Plan and Investment Plan is brought forward, that it would be a better time to clearly show the outputs from the Board's investment.

Ian Lewis (IL) supported that the current spend is a small overhead given the production of the 10-year Regeneration Plan and 4-year Investment Plan and once the contract is executed it will be shown to be good value for money.

John Unsworth (JU) added that the fee uplift is not a large spend considering the governmental change in scope and requirement to rebrand the programme including the five additional investment themes.

PR added that the visit with MHCLG was very positive and represented the town strongly. CH agreed and added that the presentation was a great visual to bring the programme to life.

CH asked Neighbourhood Board Members if they endorse the additional expenditure via a vote, and this was passed unanimously.

DECISION: Board endorsed the expenditure of capacity funding for the additional works undertaken by Neighbourhood Board Specialists due to the significant expansion of the programme scope

5. Any Other Business

CH thanked Board Members for their contributions and asked Board to state any other business.

Chris Stafford (CS) enquired as to the response from the school workshop held at Hope Academy. Rachel Bebbby (RB) advised that Hope Academy was provided a full day workshop with a dedicated group of students to take part in various engagement activities, with 13 attendees from different ages. In addition, RB added 26 students from Wargrave House/Ascent College participated in a workshop.

FR added that Hope Academy published their engagement in the workshop on their Facebook page with images from the session. FR added they described the workshop as 'student engagement in community project' and wanted to highlight that the Plan for Neighbourhoods programme has more depth than a singular community project with huge potential and wanted to ensure communications with the school represents this.

MB responded that communications can be picked up with the school to ensure communications are relevant to the long-term vision of the programme. RB added that the school had received correspondence about the Plan for Neighbourhoods initiative, outlining the scope and scale of delivery.

AM enquired where the promotional video is being circulated. MB stated that it is shared on the Council's social media with approximately 5000 views to date on Facebook as an organic post.

MB added that collectively the Neighbourhood Board should do everything they can within the next 10 days to ensure consultation is heard as wide as possible.

RB added that as part of the endorsed Communications Plan, the Project Team has been working closely with the Council's Communications Team to publish social media posts, including the commencement of consultation, the awareness of pop-up events and the educational video to push out communications. In addition, it is key to note that Board Members and key external stakeholders have shared this widely.

MJ added that a new communications resource will commence in post to promote the extensive Regeneration going on across the Borough, who will be dedicated to the team and will help to drive further communications across Regeneration programmes, including Plan for Neighbourhoods.

AM noted that the communications approach could be fun to ensure engagement is suitable for social media as generally it is driven by short form, fun and engaging content. AM highlighted the Council's Instagram as a good example of this.

MB highlighted the additional workshops in section 4.5 of the report highlights key dates to engage with and gave thanks to the Board noting the time demands thus far. MB added that these additional workshops held in June and July 2025 will contribute to the formation of a strong Regeneration Plan which will be submitted to Government.

ACTION: Process to be put in place to ensure an Email is circulated to Board Members when a communications piece is released.

ACTION: Education Video to be shared with Board Members.