

ANGUS COUNCIL

ANGUS COUNCIL – 20 JUNE 2024

LONG-TERM PLAN FOR TOWNS – ARBROATH
UPDATE, APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR OF TOWN BOARD AND APPOINTMENT OF ANGUS
COUNCIL ELECTED MEMBERS TO TOWN BOARD

REPORT BY ALISON SMITH, DIRECTOR OF VIBRANT COMMUNITIES AND SUSTAINABLE
GROWTH

1. **ABSTRACT**

This Report asks Angus Council to note the progress to establish a Town Board and seeks approval of the appointment of Chair of the Town Board as recommended by the short life working group of the Policy and Resources Committee formed for this purpose. It also seeks approval of two Angus Council elected members to serve on the Town Board.

2. **ALIGNMENT TO THE COUNCIL PLAN AND COUNCIL POLICIES**

2.1 This report contributes to the following priorities in the Angus Council Plan 2023-28:

Caring for the Economy:

- We will be more commercial in our approach to contracts and support growth of business locally whenever possible through a community wealth building approach.

Caring for our Place

- Engage with communities to support their ambitions to deliver on local aspirations.

3. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Council: -

- (i) Notes the progress to establish a Town Board and appoint a Chair as well as recruitment of an officer to support the establishment of the Town Board;
- (ii) Agrees the recommendation from the short life working group of the Policy and Resources Committee and appoints Mr Peter Stirling as Chair of the Town Board; and
- (iii) Agrees which two councillors will be appointed as the two Angus Council elected member representatives on the Town Board.

4. **BACKGROUND**

4.1 The Long-Term Plan for Towns (LTTP) was published on 1 October 2023 (see Background Note 1 below) and sought to invest £1.1 billion into 55 towns across the UK, including seven towns in Scotland, to each be awarded £20 million. The Plan recognises that through the UK Government's existing programmes and lessons learned from other countries, the need for longer term funding certainty, building local partnerships, having a clear plan for delivery, joint working between central and local government and involving people and communities from the outset are key to success and these have been embedded in the Plan.

4.2 On 6 March 2024 it was announced that Arbroath was one of twenty additional towns to be awarded £20 million from UK Government (one of 3 in Scotland announced through this round of funding). The Chief Executive subsequently received a letter from the Minister for Levelling Up dated 19 March 2024 confirming the award of endowment-style funding and support worth up to £20 million with a flat grant profile over 10 years.

- 4.3 UK Government Officers recommended using the “Long-Term Plan for Towns - Guidance for Local Authorities and Town Boards” published on 18 December 2023 (see Background Note 2 below) issued for Wave 1 towns to commence preparations for the development of a Town Board, to establish the governance of the Board, and for the development of a Vision and initial 3-year Investment Plan however with the caveat that there may be changes to this Guidance.
- 4.4 A toolkit for Scottish Town Boards was published in February 2024 (see Background Note 3 below). The Long-Term Plan for Towns is designed to help local areas make the most of all powers and tools at their disposal. As part of designing an Investment Plan, UK Government expect all Town Boards, supported by the local authority, to demonstrate how they are using powers, where they apply. This toolkit of powers is a comprehensive but non-exhaustive list of levers available to Towns Boards in Scotland under the three themes of the Long-Term Plan for Towns. The Scottish Government and Scotland’s Towns Partnership have also published a number of other materials that Scottish Town Boards may find helpful when developing their Long-Term Plan. e.g. information on the Town Centre Action Plan and the Town Centre First Principle. [Long-Term Plan for Towns: toolkit for Town Boards in Scotland - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)
- 4.5 At its meeting on 30 April 2024, the Policy and Resources committee agreed that Angus Council would be the Accountable Body for the Fund i.e. responsible for the funding and overseeing the execution of the Investment Plan.
- 4.6 The committee also agreed that a short life working group of the Policy & Resources Committee be formed to support the selection of a Chair and to bring forward a recommendation to this committee, following discussion with the MP. The nominated representatives originally on the short life working group were Cllrs Whiteside, Braes, McDonald, Wann and Greig. However following declarations of interest in respect of prospective candidates for Chair, and availability difficulties, the final short-life working group members were Cllrs Whiteside, Braes, McDonald and Gall. Cllr Whiteside chaired.

5. CURRENT POSITION

- 5.1 In the letter of 19 March 2024 from the Minister for Levelling Up, officers were advised that the Town Board had to be established by 1 June 2024. UK Government confirmed that submission of a plan to set out how and when the Town Board would be finalised was sufficient to meet the 1 June deadline and this information was submitted on 16 May 2024.
- 5.2 On 26 April a public call as well as targeted invites were issued inviting people to put themselves forward to join the Town Board and/or to be Chair. In addition, 2 public sessions on 8 May and an online session on 13 May were advertised. A deadline of 17 May was set for nominations for the Board and Chair however the deadline for Chair nominations was subsequently extended to 20 May and for the Board until 4 June 2024. The MP at the time Mr David Doogan expressed support for the process being followed and a willingness to be part of the Board as required by the UK Government Guidance. However, as a General Election was then called for 4 July, there was no further engagement with him following dissolution of Parliament on 30 May, when every seat in the House of Commons became vacant.
- 5.3 40 people attended the two public sessions and 20 joined the online session. Following the session, information available to the public was updated in line with guidance and information provided by the UK Government official who attended the session to provide clarification and further detail.
- 5.4 8 nominations for the Chair of the Board were received. Officers then followed up where the nomination form had not been completed and sought confirmation from those nominated by a third party that they wished to be nominated. As a result, 2 nominations were withdrawn leaving 6 nominees.
- 5.5 The short life working group met on 23 May to discuss the process to be adopted to appoint a Chair and receive an update on the open call for Board members and a Chair.
- 5.6 The short life working group then met on 30 May to confirm the agreed process to assess nominations. It was agreed that all 6 nominees be invited to meet the short life working group members on 13 June 2024 and an agreed set of questions, a topic for presentation and a scoring process were also agreed.

