



chimeraconsulting

Research and evaluation specialists

**Mansfield Place Board
Board Review and Forward Planning**

November 2022

1. Introduction

Chimera Consulting was invited to submit a proposal in April 2022, to help the Mansfield Place Board (MPB) in reviewing its ambitions, purpose and longer term role.

The context to this related to the Board considering options to extend its role and focus on longer term objectives over and above its primary focus (to date), overseeing the Mansfield Towns Fund Investment Plan.

Chimera Consulting's overall tasks were to:

- Review feedback gathered so far on the Board's ambitions, purpose and role
- Work with partners to understand their organisational priorities and challenges. Furthermore, to seek agreement on issues where they believe more added value can be delivered to benefit Mansfield, by working in closer collaboration. Also, to help the Board look wider and take a longer-term perspective beyond its responsibilities for Towns Fund programme
- Help develop a "Framework" and support in "setting direction" and consider governance options
- Help develop and scope out an indicative Action Plan for the Board, with (suggested) a 3 to 5 year outlook.

An initial phase of work was agreed to help the MPB move forward, and this phase of support aimed to gather board members' views on issues such as the Board's:

- Purpose
- Vision
- Delivery
- Priorities
- Membership and governance.

Adam Jeffrey of Chimera Consulting gave a presentation at the board meeting on 21 July to commence the process and open up a discussion.

This was followed up with a number of one to one consultation meetings from 4 August through to late September, with Adam interviewing 16 board members.

This was supplemented with a "working group" session with 9 board members, held on 21 September at Nottingham Trent University's Vision West Notts College facility.

2. Feedback summary

Feedback from these consultations was highlighted in Adam Jeffrey's presentation to the 5 October MPB board meeting. The main slides are included at the end of this paper.

The overall tone and content of feedback was very positive with board members keen to maximise the opportunities for working collaboratively to help continue to make improvements to Mansfield, to benefit its residents, communities, business and visitors.

Some of the main headline messages that have come from the programme of consultations can be grouped as follows:

The benefits of the Partnership:

There is clear acknowledgement of the benefits of bringing together key public, community and private sector organisations who have a stake in the success and wellbeing of Mansfield. It enables key decisions makers to come together, to share ideas and information, to discuss opportunities, hear about partners' initiatives and priorities, and brings expertise together in one consolidated place. Partners were keen to continue to retain a mechanism which enabled the partnership to flourish and develop further. Also maintaining a structure that continues to encourage collaborative working and thinking, to develop proposals and be able to respond to opportunities.

Membership/Board size:

All board members consulted thought the size of the board was too large, but all recognised the value of having the breadth and range of partners and individuals involved. There was a preference for a more streamlined core strategic board, with support for a future structured approach that maintained involvement of and regular links with other partners in a formalised way, allowing all to continue to be involved.

We explored board composition and several commented that they would like to bolster the private sector representation around the group, so that overall membership of "the partnership" may actually grow (and membership may change over time) but enabling wider partners to input into / report to a smaller core board through "task and finish groups" or similar.

Focus and scope:

The primary focus of MPB to date has, understandably, been on the Towns Fund programme and overseeing its implementation. The MPB will retain this role.

The review was driven by a motivation to maximise the use of the expertise, resources, talent and agendas of the partners, and to help deliver benefits to Mansfield over a longer timeframe. In doing so, by partners across all sectors coming together, MPB can act as a formal mechanism enabling partners to position themselves to lead on future plans to secure external funding to invest in the town and across the district.

With regard to its scope, it is advisable for MPB does not attempt to be “all things to all people”. It needs to be focused, pragmatic and recognise where it can add value to existing, or planned, collaborative work impacting upon the district. Also, where it can help co-ordinate activity across partners.

Mindful that some issues are already being catered for by working partnerships or thematic groups (such as “health and wellbeing” and “employment and skills”), the Board is not seeking to replicate or duplicate any of that activity. Rather it would seek to better understand and improve two-way links to thematic groups and help establish new groups where these are required to address gaps. Some may be project-specific and some, longer term and issue-based.

