

Composition of the Town Board

COMPOSITION OF THE TOWN BOARD

1. In December 2023, DLUHC published the "Long-Term Plan for Towns - Guidance for Local Authorities and Town Boards". This guidance is published in full at www.gov.uk/dluhc . This guidance was supplemented in a further publication by DLUHC on 6th March 2024, under which Wisbech was designated by DLUHC as one of the additional towns to benefit from funding for a Town Board.
2. The guidance is, with the few exceptions given below in paragraphs 3 to 7, wholly non-prescriptive as to the membership of Town Boards, with membership varying dependent upon the local context. The Town Board must be a community-led institution that builds civic capacity in the town. The Town Board must be chaired by a local community leader or local businessperson.
3. The Independent Chair should be invited to take up the role by the local authority, considering who is best placed to convene partners and is a respected figure in the community. The Chair must not be the MP or an elected member in any authority.
4. The Chair should act as a champion for the town and provide leadership for the Town Board, ensuring it is community-led and embedded within the local area.
5. The relevant local MP must sit on the Town Board.
6. In two-tiered local authority areas such as Fenland, there should be a County Councillor and a District Councillor on the Board.
7. A Senior Representative of the Police must be a member of the Board. This will be the Police & Crime Commissioner although, subject to the agreement of the Chair, it may be a local senior representative from the Police who can act as an alternative. Should a Town Board feel that they require further contribution from the Police, noting particularly the different skills and input that could be provided by an operational representative, then it is within their discretion to invite whomever they deem appropriate to sit on the Board.
8. In the case of Wisbech, the Chair and the local authority agree that there is no suitable existing Board which can be utilised as the Town Board, and the Chair has therefore engaged with the local authority to agree that a new Town Board be established, with membership as listed in Appendix 4. Town Boards should be run by local people, for local people, to support local communities by putting them in control.

9. In considering the membership of the Town Board, it has been noted that the guidance states that the membership of a Town Board should be tailored to local context and is at the Chair's discretion, but might comprise (inter alia) individuals from community partners, local businesses and social enterprises, cultural, arts, heritage and sporting organisations, public agencies and anchor institutions.
10. The guidance is entirely silent about Combined Authorities. However, the Chair has agreed, in our particular local circumstances, that it is appropriate to invite the local member of the CPCA Board to sit on the Town Board.
11. On March 23rd, 2024, DLUHC published a technical Q&A on its Long-Term Plan for Towns. This publication included the following additional advice:
- i) By 1 June 2024 DLUHC expects:
- a chair to be appointed to the Town Board
 - local authorities to work with the chair to set up the Town Board or repurpose an existing Town Deal Board
 - a Town Board to be fully established
 - the Town Board start planning and initiating community engagement.
- ii) DLUHC strongly encourages consistency and continuity in terms of Town Board membership, in line with the long-term nature of this programme.
- iii) It is up to the chair of the Town Board to determine membership. The board should comprise representatives from a cross-section of the local community to promote community leadership.
- iv) The guidance is intentionally flexible in terms of Board membership, leaving as much as possible up to the local area to decide.
- v) Town Boards can design their own process to update the membership of the Board, in collaboration with the relevant local authority, which in this case is Fenland District Council. Any updates to the Board membership will need to be communicated to government.