

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CLACTON TOWN BOARD,
HELD ON FRIDAY, 19TH JULY, 2024 AT 1.30 PM
IN THE WESTCLIFF THEATRE, TOWER ROAD, CLACTON-ON-SEA, CO15 1LE**

Board Members present:	George Kieffer (Chairman), Sharon Alexander, Neil Gallagher, Cllr Ivan Henderson, Roger Hirst, Rob Mitchell-Gears, Cllr Mark Stephenson and Cllr Lesley Wagland.
In attendance:	Steve Evison, Sam Jones, Lee Heley, Ella Latham, Greg Myddleton and Keith Simmons

[Note: Specific action shown in bold]

19. WELCOME FROM THE BOARD'S CHAIRMAN

The Chairman, Mr Kieffer, welcomed those in attendance to the Board meeting.

He then congratulated Nigel Farage on being elected as the Member of Parliament (MP) for Clacton at the United Kingdom Parliamentary General Election on 4 July 2024. He looked forward to welcoming him to participation in the work of the Board. He also recorded the commendation of the former MP, Giles Watling, for his advocacy for Clacton-on-Sea alongside the District and County Councils that had been instrumental in securing the Long Term Plan for Towns support from central Government to this point.

Mr Kieffer also drew attention to the departmental name change from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) as being responsible for the Long Term Plan for Towns programme within central government.

20. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the following Members of the Board:

- Billy Ball,
- Ian Davidson,
- Nigel Farage MP
- Emily T Murray
- Craig Newnes,
- Laura Taylor-Green.

21. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 24 May 2024 were submitted to the Board for confirmation.

It was AGREED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 24 May 2025 be received and confirmed as an accurate record of that meeting.

22. UPDATE TO THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Terms of Reference previously adopted by the Board (Minute 16 B. of 25 May 2024 refers) were re-submitted with an amendment to reflect the membership of the Board of Nigel Farage MP (see Minute 19 above). The Board was also advised that the reference to the West Cliff Theatre in the organisation details within the membership section were in need of correction.

The amended Terms of Reference for the Board, as submitted, be approved as detailed above.

23. (I) UPDATE ON THE LONG TERM PLAN FOR TOWNS - CLACTON-ON-SEA(II) QUICK WIN IDEAS AND BUDGET - FOR APPROVAL COMMUNITY AND (III) STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW AND NEXT STEPS

In respect of these three agenda items for the meeting, the Board received a presentation on the Long Term Plan for Towns setting out the background to the last Government's initiative, the intention to provide a "ten year endowment-style fund" of £20M, the geography of the Clacton on Sea programme, the role of the new Town Board in overseeing the vision, goals and objections of the programme and the intentions for a three year investment plan towards that 10 year vision. The presentation to the Board then outlined the draft vision and the strategic case for change.

In considering what might be included in the three-year investment plan, it was important to consider the views of local people. From the range of consultation exercises referenced at the Board's last meeting, there appeared to be three broad areas that were particularly relevant to the themes within the long-term plan for towns' initiative. They were:

Safety & security

- ASB priorities - people using or dealing drugs, street drinking, knife crime, fly tipping and criminal damage.
- The most popular suggestion for enhancing safety was an increased police presence and local patrols and the two most popular activities were 'sports' and 'gyms for teens'. Clacton beach was noted as a specific location where young people felt unsafe.

High Streets, Heritage & Regeneration

Greater variety of shops; more events; physical environment - cleaner & greener and safe spaces. Residents value the culture and heritage and natural asset of the beach. Businesses felt that most activity was centred around the seafront, with limited connection to the town centre.

Transport & Connectivity

Improved parking; safer pedestrian & cycle routes; frequency, cleanliness & reliability of buses; train station arrival/accessibility; broadband speeds.

Based on the data and consultation outcomes the proposed priority interventions for the three-year investment plan discussed included those below. The reference numbers quoted were those from Annex C of the Government's guidance to local authorities and Town Boards in developing the three-year investment plan and 10-year vision for their Town. The presentation to the Board set out all of the interventions from that guidance.

Safety and Security –

- S1: Design and management of the built and landscaped environment to 'design out crime'
- S2: Engage with Police Force and together consider interventions to focus on visible crime prevention in defined areas places
- S3: Measures to prevent anti-social behaviour, crime and reduce reoffending.

High Streets, Heritage & Regeneration –

- H1: Funding for place-based regeneration and town centre and high street improvements
- H5: Support for local arts, cultural, heritage and creative activities
- H7: Funding for impactful volunteering and social action projects to develop social and human capital in local places.
- H11: Investment in open markets and improvements to town centre retail and service sector infrastructure, with wrap around support for small businesses
- H12: Funding for the development and promotion (both trade and consumer) of the visitor economy, such as local attractions, trails, tours and tourism products more generally

Transport and Connectivity

- T1: Support for active travel enhancements in the local area.
- T2: Funding for bus infrastructure and connections to speed up journeys.
- T5: Funding to improve rail connectivity and access.
- T7: Investment and support for digital infrastructure for local community facilities

At the time of the Board's meeting, there was still a need to hear from the Government about the future of the long-term plan for towns' initiative and, specifically, the timetable for submitting the three-year investment plan and 10-year vision (i.e. whether this would be extended beyond 1st August). In addition, the DLUHC/MHCLG's commissioning of Zencity for consultation around a set of questions had not (thus far) generated data for the Board to utilise (Minute 13 of 25 May 2024 refers).

