

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CLACTON TOWN BOARD,
HELD ON THURSDAY, 12TH DECEMBER, 2024 AT 10.00 AM
IN THE CONNAUGHT ROOM, AT THE TOWN HALL, STATION ROAD, CLACTON-
ON-SEA, CO15 1SE**

Present:	Lee Heley (in the Chair), Sharon Alexander (except item 45, Billy Ball, Councillor Ivan Henderson, Commissioner Roger Hirst, Rob Mitchell-Gears, Dr. Emily Murray, Craig Newnes, Councillor Mark Stephenson and Councillor Lesley Wagland
Also Present:	Pippa Brent-Isherwood, Ian Davidson (via MS Teams), Chief Inspector Ella Latham, Samantha Jones, William Lodge, Rachel Rowsell and Keith Simmons

37. WELCOME

Lee Heley advised the Board that, for personal reasons, its Chairman (George Kieffer) was unable to attend the meeting. With the consent of the Board, Mr Heley would chair the meeting in the absence of Mr Kieffer.

38. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

As referenced in Minute 1 above, Mr Kieffer had regrettable submitted his apologies for absence from the meeting. **The Board recorded their best wishes to Mr Kieffer in respect of the stated reason for the absence and asked that these be conveyed to him.**

In addition to the above, there was an apology for absence from Mr Ian Davidson (who continued to participate in the meeting via an MS Teams link). Mr Heley was Mr Davidson's substitute in the meeting itself.

The apologies for absence in respect of Mr Nigel Farage MP were recorded.

The apologies of a number of individuals specifically invited to the Board's meetings (including MHCLG officials) were also reported to the Board.

39. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 10 October 2024 were submitted to the Board for confirmation.

It was AGREED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 10 October 2024 be received and confirmed as an accurate record of that meeting.

40. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE BOARD'S CODE OF CONDUCT

The Secretary to the Board drew attention to a draft proposed form for Board Members to make general declarations of interest which had been circulated with the agenda for this meeting. Board Members were requested to review the draft form and submit any

questions or comments on it. The form would then be recirculated in a proposed final form to the next meeting of the Board for adoption. At that meeting, the Monitoring Officer for Tendring District Council proposed to attend to address the particulars of the form and how it supported the Board's existing Policy on "Avoiding Conflicts of Interest and Upholding the Nolan Principles".

The Board Members were then invited to make any declarations of interest in respect of the matters to be considered at this meeting. At this point in the meeting there was a declaration of interest from Sharon Alexander in respect of the item on Community Engagement as she was the Chief Executive Officer of the organisation appointed to undertake community engagement work for the Board. The appointment had been made following a transparent procurement process.

41. **UPDATE ON ACTIONS**

Samantha Jones submitted the following progress details on previously approved actions from the Board:

Action	Progress
Ask MHCLG to provide the Zencity data in respect of the Clacton-on-Sea consultations.	MHCLG had been requested repeatedly to provide this data and yet it had still not been provided.
Headline data from the Essex Residents Survey was also to be circulated, once obtained, based on the subset from respondents in the Clacton-on-Sea area.	The 2024 data set had been published in November 2024. The Clacton subset from that data would be provided to CVST as background to the community engagement work to be procured from them.
A report was to be submitted to the Tendring District Council's Cabinet on 21 October 2024 in respect of the Levelling Up Partnership and an electronic link to that report on the Council's website would be circulated to Board Members.	The report referenced had not been submitted (following a delay from government). The report was now to be submitted to the Council's Cabinet meeting on 20 December 2024 and the link to that report was: Agenda for Cabinet on Friday, 20th December, 2024, 10.30 am https://tdcdemocracy.tendringdc.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=134&MIId=2390
With regard to the shop wrapping a briefing in respect of the potential for enforcement powers to be used to achieve improvement in shop frontages was requested.	Minute 8 below refers. A fuller session would be scheduled for consideration by the Board at its meeting in February 2025.
The website address for NEEB would be circulated to Board Members.	The website for the North Essex Economic Board was: https://neeb.org.uk/
Sam Jones to further develop the delivery plan and circulate to the Board	12/12/24 - Forward Plan included on the Board's agenda for this meeting.

