



**Glastonbury Town Deal Board
Minutes of the Board Extraordinary Meeting
held on 23 May 2025 from 14.00 – 16.00 hours
at Glastonbury Town Hall and on Teams**

In Attendance:

Dr Lynne Sedgemore, CBE	Chair
Michael White	Vice Chair, and Mayor of Glastonbury Town Council
Jon Cousins	Community Representative
Jacqueline Cross	Community Representative with NHS Background
Paul Knight	Business Representative
Cllr Liz Leyshon	Somerset Council, Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Resources, Procurement and Performance
Kama Mackenzie	Community Representative
Paul Manning	Street and Glastonbury Chamber of Commerce
John Revill	Strode College Principal
Cllr Mike Rigby	Lead Member for Economic Development, Planning and Transportation
Ian Tucker	Business Representative
Richard Winterbottom	Business Representative

Apologies:

Emily Bunn	Community Representative
Sarah Dyke	MP for Somerton and Glastonbury
Cllr Lokabandhu	Glastonbury Town Council Representative
Conor Ogilvie-Davidson	Glastonbury Town Council
Louise Rowley	Representative for DWP

In Attendance:

Lara Bell	Head of Regeneration and Major Projects, Somerset Council
Jackie Gill	Business Support, Somerset Council
Paul Hickson	Service Director, Economic Development, Skills & Climate, Somerset Council
Jane Sharp	Regeneration Lead Specialist (East), Somerset Council

Agenda Item	Discussion	Actions
1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies	<p>Lynne welcomed everyone. She said that the meeting was being recorded.</p> <p>Apologies had been received from Emily Bunn, Sarah Dyke MP, Conor Oglivie-Davidson, Cllr Lokabandhu and Louise Rowley.</p>	
2. Declaration of Interests and Gift Register	<p>Lynne asked if there were any amendments to the Declaration of Interests or the Gifts Register.</p> <p>No changes were declared.</p>	
3. Chair's Opening Remarks	<p>Lynne confirmed that the purpose of the meeting was an update and discussion on The Life Factory.</p>	
4. Formally agree Minutes from last meeting held on 11th April 2025 (actions to be reported at next meeting)	<p>The Board formally agreed the minutes of the last GTD Board meeting held on Friday 11 April 2025, these had been circulated and agreed by email.</p> <p>Matters arising from meeting held on 11 April:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lynne asked that item 6 in the minutes be amended to say that the public statement celebrated the overall success of projects and the good work of the GTD Board. • Jane to prioritise health checks for the Enabling Project and Robert Richards Initiative in time for the next Board meeting. <p>Matters arising from meeting held on 21 Feb:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Programme Risk Register would be a separate agenda item going forwards. • A Summary Sheet on the Robert Richards Initiative allocations to be shared at the next Board meeting. <p>Liz asked that the minutes from the last two meetings to be uploaded to the GTD website, as the last visible minutes were dated November 2024.</p> <p>Jane confirmed they had both been uploaded and should be visible.</p>	

<p>5. The Life Factory:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal update. • Discussion on audit information • GTD Board Statement 	<p>Lara updated the Board on recent events.</p> <p>Somerset Council, as the Accountable Body, had issued a statement last week making it clear that no further funding would be released to the Red Brick Building for The Life Factory project. The Red Brick Building Board had been briefed on this, as had local Members and the GTD Board.</p> <p>The 22 May 2025 Audit Committee meeting had included The Life Factory Audit under Item 10a titled “SWAP Internal Audit Progress Report 2024-25” and the link to this document is found here.</p> <p>Discussion on Audit information</p> <p>Liz led the discussion. She said the last paragraph in the Council’s statement was important and it said, “We continue to work with the Board of Red Brick building and the Glastonbury Town Deal Board to consider the next steps for this project, The Life Factory, while additional audit work to validate our claims to MHCLG continues.” The continued validation of grant claims by SWAP is why this process is taking a long time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ian asked why their claims hadn’t been validated when they were submitted. <p>Liz replied that Town Deal funding is very different to other types of funding as it allows claims against retrospective spend and grant in advance. Claims can be validated against evidence of goods & services purchased and works done. With good project management in place, this is done daily, weekly or monthly; when it is not it gets complicated.</p> <p>Their main contractor is Beckery Construction Company (BCC), which is a wholly owned subsidiary of Red Brick Building Centre Limited (RBB). The accounting information we received had to be looked at line by line and there are well over 1800 transactions which all need to be checked.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ian asked why this was allowed to happen over several claims. <p>Liz responded that the last full claim allowed was in December 2023, since then there have been some minor claims agreed for specific costs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ian and Paul M asked if the issues experienced with the RBB’s Accelerator Project for Building C had raised a red flag around further funding. <p>Liz said there were several contributing factors to what has happened. Some former Mendip District Council (MDC) employees who transferred to</p>	
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Somerset Council had since left and this may have reduced oversight on the RBB and its BCC.

