# Town Deal Assurance Framework

(Incorporating Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest)

# Contents

1. Introduction ..... 2
Local Assurance Framework ..... 2
2. Governance ..... 3
a) Town Deal Board ..... 3
Board Representatives and Structure ..... 3
Project Delivery Working Groups ..... 4
Conduct ..... 4
b) Cumberland Council ..... 5
Roles and Duties as the Lead Authority ..... 5
Roles and Duties as the Accountable Body ..... 5
3. Programme Management ..... 7
Contracting ..... 8
Monitoring, Evaluation and Payments ..... 8
Scheme Changes ..... 9
Risk Management ..... 9
4. Scheme of Delegation ..... 10
5. Code of Conduct ..... 11
Registering and declaring pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests ..... 12
Conflict of interest ..... 13
Procedure for Managing Conflicts ..... 14
Collective Responsibility ..... 15
Non-Compliance ..... 15
Whistleblowing ..... 16
6. Communication, Publications and Engagement ..... 17
Publication of reports and documents ..... 17
Branding ..... 18
7. Financial Regulations ..... 19
8. Procurement ..... 19
9. Inclusion and Sustainability ..... 20

# 1. Introduction

## Local Assurance Framework

The purpose of the Local Assurance Framework ('the Framework') is to support the development and delivery of the Town Deal investment programme. The Framework provides government, stakeholders, and the public assurance that Cumberland Council ('the Council) has the policies and processes in place to ensure the robust stewardship of public funds.

The Framework ensures that the Council has in place the necessary systems and processes to manage delegated funding from central government budgets effectively and fully in line with government's expectations as outlined in the National Local Growth Assurance Framework.

The Framework sets out how both the Council and the Town Deal Board ('the Board) will effectively undertake their roles in relation to good governance and allocation of Town Deal funding. It identifies the roles of the Council, as Lead Authority and Accountable Body, and the Board and its sub-groups. This includes the process of ensuring value for money, prioritisation, appraisal, business case development and risk management.

The Framework also sets out the Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest Policy. This is intended as a guide, to indicate the standards of conduct and accountability, which are expected of members of the Town Deal Board to assist them in carrying out their role. It is not intended to be a definitive or authoritative statement of the law or good practice.

All Town Deal Board members have an obligation to act in the best interests of the area in which their Board is operating, and in accordance with its governing documents. Conflicts of interests may arise where an individual's personal, organisational, or family interests and/or loyalties conflict with those of the Towns Deal Board. For example, when a board member is a shareholder in a company that is a potential beneficiary of grant funding. Such conflicts may create problems which can:

- Inhibit free discussion.
- Result in decisions or actions that are not in the interests of the Town Deal Board.
- Risk the impression that the Town Deal Board has acted improperly.

The aim is to protect both the organisation and the individuals involved from any appearance of impropriety, to maintain Cumberland Council's high ethical standards and protect our reputation against any allegations of conflict of interest.

As Lead Authority and Accountable Body, the Council has responsibility for ensuring this Framework is in place, meets the standards set out by Government and that all funding decisions are made in accordance with it. The monitoring and section 151 officers will provide assurance of proper use of funds and application of procedures within the own Deal Board activities.

# 2. Governance

## a) Town Deal Board

The Board is the vehicle through which the vision and strategy for the Town Deal has been defined and consists of representatives from key public and private sector organisations across the city. The Board has worked to agree a vision for the area and develop the Town Investment Plan, ensuring that this plan is embedded in evidence and sets a strategy and objectives that are distinctive for the area. As the Town Deal enters its next phase, the Board will continue to provide strategic oversight of the delivery of the Town Deal programme.

Members of the Town Deal Board and other subgroups will work within the agreed governance structures and will always demonstrate the highest standards of conduct. Any third party involved with the Town Deal Board or who is providing a service to the Town Deal Board will be made aware they are expected to act within the governance system and that their conduct is expected to be consistent with the standards applicable to members of the Town Deal Board.

As per the Towns Fund Prospectus, the Government expect that Town Deal Boards align with governance and polices of the Lead Authority (Cumberland Council). This includes whistle blowing, conflicts of interest and complaints.

## Board Representatives and Structure

The Board comprises of public and private organisations, including local government, education sector, the creative/cultural sector, the voluntary sector, and business.

