



Minutes of Newton-le-Willows Neighbourhood Board

Friday 24 April 2026

Invitees			
Name	Initials	Role	Organisation
Board Members			
Chris Hickey	CH	Chair	Mercury Hampton
David Baines MP	DB	Member of Parliament, St Helens North	Member of Parliament, St Helens North
Councillor Anthony Burns	AB	Leader of the Council	St Helens Borough Council
Councillor Kate Groucutt	KG	Cabinet Member for Business & Inclusive Growth and Deputy Leader	St Helens Borough Council
Natalie Carroll (maternity cover for Amie Parsonage)	NC	Portfolio and Partnerships Officer	Merseyside Police and Crime Commissioner
Ian Lewis	IL	Investment Manager	Liverpool City Region Combined Authority
Community & Co-Opted Board Members			
Alex Myhill	AM	Community Representative	Willow & Ram
Joanne Edge	JE	Community Representative	Newton Sports Club
Debbie Taylor	DT	Business Representative	Es Paradis Salon & Domestic Abuse WA12 CIC
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
Catherine Twist	CT	Education and Opportunity Representative	Independent Member for Admissions and Exclusion appeal in St Helens
Claire Glover	CG	Health and Wellbeing Representative	Operations Manager at St Helens Wellbeing Service (CHCP)
Local Authority Representatives			
Matthew Valentine	MV	Programme Lead	St Helens Borough Council

Rachel Bebbby	RB	Project Officer	St Helens Borough Council
Glenn Taggart	GT	Project Manager	St Helens Borough Council
Donna Wilby	DW	Finance Business Partner - Regeneration	St Helens Borough Council
Apologies Received			
Jon Julian Smith	JJS	Chief Inspector, St Helens	Merseyside Police
Mark Palethorpe	MP	Chief Executive	St Helens Borough Council
Paul Romanko	PR	Business Representative	United Utilities Water Ltd

Item	Title	Lead
1.	Welcome and Introductions	CH
2.	Declarations of Interest	CH
3.	Minutes of the previous Neighbourhood Board meeting held on 6 March 2026	CH
4.	Board Appointments	MV
5.	Pride in Place Programme Update	MV
6	Newton-le-Willows Neighbourhood Board Branding Update	MV
7	Early Delivery Projects Update	MV
8	Community Pot Approach	MV
9	Any Other Business	All

1. Welcome and Introductions

Chris Hickey (CH) welcomed the Neighbourhood Board and welcomed the following new attendees to Board:

- Natalie Carroll (NC), who is providing maternity cover for Amie Parsonage.
- Catherine Twist (CT), and Claire Glover (CG), attending their first meeting following the open application process for two additional Neighbourhood Board members.

Introductions were given around the table.

CH acknowledged apologies received from:

- Mark Palethorpe, Jon Julian Smith and Paul Romanko.

CH extended a thank you to Councillor Kate Groucutt, as this will be her last Neighbourhood Board meeting following her decision to stand down from her role as a Councillor.

CH informed the Board of the meeting etiquette, including details of how the Chair would run the meeting.

2. Declarations of Interest

CH informed members that no declarations had been received ahead of the meeting and invited Newton-le-Willows 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 6 March 2026

CH reminded the Board that minutes from the previous Newton-le-Willows Neighbourhood Board meeting on 6 March 2026 have been agreed and are live on the St Helens Borough Council (SHBC) website. An overview of the key discussions and endorsements were provided, including:

- The formation of a Branding Sub-Group and endorsement of the appointment of local branding specialist, Notch Digital Marketing, to create a logo for the Newton-le-Willows Neighbourhood Board.
- Noting of the progress and approach for the recruitment of two Neighbourhood Board representatives, one from an 'Education and Opportunity' background and one from a 'Health and Wellbeing' background.
- Endorsement of the proposed governance arrangements for the formation of Sub-Groups when required.
- Noting of the contents of the revised 'Pride in Place' prospectus, replacing the previous Plan for Neighbourhoods programme prospectus.
- Endorsement of the adoption of the new 'Pride in Place' programme name, in alignment with Government prospectus.

4. Board Appointments

CH noted the appointment to the 'Health and Wellbeing' and 'Education and Opportunity' positions to the Neighbourhood Board.