University of Essex's paper to be circulated to the Board for consideration at this meeting.	The paper had been circulated to Board Members with the Minutes of the meeting on 10 October 2024.
--	--

It was **AGREED** to note the update provided, as set out above, and to not pursue further the provision of the Zencity consultation findings.

42. UPDATE FROM THE GOVERNMENT'S MHCLG

The Board was reminded that on 30 October 2024 the Chancellor, the Rt. Hon. Rachel Reeves MP, had announced as part of the Budget that the Long-Term Plan for Towns would be retained and reformed as part of a new regeneration programme. MHCLG Officials had then confirmed that this announcement could be taken as formal confirmation of the £20M funding over a decade for individual Long Term Plan for Towns schemes (e.g. for Clacton-on-Sea). The programme was likely to be renamed.

Following the above, MHCLG officials had invited Chief Executives from the relevant Councils to an online meeting on 28th November 2024. Jack Rampling, MHCLG's Head of Long-Term Plan for Towns, attended the meeting and provided an update to them. A revised prospectus for the programme was expected early in 2025. This was expected to be 'additive' to the previous guidance for the programme and include new strategic objectives aligned with Government's missions.

In addition to the confirmed funding over a decade, the Government was providing a further capacity payment in 2025/26 to support engagement and planning. The prospectus was expected to confirm that this additional capacity funding could be used to undertake scoping and preparatory activity to support delivery. Delivery grant funding was now to begin in 2026/27.

The Board considered the benefits for planning from the provision of the intended pipeline of funding across the years. It was also considered beneficial to look at the funding to be provided to leverage additional investment and thereby add value to the funding to be achieved under this programme.

It was **AGREED** to welcome the recent confirmation of the continuation of the programme.

43. CLACTON TOWN BOARD WEBSITE

The Board received an update on discussions that had taken place with the successful company to provide the Board's website. It was intended to have the Board's website up and running by March 2025 (with a soft launch ahead of that). The presentation included possible branding, palette of colours against the following specification:

- A shop front for transformational change programmes across a wide range of funding streams. Raise profile and understanding of role of board.
- Interactive mapping and digital storytelling to demonstrate how funding translates to change on the ground and deliver improved outcomes for locals.
- Increased visibility of public consultations, as well as news and events feature to engage community.
- An independent portal, showing vision for Place and breadth of partnership work. Ambitious in nature, to create a sense of momentum.

- Signposting to other sights, including local tourism group/ destination marketing website.

The website was to be developed so that it was fully mobile dynamic (i.e. would work on laptops as well as mobile 'phones).

There was an extensive discussion following the presentation that included reference to Clacton-on-Sea's unique selling point compared with many other towns and cities (i.e. its sea front). There were several Board Members who wanted the website to focus more on the ambition, investment, and delivery of schemes to improve the town rather than on the Board itself. The sense of 'we are Clacton' was something the Board wanted to come across strongly from the website. There was also a feeling that the imagery should be very much about residents, business people and visitors rather than anything else.

During the discussion, the Board also touched on non-internet communications to cater for those who relied more on those non-internet sources of information. This would include conveying messages to residents in care homes and to school age young people (and via them to the families of those young people). This was considered to be important and could lead to an allocation of additional budget for enhanced communication resource. In thinking about funding, business representatives at the meeting talked about the potential for sponsorship of additional public space litter bins to supplement the current numbers of bins in the town centre.

It was AGREED that this had been a very productive discussion and that it should be used to shape not just the website but more generally the communication from the Board.

It was further AGREED to establish a small sub-group of the Board comprising Cllr. Mark Stephenson, Billy Ball and Sharon Alexander to specifically look at the design and content of the website on behalf of the Board.

