

## **Local Assurance Framework for Runcorn Town Deal**

### **Introduction**

Runcorn has been awarded £23.6m by Central Government to deliver the Runcorn Town Deal programme that will provide 'interventions' which will result in economic productivity through urban regeneration, planning and land use, skills and enterprise infrastructure and connectivity.

The Runcorn Town Deal Board (TDB) was established in January 2020 to support the development of the Town Investment Plan (TIP) for Runcorn and identify and agree the funding priorities for a potential Town Deal. The nature of the board's role now centres around overseeing the development of the seven project business cases by August 2022 and delivery of the Town Deal by 31st March 2026.

A requirement of a Town Deal is to implement a Local Assurance Process for the development and sign off of individual Business Cases, to finally be signed off by the Section 151 Officer and Town Deal Board Chair. This Assurance Framework (AF) sets out the governance and decision-making structure of the Runcorn Town Deal Board (the board) in relation to the Towns Fund.

Its purpose is to:

- Enable accountable decision-making
- Ensure value for money
- Provide for effective monitoring and evaluation

The Framework is underpinned by a suite of documents, including the terms of reference, which apply to all the activities in which the Runcorn Town Deal Board are involved.

Halton Borough Council is the Accountable Body for the Runcorn Towns Fund programme in fulfilling its AF. The role of the accountable body is to:-

- Develop project delivery arrangements and funding agreements
- Ensure decisions made by the board are made in accordance with good governance principles
- Ensure transparency requirements are met through publication of information on their website
- Ensure required Environmental Impact Assessments or Public Sector Equalities are completed
- Develop detailed business cases for projects
- Agree and Sign the Heads of Terms Agreement with government
- Lead and manage the delivery of public sector projects within the TIP
- Work with partners on the delivery of partnership projects
- Monitor and evaluate the delivery of individual projects
- Submit regular monitoring and financial reports on all TIP projects to the Towns Hub
- Receive and account for any project funding including Towns Fund monies

### **Runcorn Town Deal Board**

The Runcorn Town Deal Board is the strategic body providing strategic direction to the development and implementation of the Towns Fund programme. It is the vehicle through which the vision and strategy for the town as defined in Runcorn Town Investment Plan is to drive long-term transformative change.

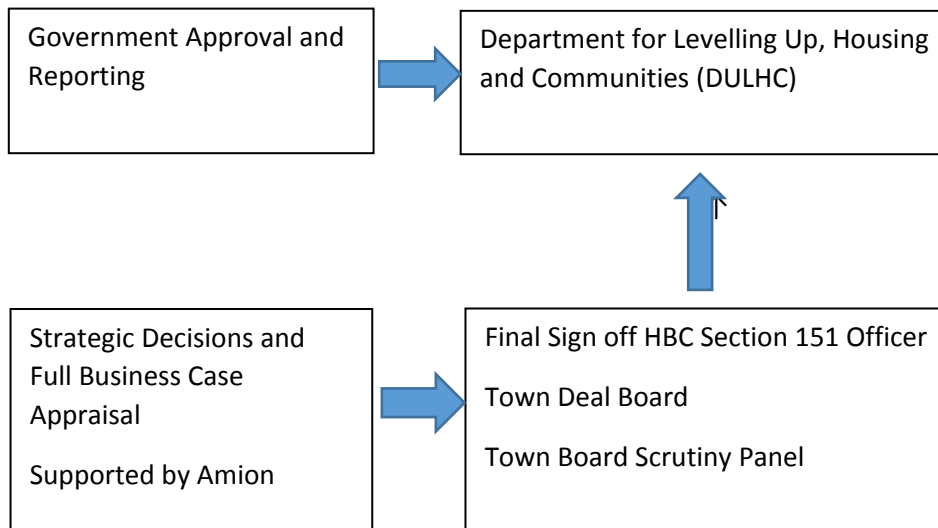
The Board will approve each Town Deal business case to ensure alignment with the priorities set out in the TIP and to ensure they are developed with engagement with key stakeholders, local communities and businesses. The Board will receive reports on the progress, key milestones and any issues/risk identified during the development of the detailed business cases.

The Town Deal Programme Board, The Town Deal Board Scrutiny Panel and Halton Borough Council including the S151 Officer will be responsible for approving the Business Cases on behalf of the accountable body.

