Minutes of Newton-le-Willows Neighbourhood Board

Friday 9 October 2026

Invitees			
Name	**Initials**	**Role**	**Organisation**
Mandated Board Members			
David Baines MP	DB	Member of Parliament, St Helens North	Member of Parliament, St Helens North
Mark Palethorpe	MP	Chief Executive	St Helens Borough Council
Natalie Carroll (maternity cover for Amie Parsonage)	NC	Portfolio and Partnerships Officer	Merseyside Police and Crime Commissioner
Ian Lewis	IL	Investment Manager and Deputised Chair	Liverpool City Region Combined Authority
Community & Co-Opted Board Members			
Alex Myhill	AM	Community Representative	Willow & Ram
Joanne Edge	JE	Community Representative	Newton Sports Club
Debbie Taylor	DT	Business Representative	Es Paradis Salon & Domestic Abuse WA12 CIC
Fiona Ruddy	FR	Third Sector Representative	Newton Community Centre
John Unsworth	JU	Cultural, Arts, and Heritage including Sports Groups Representative	Sea Cadet Corps
Reverend Chris Stafford	CS	Faith Representative	Team Rector at St Peters, Emmanuel Wargrave, and St John's
Simon Pierce	SP	Education and Opportunity Representative	Principal, St Helens College and Knowsley Community College
Claire Glover	CG	Health and Wellbeing Representative	Operations Manager, St Helens Wellbeing

			Service (CHCP)
Paul Romanko	PR	Business Representative	United Utilities Water Ltd
Local Authority Representatives			
Matthew Valentine	MV	Programme Lead	St Helens Borough Council
Glenn Taggart	GT	Project Manager	St Helens Borough Council
Mary Jefferson	MJ	Head of Regeneration & Growth	St Helens Borough Council
Donna Wilby	DW	Finance Business Partner, Regeneration Projects	St Helens Borough Council
Matthew Kay	MK	Finance Manager	St Helens Borough Council
Apologies Received			
Chris Hickey	CH	Chair	Mercury Hampton
Jon Julian Smith	JJS	Chief Inspector, St Helens	Merseyside Police
Councillor Dr George Woodward	GW	Leader of the Council	St Helens Borough Council
Councillor Jack Benyon	JB	Portfolio Holder for Property, Regeneration and Planning	St Helens Borough Council
Additional Observers			
Rod Thomson	RT	Interim Director of Public Health	St Helens Borough Council
Andy Bowden	AB	Head of Office for David Baines MP	David Baines MP Member of Parliament, St Helens North

Item	Title	Lead
1.	Welcome and Introductions	IL
2.	Declarations of Interest	IL
3.	Minutes of the previous Neighbourhood Board meeting held on 17 July 2026	IL
4.	Draft Monitoring Return	MV
5.	Changes in Board Membership	MV
6.	Subgroup and Project Updates	MV
7.	Building Improvement Programme	MV
8.	Finance Update and Management Fee	DW/MV

9.	Any Other Business	All

1. Welcome and Introductions

Ian Lewis (IL) welcomed the Neighbourhood Board to the meeting

IL acknowledged apologies received from:

- Councillor Jack Benyon, Chris Hickey, Jon Julian Smith and Councillor Dr George Woodward.

2. Declarations of Interest

IL informed members that no declarations had been received ahead of the meeting and invited Newton-le-Willows Neighbourhood Board Members to present any new declarations relevant to the agenda items. Declarations of interest were received from Debbie Taylor for Agenda Item 7. All declarations were noted by the Chair for reference at the appropriate time and it was advised DT would be requested to leave the room during the presentation and voting related to Item 7.

3. Minutes of the previous Neighbourhood Board meeting held on 17 July 2026

IL reminded the Board that minutes from the previous Newton-le-Willows Neighbourhood Board meeting on 17 July 2026 have been agreed and are live on the St Helens Borough Council (SHBC) website. An overview of the key discussions and endorsements were provided, including:

- On 21 May 2026, the new council was sworn in, with Councillor Dr George Woodward as the leader, thus replacing Anthony Burns on this Board, with no direct replacement for Kate Groucutt at that time;
- Full Board endorsed the outcomes of the Community Pot;
- Full Board endorsed the proposal for the Building Improvement Programme framework;
- The Board received an update on the Early Delivery Projects Update; and
- An update was given to the Board about staffing updates and management fees.