44. SHOP-WRAPPING, MAINTAINING SHOP FRONTS, PUBLIC SPACE CLEANING AND BANNERS

(a) Shop wrapping

The Board was provided with images of the shop wrapping of the former Burton Shop and former P G Oxley office window (both in Station Road, Clacton-on-Sea) and several of the windows in the current QD store in Rosemary Road. There were positive comments about the shop wrapping that had been put in place.

The update provided was NOTED.

(b) Maintaining Shop Fronts

There was then a discussion around the actions of several shop front owners in the town centre who were not adequately maintaining those shop fronts, and this was adversely affecting the visual appearance of the area. The powers to enforced good maintenance were then referenced as follows:

- Section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 ('the Planning Act 1990')
- Could be served on an owner when the amenity of an area was adversely affected by the condition of an asset
- The Notice requires steps to remedy the condition within a set timescale
- Could be used in respect of any land, designated or not, including buildings, in use or vacant
- The various steps to secure compliance of any Notice before any more punitive action would be taken was, probably, about 9 months.

The need to have a whole-Town approach to this process was commented upon in order to address issues. The resourcing of enforcement around the powers in Section 215 referenced above was something the conversation at the Board centred upon. The ability to provide a dedicated resource that would not be drawn into other areas of work was referenced. Likewise, the approach to be taken and the skill set required was mentioned.

The Board also focused on action to deal with graffiti on private property in the town centre. Here there was reference to powers under Anti-Social Behaviour legislation to secure remediation works with 28 days.

The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner stated that he wanted to work closely on the shop front and graffiti issues referenced here.

It was AGREED to consider further options around enforcement of good shop front maintenance and graffiti clearance at the Board's meeting in February 2025.

(c) Public Space Cleaning

The Board was advised of the position in respect of its intended enhanced cleansing regime in the area bounded by Pier Avenue-Rosemary Road-Station Road and of 'Christmas Tree Island' in the town centre of Clacton-on-Sea. In respect of this the Board was informed that Tendring District Council was in the process of re-procuring its waste collection and street cleaning service with a view to a new contract being in place from 1 April 2026.

While considering this matter, reference was made to plastic bags being placed on the street pavement in Old Road, Clacton-on-Sea and that Gulls would often break into those bags and litter would spill out.

Other Board members commented up the need to change attitudes to the dropping of litter in order to address this element of the issue

It was AGREED that a further discussion of the issue of waste collection and street cleansing take place at the February meeting of the Board.

(d) Banners

The Board was advised about the discussions that were taking place with Essex County Council officials around the 'permanent' installation of banners attached to street lamp posts in the Town Centre. A charge of £6K to facilitate annual checks on the street lighting columns that would have banners affixed was reported to the Board. The

discussions referenced were to continue, including around placing the banners only for defined periods of time. The sub-group of Board Members who had worked on the designs for the shop wrapping would be brought back together to look at Banner designs, which included Rob Mitchell-Gears and Billy Ball, and seek to link them to the design work for the website.

The update provided was NOTED.

45. ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

The Board received a paper on various elements of its approach to engagement across different sectors and age groups. These were residents, businesses/potential investors, and young people. The report sets out the process of appointment of CVST as the contractor to deliver the Board's community engagement, outreach work, community forums and surveys both digital and face to face. The appointment had been stalled by the General Election in the summer and the need to await confirmation of the intentions of the new Government in respect of the Long Term Plans for Towns Programme. However, the appointment would now be confirmed at the same value as originally quoted by CVST earlier in the year.

It was AGREED that:

- (a) The appointment of CVST to deliver the Board's community engagement, outreach work, community forums and surveys (both digital and face to face) be approved as reported to it;**
- (b) the updates in respect engagement and consultation with businesses/potential investors and young people be noted; and**
- (c) that a small group of Board Members be formed to help shape the engagement/ consultation activity and that this would involve Neil Gallagher (other nominees would be added to the sub-group). The small group would be supported by appropriate officers from Tendring District Council and, potentially, a nominee from the Police, provided by Ella Latham.**

[Note: Further to the declaration of interest made at item 40 above, Sharon Alexander left the meeting for this item and took no part in the discussion or voting on the item.]

