**Discover Ashfield logo and text. 
  
  
DISCOVER ASHFIELD BOARD MEETING**

**Wednesday 24th September 2025**

**9am – 11:00am**

**Hybrid – Meeting Room 1, Urban Road & Microsoft Teams**

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| ATTENDEES | | | |
| Name | Position on Board | Position/Organisation | Present |
| Kieran Percival | Chair | Director, Gardens of Giving CIC |  |
| Louise Knott | Vice Chair | Vice Principal, West Nottinghamshire College  MA2020 Representation | √ |
| Darron Ellis | Theme Lead – More to Discover | Historian, Sutton Living Memory Group |  |
| Martin Rigley OBE | Theme Lead – Succeed in Ashfield | Chief Commercial Officer Devtank Ltd. |  |
| Liz Barrett OBE | Theme Lead – Love Where You Live | Principal, Academy Transformation Trust Further Education (ATTFE) | √ |
| Pete Edwards | Theme Lead – Be Happy, Be Healthy | Chair, Ashfield Health and Wellbeing Partnership | √ |
| Claire Hinchley | Board Member | Director Strategy and Partnerships Sherwood Forest Hospitals |  |
| Clare Hitchings | Substitute for Tim Hepke | Communications Lead, ITP Aero |  |
| Cllr Julie Gregory | Board Member | Scrutiny Representative, Ashfield District Council |  |
| Cllr Dale Grounds | Board Member | Vice-Chairman of the Council, Ashfield District Council | √ |
| Cllr Matthew Relf | Board Member | Executive Lead Member for Growth, Regeneration and Local Planning, Ashfield District Council  MA2020 Representation | √ |
| David Williams | Substitute for Shola Olawole | Partnerships Manager North Nottinghamshire DWP |  |
| Edward Johnstone | Board Member | Assistant Principal (Development), Portland College |  |
| Gary Jordan MBE | Board Member | Community Engagement and Learning Lead, ATTFE |  |
| Graham Ward | Board Member | Chair of Board of Directors, Sherwood Forest Hospitals Trust |  |
| Holly Shuttleworth | Substitute for Paula Longden | Strategies and Partnerships Lead, Sherwood Forest Hospitals Trust | √ |
| Jackie Insley | Board Member | Chief Executive Officer Citizens Advice Central Nottinghamshire |  |
| Kirsty Blyth | Substitute for Peter Gaw | Inspire: Culture, Learning and Libraries |  |
| Leanne Harwood | Substitute for Simon Cartwright | Operations Lead - Transforming Notts Together |  |
| Leanne Monger | Board Member | Interim Programme Director, Mid Notts PBP |  |
| Lee Anderson, MP | Board Member | MP for Ashfield and Eastwood |  |
| Mark Yates | Substitute | PCN Development Managers, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire ICB |  |
| Paula Longden | Substitute for Claire Hinchley | Associate Director of Strategy and Partnerships Sherwood Forest Hospitals |  |
| Peter Gaw | Board Member | Chief Executive Officer, inspire: Culture, Learning and Libraries | √ |
| Sarah Mayfield | Board Member | Director of Skills and UK College and Civic Partnerships, NTU | √ |
| Sarah Speight | Observer | Deputy Vice-Chancellor & Provost, NTU |  |
| Sam Howlett | Substitute for Lee Anderson, MP | Office Manager, Ashfield & Eastwood MP’s Office |  |
| Simon Cartwright | Board Member | Chief Officer Transforming Notts | √ |
| Simon Martin | Board Member | Vice Principal, Academy Transformation Trust Further Education (ATTFE) | √ |
| Shola Olawole | Board Member | North & East Midlands Group Performance Lead, DWP |  |
| Tim Hepke | Board Member | UK Head of Maintenance and Group Property, ITP Aero |  |
| Theresa Hodgkinson | Board Member | Chief Executive, Ashfield District Council |  |
| Una Key | Board Member | Chief Officer, Ashfield Voluntary Action | √ |
| Andrea Stone | Supporting Officer | Wellbeing Manager, Ashfield District Council |  |
| Charles Edwards | Supporting Officer | Executive Director – Operations, Ashfield District Council |  |
| Christine Sarris | Supporting Officer | Assistant Director – Planning and Regulatory Services, Ashfield District Council |  |
| Hollie Maxwell-Smith | Supporting Officer | Discover Ashfield Lead, Ashfield District Council |  |
| Joelle Davies | Supporting Officer | Group Manager for Growth, Infrastructure and Development | √ |
| John Bennett | Supporting Officer | Executive Director, Place, Ashfield District Council | √ |
| Lucy Lightfoot | Supporting Officer | Regeneration Officer – Regeneration, Ashfield District Council | √ |
| Melanie Wheelwright | Supporting Officer | Forward Planning & Economic Growth Team Manager Ashfield District Council |  |
| Millie Connell | Supporting Officer | Communities Graduate - Regeneration, Ashfield District Council | √ |
| Paul Crawford | Supporting Officer | Investment Manager – Regeneration, Ashfield District Council |  |