Vision:

Agreeing upon a vision for the Board and for Mansfield generally, was a much harder task to gain agreement upon. Board members had varying opinions on what a vision for Mansfield could “look like” and what its focus should be. Balancing factors such as its history and industrial heritage, with a forward-looking vision for the future, or thinking through what people associate with Mansfield and what its key strengths are, presented varying views.

It requires a concerted effort involving all partners (and beyond) to discuss ideas and come to an agreement on a vision for Mansfield and this is, we suggest, the main next task.

Working Group session

Building upon the feedback from board members on a one-to-one basis, the working group session was facilitated to develop this further by focusing upon three main issues which follow through into this paper. Namely:

Issue	Discussion prompts
Purpose Role and remit of the Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are we here to achieve as a partnership? • What are our objectives? • What is our scope (our parameters) and what issues are already covered by other partnerships for Mansfield – e.g. employment and skills / health and wellbeing etc.?
Priorities Focus and priorities (short, medium and long term)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Top 3 priorities to focus upon in the short term (next 1-2 years), medium term (3-5 years from now) and longer term (5-10 years from now) • If we were to focus on one action for the next 6-12 months, what would it be?
Structure Governance and delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have we got the composition of the Board about right? Does it need a smaller “core” or do we need other organisations involved? • What delivery mechanism would work best? Do we need a series of thematic groups supporting a core strategic group? If so what should be their focus/membership? • Where does the Board “fit” (or align) with other governance structures and its influence on other strategic issues?

Feedback from all the consultation work was highlighted in Adam Jeffrey’s presentation to the 5 October MPB board meeting. The main slides are included at the end of this paper.

Some priorities have been articulated and can be incorporated into a draft Forward Plan / Action Plan, but first there is a need to get agreement upon the purpose of the MPB, its role and vision. Then agreement upon the relevant structure and membership of the MPB to meet the vision.

3. Looking ahead: Purpose and Structure

Below are suggestions for consideration relating to the Purpose and Structure of the Mansfield Place Board.

Purpose of the Mansfield Place Board

1. To oversee and monitor the implementation of projects, including those developed through the Towns Fund, and evaluate their impact.
2. To lead, in partnership with Mansfield District Council, the development of a vision for the future of Mansfield.
3. To bring together and maximised the combined power, resources and relationships of key stakeholders in the private, public and third sectors to accelerate towards that vision.
4. To clarify and agree upon a clear identity / brand for Mansfield and a consistent narrative and language to surround it, aligned with the Towns Fund / Town Investment Plan.
5. To ensure MPB is strategically aligned to constituent partners' strategies and plans to avoid duplication and add value to the work of constituent partners.
6. To support and challenge MDC (and other partners) in the delivery of their respective strategies.
7. To provide a collective but apolitical voice for Mansfield to support the development of local, regional and national partnerships and to influence regional and national government, including within Combined Authority, using the benefit of a consistent and collective voice, across sectors.
8. To act as a conduit for the exchange of information and opportunities between key partners.
9. To develop proactive funding bid plans to support the achievement of the vision in order to respond quickly and coherently should opportunities arise.

Structure of the Mansfield Place Board

A smaller core, strategic board would be welcomed, but accountable to and representational of all sectors and interests. This needs to be balanced to ensure all existing partners (and potentially new members) can be fully involved in the purpose and activities of MPB.

There was support to reduce the overall board down to circa 8 to 12 active members as a core strategic group at the heart of the board, drawing upon a fair representation across the membership.

Membership of the Core Strategic Group:

A smaller core group could include:

1. Vision West Nottinghamshire College Principal – Chair
2. MDC Mayor
3. MDC CEO
4. MP for Mansfield
5. D2N2 LEP
6. Mansfield Business Improvement District
7. Mansfield Community and Voluntary Service
8. Nottingham Trent University
9. Mansfield and Ashfield 2020
10. NHS (Sherwood Forest Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust)
11. Nottinghamshire County Council
12. Private sector representative 1
13. Private sector representative 2.

Note 1: Expectations would be that the CEO or equivalent, or senior representation, attends for organisations listed 5 to 11.