4. Draft Monitoring Return

IL requested Matthew Valentine (MV) to give an update to the Board on the draft monitoring return for endorsement, which is required to be submitted to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

MV gave a verbal overview of the presentation which details that, in line with MHCLG's Pride in Place monitoring requirements, programme performance must be reported at six-monthly intervals. The first return was endorsed by the Neighbourhood Board on 24 April 2026 and submitted on 30 April 2026. The second return is now being prepared for submission by 29 October 2026. Its streamlined

requirements will provide an update on capacity funding, programme-funded project delivery and planning, and the composition of the Newton-le- Willows Neighbourhood Board. The spreadsheet containing the return had been circulated to the Board prior to the Board meeting for comment.

IL invited Board Members to join the discussion and to endorse the draft monitoring report to be submitted as part of the first submission for Phase 1 monitoring returns.

Fiona Ruddy (FR) requested more information on the role of MHCLG in relation to the Board and its operation. MV explained that MHCLG provide the final oversight and scrutiny on the Board's decisions to ensure projects are viable operationally and financially and, along with the Council, that they are in line with the objectives of the programme and public sector funding requirements.

DECISION: Neighbourhood Board members endorsed the draft monitoring report for submission.

5. Change in Board Membership

IL introduced the next agenda item and requested MV to advise the Neighbourhood Board on the updated Board Membership in line with the Pride in Place Programme governance.

MV gave a verbal overview about the results of the May 2026 elections, which led to changes to St Helens Borough Council's leadership. This in turn required corresponding updates to the Newton-le-Willows Neighbourhood Board. The Leader of the Council, Councillor Dr George Woodward (GW) joined the Neighbourhood Board at the previous meeting in July 2026 and the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Property and Planning, Councillor Jack Benyon (JB), will join the Neighbourhood Board with his membership commencing from this meeting. Both will assume their particular Board positions in line with the Terms of Reference.

Separately, Simon Pierce (SP) has been appointed as Education and Opportunity representative following Catherine Twist's resignation and a review of candidates from the previous recruitment process by the Chair and MP for St Helens North. The revised membership maintains appropriate representation for the investment themes and complies with the Neighbourhood Board's Terms of Reference.

MV invited SP to introduce himself to the Board. SP thanked the Board for his accension in membership and went on to detail his more than 37 years' experience across further education, skills, funding and organisational leadership. SP's career has spanned senior leadership roles within colleges, national funding agencies and regional education bodies, providing extensive expertise in strategy, organisational improvement, stakeholder engagement and sustainable growth. A passionate advocate for further education, SP believes in its power to transform individual lives, strengthen communities and drive economic prosperity by creating opportunities for people of all backgrounds to achieve their potential.

IL then requested the Board to note that Mark Palethorpe (MP) will be stepping down from the Board and that Rod Thomson (RT), the Interim Director of Public Health,

will be taking his place as the senior representative for St Helens Borough Council, which has been agreed with the Neighbourhood Board Chair.

MP gave his rationale for stepping down, as it was becoming increasingly difficult to give the requisite amount of his attention to the excellent work of the board due to clashes with Liverpool City Region (LCR) requirements and other mandatory regulatory board requirements. MP had a difficult decision to make when considering stepping down and then in finding the correct person to represent the Council. After lengthy deliberation, MP felt it was possible to step down after speaking with RT, who will bring his extensive knowledge and experience in health and wellbeing to the board, thus proving RT was the best fit to replace MP and represent the Council correctly. This change would only be implemented from the Neighbourhood Board meeting in January 2027.

IL and the Board welcomed the new Board Members and thanked MP for his contribution to the board. IL then invited Board Members to note the change in Board membership following administrative changes for the Council, relevant to the Pride in Place Programme; and note that the resignation and subsequent recruitment of the Education and Opportunity representative is made in accordance with the Terms of Reference for the Newton-le-Willows Neighbourhood Board.