| Paul Coffey | Supporting Officer | Interim Service Manager for Communications and Events, Ashfield District Council |  |
| Sarah Daniel | Supporting Officer | Assistant Director - Regeneration, Ashfield District Council | √ |
| Jake Dalton | Supporting Officer | Communities Graduate – Regeneration, Ashfield District Council |  |
| Joel Hough | Supporting Officer | Digital Media Assistant – Regeneration, Ashfield District Council | √ |
| Suzanne Morton | Guest | District Mission Enabler for the Methodist Church |  |

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| **Agenda Item** |  |
| **1** | **Welcome / Introductions / Apologies – Louise Knott** |
|  | * Apologies were noted for Abbie Smith, Sarah Speight, Kieran Percival, Melanie Wheelwright, Christine Sarris, Martin Rigley, Jackie Insley, Timothy Hepke, Paula Longden, Cllr Julie Gregory and Theresa Hodgkinson. * Joel Hough was introduced to the Board; Joel is the Regeneration Digital Media Assistant supporting the Discover Ashfield Board. |
| **2** | **Review of Previous Meeting – Louise Knott** |
| **a** | **Board Meeting Minutes** |
|  | * All minutes were agreed. |
| **3** | **New Declarations of Interest – ALL** |
|  | * No new declarations. |
| **4.** | **Regeneration Programmes Update – Sarah Daniel** |
|  | * Sarah asked Steve Wallance to introduce the proposal outlined in the report around Sherwood Observatory. * During the construction phase of the Observatory, there were several improvement projects put on hold due to budget and time constraints. The Sherwood Observatory opened in November 2024 and has expanded its operations since opening. Due to the turnover, the Observatory explored registering for VAT, presenting an opportunity to submit a retrospective claim for VAT from the construction phase of the project. * Due to the complexity, the Observatory appointed tax advisors to liaise with HMRC. The advisors have facilitated a VAT recovery, and an allocation model has been used to apportion this across the various funders. * As a result of this apportionment, there is £570,000 allocated to the Towns Fund and Levelling Up funding, which was provided through Ashfield District Council. In 2024, the Board agreed for an additional £188,000 to be drawn down by Mansfield and Sutton Astronomical Society (MSAS) “if and when needed”. There was a further £160,000 made available towards the end of the construction to cover the remaining costs towards sustainable energy features from the Green Ashfield budget. The combined total of £348,000 will be re-paid to the Council, leaving £222,000. The Board were asked to consider if MSAS can retain the remainder to support Phase 2 projects, such as refurbishing the Observatory, installing an accessible, high-quality telescope and new block paving areas. The refurbishments are included within the report with budget estimates. * Cllr Matt Relf asked Steve a question around the accessible telescope to ascertain how the new telescope and mount would increase accessibility, given that the existing telescope has an ability to stream. Steve confirmed that the current telescope is accessed via a spiral staircase and therefore poses challenges for individuals with accessibility needs. MSAS could consider streaming to a downstairs lecture room, but the installation of a level access telescope would enable individuals with accessibility needs to operate the telescope. * Simon Martin asked Steve a question around other funding sources and Steve confirmed that MSAS have discussed the VAT recovery with other funders, such as the National Lottery Heritage Fund and they have agreed that MSAS can retain the VAT recovered from their funding stream. * Peter Gaw confirmed that he supports the proposal to re-pay part of the VAT and retain the remainder. * The Board approved an allocation of up to £222,000 to support the phase two projects for the Observatory. Peter Gaw proposed the motion and Simon Martin seconded. * More information about the projects will be provided to the board as they are developed. |
|  | * Sarah continued with the remainder of the Regeneration Programmes Update, beginning with Succeed in Ashfield. |
