

A2 Appendix D: Programme of Future Engagement

Working Groups

Clacton Town Centre Ambassadors Group

The Clacton Town Centre Working Party has succeeded in its original purpose by identifying the main issues and challenges facing Clacton Town Centre along with a variety of ideas for tackling those issues and challenges. The meetings included a large group including all the various stakeholders as well as smaller more focussed groups looking more closely at specific topics i.e. transport, marketing, social issues etc. This culminated in the submission of the expression of interest to the Future High Streets Fund with numerous letters of support, and the recommended actions within the Plan of Action accompanying the report to Cabinet. The establishment of the Working Party also helped form constructive lines of communication between businesses and the Council which will need to be maintained if the rejuvenation of Clacton Town Centre is to be delivered.

Looking to the future, it is proposed that the format and the terms of reference for meetings need to change to better reflect the likely work programme going forward. The main purpose should shift from being a multi-disciplinary exchange of information ideas to a forum for leadership and engagement specifically involving business and community stakeholders as ideas are put into practice. It is therefore proposed that future meetings of the group will include only representatives from the business community, elected Councillors, relevant community stakeholders and a smaller core of Council Officers. On the recommendation of some of the participating businesses, it is suggested that the Clacton Town Centre Working Party be re-named the 'Clacton Town Centre Ambassadors Group'.

It is proposed that the new group be chaired, initially, by TDC's Director for Planning and Regeneration with the potential to the chair to pass to business leader or other stakeholder in the future. Relevant TDC Portfolio Holders and Ward Members will be invited to attend as well as the businesses, community groups and transport providers that have already been involved in the Working Party meetings to date. The Council's Planning Manager and Town Centre Coordinator would be the lead Officers tasked with managing the agenda and progressing any actions through the Technical Group described below.

It is proposed that the Clacton Town Centre Ambassadors Group will meet on a two-monthly basis with the first meeting being arranged for as early as possible in October 2019.

Clacton Town Centre Technical Group

To deal with matters of technical detail, it is proposed that a separate group mainly comprising relevant Officers from Tendring District Council, Essex County Council, the NHS and the Police be set up. This group will be charged with delivering the actions in the Plan of Action, undertaking relevant technical work and preparing a fresh submission to the Future High Streets Fund. It is likely that the Technical Group will meet on a monthly basis and will pull in the relevant officers to deal with specific issues, as and when required.

Clacton Town Centre Strategic Leadership Group

A third group comprising Officers at chief executive and director level within Tendring District Council, Essex County Council and other relevant organisations will be set up to provide a strategic overview of the project and ensure that the shared corporate priorities around the rejuvenation of Clacton Town Centre are delivered with the right commitment to project management and resources. It is likely that the Strategic Leadership Group would meet on a quarterly basis and could incorporate discussion on a range of relevant regeneration projects beyond Clacton Town Centre to make the most effective use of time and resources.

Wider Engagement

Survey of Businesses

Whilst the business representatives on the Working Party have provided a valuable insight into the issues and challenges facing the town centre and the potential ideas aimed at tackling those issues and challenges, there will need to be wider engagement with individual business owners in Clacton Town Centre and the wider town to ensure their views are heard; and to validate the work of the Working Party to date. Evidence of proactive engagement with the wider business community will be essential for the Council's stage 2 bid to the Future High Streets Fund in 2020 and to improve the chances of the project being successful.

It is therefore proposed that a survey to businesses be distributed in October/November 2019 by the Council working with the Clacton Town Centre Partnership. The format and questions within the survey would be considered by the members of the Ambassadors Group and agreed by the Chair before being distributed.

The survey would specifically invite participants to consider and comment on the issues, challenges and ideas identified by the Working Party and more specific options relating to parking and access, development and public realm improvements. The findings of the survey would then inform action going forward.

Public Consultation and Public Survey

A survey and a series of public engagement events is also recommended to gauge the views of residents in the Clacton and wider area on the various issues, challenges and ideas and the more specific options relating to parking and access, development and public realm improvements. Evidence of public engagement and support will be essential for the Council's Stage 2 bid to the Future High Streets Fund in 2020 and to improve the chances of the project being successful.

The survey would be sent to all households in Clacton and surrounding parishes and Officers would organise drop-in sessions/exhibitions in the Town Centre for people to visit and express their views and ideas. It is suggested that these sessions could take place in the run up to Christmas when town centre footfall would be expected to be higher.

Again, the format and questions within the survey along with the format of the drop-in sessions/exhibitions would be considered by the members of the Ambassadors Group and agreed by the Chair before being distributed.

Market Research

It is proposed that an external company is engaged to undertake market research to understand the needs and demands of people in the catchment area which can inform strategic decisions about the products and services the town centre should cater for and the approach to branding and marketing that should be adopted to encourage people back into the town centre.

Engagement with younger people

Officers have already made preliminary contact with teachers and students at Clacton's two secondary schools as a means to gauge the views of younger people. Both have expressed a desire to be involved in proposals for Clacton Town Centre, setting up focus groups with a range of pupils of different ages and/or running school projects on this topic which could involve a survey of all pupils. It is proposed that Officers continue to engage with the teachers and pupils in these two schools alongside the wider consultation with businesses and the public.