6. Subgroup and Project Updates

IL introduced MV to provide an update to the Neighbourhood Board on the progress made in the Board's subgroups and in the delivery of the three 'early delivery projects' for Year 1 of the programme. IL requested that questions be asked at the end of the verbal update.

<u>Regeneration, High Streets and Heritage Subgroup</u>

MV commenced the update with progress on the Regeneration, High Streets and Heritage Subgroup, who met on 20 August 2026 and 11 September 2026 to develop the Building Improvement Programme documentation. Additionally, the Subgroup have developed a project framework for the Spring Clean initiative for endorsement by the Neighbourhood Board and subject to further operational development.

A community launch day will signify the beginning of the Newton-le-Willows Spring Clean, with ongoing delivery throughout the month of May. This launch day will take place on Saturday 8 May 2027, as previously advised at the 17 July 2026 Neighbourhood Board meeting.

A primary location has been identified as Earlestown town centre for a centralised location, with possibilities to be explored around the presence at this location and where a central base can be designated; however, consideration will be given to additional launch locations subject to appropriate logistical support for the launch day.

The launch day will incorporate community involvement of litter picking along designated routes, alongside a Neighbourhood Board presence to provide community engagement, with an opportunity to capture residents' viewpoints. Alongside the launch day, community groups will be identified and asked to engage

with the project. To support this engagement, it is the intention to deliver skips (where appropriate) and litter picking packages for a more targeted approach to tackle particular hot spot areas.

The Pride in Place Programme Team is liaising with internal Council colleagues to ascertain whether a coordinated approach can be achieved with planned Council service operations to maximise project impact. Conversations to date have identified logistically the projects may not overlap, however, a coordinated communications approach can be formed.

Further operational development and stakeholder engagement will be undertaken, prior to returning to the Neighbourhood Board for budget and delivery endorsements.

Education and Health Subgroup

MV next detailed the progress with the Education and Health Subgroup. Following the initial meeting on 4 August 2026, mapping of existing provision which relates to identified themes is being undertaken to ensure that any project delivery adds value to and strengthens, rather than duplicating, existing provision.

In addition, consideration was given to the delivery model for Education and Health projects, with discussions ongoing to an appropriate vehicle for funding distribution and project management.

A second meeting of the Education and Health Subgroup was held on 25 September 2026, with discussion held on additional membership to the Subgroup and early identification on priority interventions.

Stakeholder Engagement Subgroup

MV continued the verbal update with information about the Stakeholder Engagement Subgroup: following the request of the Neighbourhood Board, an expression of interest form was circulated to all Board members, to be completed and returned to the programme team by 25 September 2026.

This subgroup will be responsible for developing the Neighbourhood Board's Strategic Communication Plan, which will include but is not limited to stakeholder analysis and mapping, engagement strategies, tools and activities and risks and issues that may arise within the programme, linked to project communications.

The Chair of the Neighbourhood Board will review expressions of interest and appoint appropriate members to the Stakeholder Engagement Subgroup.

Arts on Prescription

MV moved onto the Arts on Prescription update. The first of three cohorts has now concluded, with seven of the initial 10 places completing the first cohort. Excellent initial feedback was received from participants that the project had contributed positively to their wellbeing. A case study has been requested from the delivery team and will be shared with the Neighbourhood Board once available.

The second cohort of delivery began on 25 September 2026. At the time of providing the update, anticipated uptake was strong and a project progress meeting is scheduled for the afternoon of 9 October 2026. Additional Social Value for the project has seen a local volunteer gain part-time sessional employment with the delivery provider, Creative Alternatives.

Earlestown Town Hall AV and Lighting

MV next covered the work on the Earlestown Town Hall AV and Lighting. As contribution to the project, the Council have provided enabling works for the routing of cables required for installation and structural surveys to ensure that the equipment can be mounted safely.

Following procurement activity, an equipment and installation contractor was identified, with Adlib being appointed. Adlib are a specialist audio, lighting, video, rigging and staging provider who also provided initial designs and specifications to the AV project.