The Board has the following representatives:

- **Chair:** The chair leads and facilitates the meetings, providing strategic direction, and is a private sector representative. The chair will be reviewed on an annual basis.
- **Board Members:** The Board makes recommendations on a collective basis; there may be one vote per member. The Board membership may be revised, as required, to best support the evolving nature of the programme, provided the core

membership remains in line with government guidance. The decision to appoint or alter the membership of the Board rests with the assistant director of Thriving Places of Cumberland Council, in consultation with the leader of the Lead Council and with the chair of the Board.

- **Substitute Members:** In consultation with the chair, members of the Board may nominate substitutes if they are not able to attend a meeting. Substitute members are required to follow the governance process.
- **Advisors and technical support:** Advisors are invited by board members to participate in the meetings but have no voting rights or ability to make decisions on behalf of the Board.
- **The Ministry for Housing, Communities, and Local Government (MHCLG)**: The Area Lead will attend board meetings in an observer capacity.

## Project Delivery Working Groups

Any Project Delivery sub-groups that may be formed, that meet on a regular basis, will report their activities to the Board. The group will be responsible for leading the delivery of the projects within the Town Deal programme, providing updates and information to the Lead Authority and Town Deal Board to ensure the programme is effectively managed across the partnership. The group will be comprised of project managers and project officers responsible for each project.

## Conduct

Cumberland Council expects employees and its members to adhere to the seven Nolan Principles of public life. Therefore, members of the Town Deal Board, and its working groups are expected to adhere to those same principles of:

- Selflessness
- Integrity
- Objectivity
- Accountability
- Openness
- Honesty
- Leadership

Each board member is required to submit a signed version of the Register of Interest, Terms of Reference, and Code of Conduct to become a member. These are published on Cumberland Council's Regeneration page.

An agenda, including reports presented to the Town Deal Board is required to be circulated to all board members five working days prior to a board meeting and will be published on the Cumberland Council website. Minutes and actions from board

meetings are required to be published and circulated to board members no more than ten working days following a board meeting.

## b) Cumberland Council

Cumberland Council is the Lead Authority and Accountable Body for the Town Deal programme.

### Roles and Duties as the Lead Authority

- Ensure recommendations made by the Town Deal Board are made in accordance with good governance principles.
- Ensure transparency requirements are met through publication of information on their website.
- Undertaking any required Environmental Impact, Public Sector Equalities and Subsidy Control Assessments.
- Lead and manage the delivery of Town Deal projects sponsored by the local authority.

### Roles and Duties as the Accountable Body

- Enter into funding agreements / memorandums of understanding with government (MHCLG) to draw down the Town Deal Funding.
- Monitor and evaluate the delivery of individual projects.
- Submit regular monitoring reports on all TIP projects to the MHCLG.
- Receive and account for any project funding including Towns Fund monies.
- Assessing change control requests and recommendations to the Strategic Programme Panel.

The following Committees, Officers and Teams fulfil the following roles in the Town Deal:

- **The Strategic Programme Panel:** Recommendations made by the Town Deal Board, involving change control requests that have been endorsed by the Place Programme Board, require approval by the Council's Strategic Programme Panel.
- **Place Programme Board:** Oversees the Council's Town Deal programmes on a strategic level, monitoring delivery progress and risks. Recommendations made by the Town Deal Board involving change control requests, must be considered and endorsed by the Place Programme Board, before being taken to the Strategic Programme Panel.
- **Area Board:** Oversees the delivery of the Town Deal programme at operational level, monitoring delivery progress and risks. Issues and change control requests

from project leads will be reported and agreed for referral to the Town Deal Board for consideration.

- **The Assistant Director of Thriving Places:** Is the Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) for the delivery of the Town Deal programme for Cumberland Council and sits on the Place Programme Board.
- **The Regeneration Manager:** Is the programme manager for the Town Deal programme and is responsible for the delivery of the Town Deal programme and sits on the Area Board.
- **S151 Officer:** Formal part of the Accountable Body function. Ensure compliance with all necessary financial regulations, to protect the accountable body and ensure proper administration of all financial affairs. Sits on the Strategic Programme Panel.
- **Monitoring Officer:** The Council's Monitoring Officer will ensure compliance with all necessary financial regulations, to protect the accountable body and ensure proper administration of all financial affairs. Sits on the Strategic Programme Panel.
- **Programme Management Office:** Will provide the assurance function and support the SRO S151 officer to lead a wider management and support function of the Programme, with additional support provided by the Council's Governance and Finance teams as required.
- **Secretariat:** The Council provides the secretariat function for the board meetings.

