

## **DUMFRIES TOWN BOARD**

Meeting of 18th March 2025

4pm @ SPEN Offices Dumfries

### **PRESENT**

Richie Nicoll – Town Board Chair

Kenny Bowie – Chamber of Commerce

John Dowson

Anne Marie Coulter- Summerhill Community Centre

John Caskie- Guid Nychburris

Isabelle Johnstone- Town Board Admin Support

Rachael Milligan- Covetrus

Jamie Milligan- The Swan/Steamboat (Via Teams)

Julie Dykes- Bust Stop

Cllr Maureen Johnstone

Cllr David Slater

### **Council Officers**

Nicola Hill - Economic Development Officer

Matthew Watt (representing John Cooper MP) (via teams)

## **1) Welcome and Introductions**

The Chair welcomed members to the 12th meeting of the Dumfries Town Board and shared that he attended the monthly Scottish Town Partnership (STP) meeting. During this event, all chairs discussed and exchanged ideas about the newly released neighbourhood plan. It was noted that Dumfries is ahead of other towns and receiving strong support from the local council. The Chair also confirmed his attendance at a meeting on the 27th, where seven chairs and three members from MCHLG will be speaking, and Dumfries Chair has been asked to contribute.

The Hub has had their first trustee meeting which included Anne Marie Coulter, Kenny Bowie and Richie Nicoll.

On March 15th, the Chair met with Lisa Arnold (Director of Economy Infrastructure) and Ian Blake (Chair of the Council's Economy and Infrastructure Committee). They discussed the

possibility of creating a smaller pedestrian zone and reducing the size of the town centre to minimise incidents. Additionally, they emphasised the importance of avoiding any overlap in the plans

## **2) Apologies**

John Strange – Owner Solway Sharks

Supt Nicola Robison- Police Scotland (via Teams)

Tom Mcaughtrie- Vice Chair

Campbell Young- SOSE

William Currie- DG College

Stuart McMillan- Strategic Economic Investment Manager (Nicola Hill Stood In)

## **3) Minute of meeting #11 (10<sup>th</sup> FEB 2025) Approval with matters arising**

The minute of the previous meeting was agreed. No matters arising and all actions from the previous meeting will be updated during this meeting.

## **4) Where are we at now?**

New Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) Update.

As part of the new guidance, and with a deadline of 22<sup>nd</sup> April, Richie Nicoll was asked if he intended to remain as Chair of the Dumfries Town Board. Richie Nicoll highlighted his intention to remain. The meeting also addressed whether all Board members wished to continue, and it was noted that this could be a poignant time for any new board members to join the Town Board. This could be addressed through direct outreach to business owners, the private sector, and potentially community councils/neighbourhoods, as they are directly impacted and provide valuable input.

Also aligned to the 22<sup>nd</sup> April deadline, Richie discussed the need to confirm the boundary, with the possibility of it being expanded or reduced depending on the board's vote. After voting, the board unanimously agreed to keep the boundary the same, with 10 votes in favour.

Richie discussed thoughts on the Town Board rebranding due to the board now being called the Plans for Neighbourhood Board. This rebranding would involve changes to the logo, social media, and the website. Several board members expressed concerns and are seeking to resist the idea, considering the possibility of using a loophole by continuing to use "Dumfries Town Board trading as Plans for Neighbourhoods' Board.

The Dumfries Town Board discussed the potential of transforming into a charity or Community Interest Company (CIC). It was agreed that more guidance is needed to understand the legal, financial, and implications of this transition. The board also considered linking with local authority charities or CICs and emphasised the need for professional advice. The benefits of becoming a charity or CIC, such as access to funding, were acknowledged. The board decided to seek external advice and continue discussions once more information is gathered. Additionally, modifications with the local authority would be required, and the board will engage with them to determine the necessary changes if this went ahead.

It was discussed that more documents, including a prescriptive 4-year plan, will be released soon. In the meantime, the Town Board can focus on smaller, visible actions like street cleaning and tidying up the town to demonstrate to the public that the board is active and following through on its commitments. There was also an emphasis on involving the community, whether through community payback programs or volunteer work. Additionally, there is a strong push to encourage the council to engage with the ministry to help explain and showcase these efforts.

After briefing the board members with all the information, the Chair asked for their thoughts and feedback on the discussed topics.

John Dowson expressed satisfaction with the boundary decision and the plan to send it on April 22nd, allowing the board to move forward with other initiatives. Regarding the CIC/Charity discussion, he noted that there are no clear numbers or constitution yet, and the board will need to discuss the formation of a committee. He suggested evaluating whether a CIC or Charity is the best option for the board. Concerning the name, he was fine with keeping it the same but proposed that "Dumfries Town Board" could be used as a trading name if necessary. This would allow the website, logo, and name to remain unchanged. If the board becomes a charity, he highlighted the need to be cautious about the number of members and who is brought on board.

Anne Marie Coulter Agreed with everything John Dowson had said and had nothing further to add.

David Slater made several points during the discussion, including that the Ministry will review the Town Board's activities. He also highlighted that having a charity status may not be as beneficial as initially thought. Additionally, he pointed out that if the boundary is expanded, the funding available to the board may decrease more quickly than if the boundary remains as it is now.

Maureen Johnstone expressed strong support for accessing cleaning equipment and starting with small projects to show visible progress and demonstrate the Town Board's presence. It was also noted that Richie and Matthew have been pressing John Cooper to escalate this issue for higher-level discussion. Additionally, Maureen mentioned that the council is fulfilling its statutory duties, including cleaning roads, road markings, and updating signs.