|  | * Automated Distribution Manufacturing Centre: Sarah confirmed that the Section 278 technical approval has now been completed on the ADMC contract, and the legal agreement is progressing. There are some changes to the highway design which are being costed. The Operator Procurement full tender period commenced in mid-August for an eight-week period. The evaluation will take place before the end of October. * Ashfield Construction Centre and Satellite: The former Wilkos site has been handed over to Vaughandale Construction to undertake the internal refurbishment, which is due to be completed by the end of this year, with the external works in 2026. The Julias Way reconfiguration can be finalised once internal works have completed. * Ashfield Civil Engineering Centre: The Northern Depot has been handed over to the main contractor with works progressing with the refurbishment. The lease is being drafted with West Nottinghamshire College. * Enterprising Ashfield: The reported outputs to date against the profile targets are included within the report. Each of the programmes within the report are listed separately with an indication of risk included. Generally speaking, risk is looking more positive. The Council has a meeting arranged with the Enterprising Ashfield Team to discuss the legacy of the project and what learnings can be noted moving forward. * Enterprise Development Grant: There have been 13 applications received (as of 28 August) and 4 have been awarded with a value of £37,950. There are 9 applications still being reviewed, expected to be awarded on 5 September in the region of £80,105. This will reduce the funds available to £92,045 with 36 SMEs looking to submit an application. * Test Trading Opportunities: Since the report was written, there have been two grants awarded, with one business up and running at Kirkby Market (a coffee van which will be used as a case study). It’s unlikely that all the funds will be spent on the project, so there will be a proposal to reallocate some of the funding at the next Board meeting. * High Street Business Support: Save the High Street is delivering in Sutton and Kirkby. Cliffen Consulting are delivering in Hucknall and Rurals. * Small Business Membership: The Federation for Small Businesses are delivering this to 60 businesses with delivery starting on 1st September. * Sarah updated the Board on the Business and Employability Events: * Light Cast – Business and Skills software procured for 2025/26. * Ashfield Careers Fair 2025: Scheduled for 8th October, with 6 sponsors confirmed and 36 stalls booked. There will be a focus on STEM. * Business Leaders Networking Event focus is confirmed as Global Trade Tariffs: What does it mean or SMEs? The Mour Hotel has been booked with two guest speakers confirmed. Promotional material has been launched so Board is asked to share the details with interested parties. * Transform Your Future: There have been 87% of outputs and 64% of outcomes achieved. The report contains information on the people engaged in the programme. * Business and Education Collaboration (Aspiring Careers Ashfield): The outputs and outcomes are recorded in the report and are all on target. * Ashfield Financial Resilience Project: This project is working with Citizens Advice Bureau to support people with their finances. In August, there was the first employment gains and there was an increase in the number of economically inactive participants reached. * Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) Careers Education for Stakeholders Project: The procurement has been completed, and the provider is the Threes Club Services LTD, and the contract has been prepared, and the delivery will start shortly. |
|  | * Sarah moved onto More to Discover. |
|  | * St Mary’s Church: Work is continuing with the Church. They are still looking to submit their expression of interest, with delays experienced due to capacity issues within the volunteer team. * Ashfield Creates: There has been positive progress, with the team supporting various activities and events across the District including the Portland Square market. The team are also supporting work on the Kirkby Mural Project on Ellis Street. The Arts Partnership will be convened in September. * Events Programme & Ashfield Show: The report contains some information around funding and upcoming events, with the next event planned being Sparks in the Park on 1 November. * Cornerstone Theatre: There were significant updates in the last Board Meeting. The *SixTeen* play (written by local writers) took place on 13th September and received positive feedback. * Cycling and Walking Routes: There was one submission received following the tender period for Cycle Route 4, which was significantly over budget, so a review is therefore underway. * Kings Mill Reservoir Leisure Development: The lease has been issued to the new operator for signing. The kitchen installation has been completed with some minor issues to rectify. * Now and Then Heritage Project: Inspire are delivering the project and are due to host a photography workshop in Skegby on 11 October. * Hucknall Library: Works have commenced on digitalising Hucknall Library Archives, and the heritage timeline display has been installed. Inspire will no longer proceed with the planned Wi-Fi upgrade at Hucknall Library following a recent survey, which confirmed that the existing infrastructure already supports the maximum internet speed. There will be a proposal to the Board to re-allocate the £9,500 at a future meeting. * Sherwood Observatory: The UKPSF project is supporting the recruitment of 1.5 FTE to enable the Observatory to meet the increase in demand. |