The Governance Structure for Cumberland Council is set out in the organogram below. Issues or recommendations coming from the Town Deal Board will feed into the reporting / decision making of the Place Programme Board and the Strategic Programme Panel.

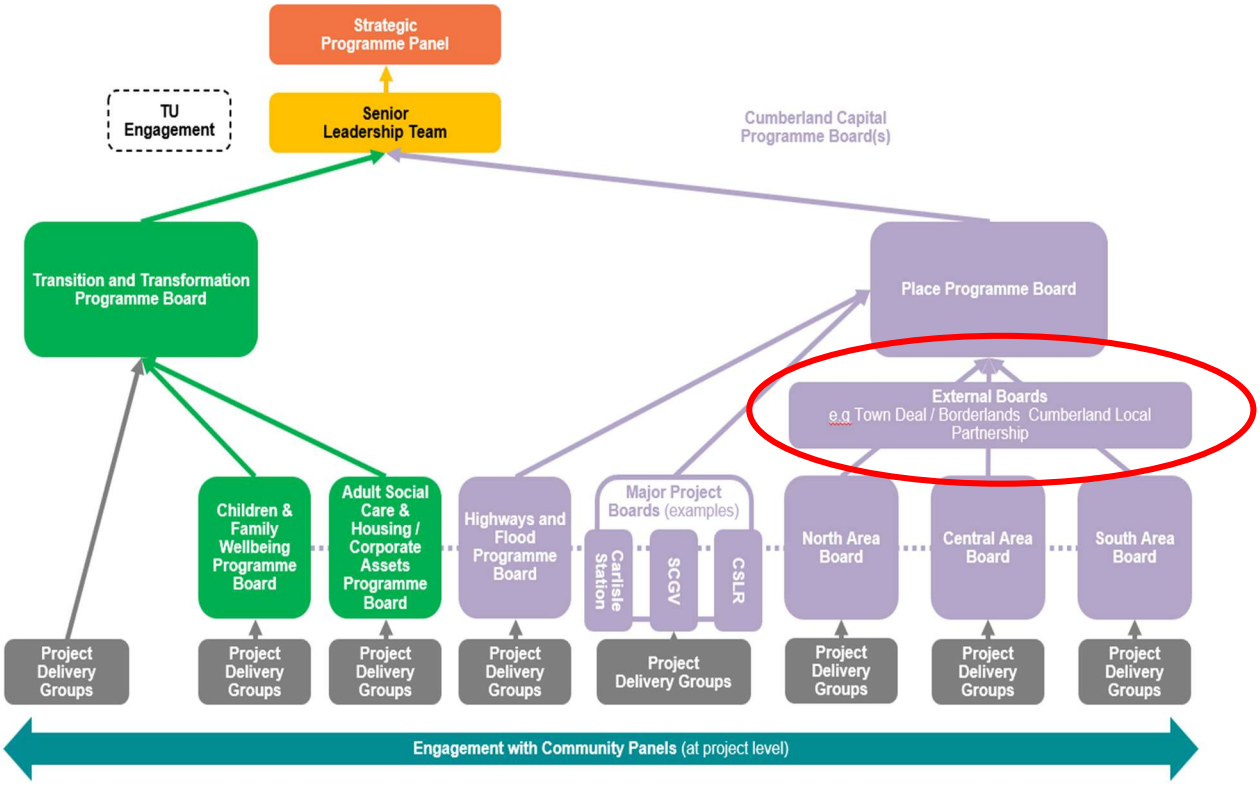

Figure 1: Cumberland Corporate Programme Governance Structure

Under the governance structure, actions stemming from the Town Deal Board, such as the sign-off on reporting / returns to MHCLG, escalated risks, or change controls will be taken to the Place Programme Board in the first instance and subsequently, the Strategic Programme Panel for consideration and approval.

