

DUMFRIES TOWN BOARD

Meeting of 13th January 2025

4pm @ SPEN Offices Dumfries

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Richie Nicoll – Town Board Chair

Kenny Bowie – Chamber of Commerce

John Dowson

Supt Nicola Robison- Police Scotland (via Teams)

Anne Marie Coulter- Summerhill Community Centre

John Caskie- Guid Nychburris

William Currie- DG College (via Teams)

Isabelle Johnstone- Town Board Secretariat

John Strange- Solway Sharks (via Teams)

Cllr Maureen Johnstone

Cllr David Slater

OTHERS

Stuart McMillan – Strategic Economic Investment Manager (via Teams)

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

Observers/Guests

Robin Wishart (The Hub)

Jane Connechan (The Hub via Teams)

Rusell Brown (The Hub)

1) Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed members to the 10th meeting of the Dumfries Town Board and introduced guests Robin Wishart and the HUB Trustees.

2) Apologies

Laura Thomas- individual

Julie Dykes- The Bust Shop

Rachael Milligan- Covetrus

Lisa Callander Bone- Include Us

Tom Mcaughtrie- Town Board Vice Chair

Campbell Young – SOSE

Jamie Milligan – Steamboat/The Swan

3) Minute of meeting #9 (13th Jan 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) ‘The Hub’ Discussion

Robin, Russell, and Jane were introduced as representatives from the Hub, an initiative established 20 years ago by the trustees of the 3rd Sector Dumfries and Galloway. The Hub was originally established by the 3rd Sector Dumfries and Galloway with the main aim of maintaining the building for project work. The Hub has been a focal point for community activities, with a primary focus on supporting the young people of Dumfries and providing access to the facility.

Richie explained that, for the Town Board to facilitate the management of the Hub, three individuals who are also members of the Town Board need to be nominated and put forward for election by both the current and previous trustees. This process ensures that the Hub remains under proper governance and that the community is represented in decision-making. It is important to note that the Town Board would have no jurisdiction over the Hub and the Hub would have no jurisdiction over the Town Board.

One of the key requirements for the new trustee’s involvement is the development of a comprehensive business plan. This plan must outline how the Hub will be managed in the future, including financial sustainability, operational structure, and the arrangements for paying rent by the tenants occupying the building.

The business plan will need to demonstrate to the old trustees that the new trustees have an unclouded vision for the Hub's future and that it can manage the building effectively.

5) Where are we at now?

Council update on communications with the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) and other Scottish towns in the programme

Stuart provided an update on recent discussions with nine other local town boards involved in the Scotland Town Partnership. The Town Boards are actively sharing information and best practices to ensure each area is prepared for upcoming funding and projects.

Although no formal announcement has been made yet, it remains committed that the full guidance and details regarding funding will be released imminently. Stuart also highlighted that the UK Government wants each Town Board to be able to start projects by April 2026. To meet this goal, substantial plans will need to be presented as evidence of readiness. The UK Government has indicated that additional time will be granted for the development of these plans, and further consultations will be taking place in the coming months.

A statement from the UK Government confirmed that in April 2025, all Town Boards will receive an additional £200,000. It was explained that due to well governed practises aligned to the creation of the TB report, the Dumfries Town Board has only spent 30% of the previous £200,000 allocation, which leaves the Town Board with well over £100k unspent. This means that Dumfries Town Board will have circa of £300k available to start the plan for future Town Board Plan projects.

With the confirmed release of the funding, the Dumfries Town Board now has the financial resources to begin planning and moving forward with the planning of various projects aligned to the Dumfries Town Report, including the employment of a Programme Manager Role: The Board discussed the need to hire a Programme Manager, who will align with the sub-committees and ensure that projects are managed effectively under the boards direction. This role will be crucial in coordinating efforts across the different sub-committees and in driving forward the Town Board Report. Ideas will be reviewed, and the sub-committees will be tasked with developing detailed project proposals. A focus will be placed on ensuring the projects align with the overall goals of the Dumfries Town Board and contribute to the long-term development of the area.

Actions: It was agreed that –

- i. the Town Board should appoint a Programme Manager to manage the development work ahead for the Board to define and prepare for the start of projects.
- ii. the Chamber investigate hosting that post and that the Chamber and Council develop a job description for approval of the Board at its next meeting

6) Sub-Committee Intervention Groups

The following dates for sub-committee meetings were confirmed:

- 20th January 2025 – Sub-committee: Security and Safety
- 21st January 2025 – Sub-committee: Transport and Connectivity

- 22nd January 2025 – Sub-committee: High Street, Heritage, and Regeneration
All members are encouraged to attend the relevant sub-committee meetings and participate actively in discussions.

The Town Board Chair confirmed that he will email the board and request volunteers to act as the sub committee Lead, with names confirmed on Meeting #11.

The sub-committee leads will be responsible for overseeing the activities of their respective sub-committees, ensuring meetings are productive, and keeping track of progress. They will also be responsible for relaying essential information back to the Town Board meetings and to the Chair when required.

7) Website Update

Isabelle will be taking over the management of the Town Board's website from Lisa. This transition is currently underway, and the Town Board members were informed of the change. As part of this update, all Town Board members are required to send in a headshot and a summary of their role, including what they do and what they aim to bring to Dumfries as a town. The headshot and summary will be featured on the website to give the public insight into who the Town Board members are and their individual contributions to the community.

It was discussed that regular updates are essential for maintaining public interest and engagement with the Town Board's activities. The Facebook page will be updated weekly or monthly to ensure that the community is kept informed about upcoming events and initiatives that the Town Board is involved in. These updates will include information about:

- Upcoming events and activities being organised by or involving the Town Board.
- Attendance of Board members at various local events and meetings.
- Positive promotions of new businesses opening in Dumfries and spotlighting existing businesses to encourage support for the local economy.

The goal is to project a positive outlook on the development and vitality of Dumfries, helping to keep the public engaged and informed.

Both the website and Facebook page will serve as channels for public inquiries and complaints. This will provide a platform for the community to communicate directly with the Town Board. Any inquiries or complaints submitted will be reviewed and dealt with accordingly, ensuring the Town Board remains responsive and accountable to the people of Dumfries.

8) AOB

A discussion was held regarding the issue of abandoned buildings in Dumfries and the potential risks associated with them, such as misuse or mistreatment (e.g., illegal occupation or drug-related activity).

The councillors advised that the first point of contact for any concerns related to abandoned buildings should be the Council website - [Report a dangerous building | Dumfries and Galloway Council](#) or through local councillors or, if necessary, the police if there are concerns of criminal activity. There are Building Standards Officers in place who can conduct checks on empty buildings to ensure they are being kept in a safe condition. These officers will check whether the buildings are being used for illegal activities, such as people sleeping inside or being used for growing illegal drugs. The councillors clarified that they have the authority to force building owners to act if a building is deemed unsafe or misused, ensuring that owners are held accountable for the maintenance and security of their properties.

As part of the Town Board's efforts to raise awareness and address the issue, it was agreed that information on how to report concerns regarding abandoned buildings will be promoted across all available communication platforms (website, social media, etc.).

9) Next Steps

The next meeting will include a discussion on the proposed Programme Manager role and the hiring process.

Discussion of sub committees taken place and each committee to have a lead which can report back at each meeting if required.

Set up meeting with the HUB trustees and involving the new trustees.

10) Date of next meeting

The next meeting will take place at 4pm on the 10th of February 2025 at the SPEN Offices, Leafield and online via Teams.