Matthew Valentine (MV) provided an update on the process and appointment as follows:

- 10 March 2026 – Nominations were sought through a public advertisement and emails circulated to Newton-le-Willows Neighbourhood Board, senior internal officers, and Ward Councillors.
- 2 April 2026 - nominations and applications were reviewed by the Neighbourhood Board Chair, Chris Hickey, in consultation with the Member of Parliament for St Helens North, David Baines. A shortlist of candidate(s) for each position was developed.
- 24 April 2026 - the two successful applicants attended their first meeting.

A Neighbourhood Board member enquired as to how many applications were received. MV confirmed 17 applications were received through public recruitment or via nomination. CH added it was the longest list of applicants to review for the Neighbourhood Board positions to date. Board members noted the positive interest from the community in the programme.

Board discussed whether unsuccessful applicants could be invited to participate in Sub-Group activities. MV added that applicants who were unsuccessful have received a letter detailing that there may be further opportunities, through advisory Sub-Groups, and that the Council would retain their details if any advisory roles became available which align to their respective skillsets. It was also noted that if unsuccessful applicants did not want their details retained on file, to write to the Project Team.

NOTE: Full Neighbourhood Board noted the appointment of the ‘Health and Wellbeing’ and ‘Education and Opportunity’ representatives to the Newton-le-Willows Neighbourhood Board.

5. Pride in Place Programme Update

CH detailed that this agenda item will provide an overview of communications received from Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), following submission of the Regeneration Plan, release of monitoring guidance and the request for approval of the submission of the initial monitoring return for the Newton-le-Willows Pride in Place programme.

MV outlined the following:

- 27 November 2025 - Submission of the Newton-le-Willows Regeneration Plan ahead of the 28 November 2025 deadline.
- 23 March 2026 - the Project Team received positive correspondence, from MHCLG, that the Newton-le-Willows Regeneration Plan had received full approval, with no amendments required.
- 30 April 2026 - The Project Team received the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) which was signed and returned to MHCLG, with the Council expecting to be in receipt of the initial tranche of delivery funding on 30 April 2026. MV provided Neighbourhood Board with a reminder that the Year 1 funding allocation is £591,640, with a split of £360,000 capital funding and £231,640 revenue funding.
- 18 March 2026 – Cabinet endorsed the three ‘early delivery projects’ for Year 1 of the programme, and the Building Improvement Programme for Earlestown Town centre, which will be delivered within Year 2 to Year 4 of the programme following previous Board approval.

MV confirmed the monitoring guidance was released on 2 March 2026, with the first Neighbourhood Board monitoring submission required to be submitted by 30 April 2026. Appendix 1 within the Board pack contains the draft monitoring submission for the Neighbourhood Board’s endorsement.

The monitoring return submission contains the reporting as follows:

- Capacity funding activities.
- Projects delivered using programme funding (not required on the first monitoring return due to the delivery of projects beginning in April 2026).
- Projects planned which will draw upon programme funding.
- Neighbourhood Board details.
- Forecast capacity funding spend.
- Outputs.

CH asked Neighbourhood Board members to vote on the endorsement of the draft monitoring submission in Appendix 1 of the agenda pack, which this was passed unanimously.

NOTE: Full Neighbourhood Board noted the approval of the Newton-le-Willows Neighbourhood Board's Regeneration Plan, following review from MHCLG.

DECISION: Full Neighbourhood Board endorsed the draft monitoring report in Appendix 1, as the first monitoring return submission for the Newton-le-Willows Pride in Place programme.

6. Newton-le-Willows Neighbourhood Board Branding Update

CH introduced the item to request Neighbourhood Board endorsement to adopt a logo, created for the Newton-le-Willows Neighbourhood Board.

MV outlined that on the 6 March 2026 Neighbourhood Board meeting, the Neighbourhood Board agreed to appoint Notch Digital Marketing to develop a logo that will provide the Newton-le-Willows Neighbourhood Board a cohesive and distinctive brand.

An update was provided of the diligent sub Branding Sub-Group work, via a series of workshops and detailed conversations with Notch Digital Marketing, to ensure the logo presented today meets the scope provided and reflects the heritage of Newton-le-Willows.

The Branding Sub-Group were invited to provide any feedback to the Neighbourhood Board, with a Sub-Group member detailing they are very happy with the logo presented today and the recognisable aspects included making the logo unique to Newton-le-Willows.

Board reviewed the various versions of the logo, and a discussion was held around accessibility (which was included in the scope of works). The Branding Sub-Group noted this when discussing colour palettes and fonts.

CH asked Neighbourhood Board members to vote on endorsement of the draft Newton-le-Willows Neighbourhood Board logo in Appendix 1 of the agenda pack, and this was passed unanimously.