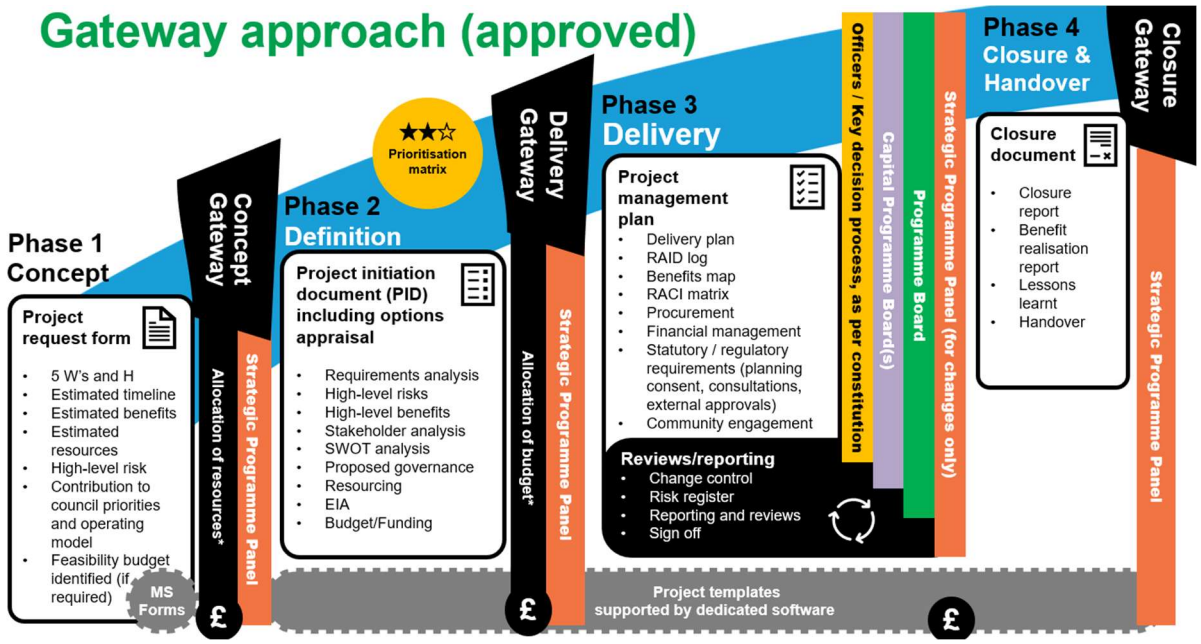

Figure 2: Cumberland Corporate Approval Process.

- The Town Deal Board provides a strategic 'steering' function, advising and providing recommendations to Cumberland Council.
- Cumberland Council is the Accountable Body (and Lead Authority), therefore formal decision-making responsibilities lie with Cumberland Council.
- Programme Management and Co-ordination is delivered through the Project Delivery Group and Communications and Engagement Working Group.
- The Town Deal Programme Lead and individual project leads are responsible for programme delivery, working with external experts as required.
- Oversight and Scrutiny is ensured through engagement with MHCLG, Cumberland Council's Area Place Programme Board, and the appointment of external assurers to assure the business cases.

# 3. Programme Management

Cumberland Council, as Lead Authority and Accountable Body, is committed to ensuring that all projects within the Town Deal programme and which are delivered utilising Town Deal funding, are managed within the context provided by this Assurance Framework.

Cumberland Council, acting as Accountable Body, will hold the Town Deal funding and make payments based on the terms set out in the appropriate Grant Funding Agreements or Memorandums of Understanding, whichever is applicable.

The purpose of the Town Deal Board is to advise Cumberland Council, as Lead Authority and Accountable Body, on the delivery of Town Programme. Its responsibilities include overseeing programme assurance, identifying risks to agreed financial or performance outputs and recommending on appropriate mitigation actions.

## Contracting

Cumberland Council, acting as Accountable Body, will enter into funding agreements with individual promoting authorities and these will be developed and issued in line with the requirements of the Town Deal funding programme. The funding agreements will include:

- The agreed overall level of funding for the scheme.
- The agreed funding profile of the scheme across financial years.
- General approval conditions.
- Any scheme-specific conditions.
- Agreed contract outputs, profiled across financial years.

Before any funding is released, the scheme promoter will need to agree to the funding and the conditions for its use through the signing of the funding agreement. Any pre-conditions imposed as part of the investment decision must be satisfactorily resolved before funding is released to the scheme promoter. Once the funding agreement has been approved, the scheme promoter will be responsible for funding any cost increases from its own resources.

Cumberland Council will be responsible for holding and maintaining records of all Town Deal funding agreements.

## Monitoring, Evaluation and Payments

Cumberland Council, acting as Accountable Body, will develop an agreed Monitoring and Evaluation Plan, which covers the activities funded as part of the Town Deal programme and outlines reporting timescales and procedures. The Town Deal Board will review progress against the Plan.

Each project will complete monitoring returns, as directed within the individual funding agreement. Project monitoring returns will contain information including, but not limited to:

- Level of project spend
- Achievement of outputs
- Update on risk
- Any alterations to output of spend forecast
- Planned activity during the next reporting period

Cumberland Council, acting as Accountable Body, will review and verify all monitoring returns and arrange for payment in line with the agreed profile.