|  | * Sarah continued with the Be Healthy, Be Happy theme. |
|  | * Kirkby Sports Hub: Legal agreements are progressing for the Principal Contractor appointment. There is also a legal review between the Council and the Football Foundation. Recent developments have required additional funding to be allocated. * Sutton Lawn Sports Hub: Legal agreements are progressing for the main contractor appointment. There is an ongoing legal review between the Council and the Football Foundation and related conditions of the grant funding. * PlayZones: Draft contracts are awaited from the Football Foundation. Due to the delay in the approval and delivery schedule for the Football Foundation, there is anticipated impact on the UKSPF funding period, which was intended to support activation of the PlayZones. It is therefore proposed to re-allocate the £30,000 to support 3 further organisations with a community grant. Approval has already been granted by the DA Funding Subgroup. The Council are reviewing how we can support activation of the PlayZones through other funding. There is a recommendation later in the report on the re-allocation of this funding. * Community Grants: 10 organisations have been successful and have been notified. Grant agreements are being finalised. |
|  | * Sarah moved onto the Town Centres and High Streets theme. |
|  | * High Street Property Fund: The College have recruited an internal site manager to take the project forward. The window installation works have commenced. * Central Walk and Chapel Street: There are some draft designs and community consultation is underway. There is a meeting with Council members scheduled for next week, with the aim to design final designs and submit a planning application mid-October. * North Kirkby Gateway: Applications to disconnect services has been submitted. The demolition of the Ellis Street building is expected by mid-December, and the design of a three-storey building is being explored, with approximately 730m2 of commercial space on the ground floor and two residential floors above. * West Kirkby Gateway: The team are progressing RIBA stage 4. The planning application has been submitted with main works due to start on site early 2026, subject to planning approval being granted. * Portland Square & Fox Street: The works to Portland Square are substantially complete. Practical completion has been delayed with a three-week extension in place to rectify identified defects. The works to the Fox Street Car Park are complete and it’s now open to the public. The first Saturday Food and Makers market was positive. * Low Street: No updates. * Library Innovation Centres: Kirkby & Sutton: No updates. * Stanton Hill investment Plan: Progress is continuing with a Christmas event for the community in planning. Landlords have been engaged in relation to shop frontage improvements. The Council have also been working with East Midlands Housing on the proposed allotment site. Ashfield Creates have also been engaged on a mural, which has been requested by the community. |
|  | * Sarah continued with Green Ashfield. A list of projects has been created with carbon load and usage for review to understand which projects should be prioritised with the remaining funding. |
|  | * Monitoring and Evaluation: Outputs and outcomes are being reviewed, and the Board will receive an update in November. The Towns Deal and LUF programmes are now managed under the Local Regeneration Fund. * The report also contains information on the communication for the last quarter, around Portland Square/Fox Street and the Central Walk and Chapel Street comms. * Risk registers are up to date and in the annex, along with procurement activities. |
|  | * As outlined within section 1.7 of the Report, the Board are asked to consider the proposal around the Community Grants, to re-allocate the £30,000 originally allocated for PlayZones Activation. * Louise Knott added that the reallocation feels like the appropriate way forward. No other members expressed views. * The Board approved the re-allocation of £30,000 to support the Community Grants project, proposed by Liz Barrett and seconded by Simon Martin to agree the re-allocation. |