Following practical completion of the Town Hall, the appointed contractor will now deliver and install the AV and Lighting Equipment, ensuring that systems are appropriately balanced for the space. Installation of the procured equipment is anticipated in December 2026.

DB was thoroughly impressed by the works during the Board's tour of the Town Hall on Wednesday 7 October 2026 and congratulated all involved with the project.

St Johns Playground

MV then shifted focus to the St Johns Playground project, which submitted a planning application on 26 August 2026, which was granted at the Planning Committee meeting on 6 October 2026. The project is concurrently running procurement activity to identify a contractor to undertake design and installation of the playground. Tender returns were received by 28 September 2026, and assessment is being undertaken prior to contract award, this assessment will incorporate quality assessment of submitted bids and additional social value of the delivery.

Following contract award, the design process will begin, based on the scope provided by the Neighbourhood Board and consultation outcomes. This design will be an iterative process with opportunity for Neighbourhood Board input through the Regeneration, High Streets and Heritage Subgroup. The project is on track for completion within the advised period of Winter 2026/27 and prior to the Board deadline of 31 March 2027.

Community Pot

MV drew the verbal update to a close by covering the outcomes of the Community Pot. The successful applicants were notified following the Neighbourhood Board meeting on 17 July 2026 and requested to sign and return offer letters to for a formal acceptance to the grant. All ten offer letters were returned and subsequently payments have been processed to all organisations.

Development of monitoring and evaluation documentation is now underway and will be distributed to organisations prior to the targeted project end dates, subject to review by the Community Pot Review Panel. This will ensure that project outputs and benefits can be accurately reported to MHCLG through the required scrutiny process and monitoring returns.

IL invited comments and discussion from the Board about the items covered by MV in the provided verbal update.

Paul Romanko (PR) stated that he would be happy to share any information on the Regeneration, High Street and Heritage subgroup's project development and that when designs were received for St Johns Playground for review this could be consulted on.

MV affirmed that the designs will be bespoke to Newton-le-Willows, with feedback welcomed if adjustments are required. DT queried about designs that had been shared on social media, which MV confirmed are not the final designs but only generic concept drawings. DB put forward that any designs should be reserved initially for the Board and thus be considered confidential until the Board had sight of them, as this is a Board project and not a Council project. MP noted that the Council could explore this and ensure that Board representatives had sight of designs prior to progression.

PR was pleased with the work of the team in awarding the successful groups to the Community Pot grant fund and wondered how to include the unsuccessful groups in the next round. MV pointed out that there is £75k available in the next round and took the opportunity to remind the Board that the next round's approach is still to be decided by the Board and further development would be required to identify a management approach for years 2, 3 and 4 of the Community Pot.

JE asked whether groups had asked for any assistance in completing the documentation, as she and DT wished for this to be an inclusive process, with no parties put off by challenging requirements; MV confirmed he had spoken directly with two groups at their request and open drop in sessions were held for any interested organisation to attend. IL proffered that this first round should be considered a pilot and that there was a lot to learn from the process.

Linked with the Community Pot and next year's round, JU asked whether, based on this years' experience, would £75k be enough to encompass more groups. MV responded that the budget of £250k over four years has been allocated within the Neighbourhood Board's four-year investment plan and is fixed. Whilst a £75k budget is a significant increase on the year 1 allocation, it can't be guaranteed that the request for funding would not exceed this value.

IL drew this item and its discussion to a close, requesting the Board to note the progress relating to the subgroups and note the progress relating to the delivery of the endorsed 'early delivery projects'. Finally, IL thanked Board Members for their contributions to the discussion.

7. Building Improvement Programme

IL requested that members of the Board with interests in the item leave the room, to which any conflicted Board Members, as listed in Section 2, complied. IL then introduced this item on the progress made following endorsement of the Building Improvement Programme framework at the Neighbourhood Board meeting of 17 July 2026.

MV commenced the update stating that officers have been preparing the requisite documentation to enable delivery of the programme. A grant funding agreement has been drafted with consultation from Council legal and finance colleagues. Further items, inclusive of; programme guidance and project documentation are currently under development. MV advised that a delegation of authority was to be requested to the Regeneration, High Streets and Heritage Subgroup to approve programme guidance.

