

Leigh Neighbourhood Board

6.00pm, 10 July 2025

Present at the meeting:

Alex Grundy (Chair) - Owner - Café Stella
 Jo Platt, MP for Leigh and Atherton
 Steven Tomlinson, Director – Nemiah and Leigh Means Business
 David Proctor, Assistant Director – Planning and Regeneration
 Maxine Mealey, Wigan & Leigh College – Assistant Principal
 Dorothy Bowker, Founder and Trustee – The Bridge
 Adele Adjetey, Senior Policy and Partnerships Officer
 Matt Collier, JJ Harrison PVC Products Ltd
 Dave Radley, DMR Training
 Paul Costello, Leigh Spinners Mill / Leigh Preservation Trust
 Kevin Parker-Evans, Wigan, Wrightington & Leigh NHS Foundation Trust
 Jo Francis, Lillies Cocktails & Small Plates
 Stewart McGarrie, Absolute Leigh Facebook Group
 Liam Owens, Edge Hill University
 Councillor Keith Cunliffe, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Health
 Reece, Youth Board Representative
 Elena, Youth Board Representative

Apologies:

Danny O'Neil – Greater Manchester Police
 Lloyd Jolley, Director – WJ Structures Ltd
 Natalie Hatton – Deputy Head – St John's Primary School
 Danny Melling, Premier Education
 Councillor Yvonne Klieve, Lead Member for District Centres & Night Time Economy
 Councillor Dane Anderton, Portfolio Holder for Children and Families

In Attendance:

Paul Blinkhorn, Constituency Support Officer
 Melanie Lamb, Service Manager – Regeneration
 Stuart Hurst, Project Manager – Regeneration
 Joanne Berry, Neighbourhood Manager
 Graeme Collinge, Genecon Consultants Ltd

1. Welcome and Introduction

The Service Manager – Regeneration welcomed everyone to the Leigh Neighbourhood Board and introduced the Interim Chair Alex Grundy.

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, stating he was honoured to represent the Board and the town. The Chair commented that safety and security will be a focus moving forward in the early delivery of the programme and looks forward to working with everyone.

The Chair invited everyone present to introduce themselves and highlight what they would like to achieve from being a member of the Board.

Leigh Neighbourhood Board (10.07.25)

2. MP Introduction

Jo Platt MP welcomed everyone to the Leigh Neighbourhood Board. The MP summarised the background to Plan for Neighbourhoods and the change in focus from Long Term Plan for Towns under the previous government. The MP noted that a government official visited Leigh on 17th June to introduce Plan for Neighbourhoods and was positive about the town and opportunities that exist. The MP emphasised the huge amount of good work going on in Leigh driven from within the community and noted that the focus should be on supporting this work and addressing any gaps. The MP thanked the contribution of the Town Centre Manager and Assistant Director – Infrastructure and Regulatory Services in addressing town centre issues, particularly over the past few months. The MP referred to the existing powers that can be used to support Plan for Neighbourhoods and the range of interventions that could be considered.

3. Feedback from Governments PfN Chairs Event

Steven Tomlinson, Director – Nemiah and Leigh Means Business attended the PfN Chairs event on 10th June and presented an update to the Board on the following key highlights from the event:

- Government is encouraging Boards to be empowered, flexible, take risks and build capacity through local community groups.
- Government will be taking a light touch approach to managing the programme.
- Places are encouraged to empower the local community, which is already delivering interventions the Board would like to take forward.
- Most towns across the country have similar issues and, although their Boards have different makeups, this is an opportunity to engage share ideas.
- Create a vision and legacy, don't focus on quick wins.

The Chair thanked Steven Tomlinson, Director – Nemiah and Leigh Means Business for attending the government PfN Chairs event at short notice and the informative presentation. The Chair commented that although there isn't a focus on quick wins it is important not to lose momentum on the progress made in the town centre between now and the start of project delivery in April 2026.

4. PfN: Update

The Service Manager – Regeneration gave an overview of the new guidance and the new strategic objectives of the programme. The three original themes of the LTPT programme have been increased to eight, giving the Board more scope and flexibility to deliver a broader range of interventions.

Submission of the Regeneration Plan will include a ten year vision document and four year investment plan. The deadline for submission is 28th November 2025. The Regeneration Plan will be approved by the Board and will go through the Council's approval process before submission, noting that government require the s151 officer to authorise the submission. Government has highlighted the existing range of powers available to local authorities and other statutory bodies which could support Plan for Neighbourhoods. An example is the new High Street Rental Auctions (HSRA) legislation, which aims to bring long standing empty properties back into use, and the potential to implement this in Leigh is already being explored.

Leigh Neighbourhood Board (10.07.25)

The Chair raised the possibility that extra policing could be included within safety and security interventions delivered within the town centre.