|  | * Sarah finished the report with an update with the Kirkby Plan for Neighbourhoods. The updated government data pack and survey findings were presented at the Kirkby Neighbourhood Board meeting on 15 August and Officer Group on 18th August. There are two dedicated subgroups focusing on the capital and revenue elements of the fund and continue to meet regularly to develop detailed plans. Board meetings are scheduled for October to finalise and approve the Regeneration Plan, with the aim to submit in late October to meet the formal deadline of 28th November. |
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| **5** | **Theme Lead Updates – Theme Leads** |
| **a** | **Succeed in Ashfield – Martin Rigley** |
|  | * No updates. |
| **b** | **Love Where You Live – Liz Barrett** |
|  | * Cornerstone Theatre had it’s first event, the *SixTeen* play. Cllr Relf added that this production was impactful, and he enjoyed the visit. There was really positive feedback. On 25 September, the Theatre was expected to host 200 people for #InThisTogether 2025 Campaign Launch. Around this, other facilities within the Sutton Community Academy will be utilised such as the Princess Suite and catering. Simon added that tickets can be purchased via Ticket Source. * Portland Square Artisan Market has received some positive feedback. Liz added that people have travelled from Ravenshead to visit Ashfield. * 9-11 Low Street, ATTFE Learning Hub has increased the level of operation throughout the day and is testament to the success of re-purposing commercial units across the District’s high streets. Liz added that having West Nottinghamshire College in the Construction Centre will help bring people into the town and encourage local spend. Inspire and Portland College have both explored utilising shops in a similar way and Liz has proposed this model formally to EMCCA. Louise added that West Nottinghamshire College have engaged local cafés and businesses to encourage student discounts and incentives to encourage students to spend locally. * Sparks in the Park is coming up on 1st November. * Ashfield Careers Fair will be held on 8th October. The value of careers and support is integral for our communities. * Remembrance events will be held in November. * Liz has recently met with Una from Ashfield Voluntary Action and discussed AVA’s fantastic work within the community. |
| **c** | **More to Discover – Darron Ellis** |
|  | * No updates. |
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| **d** | **Be Healthy, Be Happy – Pete Edwards** |
|  | * A Be Happy Be Healthy Network meeting was held w/c 15th September, with 57 attendees. The current strategy was reviewed and partners reflected on progress made. The group also reflected on the new 10-year strategy,. At the next meeting, scheduled for 11 November, there will be a final draft put forward for review and comments before being presented to the Board and Council for final approval. * Meetings are continuing to discuss how the Mayoral Community Funding and the Sport England funding could be used in Leamington. The next meeting is scheduled for 22 October and weather permitting, there will be resident engagement through door-knocking. The meeting will also focus on the ten-year action plan. On 6 November, there is a systematic partner development session to progress an application for further funding from Sports England, C £1.6 million. * Kieran Percival and Pete have met to discuss having “Champions Days” for businesses to enable conversations and discuss greater collaboration for events like Careers Fairs and link this to the Secondary School Network. * East Midlands Airport are running Aviation Career Events in March next year. Pete has shared this with Nathan McNicholas and linked with Louise Shire (Academy Co-Ordinator for East Midlands Airport). Pete to also share this with Louise Knott as West Nottinghamshire College are looking at enhancing their aviation curriculum offer for the next academic year. |
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| **6.** | **Board Member Updates – All** |
|  | * Peter Gaw: Following Ian Bond’s retirement, Michael Reed has been appointed as Ian’s successor. |
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| **7.** | **Any Other Business – All** |
|  | * Discover Ashfield Away Day Priorities: The Discover Ashfield Away Day Priorities have been revised following the Delivery Group. The Board endorsed the Away Day Priorities, proposed by Unda and seconded by Pete. |
| **8.** | **Date of Next Meeting – 14th November 2025** |