Since the endorsements to the engagement approach and programme frameworks were achieved, the Regeneration, High Streets and Heritage Subgroup have met on 20 August 2026 and 11 September 2026, pursuant to the development of Building Improvement Programme documentation.

Drop-in sessions were held for business and building owners to attend and discuss the programme with members of the Regeneration, High Streets and Heritage Subgroup and Council officers. The sessions were well attended and provided valuable insight to the intentions of potential applicants and positive feedback was received towards the programme. Drop-ins were held at the Ways to Work Service premises on Bridge Street in Earlestown on the following dates:

- Thursday 20 August 2026 – 12:00 to 14:00; and
- Thursday 17 September 2026 – 16:30 to 18:30.

The following information outlines the key milestones for the development and delivery of the Building Improvement Programme:

January – April 2027, Soft Launch and Applicant Development:

- Delivery of Phase 2 engagement activity;
- Launch of the Expression of Interest (EoI) process; and
- Workshops and support for prospective applicants

April 2027 – April 2030, Full Launch and Delivery:

- Opening of the full grant application process;
- Assessment of applications; and
- Approval of grants and commencement of project delivery

MV further advised that requests for delegation of authority would be sought for the Regeneration, High Streets and Heritage Subgroup to decide application outcomes due to the volatile nature of construction projects. MV explained that as the Neighbourhood Board meets on a quarterly basis, any application received immediately following a Board meeting may be redundant by the time of the next meeting. Cost variance or a change in contractor availability could occur during this time, leaving applications not fit for purpose. Additionally, a delegation of authority will be sought for the Project Team to manage contingency budgets to ensure efficient responses can be given to genuine requests of contingency use.

IL thanked MV for the update and invited Board Members to join the discussion

MV advised that DT, although not in the room, had previously raised concerns that some business owners had suggested upfront costs could be a barrier for applicants; MV detailed that rarely and where unavoidable, at the subgroup's discretion, grant funding could be phased where required. This would increase oversight requirements, as stage payments would necessitate assessments at key milestones, but could enable otherwise strong projects to proceed. JU agreed that this was a reasonable solution.

PR noted that the scheme covered the conservation area but that some prominent eyesore buildings sat outside its boundaries. He highlighted that the Neighbourhood Board may wish to consider future programmes to promote wider investment. PR also referred to previous discussions during the Earlestown Town Hall tour regarding how best to encourage investment in properties.

DB expressed hope that buildings not initially included would eventually be brought up to the same standard through wider investment. MV referenced the experience in Prescot, where improvements to prominent buildings had encouraged wider investment. He advised that specific buildings in Earlestown would require discussion from the wider Neighbourhood Board to establish a Board position prior to applications opening. DB noted that the Council had already made efforts to resolve issues with some buildings, including himself writing to the owner, and confirmed that officers had also attempted to engage. MV agreed to provide an update on progress relating to this building at the next Neighbourhood Board meeting.

FR wished to raise two questions: FR acknowledged the substantial work undertaken to develop the scheme and sought assurance regarding capacity to deliver it, given the scale of the programme and MV's wider portfolio responsibilities.

MV advised that delivery would be led by a dedicated Heritage Project Officer, who had already undertaken significant preparatory work and would commit three days per week to the project as per the agreement with the Neighbourhood Board. MV confirmed that he would provide overall oversight and that planning officers would also support the assessment process. He further explained that, when the £1.2 million allocation was approved, a Council-led delivery model had been selected as external delivery options would have been considerably more expensive. Additional in-house expertise, including Building Control and Surveyors, could also be available. FR stressed that the scheme represented a flagship project for the Board and should not be compromised through insufficient resourcing. PR reiterated that the necessary resources were in place and where programme needs arise, additional resource could be sought.

FR then posed her second question by raising the issue of accountability following MP's departure from the Board and queried how the Council would be held to account for delivery of the programme.