Key ex-MDC officers had been lost including the Senior Officer, a consultant, the Business Support Officer. We also lost MDC's s151 Officer post, finance officers and the finance system had been changed. Somerset Council's Portfolio Holder had more recently changed from Cllr Wyke to Cllr Rigby.

The only consistencies were the GTD Board, Jane Sharp and herself.

She added you may have seen a statement saying that the RBB paused the project, that was incorrect. Liz had initiated the pausing of the project when she saw Building C roof had been removed in the middle of winter.

Appendix A of the Grant Funding Agreement says that all procurement must be on a competitive process. RBB decided to go in-house via Beckery Construction Company (BCC), it should have been selected from an open market process.

Somerset Council and the Glastonbury Town Deal Board had taken many actions since and the situation is truly regrettable.

Liz concluded that a lesson for local government reorganisation was that we should have retained 2 or 3 Deputy s151 Officers and she was trying to get this added to the LGR lessons learnt.

- Paul asked if RBB was out of their depth.

Liz said the Accountable Body forwards grant to projects on receipt of grant claims and then the Council claims it back from MHCLG.

Government had intended that Town Deals would take a light touch approach. At Audit Committee yesterday, Cllr Ros Wyke made the point that Town Deal funding is very different to any other funding and there was an increased risk to Town Deals because of its funding model.

- Kama quoted Finding 1 from the audit report which says "risk register not reflective of identified project risk and project risk not escalated within the council" and should be linked to the capacity of the Somerset Programme Team. Capacity was not mentioned in the report. She reminded the Board of the letter they had written to Somerset Council expressing concerns about the capacity of officers and the impact this could

have on the programme.

Liz agreed and said capacity issues had impacted the former District functions more than the former County Council functions.

- Jon asked what happens next, in particular who will pay creditors and what we should do about a community asset without a roof?

Liz highlighted the changing picture. She had been told of a creditor being owed £28,000, but there was now an additional invoice of £364,000 for further work commissioned after work on the project had been paused. Finding the evidence was very hard.

Jon asked who had signed off the additional work.

Liz replied she didn't know.

Lynne asked if RBB's project manager had been interviewed as part of the Audit.

Jane confirmed not as he was no longer an employee.

Paul M asked if RBB should take responsibility.

Liz confirmed that it was RBB's responsibility to commission the works. They had created their wholly owned subsidiary BCC to deliver their project. However, the Accountable Body is Somerset Council and Somerset Council is accountable to Government.

Paul K said he had questioned the project manager about TLF project in September 2023 when he made a presentation to this Board. It was a big failure to have set up BCC and not have a formal contract in place with the RBB or a quantity surveyor.

Liz asked how often claims were submitted and MHCLG performance reports completed.

Jane confirmed that Project Claims are quarterly or monthly by agreement with individual projects and MHCLG Performance Reports are every 6 months.

Liz said she was grateful to Paul K for the time he had spent at The Life Factory, as we have an audit trail of his findings. Liz also thanked John Capper for his detailed chronological statement and said he had been interviewed by SWAP as someone who was there while the BCC was in place and functioning as the main contractor.

There was consensus that learning from this was that the normal way of funding projects is the right way, and the light touch approach is far too risky. Projects also must have a properly qualified and experienced

project manager, design team and contractors.

Lynne summarised the situation by saying that there were multiple accountabilities and suggested taking a look at where the GTD Board sat in the accountability trail, albeit as an advisory body. This would require a coordinated approach to evidence its accountability.

Lynne then offered her resignation if the Board felt this was the right thing to do.