Note 2: Mansfield and Ashfield 2020 would act as link to wider private sector members of the current board and other commercial interests, including its own membership.

Note 3: We envisage there to be 11 permanent members of the group, with two additional places allocated for private sector members, to be nominated and voted onto the group every 3 years.

Expectations:

Expectations are that core members would play an active role in both bringing issues to the MPB for discussion and consideration, and also lead on overseeing and co-ordinating relevant thematic groups or projects, as appropriate.

They will be expected to provide reports and feedback to the core group and ensure that their thematic groups or project teams are fully informed of the activities of the Place Board.

Frequency of meetings:

We suggest that 6 MPB meetings are convened each calendar year. Four of these would be for the core strategic group and two for the group plus wider membership. Frequency would therefore be alternate months. An annual meeting schedule could look like:

Month	Meeting
January	Core Group
March	Full Membership
May	Core Group
July	Core Group
September	Full Membership
November	Core Group

MPB “secretariat” resources

There will be a need to provide support to and help co-ordination of the Core Strategic Group’s business. Mansfield District Council has, largely, carried out this function to date for the overall Mansfield Place Board. There is a need for additional resources – either in the form of staffing support provided by wider members, or financial contributions to help cover the costs of a Co-ordinator position, either full-time, part-time or on a contractual basis.

Sub-group chairs would be expected to draw upon their own organisational resource to facilitate sub-group working.

Wider membership and involvement:

All wider members to be retained, and potentially new ones “recruited” to be involved at thematic or project specific levels.

Thematic groups could include:

1. Environmental
2. Visitor Economy
3. Identity / Brand
4. Town Centre
5. Transport
6. Skills
7. Business Start-ups and Business Growth
8. The health and wellbeing of Mansfield (its people, communities and employers)
9. Partnerships with neighbouring Local Authorities / Place Boards (or equivalent).

Board members will be expected to take on a role in addition to their attendance at meetings. This will typically involve the leadership of a theme group, a task and finish group or a project.

Feedback – main slides from presentation to MPB, 5 October

FEEDBACK – OVERALL IMPRESSIONS

1. Enthusiasm and energy
2. Positivity and “can do” attitude
3. Seeing opportunities
4. Mix of partner organisations and representation
5. Potential for influence and impact

CONSENSUS MESSAGES

1. Smaller core strategic board
2. To be pro-active not reactive – set out our stall
3. Start with the end in mind
4. Need short/medium/long term plan
5. Stronger voice of business community
6. Clarify brand and purpose / focus
7. Communication to “our customers” – people, communities, businesses, employers, visitors, prospective inward investors, Government
8. Clear links to other thematic groups and open dialogue
9. “Task and Finish” groups

FEEDBACK — PURPOSE OF THE BOARD

1. Need to clarify Mansfield's "brand" and our vision
2. Maximise existing relationships and resources (irrespective of external funding opportunities)
3. Benefit of collective voice, across sectors— sum greater than its parts
4. Advocates for Mansfield including a strong voice within Combined Authority
5. Common ground of wanting to improve the wellbeing of Mansfield (its people, communities, employers, visitors etc.)
6. Influence and ability to challenge
7. Strategic alignment - not to duplicate but add value and positioned strategically

FEEDBACK – PRIORITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES

1. Overall: agree brand and vision
2. Communication and “shine a light on the positives”
3. Green agenda inc. household retrofitting
4. Holistic neighbourhood (place based) regeneration
5. Tourism and the visitor economy
6. “Growing our own” – nurturing business start ups and growth
7. Retaining young people
8. Heritage buildings – needing investment / repurposing
9. Health and wealth and addressing economic inactivity

FEEDBACK - STRUCTURE

1. Smaller core strategic group
2. Wider partners engaged via thematic groups, task and finish groups (ass appropriate) and ongoing communications
3. Annual “open forum event” - transparency
4. Consolidate / clarify links to existing thematic groups (e.g. health and wellbeing / employment and skills etc.)
5. Review and refresh (update) Terms of Reference



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