DECISION: Full Neighbourhood Board endorsed the Newton-le-Willows Neighbourhood Board logo in Appendix 1, to be used in communications alongside the Council and funders logo, in accordance with the Council's branding guidelines.

7. Early Delivery Projects Update

CH introduced this item on the progress made in the delivery of 'early delivery projects' for Year 1 of the programme.

Updates were provided as follows:

St Johns Playground

The key update is that consultation with the community will commence from May 2026, for up to four weeks with local young people to understand the preferred theme for the playground and equipment. It will also include an online survey made available via the Council website.

Following community consultation, the planning process will commence, ahead of procurement via the Council's Procurement Specialists, STAR Procurement, ensuring compliance. The project is expected to be completed in Winter 2026.

Board agreed this is a key need for the local community, asking if there were any opportunity to add outdoor gyms to the project. MV responded that this can be raised with the delivery team, but the Neighbourhood Board have allocated a set amount of money to the project to date, which was informed by a draft scope of works. A focus of the project is to have accessible play equipment, in addition to the access paths being improved to provide better access to the playground.

Earlestown Town Hall AV and Lighting

Procurement is expected to commence imminently, with the equipment installation to take place in Autumn 2026 following the main construction contract completion.

Further match funding has been provided by the Council via enabling works, increasing the value of the project.

Neighbourhood Board members asked if the Neighbourhood Board logo can be referenced anywhere within the Town Hall, with the Programme Lead advising that there is a wider discussion required for all projects, on how the Neighbourhood Board logo is used through promotional materials such as videos, and longer-term opportunities for use via hoardings, plaques etc.

Arts on Prescription

The Neighbourhood Board funded project will be a trial of a Newton-le-Willows focused programme, due to previous data identifying that Newton-le-Willows residents found the location of the St Helens based service a barrier to participation.

From May 2026 onwards, the delivery team are engaging with referral partners to identify participants, and hosting taster sessions for the first cohort in Spring 2026. Rachel Bebbby (RB) added that if there were any organisations the Neighbourhood Board would like to be reached and approached via the programme, to advise the Project Team.

Neighbourhood Board Members added this is a creative way to improve mental health wellbeing, with other successful services acknowledged, which utilise similar

activities such as film making. The Board were keen to see the progress on this programme, and how this could have potential to be self-sustaining beyond the lifespan of the Neighbourhood Board funded delivery.

8. Community Pot Approach

CH introduced the item on the proposed approach to the 'Community Pot' grant scheme, and to request endorsement for a pilot scheme developed for Year 1 of the programme.

A background was provided by the Programme Lead, that a £250,000 allocation to enable a grant fund for community projects across the next four years (the 'Community Pot'), was endorsed as part of the Regeneration Plan at the Neighbourhood Board meeting of 3 October 2025. MV reminded Neighbourhood Board that the below grant allocations are approved:

- £25,000 in Year 1 (from April 2026 – March 2027)
- £75,000 in Year 2 (from April 2027 – March 2028)
- £75,000 in Year 3 (from April 2028 – March 2029)
- £75,000 in Year 4 (from April 2029 – March 2030)

An Internal Delivery Model for Year 1, led by the Council was previously approved, with review on the proposed approach upon Year 1 completion. Neighbourhood Board may then decide on the merits of external support for this theme from Year 2 onwards when the pot size increases and additional management is required. This could be funded via the capacity funding allocation.

MV gave an overview of the two proposed grant pots available:

- **Micro grants from £500 up to £1,000 per project** - specifically aimed at those projects that support or extend the daily running of a project, for example training, group activities, events and running costs.
- **Grow grants from £1,000 up to £5,000 per project** - specifically aimed at projects such as purchasing, renovating, or improving physical assets that serve a local area, rather than day-to-day running costs. Within the £5,000 Grow grant limit, a maximum allocation of £1,000 of Micro grant funding can be included.

An overview of timescales was provided as follows:

- May 2026 - first round of applications expected to open
- Mid-June 2026 - application window closing
- July 2026 - decision on grant award via Neighbourhood Board endorsement

A review panel will be formed (comprising Council Officers and Newton-le-Willows Board members, ensuring compliance and community voice) to assess applications. These will then be presented to Neighbourhood Board.

Donna Wilby (DW) provided a brief finance update reminding that the Council will require appropriate evidence as accountable body, to ensure that any items funded comply with the accounting requirement classifications.