Mary Jefferson (MJ) explained that accountability was embedded within the wider governance arrangements. Although MP would no longer sit on the Board, he remained involved in regeneration governance structures, and key risks would continue to be escalated through established regular reporting mechanisms.

Additionally, Rod Thomson will be joining the Neighbourhood Board as the Council representative and can provide a direct contact for the Council.

FR asked how the Building Improvement Programme would align with the wider town centre regeneration programme. MV stated that he did not anticipate overlap, as the grant programme was unlikely to progress before major regeneration works had been completed. He noted that protection of the completed public realm would need to be taken as part of preliminaries, where applicable, to ensure that no damage was made. MJ commented that the scheme would represent a natural progression of the wider regeneration activity and provide further positive developments for the Board to promote.

PR emphasised the importance of ensuring that grant-funded works did not adversely impact regeneration projects already underway. FR agreed, stressing that disruption to residents, businesses and visitors should be minimised.

MV responded that impacts should be limited, as the majority of works would take place to private buildings rather than within the public realm.

SP queried whether the subgroup had sufficient capacity to fulfil its role, given the anticipated workload. JU responded that the subgroup had adequate capacity. MV explained that the process had been designed to minimise demands on the subgroup. Initial application assessments would be undertaken by the project team, with the subgroup primarily responsible for scrutiny and verification. JU confirmed confidence in the proposed process.

MV added that the assessment criteria had been designed to be as objective as possible, reducing subjectivity in decision-making. PR observed that capacity pressures could arise if a significant number of applications were received immediately upon launch but acknowledged that demand levels were currently unknown. He added that he hoped the scheme would attract strong interest.

FR requested feedback on attendance at the public drop-in sessions. PR reported that members of the public had attended from across the town and had engaged positively in discussions. MV advised that approximately 20-30 people had attended the drop-in events. MV added that both he and the Heritage Project Officer had engaged directly with additional stakeholders, and that key business owners and landlords had attended drop-in sessions. JU commented that the programme appeared to be launching at an appropriate time and welcomed the level of interest shown to date.

IL thanked Board members for their queries and comments and asked the Board to endorse the points and note the progress made on public engagement to support project pipeline development and increase awareness of the programme.

DECISION: Neighbourhood Board members endorsed the appended document pack for the Building Improvement Programme

DECISION: Neighbourhood Board members endorsed the delegations to the Regeneration, High Streets and Heritage Subgroup, contained within

paragraphs 3.5 and 3.20 of this report, relating to authority to award grants and authority to approve programme guidance

DECISION: Neighbourhood Board members endorsed the delegation to the Project Team, contained within paragraph 3.22 this report, relating to authority to manage project contingencies.

Neighbourhood Board members who had declared an interest were invited back into the room.

8. Finance Update and Management Fee

IL invited Donna Wilby (DW) to update the Board on the Finance Update report prepared for the meeting.

DW detailed key aspects of the report from the Council's Finance Team, providing the Board with an update on the financial position in relation to the Pride in Place grant funding approved by Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

The report also addresses the annual management fee review, with a recommendation for endorsement of amendment to the management fee to reflect increasing programme complexity. At the Neighbourhood Board meeting on 3 October 2025, the Neighbourhood Board approved an allocation of 6% for management of the Newton-le-Willows Pride in Place Programme. It was noted at the same meeting that the management fee would be reviewed on an annual basis and may be subject to proposed increases or decreases.

MV explained that, touching on the concerns raised earlier by FR regarding resourcing, a review had been undertaken with DW as projects had become more complex and moved into delivery. As a result, an increase in the management allocation from 6% to 7.5% was proposed to ensure that programme oversight could be delivered to the required standard. MV advised that the vast majority of his time would be dedicated to the programme, with a corresponding reduction in his involvement in other workstreams. This time would be shared with MJ to ensure full Programme Lead oversight for 100% of the allocated time.

IL thanked DW and MV for their updates and invited questions from the Board.

MP assured the Board that considerable discussion had taken place regarding the proposal, noting that the existing 6% fee was considerably lower compared with some other Neighbourhood Board management fees, with some reaching 10-12%, and emphasised the importance of ensuring the programme was adequately resourced, with flexibility available behind the scenes where required. MV added that MP had rightly referenced the Fingerpost Board, which had adopted the 7.5% management fee approach. He advised that the same Project Officer would support both boards, due to the 50% time allocation, with responsibilities focused on Pride in Place.