- 5.7 On 13 June the short-life working group met 4 of the original nominees, following a further 2 having withdrawn. Members were impressed by the calibre of all nominees but unanimously agreed that Peter Stirling be recommended for appointment as Town Board Chair. It is therefore recommended that the Council agrees the recommendation that Mr Stirling be appointed as Chair of the Arbroath Town Board.
- 5.8 Born, raised in and still living close by Arbroath, Mr Stirling has had a large fresh produce factory in Kirktown Industrial Estate for over 25 years (Seahills). In addition, he owns 6 farms located around the town, which also provide employment for the local community. His farming business has Scotland's largest area of climate controlled greenhouses, 25 acres, heated by 12 mega watts of biomass boilers (non-fossil fuel). His business also supplies Marks & Spencer with 100% of their UK Brussels sprouts. He has successfully established the Seahills Farm food brand, which sells strawberries to 130 retailers across Scotland, as well as Harrods in London. In 1997 he founded an Edinburgh based property development company and is still the Managing Director. He has developed many projects over the years but currently his most prominent is a new town, Calderwood, on the outskirts of Edinburgh with a population of around 5,000 residents with capacity to grow to around 8,000. More recently he has been involved in electricity investments, with two large battery storage facilities and significant investments on solar projects all on his farmland close to Arbroath. A keen supporter of many charities in the town as well as the football club, Arbroath has a special place in his heart and he is keen to see the town do well.
- 5.9 Mr Stirling's ambitions for the town through chairing the Board include making Arbroath Scotland's best seaside town; using the £20m funding available as a lever for more funding and exploring income streams; ensuring the whole town benefits and undertaking meaningful public consultation events to solicit good ideas and tap into local knowledge and expertise.
- 5.10 Nominations for the remaining members of the Town Board closed on 4 June and have now been reviewed and where required clarification of missing information sought. Following confirmation of the appointment of the Town Board Chair, the Chair will work with officers to select the Town Board members. Police Scotland have confirmed their willingness to take up their place on the Town Board as one of two required representatives as per the UK Government Guidance. At the time of writing this report, a General Election has been called for 4 July so the identity of the local MP is not known however their participation will be sought following the election. UK Government officials have stated they are satisfied with the level of engagement so far given the current position with the General Election.
- 5.11 Angus Council is entitled to put forward two elected members to serve on the Town Board. The UK Government Guidance does not state that elected member representatives require to be local ward members therefore it is for the Council to determine the representatives. The tenure of Board members will be agreed by the Chair and Board once established. Council is therefore asked to agree two representatives to be part of the Board at this time.
- 5.12 The UK Government confirmed in the letter to the Chief Executive on 19 March 2024 that £50k capacity funding would be made available to Angus Council in April 2024 to cover for example, running community engagement, costs to convene a Town Board including staff costs, to support the Town Board in developing Long-Term Plans and/or to provide technical expertise to the Town Board for project development, business cases etc. This money has now been received. Recruitment for an officer to support this work took place on 5 June 2024 and is currently being finalised. Further details will be shared once recruitment is complete.
- 5.13 The updated indicative timeline is now as follows: -
- Angus Council agrees Chair of the Town Board at its meeting on 20 June 2024
 - Town Board appointments in conjunction with Chair – by end of June 2024/mid July 2024
 - First Board meeting to agree Terms of Reference, project assessment criteria, governance and procedures – summer 2024.
 - Draft initial 3-year Investment Plan considered by Town Board – Sept 2024
 - Report draft Investment Plan to Angus Council for approval – 7 November 2024
 - Town Board finalises initial 3 year Investment Plan and 10-year vision and submit to UK Government – by 1 November 2024

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no additional financial implications for the Council arising from the recommendations in this report.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

7.1 No further risks have been identified in relation to the recommendations of this report.

8. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no direct environmental implications from establishing the Town Board and developing the initial 3-year Investment Plan and 10-year Vision however there may be from individual projects. Environmental impacts will be considered as part of the development of projects and business cases.

9. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT, HUMAN RIGHTS AND FAIRER SCOTLAND DUTY

An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out and is attached.

10. CONSULTATION

The Chief Executive, Director of Finance and the Director of Legal, Governance and Change have been consulted in the development of this report.

NOTE: The background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) which were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report are: (list them below)

Background Documents

1. Guidance - Our Long-Term Plan for Towns - published 1 October 2023
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/our-long-term-plan-for-towns/our-long-term-plan-for-towns>
2. Guidance – Long-Term Plan for Towns. Guidance for Local Authorities and Town Boards – published 18 December 2023
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65831b8a23b70a000d234d47/LTPFT_Guidance.pdf
3. Guidance – Long- Term Plan for Towns: toolkit for Town Boards in Scotland – published 5 February 2024
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/long-term-plan-for-towns-policy-toolkit-for-scotland/long-term-plan-for-towns-toolkit-for-town-boards-in-scotland#:~:text=The%20Long%2DTerm%20Plan%20for,using%20powers%2C%20where%20they%20apply>
4. Selection of Towns methodology note
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/long-term-plan-for-towns-towns-selection-methodology-note#:~:text=Local%20authorities%20were%20selected%20according,local%20authorities%20were%20then%20selected>

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List of Appendices:

Appendix 1 – EIA