46. BUDGET OVERVIEW

In relation to the developing position around the delivery of the Board's intentions for the use of the initial allocation of £250K capacity funding and the announcement (referred to above) of a further £200K capacity funding for 2025/26, the draft allocations set out below was submitted to the Board:

	Capacity Funding	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	Total
	Income				
		250,000	200,000	0	450,000
	Expenditure				
	Vinyl Wrapping	20,000			20,000
Quick wins	Increased Street Cleaning	20,000			20,000

	Decorative Street Banners	5,000			5,000
	Graffiti Removal	1,000			1,000
Communication	Website development	15,000	5,000	5,000	25,000
	Design & photography	2,000			2,000
Consultations	Residents	18,000	1,000	1,000	20,000
	Business	10,000			10,000
	Young people	5,000			5,000
	Visitor survey		20,000		20,000
	Visitor benchmarking	650	150	150	950
Capacity	Town Centre Manager		30,000	30,000	60,000
	Communication support		20,000	20,000	40,000
	Board & secretariat costs	5,000	5,000	5,000	15,000
	Planning enforcement		50,000	50,000	100,000
Other	Car park survey		10,000		10,000
	Free town centre Wi-Fi pilot & data collection		60,000		70,000
	Additional surveys, design guides and/or master planning support		25,000		25,000
	Contingency		3,000	3,050	6,050
	Total	96,650	239,150	114,200	450,000

The discussion of the budget allocation included reference the positive value to be achieved from the Town Centre Manager role, enforcement, possibly an enhanced communication support resource and survey of car parks. A revised budget proposal would be submitted to the Board in February 2025.

In respect of enforcement reference was made to the very new proposals around High Street Rental Auctions.

The Board was also provided with a bid for free public Wi-Fi infrastructure in Town Centre. BABLE and Signify BrightSites were looking to install the WIFI infrastructure in five cities/towns across the UK and bidding to be one of these would close at the end of January 2025. The intentions around a potential bid were:

1. Wi-Fi Network from Town Centre to Promenade

2. "Internet of Things" Network and Supporting Information Systems to Aid Visitor Experience

Due diligence checks would be needed in respect of the companies involved.

The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner spoke about the importance of the Town Centre Manager linking in to 'designing out crime' initiatives through his office.

It was AGREED to note the proposed budget allocations and that a further report would be submitted to the meeting of the Board in February 2025.

47. DELIVERY PLAN (INCLUDING THE UNIVERSITY OF ESSEX'S PROJECT IDEAS)

The Board was reminded of the research findings and proposals developed for the Centre for Coastal Communities at the University of Essex and circulated to Board Members following the 10 October 2024 meeting of the Board.

It was timely as the Board would need to consider the mechanisms and processes for inviting projects to be part of the Board's Investment Plan and then evaluating and selecting the projects to then be included in the Investment Plan. The Board was provided with approaches adopted for several other initiatives to address these matters (albeit with their own specific parameters).

The revised prospectus and guidance for Town Boards to assist in the development of their Investment Plans was to be published in early 2025 and, as such, draft suggestions were to be submitted to the Board's February 2025 meeting.

The position update, including the proposals provided by the University of Essex's Centre for Coastal Communities, was NOTED.

48. FORWARD LOOK

The following summary of activities was submitted to the Board:-



49. DEVOLUTION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT EVOLUTION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT RE-ORGANISATION WHITE PAPER

Mr. Davidson reported to the Board that the Government had indicated that it would publish a White Paper on the subject of Devolution and Local Government Re-organisation on Monday, 16 December 2024. It would be important to consider the potential implications of the White Paper (once published) and the intentions across Greater Essex to pursue matters set out in the White Paper.

50. FUTURE MEETINGS

It was NOTED that the next Board meeting was to be held on 10 February 2025.

It was also NOTED that proposals for meetings of the Board to take place in May, July and October 2025 and in January 2026 would be developed and circulated to Board Members.

The meeting was declared closed at 12.01 pm

Chairman