# Smethwick Partnership Board Engagement and Funding Subgroup Meeting Notes

| | |
|---|---|
| **Meeting details** | 3 September 2026 |
| **Attendees** | Z Hussain (Chair), C Padda, G Josan, J Watkins, W Ali |
| **Apologies received** | A Taylor, J Thompson, M Sibi, K Patel, R Lake |
| **Support officers** | A Fuidge, E Pate, E Parkes, L Firth and R Rahim |

## 1. Welcome and apologies

1.1. Z Hussain welcomed members to the meeting. Apologies received were reported to members present.

1.2. The Chair outlined the agenda items for discussion and reminded members that declarations of interest should be clearly identified at the start of each meeting. It was acknowledged that maintaining transparency and consistency would be important as the funding programme progresses.

## 2. Declarations of interest raised

2.1. M Sibi – Declared interest via email with regards to the Expression of Interest submission from Pathway Progress. M Sibi declared interest prior to the meeting and sent apologies to this meeting.

2.2. K Patel – Declared interest via email with regards to the Expression of Interest submission from Ideal for All. K Patel declared interest prior to the meeting and sent apologies to this meeting.

## 3. Subgroup Terms of Reference

3.1. Members considered amendments to the Terms of Reference following the delegation previously approved by the Board. The subgroup's authority to review and approve applications had already been agreed by the Board and the proposed update simply reflected that decision within the Terms of Reference.

3.2. Discussion focused on membership arrangements and the current provision limiting subgroup membership. Members agreed to update the Terms of Reference to state subgroup meetings remain open to all Board members.

3.3. A discussion took place around retaining a specified number of voting members while allowing wider attendance by other Board members as observers and contributors. Members highlighted the importance of

maintaining consistency and commitment within the subgroup, recognising that its effectiveness relies on regular attendance and participation. However, concerns were raised that any changes should be handled transparently and carefully to avoid perceptions that participation was being restricted. Members agreed that the subgroup should remain open and inclusive while proposing a limit of six members with voting rights.

3.4. Discussion also considered mandatory representation within the subgroup, including the Subgroup Chair (appointed by the Board), Local MP and local councillor representation. Members noted that wider Board arrangements already specify certain positions and considered whether a similar approach should apply to the subgroup.

3.5. Members were informed activity is ongoing to identify a local ward councillor to join the Board to ensure compliance with government guidance.

3.6. Members acknowledged the importance of reviewing attendance records to understand current engagement levels and help inform future membership arrangements.

3.7. **Agreed: Update Terms of Reference to confirm subgroup meetings remain open to All Board members, for Board approval**

3.8. **Agreed: Update Terms of Reference to include a maximum number of 6 voting members, for Board approval.**

3.9. **Agreed: Update Terms of Reference to include a list of mandatory members, including the Chair of the subgroup appointed by the Board, Local MP and local councillor representative, for Board approval.**

3.10. **Agreed: To keep an attendance log of subgroup meetings to help inform future membership arrangements.**

## 4. Smethwick Pride in Place Expression of Interests

4.1. Members received an overview of newly submitted Expressions of Interest alongside an update on previously received applications and funding themes.

4.2. Discussion highlighted a number of recurring themes emerging from applications, including family support, health and wellbeing, education support, environmental initiatives and community development.

4.3. Members noted several opportunities where similar applications could potentially be delivered through more coordinated approaches. It was suggested that organisations pursuing comparable objectives could be

encouraged to work together, helping to strengthen delivery, maximise impact and create broader benefits across Smethwick.

4.4. The discussion broadened into consideration of larger strategic projects which could potentially be commissioned directly by the Board rather than delivered solely through grant funding processes. Examples were discussed including educational support programmes e.g. tuition schemes, canal-related projects and support for community allotments.

4.5. Members reflected on the need to balance support for individual projects with longer-term strategic ambitions. It was recognised that some proposals may be better considered as part of future programme development rather than through the current grants process.

4.6. Opportunities to explore match funding were also discussed. Members were keen to encourage applicants to maximise external investment and leverage additional resources wherever possible.

4.7. The subgroup also considered the importance of partnership working. Members acknowledged that many applications referenced collaboration but often provided limited evidence of how partnerships would operate in practice. It was agreed that stronger partnership arrangements should be encouraged and reflected within future assessments.

4.8. The subgroup also reflected on the importance of assessing value for money. Members suggested that future application assessments could benefit from clearer information regarding anticipated beneficiaries and cost per participant to support funding decisions.

4.9. Members discussed future evaluation arrangements and agreed that learning should continue to be captured throughout the programme, rather than waiting until the end of delivery. It was suggested that application data, community feedback and emerging priorities should be brought together to support future strategic planning. Members acknowledged that there would inevitably be lessons learned from the first funding round and agreed these should be reviewed and used to strengthen future funding opportunities, application processes and strategic commissioning approaches.

