



Kendal Futures Board Meeting Minutes

Wednesday 15th April 2020

3.00 to 4.30 pm

Video Conference via Skype

Present:

Martyn Nicholson, Chair
Paula Scott, Kendal Futures
Susanne Long, Kendal Town Council
Julian Rayner, Transport/Distribution
Rhian Harris, Culture & Festivals
Mark Cropper, Large Employers
Robin Ashcroft, South Lakeland District Council
Matt Williams, SLDC
Mandy Dixon, K Village and Tourism
Jamie Allison, Young Professionals Group
Cath Purdy, Housing
John Haley, Professional Services
Brian Harrison, Kendal BID
Geoff Cook, South Lakeland Local Committee
Graham Booth, Observer
Nick Taylor, Kendal Futures

Apologies:

Miriam Randall, Creative Industries & Innovation
Louise Shrapnel, Kendal College

This was the KFB's first meeting during the COVID-19 lockdown period with members attending via Skype. Some technical difficulties were experienced, with some members only able to listen and communicate via messages. It was intended to be a 'keeping in touch' meeting, rather than conduct full KFB business.

1. Apologies and membership

M Nicholson welcomed Graham Booth to the KFB. Graham is joining as an observer in a personal capacity, but the group agreed that his business interests and position on the Cumbria LEP Board will be valuable.

2. Declarations of interest

No declarations were made for the meeting agenda.

3. Minutes & matters arising

The Vision publication event was held instead of the March meeting. The minutes of the meeting held on 22nd January were agreed as a true record.

Matters arising

P Scott has prepared a draft 5-year budget for KF resources needed to progress the Vision, and a draft funding proposal for SLDC. **ACTION: P Scott to organise a Vision Working Group video meeting asap to discuss the draft papers ahead of submitting to SLDC.**

The Annual Report has been completed and shared with the KFB. **ACTION: P Scott to share the Annual Report with funding partners.**

ACTION: M Williams to discuss whether the s106 monies could cover the cost of consultants, and if so, P Scott and M Williams to discuss the CCC Highways framework procurement issues with CCC. (Relating to use of these funds to support plans to improve the station gateway area in line with the Vision.)

The KFB confirmed that planning delays remained a barrier to new housing developments and this was likely to worsen considering the COVID-19 social distancing restrictions. S Long commented that KTC's planning committee were still meeting to progress work. **ACTION: M Williams to confirm how SLDC's planning team and committees are operating in light the COVID-19 issues.**

4. Member business/organisation updates

Members were asked in turn to discuss how their business or organisation was affected by the COVID-19 crisis, their ongoing concerns and whether Kendal Futures could support? A range of issues were discussed and have been combined for the purposes of the minutes.

- Several businesses and sites are closed to the public in line with Government guidelines, with only key services or businesses which can operate within the social distancing guidelines still open. Those still trading/working are operating at reduced capacity to manage social distancing and health and safety effectively.
- Most office-based teams were working from home.
- Emergency cover was being provided for urgent repairs in the housing sector.
- Sheltered housing and care packages to protect vulnerable residents are continuing, with safety being a priority.
- Many businesses are operating with reduced levels of staff and service.
- Staff were furloughed in organisations where work has severely reduced.
- Additional rates of pay offered to those volunteering to work.
- Mothballed some development sites, due to distancing issues, but mainly because the supply chain isn't available.
- Customers ability to pay rent and rent deferrals will affect incomes.
- Community support and volunteer initiatives have been fantastic.
- Creating an online presence for arts at home and creative activities.
- Cultural sector has had funds made available via the Arts Council but probably a small amount for the number of organisations its needed to cover.
- Large numbers of orders cancelled to suppliers and by customers.
- Sending daily updates to employees about the business and to keep teams in touch.
- Deep cleaning measures have been put into place to tackle the virus.
- Extra security installed to manage anti-social behaviour around empty sites.

- Priority to safeguard staff in businesses still operating, with PPE introduced and social distancing measures, but the mitigation measures were felt to be working well.
- In the retail sector, innovative new services introduced to keep up with customer demand and deliver services.
- Fast track recruitment system introduced successfully and could be adopted more widely in future.
- Pleased Government now offering support for mid-size companies but concerns about levels of debt affecting future growth plans in the longer term.
- Russell Armer Homes team fitted out the emergency recovery centre in 3 days at Kendal Leisure Centre.
- Rural Farm Payments are vital and staff need to continue to work and manage these.
- There will be a need to be more flexible with commercial space in future.
- Most Kendal College staff are working from home with learning completed online.