## Scheme Changes

Cumberland Council, acting as Accountable Body, will put in place a transparent methodology to actively manage the Town Deal budget to respond to changed circumstances including scheme slippage as well as to changes in scheme scope and/or costs.

Cumberland Council, acting as Accountable Body, will consider if any notified scheme variation represents a material change to the project. A material change would include, but is not limited to:

- Variation to delivery timescales
- Variation to funding package
- Variation to project outputs
- Variation to project scope or scale

Where a material change is proposed, a Change Control will be considered by Cumberland Council, acting as Accountable Body, who will need to consider if delivery of the proposed changes would mean:

- The project still fits strategically with the objectives of the Town Investment Plan and the wider Town Deal programme.
- The project will still deliver acceptable benefits and value for money.
- The project is still allowable within the context of the Subsidy Control regime.
- The project can be delivered within the required timescales.
- The risk to delivery is raised to an unacceptable level.

If Cumberland Council, acting as Accountable Body, agrees to support the proposed Change Control, then a Project Adjustment Request (PAR) will be made to the MHCLG. If the PAR is approved, then any subsequent necessary amendments will be made to the funding agreement.

## Risk Management

Each project will develop and maintain an individual risk register and plan. This will be reviewed as part of ongoing project monitoring. Each project is required to highlight to Cumberland Council, as Lead Authority and Accountable Body, at the earliest opportunity any significant risks to successful delivery of a scheme.

It is the responsibility of the Project Delivery Group to monitor risk (utilising the risk register) and individual project leads to update the group on any escalation of risk relating to their project(s). The risks of each project are RAG rated using a matrix based on likelihood and impact that each risk presents. Mitigation actions are also included.

Risks will be reported to the Town Deal board at each meeting and at least quarterly. The Town Deal board will be responsible for scrutinising the approach of Cumberland Council, acting as Accountable Body, to managing risk at both project and programme level.

Cumberland Council, acting as Accountable Body, through regular project monitoring will be in a position to identify where projects are likely to underspend, overspend, underperform, and demonstrate non-compliance with the conditions of funding. Such concerns will be reported at the earliest possible stage to the Town Deal Board through reporting against the Risk Register.

In exceptional circumstances, Cumberland Council, acting as Accountable Body, may need to take a decision as to whether it is able to recover some or all funding from a project. In each circumstance a report will be taken to the Town Deal Board seeking agreement for a proposed course of action.

# 4. Scheme of Delegation

The Town Deal Board acts as a steering board, which is responsible for providing strategic direction to the Town Deal programme and making recommendations to the Lead Authority. This includes endorsing strategies, plans, and projects – and any changes that may be required during the duration of the programme.

Recommendations will generally be made during board meetings, with a clear majority of member votes needed for any recommendation to be considered valid. Any recommendation that needs to be made outside the timeframe of scheduled meetings can be decided through the written procedure:

- Only with the chair's approval may a recommendation be made through the written procedure.

- A report covering the matter at hand will be circulated to board members, with a recommendation for the Board to consider and make. Members will be given the chance to respond within five working days.
- If a clear majority of board members indicate that they are comfortable with the recommendation, then it may then be made with agreement of the chair.
- If a majority of board members indicate that they are not comfortable with the recommendation within five working days (by notifying the chair and Lead Authority), the recommendation will be considered the next available board meeting. Board meetings may be brought forward in cases of clear urgency.

Recommendations with financial implications must be ratified by Cumberland Council as the Lead Authority. The assistant director of Thriving Places, in liaison with the Programme Management Office and the S151 Officer, will ensure compliance with all necessary financial regulations, to protect the accountable body and ensure proper administration of all financial affairs.

# 5. Code of Conduct

All Members of the Board, sub-boards or panel or any other group are required to sign up to and act in accordance with the Board Members Code of Conduct set down below, which incorporates the Nolan Principles, included as part of the Town Deal Board Terms of Reference.

Namely, when acting in your capacity as a member of the Town Deal Board:

- You must act in a manner consistent with Cumberland Council's equality and diversity strategy and treat your fellow board members, members of staff and others you encounter when working in their role, with respect and courtesy at all times.

- You must act solely in the public interest and should never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person or act to gain financial or other material benefits for yourself, your family, a friend, or close associate.

- You must not place yourself under a financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might be reasonably regarded to influence you in the performance of your official duties.