Lara outlined next steps:

- The audit process continued and was focused on validation of claims.
- Somerset Council was strengthening its internal financial processes and procedures.
- A meeting with MHCLG was taking place next week. There was a risk MHCLG could seek claw back of grant if the project cannot be delivered in line with the grant terms.
- It was suggested the Board could set up a subgroup for TLF matters, if appropriate.
- We continue working with the RBB Board to identify a way forward.
- An options appraisal was being prepared and would consider the possibility of reroofing Building C and not leaving it in a poor state for the Glastonbury community.

Kama said the situation would be a lot worse if it wasn't for Liz. She said having additional officer capacity was critical and this needed to be added to the next steps list. She then asked what measures would be put in place to ensure match funding is actively sought across projects.

Lynne stated she has made it very clear to Somerset Council more support was needed including for communications & PR.

Paul H assured the Board that the Council was treating officer capacity as a priority.

Paul K asked what the RBB Board wanted to do.

Lynne said the RBB Board had held an emergency meeting and there was an appetite from some Board members to move forward and explore options.

There was a general feeling that spending more money on TLF project was the wrong thing to do.

Jon said that as a Community Benefit Society, RBB would have dedicated development consultant support from SW Co-Op Development Ltd who could help them with fundraising ideas.

	<p>Ian suggested the Board pass a motion asking Somerset Council to stabilise the position of Buildings A and B so they could continue operating.</p> <p>It was agreed the sustainability of the RBB Centre was important for Glastonbury.</p> <p>On the GTD Board statement, it was agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not to issue a statement until after the meeting with MHCLG next week. • Seek views from Board members on its content and the statement shared with Board members before issuing it. • Have input from a PR company to help prepare and issue the statement. (afternote: Dome Marketing is not able to work on the Town Deal at the present time) 	<p>GTD Board statement on TLF to be issued</p>
<p>6. Verbal updates on Progress:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board Terms of Reference • Board Vacancy • Health Check Task & Finish Group • Other updates 	<p>Board Terms of Reference</p> <p>Lara informed the Board that the Terms of Reference had been to the Bridgwater Town Deal Board and would be on the next GTD Board agenda.</p> <p>The TOR requires the Chair to be re-elected yearly.</p> <p>Lynne asked the Board for their thoughts as this may be a good time for the Chair to be re-elected.</p> <p>Kama voiced her vote of confidence to Lynne to remain as Chair.</p> <p>The Board agreed Lynne should remain Chair.</p> <p>There was a business rep vacancy and Paul M had suggested a name. Lynne had followed this up and would report back once she had had a reply.</p> <p>Health Check Task & Finish Group</p> <p>Jane confirmed that the T&F Group's Terms of Reference has been agreed and reviews of the Group continuing would happen in July and September.</p> <p>The next step was to engage Ian Gent to complete further support work on the health check findings.</p> <p>Health checks would be carried out on the Enabling Project and the Robert Richards Initiative.</p>	<p>Board TOR on next agenda</p> <p>Health Checks done on RRI and Enabling Project</p>

	<p>Other Updates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St Brigid's Chapel & Field: Planning consent granted and works start on-site late May 2025. • Robert Richards Initiative: Path works starting soon in three locations. • Enabling Project: Ground investigations have taken place and the full results are due by end June. We have asked MHCLG for a time extension due to delays including flooding of Site A and the illegal encampment on Site B. • Beckery House: This is in the final stages of sale to Glastonbury Town Council and this could be a site for a rooftop solar array. • Tor Sport & Leisure Hub: This site could soon be hosting a Junior Park Run. • Farm project: Ian said there is a risk to this project due to The Life Factory situation, it needed protection. There is an agreement from Somerset Council to transfer the land from RBB to Bridies Farm CIC or a new Land Trust and it was reported the lawyers are looking at the land transfer now. • Derelict caravans: Liz said it was unlikely Somerset Council would find significant budget to deal with all the town's derelict caravans. The best overall solution may be the Bristol City Council approach to develop meanwhile sites. 	
<p>7. AOB</p>	<p>Kama said she was resigning from the Board and added she was also the Board's safeguarding contact and link to the Farm project.</p> <p>Lynne thanked Kama for her contribution and commitment to the Board and was sorry to see her go.</p> <p>The date of the next meeting would be Friday 11 July.</p> <p>The meeting ended at 3.41pm.</p>	<p>Add Board vacancy to next agenda</p>