Rachael Milligan agreed with everything John Dowson had stated but expressed concern about opening the Town Board to too many people. She also suggested that all engagement events should be tracked to demonstrate progress to the public. However, she fully supported the street cleaning initiative as a good starting point to make visible progress and gain momentum.

Kenny Bowie agreed with the Chair's decision to keep the board members the same but disagreed with the Town Board discussing the charity aspect. Regarding street cleaning, he emphasised that two councillors are in a position to push this forward and suggested that the Town Board should focus on the heritage and regeneration of the town centre first. He also highlighted the importance of being visible in the community, as the public wants to see the board actively engaged in local projects.

John Caskie expressed agreement with the current boundary and board membership, and he is happy to work with the council when needed. He does not want to change the name or social media. Regarding community involvement, he felt the initial plan was more focused on individuals rather than the community. He emphasised the importance of involving young members of the public as well as people of all ages within the community.

Julie Dykes emphasised that she is not in favour of the Town Board being or being known as a charity. She also expressed a desire to involve a younger person on the board, an idea that has already been discussed. Richie had mentioned the importance of engaging with the younger generation and gathering their ideas.

All these opinions and interests were heard and noted to be used as reference and to gain an understanding on what the town board feels and wants.

## **5) The Hub' Update**

What does the future hold?

The Hub update highlighted that the trustees are aligned on the progress, with infrastructure improvements underway, including addressing electrical issues to ensure it meets required standards. The goal is to attract more businesses to use the hub as a central hotspot location in the town. Kenny Bowie has mentioned this to the DG Chambers, and it is currently under board discussion. Once operational, the Hub will serve as the base for the program manager and secretariat. Additionally, it will be open to the community, providing an opportunity to involve younger voices and ideas in the regeneration of Dumfries.

## **6) Sub Committee Intervention Groups**

### **Safety and security**

The safety and security group has met and is currently focusing on actions like the Street Pastors initiative. They hope to hold a discussion with the entire Town Board, as their work involves all groups, not just one. The next step is to address CCTV coverage. Police Scotland is working on providing a list of areas with strong CCTV coverage and identifying areas that lack sufficient coverage

### **Transport and Connectivity**

Meeting in place for the 26<sup>th</sup> of March 2025

### **High Streets, Heritage and Regeneration**

The High Streets, Regeneration, and Heritage subcommittee met with the three local ward officers: Darren Burns, Chris Woodness, and Kimberley Phillips. Following this, the subcommittee arranged a meeting with four councillors: Nicola Hill, Shona McCoy, Will Mason, and Jamie Little. The councillors have requested that the Town Board contribute ideas for the CDP 3 by March 2025. Will Mason and Shona McCoy have offered to map out the high street, including identifying owners and landlords. Minutes of this meeting are available for further information

## **7) Cairndale Meeting- 1<sup>st</sup> small focus group**

The Cairndale meeting is being held on the 20<sup>th</sup> of March and the following landlords and business have confirmed:

- James Monoghans
- Wirefox
- Matthew Wallace
- The Globe
- Loreburn Centre Owner

## **8) Update on programme Manager**

The Programme Manager received 13 strong applications for the role, with candidates from as far as Glasgow and the south of the UK. After a thorough review, four candidates were shortlisted, all of whom have experience and are already involved in projects within and around Dumfries, making them well-suited for the position.

The next stage of the recruitment process will involve psychometric analysis tests to assess candidates' suitability for the role. Following this, the shortlisted candidates will undergo a screening process conducted by board members to further evaluate their fit for the

position. Once all these assessments are completed, the final stages of interviews will take place, with a decision expected shortly thereafter.

The board is optimistic about selecting a strong candidate who can bring valuable experience and insight to the role and ultimately contribute to the continued success of Dumfries' regeneration and development initiatives.

#### 9) Board member Vote

The board members were given the option to vote on new members for the board, with three applicants coming forward. However, it was decided that the Chair should have the final say in selecting new members, as the original board members were chosen by the Chair, and this raised concerns among the members. The Chair's opinion and choice were therefore prioritised in the decision-making process. This discussion is being paused for the foreseeable unless the chairman decides on candidates.

#### 10) Website Update

Regarding the website, there is uncertainty about its final name and appearance due to the possibility of transitioning to "Neighbourhood Board." The website is almost complete, with only images and a few bits of information remaining to be added. However, the potential name change has raised questions about how the website will ultimately look and function.

The same uncertainty applies to the Facebook page, as it is unclear what the logo and name will be going forward due to the potential transition to "Neighbourhood Board." This raises questions about how the page will be branded and updated in line with any changes.

#### 11) AOB

David Slater, along with the CEO of the council, visited several locations within Dumfries. The places mentioned during the visit included:

1. **River of Life** (Mark Smith)
2. **St. Joe's College**, focusing on sports like swimming and the competition aspect.
3. **Midsteeples High Street**, which includes the Standard Building

The Nithsdale Area Committee requested a small report on the activities of the Dumfries Town Board. It was noted that the minutes are already published on the Council's website, but the report will still be provided as requested.

#### 12) Next Steps

Choosing of board members currently paused until meeting on Thursday and suitable candidates have been picked by chairman

Programme Manager recruitment process (Screening, Final Interview)

**13) Date Of Next meeting**

Monday the 14<sup>th</sup> of April 2025

4pm – 6pm

SPEN Office, Leafield road, Dumfries