However, the Clacton-on-Sea initiative had received £250K for capacity funding. The potential use of this funding was set out in the presentation as:

- Shop wrapping and plans for shop front grants and encouraging private sector investment. The Board felt that shop wrapping would promote engagement of the public in the consultation exercise by using QR codes on the shop wrapping images, encouraging people to respond.
- Cleaning & graffiti removal -Have a town blitz to tackle immediate issues. Put up flags and lamp post banners to promote local attractions, facilities and amenities.
- Community engagement – Create an ongoing dialogue with residents, businesses and visitors. On the basis of confirmation of the Long Terms Plan for Towns initiative progressing as originally envisaged, this could now focus on longer-term priorities and opportunities.
- Improved communication and connectivity of regeneration projects.

The Board also looked at additional start up proposals, including:

- Tackling anti-social behaviour working with the police and looking at prevention projects
- Understanding the car- parking issues
- Undertaking public realm designs
- Launching shop-front improvement grants.

The need for shop wrapping and street lamp banners etc. to develop branding and themes that could, themselves, then be built upon was referenced by several Board Members. The suggestion of a small group of Board Members to oversee these elements was put to the Board. The interlinking of the shop wrapping and lamppost banners with a Town Board website design was also commented upon. In respect of securing improved shop frontages, there could also be planning enforcement options to examine to complement the other measures.

In considering the response to criminality and anti-social behaviour, there was a recognized need to ensure the activities the Board was wanting to pursue linked with the action plan of the local community safety partnership. The Board was advised that during the summer months, the Police undertook joint patrols with the Council's community ambassadors (as part of Operation Sunbeam).

The discussion at the Board also touched on the need to capture the views of young people given that the initiative was to create a long-term legacy for their Town. The concerns of young people (in previous consultations) in respect of safety in and around the beach area was something the Board was interested in exploring; together with measures to address these concerns.

The prospect of developing spatial priorities (and look at possible 'One Public Estate' options to advance those priorities) was referenced. Any re-purposing of existing buildings or new build provided an opportunity to try to design out opportunities for crime. Increasing green spaces and providing children play spaces would both soften the built environment and encourage family use of space where families could be currently discouraged from using due to perceptions of that space. The discussion highlighted the benefit from expanding on the spatial priorities presented and for this to also take account of crime hotspots.

In relation to 'Christmas Tree Island', the provision and arrangement of public benches was a topic of discussion. The potential benefits of removing several/all of the benches was commented upon as well as some consequences that would need to be worked through; these included displacements of street drinkers and the needs of those with limited mobility who could currently take temporary rests using those benches. There was a need to consider that the street drinkers currently using those benches might be dispersed to other parts of the town and the impact this would have on policing.

There was an opportunity to harness the benefits of smart technology in public spaces; such as smart bins to inform emptying cycles and smart parking signs to help motorists find car parks with spaces.

The role and funding of the Town Centre Manager, together with a referencing of the amount of resource required for Clacton-on-Sea was touched upon in the dialogue at the meeting. This would need to be further considered and clear arrangements put in place. A 'go to' person for businesses in the Town Centre was mentioned by several Board Members.

Beyond the Town Centre, there was a genuine need to look to diversify the economic activity in and around the Town to support sustainability of the Town. The advantage of a longer-term strategic spatial plan for the Town would enable a focus on key sites to support that sustainability. An example of this was the Adult Community Learning Centre (which would become vacant on the basis that the service relocated to the intended Clacton Civic Quarter (alongside the library, registration services and the University's Centre for Coastal Communities) at the junction of Station Road and Carnarvon Road in Clacton-on-Sea), with its current building at St Osyth Road, Clacton-on-Sea providing an opportunity to be repurposed as a hub for small and developing business units and thereby contribute to the diversification referenced.

It was AGREED:

- (1) That Sam Jones be thanked for developing and delivering the presentation to the Board's meeting and that it and the draft**

- proposals for the three year investment plan and 10 year vision be circulated to Board Members for comment;
- (2) that the proposals set out in the presentation for use of the £250K capacity funding be approved;
 - (3) that further discussion with Tendring District Council take place around the funding and role of the Town Centre Manager in so far as this role relates to Clacton-on-Sea;
 - (4) that, a small group of Board Members be tasked with overseeing the development and deployment of shop wrapping and street lamp banners etc. (including the elements of the branding and themes across those items);
 - (5) that Essex Police be requested to identify crime data relevant for the Clacton-on-Sea Town Centre over time and, potentially, in comparison to other comparable Town Centres;
 - (6) that a spatial plan for Clacton-on-Sea Town Centre be further developed, picking up the discussions at this Board Meeting around expanded spatial priorities and overlaid with crime hotspot data to be obtained through (4) above; and
 - (7) that the presentation to the Board and the current draft of the Clacton-on-Sea Long Term Plan be circulated to the Board Members for comment.

[Note: Subsequent to the meeting, the Board's Chairman received correspondence circulated on behalf of the Deputy Director of MHCLG (with responsibility for the Long Term Plan for Towns programme) advising that the new Minister for Local Growth, Alex Norris MP, had suspended the 1 August 2024 deadline for submitting the three-year investment plan and the 10-year vision. The correspondence received went on to state that MHCLG would be in touch in due course with further details on next steps and confirmation of the revised timelines. The Board's Chairman shared the correspondence received with all Board Members.]

24. NEXT MEETING(S)

The Board was advised that a date, time and venue for the next meeting would be circulated. It was anticipated that it would be in mid-September 2024.

[Note: Subsequent to the meeting, the Board's Chairman was consulted in respect of holding the meeting in early October 2024.]

The meeting was declared closed at 3.20 pm

Chairman of the Board