4.10. Regarding Expression of Interests, the Subgroup agreed which applications would progress to full application stage, and which ones required clarification.

4.11. **Agreed: Agreed to invite the following applications to full application stage:**

4.11.1. **Benson Community Project**
4.11.2. **New Beginnings**
4.11.3. **Rights and Equality Sandwell**

4.11.4. **West Smethwick Enterprise**
4.11.5. **Dorothy Parkes**
4.11.6. **Purple Minds**
4.11.7. **Ideal for All**
4.11.8. **Illey Community Associations**

4.12. **Agreed: Two Expression of Interests would not progress until further clarification is provided:**

4.12.1. **Ifa Yoruba Contemporary Arts Trust – Confirmation of delivery arrangements. The applicant is registered within the boundary, however the delivery organisation sits outside the boundary.**

4.12.2. **SYCC – Outstanding queries regarding eligibility require response before inviting to full application stage.**

## 5. Smethwick Pride in Place Full Applications

5.1. Members received an update on the first round of full applications and the outcome of independent scoring panel assessments. Members were informed that the funding demand already exceeded available revenue funding and that further applications were still expected.

5.2. Members were informed an applicant invited to full application stage had returned their full application with a registered address outside of the investment boundary (Care Link West Midlands), therefore did not progress to scoring stage.

5.3. Members reviewed assessment outcomes and discussed feedback provided by the scoring panel. Comments were raised regarding the relationship between panel assessments and local knowledge of community organisations. Members acknowledged the value of independent assessment but noted that assessors may not always have the same level of understanding regarding the track record, partnerships and reputation of organisations operating within Smethwick.

5.4. Members reviewed recommendations for applications that had not reached the minimum threshold score. It was confirmed that these applications would be given the opportunity to address weaknesses identified through assessment and resubmit further evidence for review.

5.5. Members also discussed consistency within the scoring process, including how sustainability and match funding had been assessed across applications. For example, an organisation has been run by volunteers for 5+ years but their application scored low for sustainability as it's ran by volunteers. Officers

agreed to report the concerns to the scoring panel and seek further clarification if required.

5.6. Concerns were also raised regarding future affordability given the level of oversubscription. Members acknowledged the need to continue monitoring funding allocations and ensuring fairness as further applications are assessed.

5.7. Two applications that achieved the 60% threshold were recommended for approval.

5.8. Members considered the application for £25,000 capital funding which formed part of a wider funding package involving multiple external funding sources. It was noted that delivery of the project relied on securing the remaining match funding required. Members supported approval subject to all necessary match funding being secured.

5.9. Members then considered the £10,000 revenue application for community engagement and cultural activity. During discussion, members highlighted opportunities to maximise the wider value of funded events by using them as opportunities for community engagement and promotion of programme activity.

5.10. **Agreed: To approve the St Albans £25,000 capital grant application, subject to the organisation securing the required match funding. Pride in Place funding to be released once the organisation provides evidence that the required match funding is secured.**

5.11. **Agreed: To approve the Black Country Touring revenue grant application.**

5.12. **Agreed: To give authority to Sandwell Council to progress grant agreements and administer the grant for St Albans and Black Country Touring as per the agreements outlined in 5.9 and 5.10.**

## 6. Any Other Business

6.1. Members were informed by Neighbourhood Team officers that West Midlands Police have identified a proposal for the Board's consideration, relating to ANPR vehicle technology and wider community safety initiatives.

6.2. The Subgroup agreed this should be recorded and be included in strategic planning discussions and that any proposal should clearly demonstrate how it would contribute to community priorities within Smethwick, deliver additional benefits beyond existing activity, should focus on outcomes for local residents and alignment with priorities identified through engagement activity.

6.3. The Chair advised that they would be unable to attend the next Board meeting. Arrangements were therefore discussed to ensure the outcomes of the subgroup meeting were properly reported back to the Board.

## 7. Summary of actions and agreements

### 7.1. Actions

7.1.1. Officers to report the concerns of the Subgroup with the scoring panel around scoring of sustainability and match funding.

### 7.2. Agreements

7.2.1. To update the Terms of Reference for Board approval, to:

7.2.1.1. Confirm subgroup meetings remain open to All Board members

7.2.1.2. Include a maximum number of 6 voting members, for Board approval.

7.2.1.3. Include a list of mandatory members, including the Chair of the subgroup appointed by the Board, Local MP and local councillor representative, for Board approval.

7.2.2. To keep an attendance log of subgroup meetings to help inform future membership arrangements.

7.2.3. To invite 8 applicants to full application stage (listed in section 4.11).

7.2.4. To ask 2 applicants to provide further clarification on their application to ensure they meet the eligibility requirements of the funding programme (listed in section 4.12).

7.2.5. To approve grant applications from St Albans Community Association and Black Country Touring, and give authority to Sandwell Council to progress grant agreements and administer the grant for St Albans and Black Country Touring as per the agreements outlined in 5.9 and 5.10.