

12 December 2024

## Community Engagement and Consultation Update

### Purpose

To review the plans for engagement on the Clacton Vision and Long-Term Plan in 2025 following confirmation of the continuation of Government funding in the recent budget.

### Recommendations for the Board

1. **Acknowledgement of Update and Future Steps:** The Board is requested to acknowledge the update and forthcoming steps regarding the engagement and consultation process for the Vision and Delivery Plan.
2. **Approval of Resident Engagement Proposal:** The Board is requested to approve the proposal from Tendring District Council to engage Community Voluntary Services Tendring for community engagement activities, based on the quote submitted in May 2024. This process, which was previously paused, is proposed to commence in the New Year, contingent upon the publication of new guidance.
3. **Establishment of a Consultation Sub-Group:** The Board is requested to consider the formation of a sub-group to help with the coordination of the various consultations taking place in 2025. **The Board is invited to nominate members or officers from their organisations to join this sub-group**, who would then report back to the Board.

### Background

Community engagement is fundamental to the Long-Term Plan for Towns programme. The original guidance stated that the Long-Term Plans must reflect local priorities and be co-designed with communities, businesses, and residents, drawing on available evidence and data.

At the workshop in April 2024 the Clacton Town Board agreed that we needed to engage the following:

- The local community/residents
- Businesses and potential businesses/investors
- Young people
- Visitors and potential visitors

Unfortunately, due to the timing of the Clacton Long Term Plan consultation falling within the pre-election period, and the deadline for the plan submission subsequently being paused by the Government, the opportunity to undertake robust consultation was also paused.

Following the recent announcements in the Budget and updates from MHCLG in November (see Agenda Item 6) it has been confirmed that the Long-Term Plan for Towns will be retained and reformed as part of a new regeneration programme. The Government will issue new guidance in the New Year that includes new strategic objectives aligned their missions,

and additional 'on-menu' policy interventions. This will still be built on community engagement, and in places where this had already been undertaken, they have suggested additional engagement to include the context of a broadened scope of interventions.

## **Consultation Update and Next Steps**

### **Residents Engagement**

In May 2024 Tendring District Council on behalf of the Clacton Town Board asked for quotes to help engage residents. This required a contractor who could quickly and effectively involve as many Clacton residents as possible, including those who are seldom heard, to meet the tight Government deadlines. Activity needed to include community engagement, outreach work, community forums and surveys both digital and face to face.

Community Voluntary Services Tendring were the successful contractor. However, prior to issuing the contract, the Government announced a General Election. This development necessitated adherence to pre-election guidance, thereby preventing us from proceeding.

In July 2024 the Board approved continuing the development of the Vision and Investment Plan using existing data from previous resident and business consultations as an interim solution. It was agreed to recommence the consultations later in the year, after initiating some "quick win" projects such as the new website and the shop wrapping, to support the consultation.

Following the November 2024 announcement that new guidance will be issued in the New Year, we have the opportunity to restart resident engagement. Ideally, this could occur between late January to mid-March, depending on the guidance release, and before the local County Council elections.

The timing aligns with the launch of the new Clacton Town Board website at the end of January, which can be used to promote the consultation, and the consultation can help drive people to the new website.

Typically, quotes are time-limited, necessitating a market re-evaluation to ensure value for money. However, Community Voluntary Services Tendring has confirmed they can proceed with the consultation at their original quote, which remains below the Board-approved budget. Given the elapsed time and revised timescale, Tendring District Council seeks the Clacton Town Board's approval to contract with Community Voluntary Services Tendring.

### **Business Engagement and Potential Investors**

In addition to resident engagement, we have planned a separate initiative for business engagement. Previously, Tendring District Council's Economic Growth Team conducted these via targeted surveys. With additional time and capacity funding, we could expand this effort and consider engaging a specialist consultancy. This would allow us to:

- Explore business views on future needs, gaps, outlook, and potential.
- Provide a detailed assessment of Clacton's opportunities and strategies to attract businesses and investors.

This initiative would support local businesses by identifying their needs, challenges, and views on priorities for investment, and by helping us to create strategies that help

regeneration and economic growth in Clacton. It would inform both our Long-Term Plan for Towns Investment Plan and feed into the masterplan to be commissioned next year.

It is proposed that the consultation sub-group explores this proposal in more detail and presents further information at the next Board meeting.

## **Young People**

The Board previously agreed to set up a Youth Shadow Board that will sit alongside the Clacton Town Board to ensure the voices of the next generation are heard and help influence and shape the future of the town.

There is also a need to have a more expansive engagement process with young people, possibly led by the Youth Shadow Board, or the engagement could be a way to recruit to the Board. Either way it is essential that they have the opportunity to be part of this process, to inform the plans and to create a sense of ownership and pride within the transformation process.

Tending District Council officers, who have led on the Youth Voice project, will work with Board representatives to bring together key stakeholders from the schools, youth services, and voluntary organisations to agree how this can be taken forward in the New Year.

## **Visitors and potential visitors**

Whilst this did not fit with the original consultation timescale of the plan, it was always the **intention** to do some more engagement with visitors, given the importance of tourism to the Clacton economy.

This is something Visit Essex may be able to assist with. Visit Essex was awarded Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) accreditation in 2023. This provides a strategic link between the local level and the national organisations such as Visit England and Visit Britain. It also comes with a range of support including government funding.

Visit Essex already undertake surveys such as the annual survey for tourism businesses, alongside collection of “volume and value” data assessing the health of the visitor economy. Visit Essex have also advised that Visit England are bringing out a standardised format for visitor surveys that would allow us to benchmark Clacton against other resorts/towns.

Lisa Bone, from Visit Essex, has offered to attend the Clacton Coastal Tourism Group, to discuss this and potential funding opportunities. Once we have more information about the options, the Board can assess what, if any, additional funding, is required to support visitor engagement and understanding of perceptions of Clacton during 2025.

## **Longer Term engagement**

Previous community consultations highlighting the lack of ongoing engagement and perceived transparency on other funding programmes. To this end engagement between the Town Board and local community should continue throughout the delivery of the Plan, to ensure residents remain informed of the Board’s activity and progress. The website will also support this.

## **Sub-group and next steps**

To effectively integrate the various elements of the consultation, it is recommended that the Board establishes a sub-group. The Board is invited to nominate members or officers from their organisations to join this sub-group, either now or after the meeting. The sub-group will meet every two to four weeks, and they will report directly to the Board and assist in shaping the Vision and Investment Plan for ongoing consultation with key stakeholders.