The Service Manager – Regeneration gave an overview of the role of the secretariat. The fund needs a secretariat to help facilitate the Board, including facilitating meetings, recording the business, decisions, and actions of the Board; project development; project management support; monitoring and evaluation of the programme and all projects; programme reporting of spend and outcomes to the Board and government. One full-time temporary post is currently funded through capacity funding.

The Service Manager – Regeneration also outlined the role of the Council as accountable body for the fund. This includes ensuring that all legal and financial requirements are satisfied. The accountable body also has responsibility for undertaking procurement and entering into contracts on behalf of the Board.

The Service Manager – Regeneration noted that all Board members had received the Terms of Reference for Board for comment and agreement. All Board members were asked to ensure they had read and signed the terms of reference and completed and returned the declaration of interest form.

Vote: The Service Manager – Regeneration asked all Board members to vote on whether Interim Chair Alex Grundy will become the Chair of Leigh Neighbourhood Board (1 year term).

Result: Board members voted unanimously that Interim Chair Alex Grundy will become the Chair of Leigh Neighbourhood Board (1 year term).

Decision: Alex Grundy is Chair of Leigh Neighbourhood Board (1 year term).

The Service Manager – Regeneration explained that consultancy firm Genecon was appointed under Long Term Plan for Towns, to support the Board in preparing the submission to government, and this contract remains in place with unspent fees (totalling £15,131). It is considered that the Board would benefit from continued consultancy services to support and facilitate the Board in preparing the submission to government under Plan for Neighbourhoods. Genecon has reviewed the scope to reflect the revised requirements under Plan for Neighbourhoods and submitted a draft scope and revised fee for consideration.

Vote: The Service Manager – Regeneration asked all Board members to vote to delegate to the Vice Chair (David Proctor, Assistant Director – Planning & Regeneration) to finalise scope of consultant support and enter into contracts as necessary.

Stewart McGarrie, Absolute Leigh Facebook Group, asked would this give Vice Chair power to make other decisions regarding contracts or is this just for the consultant support contract. The Service Manager – Regeneration confirmed that the delegated authority would only be for this consultant support contract. To provide certainty to Board this could be limited to an extension of value of no more than £15,000 more the current contract value, any additional scope would be reported back to the Board for further consideration.

Leigh Neighbourhood Board (10.07.25)

Result: Board members voted unanimously to delegate the Vice Chair (David Proctor, Assistant Director – Planning & Regeneration) to finalise scope of consultant support up to an additional £15,000 against the current contract, and enter into contracts as necessary.

Decision: Delegation to the Vice Chair (David Proctor, Assistant Director – Planning & Regeneration) to finalise scope of consultant support, up to an additional £15,000 against the current contract and enter into contracts as necessary.

5. Workshop: What does Leigh Mean to you?

The Board split into two groups for the following workshop discussions:

Workshop 1: How the Board can engage with the wider community and be a voice for everyone.

Workshop 2: How Board members feel about the draft “vision statement” and what key actions they want to see.

The Service Manager – Regeneration suggested that the Board consider forming sub-groups to help focus on key topic areas and progress the Regeneration Plan and Investment Plan between monthly Board meetings. The following sub-groups were suggested:

- Engagement, Consultation and Cohesion;
- Vibrant Places;
- Unlocking Potential

Stewart McGarrie, Absolute Leigh Facebook Group asked what outcomes will come from the sub groups. The Service Manager – Regeneration advised that the sub-groups will inform and help to develop the regeneration plan and four year investment plan for Leigh to meet the submission deadline of 28th November 2025, by making progress between main Board meetings. The outcome of sub-groups would then be reported to and developed further by the Board.

Action:- Secretariat to extend the invitation to Board Members not present at this meeting and coordinate and manage the sub-group meetings.

6. Overview of Constituents’ Representations

Due to time constraints in the meeting, no representations were presented.

7. Reflections on the meeting

The Chair invited Board Members to feedback any reflections that they had on the meeting and any future meetings.

8. Any other business

The Secretariat asked whether all Board Members consented for their email addresses to be shared with other Board members in the circulation of Board information. All members agreed. Members were asked to copy the LeighTownBoardAdmin@wigan.gov.uk into any emails.

Leigh Neighbourhood Board (10.07.25)

The potential for a WhatsApp group amongst Board was suggested. The Secretariat suggested that this point could be postponed and recommended correspondence via email.

The Chair thanked all Board members for their support and look forward to working with the Board throughout the programme.

The Chair thanked the secretariat for their support and the work undertaken prior to the Board meeting.

9. Next meetings

Tuesday 19 August, 6-8pm

Monday 15 September, 6-8pm

Monday 13 October, 6-8pm

Monday 3 November, 6-8pm

The meeting concluded at 20.35pm