Claire Glover (CG) noted that MP had already addressed some of her concerns but sought clarification regarding MV's role and commitment to the programme. MP

confirmed that any reduction in MV's involvement in other areas would be managed by the Council giving a focus to the Newton-le-Willows Neighbourhood Board. CG welcomed the explanation and commented positively on the links being developed between the Neighbourhood Boards. IL highlighted the wider opportunities for collaboration across the Liverpool City Region.

MV stated that the Board was leading the way in several areas of delivery. MP agreed, commenting that this Board had distinguished itself and noted that CH had attended a MHCLG meeting and observed a noticeably different and positive approach compared with some other boards. MV supported this by stating that officers had participated in five or six sessions with other local authorities to share learning from the work being undertaken in Newton-le-Willows. MV went on to clarify that although he would retain limited involvement in a small number of other projects, the Board would receive a full Programme Lead commitment via MV and MJ as previously advised.

DT noted that the Board had always sought a delivery model capable of producing visible results quickly and acknowledged the additional resource requirements resulting from this approach. MV confirmed that the resourcing review had considered requirements across the full ten-year programme and that the proposal reflected a long-term commitment rather than a short-term arrangement.

SP asked whether there was a maximum allowable management fee. MP noted that a range of approaches existed nationally and that fee levels varied between programmes. MV explained that all management costs must be justified to MHCLG and are subject to an additional layer of scrutiny and assurance.

DB sought clarification on leadership arrangements, asking whether MV would remain Programme Lead while reducing involvement in other responsibilities. MV confirmed that he would remain Programme Lead and that currently GT was the committed Project Officer to Newton-le-Willows Pride in Place. DB asked who was leading the Town Centre East and Fingerpost programme, to which MV confirmed that Rachel Bebby was the Programme Lead.

FR asked whether the proposed arrangement would apply for one year. MV confirmed that the management fee allocation would be reviewed on an annual basis.

DB stated that it was important for the Board to be clear about what it was receiving in return for the additional investment and noted that the proposal was acceptable provided the expected outcomes were delivered. MV responded that the total time commitment required by the programme had increased significantly and that maintaining the previously agreed limits would negatively affect delivery.

CG queried whether the annual review was sufficiently frequent, given that the programme remained in its early stages, and suggested that a six-month review could be considered. IL agreed that a review after six months would be beneficial. MJ advised that the proposal included a minimum review period of twelve months because the work was being undertaken at a strategic programme level, however a six-month review could be undertaken.

MP commented that MV had already been undertaking significantly more work than the original commissioning arrangements had anticipated. FR stated that the item would have benefited from being presented by an Officer not working on the programme on a day-to-day basis. MP agreed and advised that MJ would prepare any future reports of this nature, or an appropriate equivalent Senior Officer.

IL invited the Board to consider endorsement of the recommendation, with the proposed modification of an additional recommendation requiring a review after six months.

DB noted that the purpose of the additional review was to ensure the programme could deliver the outcomes expected by the Neighbourhood Board and that management fees should be proportionate to this. DB further noted it is the Neighbourhood Board's responsibility to ensure that the management fee is not only proportionate, but sufficient to meet the delivery needs.

MV concluded by emphasising that programme delivery was a two-way relationship between the Board and officers, with both parties having a shared responsibility to ensure successful delivery of the programme.

DECISION: Neighbourhood Board members endorsed the proposed management fee of 7.5% to improve resource on the Pride in Place Programme and oversight of ongoing delivery, with the next scheduled review to take place in April 2027.

9. Any Other Business

IL thanked Neighbourhood Board members for their contributions and invited any other business.

JU requested that a representative be available from the Board for Remembrance Sunday, which he is involved with. JU asked if a wreath could be laid with the Board's logo. MV will send JU a logo to print.

IL thanked everyone for their contributions and closed the meeting, looking forward to the New Year.