If the lower value is to be met for both the micro grants and grow grants, the Neighbourhood Board could fund up to thirty-four projects in Year 1 of the Community Pot programme.

Board Members asked if the grant forms would be the same for both grant pots and wanted to ensure smaller organisations were not excluded. A further discussion took place about the value of thresholds, and it was confirmed there will be a singular application form to simplify the application process. The Programme Lead reminded the Neighbourhood Board that this approach is for Year 1 only, with review to follow as the grant allocation increases from Year 2 onwards.

Key learnings were shared from the Ward Member Grant Scheme.

Board Members asked for the eligibility criteria under 3.10 to be reviewed to provide flexibility and eligibility for those who are either based in or deliver projects within Newton-le-Willows (this was agreed).

Board Members requested a workshop to build engagement with the eligible community organisations and address enquiries about the Community Pot. This will be incorporated into the application process and provide a drop-in session for eligible organisations to attend, providing transparency to the local community around the parameters and administration of the Community Pot.

Neighbourhood Board Members also requested that the list of eligible projects were reordered, so that the cohesion investment themes that meet the cohesion aims of the Community Pot are clearly shown. Other themes met will also be provided but ordered by theme. A discussion also took place on what eligible projects may look like, with an ask for examples to be included. It was stated to the Neighbourhood Board that there will be a guidance document which will detail the difference between revenue and capital funding, with examples included, alongside a term of conditions document and the application form. Board Members requested sight of documentation prior to release, with the Project Team to issue this through the appropriate channels.

A discussion took place around monitoring, with MV stating quotes will be obtained including receipts, photos as evidence of delivery and ensuring that applicants understand that the project details and organisation may be used for publicity purposes.

Neighbourhood Board Members noted that any Neighbourhood Board Member who is submitting on behalf of (or has direct or indirect links to) an organisation bidding for the community grant pot, must declare an interest and they will not be eligible to join the review panel process, to ensure conflicts of interest are managed. Board Members recognised that this may exclude some members of the Neighbourhood Board.

The Programme Lead confirmed that it is critical that those applying or have direct/indirect links to those applying are completely uninvolved in assessment criteria or review of applications, to ensure there is full transparency and conflicts of interest are managed.

Board members noted that the position of Board members in having information that the Grant scheme will be available, is a privileged position and this must be noted in line with the Terms of Reference of the Board. Those who are eligible will follow usual procedure in alignment with other grant pots. It was added that if Neighbourhood Board members want to share their expertise of grants that they can support the Project Team in hosting the drop-in session for community organisations and community interest companies.

A recommendation was given to endorse the proposed approach for the Community Pot, subject to accountable body approvals, as a pilot for Year 1 of the programme (April 2026- March 2027), with review of the delivery mechanism on completion. This was agreed by Board, with the below notes/actions to be complete.

NOTE: Eligibility criteria under 3.10 to be reviewed and to provide flexibility and eligibility for those who are either based in or deliver projects within Newton-le-Willows.

ACTION: The Project Team to provide a drop-in session for eligible organisations who could apply for the Community Pot.

ACTION: Project Team to issue appropriate Community Pot documentation to note, prior to release.

NOTE: Neighbourhood Board members to support the Project Team in the drop-in session for eligible organisations who could apply for the Community Pot.

9. Any Other Business

CH thanked Neighbourhood Board members for their contributions and invited any other business.

RB updated that the Delivery Manager for the Liverpool City Region at Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government (MHCLG) will be attending an upcoming Board meeting.

RB updated that the formation of Sub-Groups will take place in alignment to the Investment Themes as below, following the endorsement of the approach to Sub-Groups at the last Neighbourhood Board meeting of 6 March 2026:

- Regeneration, High Streets and Heritage Sub-Group
- Health and Education Sub-Group
- Community Pot Review Panel

MV added that Expression of Interest Forms will be circulated to Neighbourhood Board Members, with the formed Sub-Groups to then decide if external expertise is required to supplement the sitting Board members. Neighbourhood Board Members

requested workshops to be provided to the sub-groups from those who have data led evidence of need and can provide information on where funding allocations can be spent, which supports prior public consultation.

RB added that a video is being produced by the Council's Communication Team, featuring Neighbourhood Board Members presenting the three 'early delivery projects and the Community Pot.

Lastly, CH provided a thanks to Councillor Kate Groucutt for attending and inputting into the development of Newton-le-Willows Neighbourhood Board.

NOTE: Data workshops to take place on Investment Themes.