The Programme Director, the Operation Director Economy, Property and Enterprise will manage programme information and activity between the Board, the Council's S151 officer and the Councils portfolio holders and Council's Executive Board. Overarching responsibility for steering and overseeing the Town Deal and the TIP with the board.

The Programme Manager, Town Centre Regeneration Manager, will have day today responsibility for the coordinating delivery of the Towns Fund projects on behalf of the TDB.

The Runcorn Town Board scrutiny panel will act as a two way mechanism to inform and provide constructive feedback and recommendations to the TDB.



## Decision Making

### Stage 1. Town Investment Plan (completed)

The Board will be responsible for signing off each stage of the development of the TIP and to ensure that these align and adhere to Government guidance. This includes the decisions relating to the project prioritisation process and final selection of projects for inclusion in the Town Deal.

### Stage 2. Heads of Term Agreement /Town Deal (completed)

The Board will be responsible for decisions relating to the agreement of a Town Deal with government and the subsequent development of the detailed business cases for Town Deal projects. The Board will oversee each step of this process and along with Halton Borough Council (as the Accountable Body), will have responsibility for reaching a final Heads of Term Agreement with government.

### Stage 3. Town Deal Project Business Cases (in progress)

Following the Heads of Term Agreement, the Board will oversee the development of full business cases for all the TIP projects. The business case preparation will be carried out by the AMION consulting, supported by Thomas Lister (chartered Surveyors) and Edge Project Services. They will provide specialist support, guidance and capacity to develop comprehensive business cases which are used extensively in the public sector to seek approval for new initiatives and spending decisions.

The project manager for each project supported by their project team and the Council will provide the necessary information required to Amion for the Full business Case. This process will be overseen by the Town Deal Programme Manager who alongside Amion will provide progress reports to the Board.

The Business Case process will be to assess Green Book compliant across the strategic, economic, commercial, financial and management case. A review of market conditions/demand will inform financial analyses which will lead to a development appraisal to demonstrate that grant funding is required to support the viability of each project.

Further community & stakeholder consultation and engagement will take place during full business case development to ensure the community and stakeholders remain active in shaping the projects and to confirm support.

The cost-benefit analysis for each project will consider a range of potential benefits arising from projects in line with green book guidance. This will sit alongside an assessment of economic costs and funding to inform the selection of the preferred option based on value for money. An assessment of risk will also be carried out for each short-listed option.

Deliverability will be considered as part of the option scoping process and will be assessed against potential impediments to delivery. A delivery strategy will be developed for each project to agree the most appropriate way forward.

Draft business cases will be completed for each project and circulated for comment. Based on these comments a final business case will be prepared for each project. These will then be shared with the Runcorn Town Board scrutiny panel for comment and Amion will address any shortcomings and/or make final improvements to the final business cases. Summary tables for each project will inform the Board and will be shared with the Council's Section 151 officer for final sign off.

Once the business cases have been approved by the DLUHC Towns Fund Team, the projects will move onto the delivery stage.

#### **Stage 4. Delivery of Town Deal projects**

HBC will be responsible for the day to day delivery and operational decisions for the Towns Fund programme and any funding agreements with partners who will delivery Town Deal projects. The Board will be responsible for strategic programme decisions and for overseeing delivery of the programme, monitoring and evaluation of the individual projects and compliance with the Heads of Terms Agreement with government.

Each Town Deal project will be led by an appointed Project Manager who will work with a Programme Delivery Team made up of relevant internal and external stakeholders for this project. The Programme Manager will provide update reports to the relevant Council portfolio holders and Executive Board on behalf of the Council. Regular programme monitoring and evaluation reports will be provided to the Board, DLUHC, Portfolio Holders and Members. Key programme decisions will require final approval by the relevant Portfolio holder and Programme Management Board.

#### **Scrutiny**

The Programme Director in conjunction with senior offices from specialist areas such as legal, finance and communications, will act on behalf of the accountable body and will scrutinise the performance of the Towns Fund programme to ensure appropriate compliance to Council, DLUHC and Towns Fund policies and processes. They are responsible for ensuring that the programme aligns to the wider business of the Council and its policies and procedures.