B Harrison said Kendal BID has been helping businesses to apply for SLDC grants and developing the ShopAppy scheme to enable shops to centralise their online orders and delivery via taxi service. All other activity is currently on hold. The BID levy is due from 1st April for the new financial year and it is a legislative requirement that the bills are issued. BID income is likely to suffer as a result of the crisis which does make future planning difficult. British BIDs are lobbying Government to pay the levy on behalf of businesses.

SLDC has been administering the Government's grant programme and had processed 3000 applications worth £35m to date. Unfortunately, the scheme only supports small businesses or those in hospitality/leisure sectors and many don't fit the criteria. J Haley said he had received good feedback from businesses about the SLDC grant, but feedback about the banks, except for The Cumberland, was generally poor. **ACTION: J Haley to share an article from Barry Leahey of Playdale Playgrounds about accessing a Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) payment.**

M Williams and M Cropper are both representatives on Cumbria LEP's Business and Economic Response and Recovery Group (BERRG) which reports directly to Government and can forward issues raised. Issues included:

- Businesses were struggling to access the necessary support and financing from the banks and more pressure needs to come from Government. Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme is receiving mixed reports of success.
- The long-term outlook for the leisure sector looks quite bleak and what longer term support will be offered to aid their recovery, which may be quite slow?
- Construction work needs to be able to continue.

Looking ahead, the group discussed some early ideas for recovery work. G Booth emphasised that BERRG were beginning to think about how to support business recovery in the county. The LEP is launching a tracker to keep in touch with businesses and update about accessing support.

S Long reported that KTC meetings have been postponed but new meetings for committees are being established virtually. A Full Council meeting is planned for 4th May and they have also reduced the number of decisions that require Full Council approval. Planning committee is still meeting twice a month. The Mayor and Councillors will have their terms extended for a further year as elections have been postponed.

The flood relief scheme plans are progressing, but timescales aren't yet known. **ACTION: S Long to update the KFB about the flood relief scheme timescales when available.**

5. Kendal Vision

The Vision and KF have an important role to play in the town's recovery from this crisis. P Scott reported that the small amount of private sector funding raised to support the Vision has been exhausted and Nick Taylor's short contracted role has ended. Nick is still keen to offer support where possible. The private sector contributions

previously promised are now unlikely to be available for the foreseeable future. The funding ask to SLDC will need to change to reflect this and the Working Group will discuss further before submitting the request.

Continuing the Vision process, and in particular co-ordinating Action Groups and volunteers will be vital to help support the town's recovery around issues of civic pride and looking after place and people. Working in partnership with the BID and others will be essential to success.

R Ashcroft said SLDC is very supportive of a continuing role for the Vision work to boost recovery and creating a new pride in the town centre focused on innovation and quality. Kendal Futures must take a leading role and some bigger, longer term thinking is vital.

The KFB agreed that more creative thinking is needed to support the high street. Frome in Somerset is a good example to follow, and N Taylor recommended a Sustainable Transport paper recently published by Grant Shapps.

ACTION: P Scott to share information with the KFB about the Grant Shapps paper.

6. Project updates

Gooseholme Bridge Replacement

ACTION: G Cook to seek an update from CCC officers about the impact of COVID-19 on the planned replacement bridge works.

Visit-kendal.co.uk

A funding shortfall still exists to support the content manager and ongoing maintenance and support of the website. This will be even more important to promote the town as it recovers from the COVID-19 crisis. The meeting to discuss BID funding and advertising options for the website with Sarah Williams was cancelled. Funding support may be more challenging if private sector and BID funds are affected by the crisis. **ACTION: P Scott to share website support options with the KFB and rearrange a conversation with Sarah Williams from the BID.**

7. Any other business

M Nicholson is retiring as Chair at the next meeting in May. M Cropper is the current Vice-Chair and M Nicholson asked any other private sector board member who wished to stand for the Chair position to contact P Scott so details can go out in advance of the meeting. **ACTION: ALL to inform P Scott if they'd like to stand for the KFB Chair position by Friday 9th May.**

8. Date of next meeting

Wednesday 20th May 2020 – 3 pm

According to social distancing rules – venue tbc or video conference.