- When carrying out your duties you must make all choices, such as making appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards or benefits, based on evidence.

- You are accountable for your decisions, and you must co-operate fully with whatever scrutiny is appropriate to your position. You must be as open as possible about both your decisions and actions, and the decisions and actions of the Town Deal Board. In addition, you should be prepared to give reasons for those decisions and actions.

- You must declare any private interests, both pecuniary[1] and non-pecuniary,[2] including membership of any Trade Union, political party or local authority that relates to your board duties. Furthermore, you must take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest. This includes registering and declaring interests in a manner conforming with the procedures set out in the section 'Registering and declaring pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests'.

- You must, when using or authorising the use by others of the resources of your board, ensure that such resources are not used improperly for political or personal purposes (including party political purposes).

- You must promote and support high standards of conduct when serving on the Board, as characterised by the above requirements, by leadership and example.

## Registering and declaring pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests

You must, within 28 days of taking office as a board member notify Cumberland Council of any disclosable pecuniary interest, where the pecuniary interest is yours, your spouse's or your civil partner's, or is the pecuniary interest of somebody with whom you are living as a spouse, or as if you were civil partners.

In addition, you must notify Cumberland Council of any non-pecuniary interest which your board has decided should be included in the register or which you consider should be included if you are to fulfil your duty to act in conformity with the Seven Principles of Public Life. These non-pecuniary interests will necessarily include your membership of any Trade Union.

Board members should review their individual register of interest before each board meeting and decision-making committee meeting. They must declare any relevant interest(s) at the start of the meeting. If an interest has not been entered onto the Board's register, then the member must disclose the interest at any meeting of the

[1] The definition of a pecuniary interest is as set out in the Localism Act 2011 and the relevant authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests)

[2] A non-pecuniary interest is any interest which is not listed in the Schedule to the Relevant authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012 (No 1464)

Board at which they are present, where they have a disclosable interest in any matter being considered and where the matter is not a 'sensitive interest[3]'.

Following any disclosure of an interest not on the board register or the subject of pending notification, you must notify the chairperson and named contact in Cumberland Council of the interest within 28 days beginning with the date of disclosure.

Unless dispensation has been granted, by the chair of the meeting, and with the agreement of the Board, you may not participate in any discussion of, vote on, or discharge any function related to any matter in which you have a pecuniary interest. Additionally, you must observe the restrictions your board places on your involvement in matters where you have a pecuniary or non-pecuniary interest as defined by Cumberland Council.

Consideration of conflicts of interest is not reserved for formal decision-making meetings and should be applied to any activity or involvement of the Board member in the workings of the Town Deal Investment Planning and Town Deal Board.

A Declaration of Interest Form is provided for this purpose, listing the types of interest to be declared. To be effective, the declaration of interests will be updated at least annually and when any changes occur. The Town Deal Boards will review their register of interest every six months, inform Cumberland Council of any formal changes, and update regularly. At the same point, each board member will be invited to sign an updated declaration confirming their acceptance of the code of conduct.

## Conflict of interest

Members should seek to avoid putting themselves in a position where there is a conflict (commercial, actual, or potential) between their personal interests and their duties to the Town Deal Board. They should not allow any conflict of interest to arise which might interfere with the exercise of their independent judgement. This policy covers all three types of conflicts of interest.

Members should not receive gifts, hospitality, or benefits of any kind from a third party which might be seen to compromise their personal judgement or integrity. For

[3] A 'sensitive interest' is described in the Localism Act 2011 as a member or co-opted member of an authority having an interest, and the nature of the interest being such that the member or co-opted member, and the authority's monitoring officer, consider that disclosure of the details of the interest could lead to the member or co-opted member, or a person connected with the member or co-opted member, being subject to violence or intimidation.

further information in relation to the receiving of gifts, hospitality and other benefits please see Cumberland Council guidance.

The administrator/council liaison lead will maintain a Register of Members' Interests which will be open for public inspection and be made publicly available on the Council's website. Members must disclose routinely to the Board all business interests, financial or otherwise, which they may have, for entry on the Register.

## Procedure for Managing Conflicts

When an interest materially affects a member's ability to vote without prejudice, this will be deemed to be non-trivial and a conflict of interest. In such circumstances the member will withdraw from the meeting while the discussion and vote take place.

Upon the declaration of any conflicts of interest at a meeting of the Board, the non-conflicted members will:

- assess the nature of the conflict
- assess the risk or threat to member decision-making
- decide whether the conflict is non-trivial (that is, it is material or has the potential to be detrimental to the conduct or decisions taken by the members)
- decide what steps to take to avoid or manage the conflict.

The conflicted member must not take part in the discussion or decision and will not be counted when determining whether the Board meeting is quorate.

The non-conflicted members will consider whether it is necessary to seek the advice of Cumberland Council on whether the conflict is nontrivial and/or on how to manage the conflict declared.

Subject to the provisions set out in this policy, if the non-conflicted members consider that the declared conflict is trivial, they may agree that the conflicted member may continue to participate in discussions and the decision-making process.

If the non-conflicted members assess that the conflict is non-trivial, the non-conflicted members will determine what action is appropriate considering the nature and extent of the conflict. A number of steps can be taken to deal with the conflict, including:

- excluding the conflicted member from discussions in relation to the matter to avoid inadvertently influencing the non-conflicted members.

- excluding the conflicted members from decision-making in relation to the matter while the conflict exists
- delegating the matter to a sub-committee of non-conflicted members
- seeking independent advice to help with a decision
- appointing an alternative, non-conflicted member
- resignation of the conflicted member where the conflict is acute or pervasive
- applying to the court for directions.

The chair of the Board will inform the conflicted member of the non-conflicted members' decision. The secretary to the Board will note in the minutes of the meeting the conflict declared, an outline of the discussion and the actions taken to manage the conflict.

## Collective Responsibility

The Town Deal Board operates by board members taking majority decisions in a corporate manner at meetings. Therefore, a decision of the Board, even when it is not unanimous, is a decision taken by the members collectively and each individual member has a duty to stand by it, whether or not he or she was present at the meeting when the decision was taken.

If a board member disagrees with a decision taken, his or her duty is to have any disagreement discussed and recorded in the minutes.

If any member's conduct falls short of the standards set in this Framework, they may be dismissed from any or all, of their roles by a majority vote of the Board.

The member in question will not be allowed to participate in this vote. This will also apply if there has been any proven misconduct in a non-Town Fund role or illegal activity that may bring the Town's Fund activity into disrepute.

## Non-Compliance

Every board member must comply with the Code of Conduct and are individually responsible for raising concerns regarding breach of policy.

If Cumberland Council or the chair becomes aware of an allegation that a board member has acted in breach of this policy, a fact-finding exercise to establish the validity of the allegation will be undertaken, before undertaking any further action. Minor, vexatious or unsubstantiated allegations will be dismissed at this point.

Where there is evidence to support the allegation, the board members who are considered to be in breach of the policy will be invited to a one-to-one meeting with the chair, to discuss the situation. Further action being dependent on the level of the breach. The chair will determine what further action is necessary depending on the seriousness of the alleged breach. The chair may reach a resolution of minor breaches of the Code with the board member at this stage and will report the action taken to the next meeting of the Board.

If the breach relates to a failure to register or declare a registrable interest at a meeting, as opposed to manage a conflict of interest, the chair will invite the board member to comply with the policy within 14 days of the discussion. Should the board member fail to comply with the request, then the chair will consider impeachment action, in line with the Board's terms of reference. The Board's decision is final. If the alleged breach is serious and/or complex in nature, for example a failure to declare a pecuniary interest or to properly manage any conflict of interest, the chair will commission further investigation.

Following receipt of the report of the investigation, the chair will invite the board member to a meeting to discuss the findings and where appropriate the resolution of the breach. The chair will report the outcome of the meeting to the next meeting of the Board. Where a serious breach of the Code of Conduct has been established, the chair will consider impeachment action, in line with the Town Deal Board's Terms of Reference and Cumberland Council's processes as lead authority.

In the instance of more serious breaches, for example failure to manage a conflict of interest or adhere to the Code of Conduct, the chair will invite the board member to a one-to-one meeting to discuss the breach. If it becomes clear that there is no satisfactory explanation then the chair will consider impeachment action, in line with the Board's Terms of Reference. The Board's decision is final.

In the instance where there is evidence that the chair may be in breach of the policy, they will be invited to a one-to-one meeting with the Monitoring Officer from the Accountable Body to discuss the situation. Further action being dependent on the level of the breach. The Monitoring Officer will determine what further action is necessary depending on the seriousness of the alleged breach. The Monitoring Officer may reach a resolution of minor breaches of the Code with the chair at this stage and will report the action taken to the next meeting of the Board.

## Whistleblowing

If a board member, officer, third party stakeholder, or member of the public, becomes aware of any activity undertaken by the Board or its members that they perceive as illegal, improper, unethical or otherwise inconsistent with the Code of Conduct, they

should report this matter in line with Cumberland Council's Confidential Reporting Policy.

# 6. Communication, Publications and Engagement

## Publication of reports and documents

The Town Deal Board papers are published on the Cumberland Council Regeneration webpage.

These are published in line with the guidance and best practice in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972, meeting agendas and papers are published 5 working days before the meeting takes place and draft minutes of the meeting are published within 10 working days of the meeting taking place.

Any declaration of interest made at the meeting will be included in the minutes.
Cumberland Council, as the Accountable Body, determine whether information is treated as public or private (not for publication). The Board and Lead Authority are committed to transparency and openness, and aim to ensure information regarding the Board and projects is readily available, unless there is reason for exemption, as per The Local Authorities-Executive Arrangements Meetings and Access to Information Regulations 2012:

1. Information relating to any individual.
2. Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any person (including the Authority holding that information).
4. Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultation or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority.
5. Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.
6. Information which reveals that the authority proposes:
    a. To give under any enactment a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or
    b. To make an order or direction under any enactment.
7. Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation, or prosecution of crime.

Cumberland Council has in place appropriate data protection arrangements in line with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. The Council is the Data Controller for the Board in its capacity as Accountable Body.

## Consultation and engaging with stakeholders

The Town Deal Board and Cumberland Council are committed to ensuring effective engagement and collaboration with all partners and stakeholders to support the Board in its role as an effective advocate for the area and communicate key information relating the Town Deal Projects.

Examples of engagement activities include:

- Consultation with partners, stakeholders and local communities on the Town Deal projects.
- Regular engagement with local media on the project updates.
- Regular social media and webpage updates
- Organising focussed sessions with key stakeholders, including young people and local businesses.

Engagement is used to shape project development, inform key decisions and help set priorities for future strategy development.

The Town Investment Plan, together with strategic documents produced by Cumberland Council and its partners, help provide the context, rationale and up to date evidence base for project and programme development.

The Town Deal Board will remain in regular communication with MHCLG and the Towns Fund Delivery Partner and other towns who have received investment from the Towns Fund to ensure a collaborative approach to sharing ideas and support on any challenges.

## Branding

A brand for all Town Deal publications has been developed by Cumberland Council's Design Team. This will be used for all publications and can only be used with the Council's permission. Any development of the brand will be led by Cumberland Council. All project publications must adhere to the branding guidance.

Cumberland Council will lead on any general Town Deal communications (including announcements and reaction to press enquiries). Press releases and statements to

be approved the assistant director of Thriving Places, the leader of Cumberland Council, and the chair of the Town Deal Board prior to issue.

Project lead organisations will work with the Council as the Lead Authority to sign off any project level communications, ensuring that the Council is involved in project level communications, and that the material appropriately references the Town Deal.

For major announcements, HM Government and the Town Deal Board will be notified in advance. The ability to provide any printed material is limited at present. Copies of printed publications will be made available only where there are no other means of sharing the information.

All communications will need to adhere to the government's Towns Fund Communications and Branding guidelines.

# 7. Financial Regulations

Cumberland Council must conduct its business efficiently and ensure it has sound financial management policies in place, including arrangements to monitor compliance.

Cumberland Council's statutory section 151 officer is also charged with ensuring that proper financial management processes are in place.
Cumberland Council's financial regulations provide clarity about the financial accountability of individuals.

The regulations identify responsibilities of individuals across all levels. Written records are a requirement where decision making has been delegated to members of staff to give assurance that tasks or decisions have been performed in accordance with the Financial Regulations.

A scheme for further delegations will be put in place by the Accountable Body with specific reference to the delegation of authority for the Towns Fund programme. This proposal will ensure the most efficient and timely management of the programme, in the context of the delivery timeframes.

# 8. Procurement

Cumberland Council, as the Accountable Body carries out all procurement processes on behalf of the Town Deal Board. As a public sector body, the Council follows rigorous procurement processes in full compliance with HMT regulation on tendering and procurement and is a 'contracting authority' under the Public Contracts Regulations.

# 9. Inclusion and Sustainability

The Town Deal Board looks to enable inclusivity and sustainability in all its recommendation-making processes and strategic development. The Board will consider how projects will improve the health and well-being of the community. Each project should demonstrate how it meets the governments clean growth principles and Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED).