

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CLACTON TOWN BOARD,
HELD ON THURSDAY, 20 MARCH 2025 AT 10.00AM
IN THE CONNAUGHT ROOM, TOWN HALL, STATION ROAD, CLACTON-ON-SEA**

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Board Members present: | George Kieffer (Chair), Sharon Alexander, Billy Ball, Ian Davidson, Neil Gallagher, Cllr. Ivan Henderson, Commissioner Roger Hirst (via MS Teams), Rob Mitchell-Gears, Dr Emily Murray, Craig Newnes, Cllr Mark Stephenson, Laura Taylor-Green and Cllr Lesley Wagland, |
| In attendance: | Mike Carran, Lee Heley, Cllr. Peter Harris (on behalf of Hon. Nigel Farage MP), Aaron Homatopoulos, Sam Jones, Will Lodge, Natalie Nohan, Rachel Rowsell, Keith Simmons, Emma Taylor. |

[Note: Specific action shown in bold]

51. WELCOME

All those in attendance introduced themselves to everyone else so as to inform the dialogue by the Board Members at their meeting.

52. CHAIR AND DEPUTY CHAIR OF THE BOARD 2025/26

Ian Davidson reported that the initial term of office for the Board's Independent Chair was coming to an end and, having discussed the matter with him, the Local Authority planned to consult with the local MP (Nigel Farage) about the **re-appointment of George Kieffer for a further year**. Mr. Kieffer had successfully steered the Board through the last year from its initial formation and the successful functioning of the Board was a testament to his abilities.

The Chair then outlined that he was giving consideration to the appointment of a Deputy Chair of the Board. In conjunction with the Tendring District Council, he was proposing that **Cllr Mark Stephenson be appointed Deputy Chair**. Councillor Stephenson lived in the area covered by the Neighbourhood Plan and would be available to chair Board meetings when the Chair was unavailable.

Board Members were invited to comment on the proposals and indicated that they **AGREED to the proposed appointments identified above**.

53. WELCOME

The Chair acknowledged and thanked his fellow Board Members for their wishes, expressed at the last meeting, given the reason he was unable to attend that meeting.

The Chair also welcomed Emma Taylor and Natalie Nohan from the Government's MHCLG to the Board meeting. It was a pleasure to welcome them to the meeting.

54. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Board was advised of the apology for absence of Hon. Nigel Farage MP and that Cllr. Peter Harris was attending this meeting on his behalf.

In addition, Police Divisional Commander Ella Latham (an invitee to the Board) had given her apologies and Inspector Aaron Homatopoulos was attending in her place.

It was further noted that Commissioner Roger Hirst was attending a team away day for his Office in Writtle. As such he joined the meeting via MS Teams.

55. MINUTES FROM THE BOARD'S MEETING ON 12 DECEMBER 2024 (AND ACTIONS LOG)

The Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 12 December 2024 were submitted to the Board for confirmation. Neil Gallagher reported that he had been present although the Minutes as circulated did not include his attendance.

It was AGREED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 12 December 2024 be received and confirmed as an accurate record of that meeting, subject to the addition of Neil Gallagher's name in the list of Board Members in attendance.

In relation to the required actions following the Board, it was noted that most would be addressed elsewhere in the agenda for the Board's meeting (including the proposal for a sub-group to be formed to consider enforcement issues). It was also noted that whilst the action regarding due diligence in relation to the proposed wifi pilot project discussed at the last meeting was completed. The decision had subsequently been taken to withdraw the project due to timescale pressures and increased costs.

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

The Secretary to the Board drew attention to the proposed form for Board Members to make general declarations of interest which had been circulated with the agenda for this meeting. That form had been submitted to the Board's meeting on 12 December 2024 and Board Members had been requested to review the draft form and submit any questions or comments on it. There had been no comments or questions submitted, and the form was resubmitted to the Board for adoption.

Board Members were also 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 any discussion around the contract with CVST for Community Engagement in support of the 10-year plan for the Board. The declaration arose as she was the Chief Executive Officer of CVST, and that organisation had been appointed to undertake community engagement work for the Board. In view of the nature of the discussions envisaged, it was not proposed that she leave the meeting during any part of the meeting.

In support of the Board's existing Policy on "Avoiding Conflicts of Interest and Upholding the Nolan Principles", it was AGREED to approve the use of the form submitted for general declarations of interest and to adopt the arrangements set out in the form.

57. PRESENTATION ON GOVERNMENT'S INVITATION AROUND DEVOLUTION, LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION (LGR) AND THE LOCAL DECISION AROUND A COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW (CGR) FOR CLACTON-ON-SEA, HOLLAND-ON-SEA AND JAYWICK SANDS

The Chief Executive of Tendring District Council gave a brief introduction to the Government's White Paper proposals for devolution of Whitehall Powers to new Mayoral Combined County Authorities (such as for Greater Essex) and for the simplification of local government structures where there were County Councils and District Councils by the creation of 'all purpose' Unitary Councils. The proposed Mayoral Combined County Authorities were proposed to administer matters such as Local Transport and public transport functions, including bus franchising and responsibility for an area-wide Local Transport Plan, devolution of non-apprenticeship adult skills functions through a consolidated skills funding pot, production of a Spatial Development (including Housing) Strategy, responsibility for the delivery of Growth Hubs, Green jobs and skills coordination role.

The Combined Authority would bring together county/Unitary Councils in their area. In the case of Greater Essex this would, initially be, Essex County Council, Thurrock Council and Southend-on-Sea City Council. A Mayor would also be elected who would join the Combined Authority. This would involve the transfer of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner's responsibilities to the Combined Authority. The Mayor would also become a member of local Health Integrated Care Partnerships and be able to be their chair or co-chair. The intention was for the Greater Essex Combined Authority to be in place later this year with elections for the Mayor to be on 7 May 2026.

Emma Taylor referenced a Government consultation event being held at MAB221, Anglia Ruskin University, Chelmsford Campus on 31st March, between 6:00pm and 8:00pm. A Government online consultation form was also available to submit views until the close of consultation on 13 April 2025.

In respect of the stated aim of simplification of local government structures, the 15 existing Councils in Greater Essex and the Police and Crime Commissioner, were working on proposals for a series of unitary councils to replace them. The Government had indicated that a population of 500,000 would be a benchmark for the minimum size of a unitary council although that had been qualified in other statements including a reference to a minimum of 350,000 people. While there were differences of opinion across Greater Essex on the number of unitaries to submit to Government by the deadline of 26 September 2025, taking Braintree District, Colchester City and Tendring District together, there was a population of over 500,000. On this basis, the three Council Leaders had agreed to work together on unitary proposals for North East Essex.

Some key considerations in the development of sustainable unitary plans for Greater Essex would be the level of demand for services such as Adults and Children's Social Care and the funding formula to address those needs. There was also the issue of existing Council debt and how that would be dealt with in any new structure. While Tendring District Council was free of long-term debt (other than for its housing stock), there were a number of other Councils with substantial long term debt. Thurrock's debt exceeded £1bn.

It was envisaged that new unitaries would come into being formally on 1 April 2028. Prior to that there would be elections to the Council (or rather, initially, its shadow authority) on 6 May 2027.

Within Tendring District Council's area 3 in 5 households lived in an area with a Parish/Town Council. The 2 in 5 households in the District that did not have a Parish/Town Council were all those in the Jaywick Sands, Clacton-on-Sea and Holland-on-Sea areas. While Tendring District Council had committed itself to formally looking at this matter ahead of the process of local government reorganisation referred to above, renewed impetus had been generated due to that process. The formal review (known as a Community Government Review) would start on 1 July 2025 and the Board (and its individual Members) would be asked for views on the establishment of (a) Parish Council(s). All households in the three areas mentioned would also be asked for their views and the Council would need to give weight to the views expressed. If (a) Parish Council(s) were established, the existing Tendring District Council could consider whether it would be appropriate and sustainable for the new Parish Council(s) to take on certain assets of the District Council. These types of discussions were already underway with other Town Councils in Tendring District.

Cllr. Harris reported that the local MP, Nigel Farage, was in support of a Town Council for Clacton-on-Sea.

It was AGREED to thank Ian Davidson for his presentation and to welcome the information provided. The ability for the Board to be kept up to date with these matters would be welcomed.

58. FUTURE OF CLACTON – NEXT TEN YEARS

In order to encourage a dialogue on the plan for Clacton for the next ten years, Tendring District Council's Deputy Chief Executive presented a series of slides. He looked back at some of the key world leaders and headlines from 2015 (10 years ago) and how different the world was then. He also referenced key challenges faced in the intervening period.

The presentation then looked forward to what the world could be adjusting to over the next 10 years (to 2035). These included, a growing and diverse population, Energy transition to be less reliant on fossil fuels, the potential that by 2035 88% of new jobs could be graduate entry, renewed interest in space travel and business opportunities that flow from that, the growth in the application of artificial intelligence and the impact of driverless vehicles.

In seeking to think about the future it was important to address what the reality was locally. This reality included low levels of economic activity in Clacton, higher levels of school students being persistently absent (10% of sessions or more), higher levels of retail and leisure unit vacancy rates and a demographic profile locally that was increasingly becoming older.

Clacton was set to grow in size and households in the Local Plan to 2033 by the addition of mixed-use development at Hartley Gardens, Rouses Farm and Cooks Green Farm (north of the Clacton Shopping Village).

It was also a distinct positive for the Town that previously it had benefitted from the coastal protection works between Clacton Pier and Holland-on-Sea with the creation of whole new stretches of sandy beaches through the granite 'fish tail' groynes. The scheme had a

budget of £36M, bringing in funding from Tendring District Council, the Environment Agency and Essex County Council. It had been delivered on time and on budget.

In addition, through funding secured in the last Parliament and confirmed in this, Clacton was receiving £40M of funding through the Government's Levelling Up Fund and the Community Regeneration Partnership. This funding would see the gateway area into the Town Centre of Carnarvon Road regenerated with a new learning and library hub, housing and retail units, landscaping and enlarged multi-storey car park. This new and enhanced civic quarter would house a relocated Adult Community Learning facility and the University of Essex's Coastal Community Centre. Other schemes included:

- Repurposing a town centre building for community and cultural use (subject to acquisition);
- Repurposing scheduled ancient monument on At Risk Register, Martello Tower E, into a cultural, event or visitor venue;
- Improving the public realm to enhance wayfinding between the seafront and the town centre;
- Providing grants and support to improve shopfronts;
- Next phase of development of an Active Wellbeing Centre and All Wheels Park at Clacton Leisure Centre
- Repurposing disused public conveniences as an arts and community micro venue
- A spatial plan for culture to shape a creative/cultural quarter in the town centre
- New bus infrastructure in Clacton
- Three new Community Transport Buses for local initiatives
- Skills Hub fit out providing equipment for the skills hub at the new Clacton Hub.
- Contribution towards a remodelled Urgent Treatment Centre and primary care facility at Clacton Hospital

In addition to the above, in 2025/26 there would be funding for a range of businesses and organisations through the transitional UK Shared Prosperity Fund administered through Tendring District Council.

In the discussion around this matter, the updated Integrated Care Board's 10-year plan would be important in identifying challenges and intervention to improve health outcomes locally. In respect of education, the measures to support readiness for school, to address long term absenteeism and to support reading by school aged children was referenced. Raising the aspirations of young people to pursue continued and higher learning was vital and IntuEducation was praised for its work in this area.

The Board's Chair directed the Board to consider the issues raised in the presentation and which could be taken forward, with the community engagement outcomes, to develop the Board's 10-year plan for Clacton.

It was AGREED to receive the presentation with its subsequent circulation to Board Members.

59. PRESENTATION ON THE PLAN FOR NEIGHBOURHOODS AND APPROVAL OF AREA AND GOVERNANCE CHANGES

The Board received a report on the recently published Plan for Neighbourhoods which was replacing the previous Government's Long-Term Plan for Towns (LTPFTs) programme. The programme continued to provide up to £20 million per place over a 10-year period. The approach would involve Neighbourhood Boards (albeit they could be called 'Town Boards' if that was already in place and there was no desire to change the name). The Boards would develop and implement comprehensive Regeneration Plans. These plans would outline a 10-year vision and a 4-year investment strategy, focusing on long-term, sustainable solutions rather than short-term fixes. As was the case under the LTPFT's programme, funding would be split 75% capital and 25% revenue. Time had been set aside to establish strong foundations, including governance, management systems, and community involvement.

The Board had an imperative around confirming its membership and the geographical area that would be covered by the Regeneration Plans, vision and investment strategy. MHCLG required this to be confirmed by 22 April 2025.

Natalie Nohan addressed the Board and confirmed that there was no requirement for the name of the Board to change and that a key element of the difference between the LTPFTs and the new Neighbourhood Plan programme was the emphasis of a ground up approach to the development of the Regeneration Plan and vision. Natalie also referenced the data pack that would be provided to the Board.

The Board was advised that the new Neighbourhood Plan programme was specifically different to the previous LTPFTs programme in that:

1. Boards were being given a longer timescale to ensure that a) the engagement gives us the opportunity to hear from everybody, especially marginalised communities; and b) the Board had time to get established and to get the plan right;
2. The focus was around 3 new objectives aligned to the government's missions:
 - a. Thriving places - improve physical infrastructure & public services;
 - b. Stronger communities - enhance social capital and community resilience, build social trust;
 - c. Taking back control - empowering local people to shape their future;
3. It was a much broader programme, and Government had doubled the number of interventions that the budget could be spent on without requiring additional business cases to cover such things as:
 - Regeneration, High Streets, and Heritage: Public realm improvements (including cleaning street furniture and enforcing shop-front improvements), enhancing green spaces, arts and cultural activities.
 - Housing: Safe and supportive environments for rough sleepers, neighbourhood renewal, climate-resilient homes, community land trusts.
 - Work, Productivity, and Skills: Business support, skills provision, support for the visitor economy.
 - Cohesion: Measures to improve cohesion (e.g., different cultures), impactful volunteering.
 - Health and Wellbeing: Community-level health provision, co-location of services in retail spaces, prevention, drug and alcohol support.

- Transport: Active travel enhancements, local bus services, improved rail connectivity and access.
 - Safety and Security: Designing out crime, police interventions, tackling anti-social behaviour, town centre management (improving local trading, action plans, etc.).
 - Education and Opportunity: School-based programmes to support young people's development, support for families and young children, community-based adult learning.
4. The Investment Plan would need to focus on the first four, rather than the first three years; and
 5. There was a strong emphasis on crowding-in other investment.

Delivery funding would be released from the beginning of the 2026/27 financial year, once the Regeneration Plan has been approved. To facilitate this, an additional £200,000 of capacity funding would be released at the start of the 2025/26 financial year. The intentions for the release of funds were as set out in the table below. The guidance stated funding could be rolled over from one year to the next.

The figures in the table were all hundreds of thousands of pounds.

| Grant | 25/26 | 26/27 | 27/28 | 28/29 | 29/30 | 30/31 | 31/32 | 32/33 | 33/34 | 34/35 | 35/36 | Total |
|----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|
| Revenue | 200 | 382 | 256 | 432 | 432 | 432 | 432 | 437 | 450 | 450 | 450 | 4,599 |
| Capacity | 200 | 150 | | | | | | | | | | *600 |
| Grants | | 232 | 256 | 432 | 432 | 432 | 432 | 437 | 450 | 450 | 450 | 3,999 |
| Capital | | 360 | 1,736 | 1,605 | 1,605 | 1,605 | 1,605 | 1,605 | 1,605 | 1,605 | 1,605 | 14,936 |

*including £250k from 2024/25

Total £19,537K

In the discussion of this item, the evidence from previous new deal measures as to what could make the biggest impacts could be examined and, in respect of crowding in funding, the opportunities of the intended Mayoral County Combined Authority should be examined. The discussion also looked at the preparedness for work of those leaving education and the advantage of apprenticeship schemes. The advantages for young people of these first jobs could not be over-estimated in encouraging confidence and improving an appreciation and application of manners and customer service. Roles in the creative industries were also good for expanding opportunities for young people.

The anticipated impact of the increase in the minimum wage for those under 21 years of age was briefly reflected upon by a number of employers at the Board meeting.

It was AGREED:

- (1) To note the overview of the new Plan for Neighbourhoods provided to the Board (which itself highlighted the changes that had been made from the position as it applied to the previous Long Term Plan for Towns programme);
- (2) to approve the full retention of the Board's membership and governance structure to serve as the new Board under the Plan for Neighbourhoods

programme, noting that Health and Education were already represented on the Board;

- (3) to amend the Clacton-on-Sea 'Plan for Neighbourhoods' area/boundary to include the mixed use development areas identified in the Local Plan to 2033 of Hartley Gardens, Rouses Farm and Cooks Green Farm (north of the Clacton Shopping Village); and
- (4) to authorise the District Council's Deputy Chief Executive to submit the above decisions to the Government's MHCLG by the deadline for confirmation of these matters of 22 April 2025.

60. USE OF CAPACITY FUNDING - CURRENT PROJECT UPDATES:

Within this item, the two following matters were considered:

1. Website & logo

The Board was advised of the development of proposals for the Clacton Town Board's logo through the Board's Sub-Group for this purpose (and comprising Sharon Alexander, Billy Ball and Cllr. Mark Stephenson). The logo would feature on the Board's website and be circulated to all Board Members. In relation to the website, the Board was advised that there would be a soft launch by end of April 2025. The development of the website and the Board's logo was being supported by the same consultant.

It was AGREED to thank those involved in the development of the Board's logo and to approve the direction in which the logo was being developed.

2. Banners, window wrapping & shop front enforcement

Further to the discussion that occurred between the last Board's meeting and this meeting, the Board was advised of the intentions in respect of streetlamp post banners being installed along Station Road, Pier Avenue, the High Street, Rosemary Road and West Avenue. The intention was for the Banners to alternate around the various 'love Clacton' themes being developed.

In respect of shop wrapping, it was confirmed to the Board that the wrapping of the former QD store in Rosemary Road had been completed following the business being relocated to Station Road. Following discussions with the landlord of the former Barclays Bank branch, in Station Road, it was anticipated that an announcement on a new occupier was likely in 2-3 weeks' time.

In so far as shop frontage enforcement, measures to address those considered to be the worst offenders in respect of the frontages had been addressed in discussions with Tendring District Council's Planning Management. It was intended that measures would be put in place to address these concerns.

In addition, Billy Ball (as chair of the Town's Tourism Group) had agreed to write to those considered as needing improved shop frontages to encourage them to improve those frontages. In order to take this forward he would need contact details for those businesses.

It was AGREED, that a Sub-Group be established to consider enforcement and street cleansing and that the members of the Sub-Group shall be Billy Ball, Cllr. Ivan Henderson, Cllr. Mark Stephenson, Cllr. Lesley Wagland and the Divisional Police Commander (or their representative).

During the discussion of this item, the Board was also informed that, using funds from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, certain of the Town Centre Safety Bollards were being replaced and under the Community Regeneration Programme funding was being made available to improve shop fronts.

61. BUDGET BALANCE, APPROVAL OF REVISIONS TO EXISTING BUDGET & NEW £200K CAPACITY FUNDING

The Board was informed that the Government's MHCLG had requested information on the use of the 2024/25 capacity funding and the plans for the use of the additional capacity funding for 2025/26. In this regard, the Board was reminded that detailed proposals for the use of original £250k capacity funding had been agreed by the Board on 19 July 2024 (Minute 23 refers), and variations to this, and an outline for the additional £200k capacity funding (for 2025/26) had been discussed (pending the new guidance) by the Board 12 December 2024 (Minute 46 refers).

The Board was advised that the requirement was for the local authority to consult the Boards on their preference for using the capacity money, which could include:

- establishing and running the Neighbourhood Board, including any process to establish the board as a charity, community interest company, or other bottom-up organisational model, to sustain long-term investment.
- performing community engagement, which could include passporting money directly to voluntary and community sector groups to assist with engagement.
- developing Regeneration Plans.
- securing advice and expertise for Neighbourhood Boards for the technical elements of plan development and delivery.
- ensuring capital and infrastructure interventions can hit the ground running, for example, by kickstarting the planning application process, securing architectural plans and obtaining legal advice, or any other activity that councils and boards consider would progress their plans

Through the report submitted to it, the Board was invited to review and confirm the position in respect of the capacity funding for 2024/25 and for 2025/26, as follows:

Proposed Revised Budget in respect of the £250K provided in 2024/25

| Budget | 2024/25 | 2025/26 | 2026/27 | Total |
|--|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| Website & Comms | 11,554 | 5,000 | 5,000 | 21,554 |
| Engagement (community, business, young people, visitors) | 9,630 | 38,995 | 10,000 | 58,625 |
| Surveys, project preparation | | 30,000 | | 30,000 |
| Town Centre Manager (TCM) | | 30,000 | 30,000 | 60,000 |

| | | | | |
|---------------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|
| TCM Budget* | 22,360 | 20,000 | 20,000 | 62,360 |
| Contingency | | 2,461 | | 2,461 |
| Board & secretariat | 5,000 | 5,000 | 5,000 | 15,000 |
| Total | 48,544 | 131,456 | 70,000 | 250,000 |

Proposed Budget in respect of the £200K to be provided in 2025/26

| Budget | 2024/25 | 2025/26 | 2026/27 | Total |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Website & Comms (inc Comms officer) | | 25,000 | 25,000 | 50,000 |
| Regeneration Plan Coordination | | 40,000 | | 40,000 |
| Top-up surveys, project preparation | | 10,000 | | 10,000 |
| Enforcement Capacity Pilot | | 50,000 | 50,000 | 100,000 |
| Total | | 125,000 | 75,000 | 200,000 |

In respect of the Town Centres Manager funding, the Board was advised that the post was also part funded through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

It was AGREED that:

- (1) The current budget position, expenditures, and commitments to date as reported to the Board be noted;**
- (2) the updated budgets for use of the capacity funding provided, £250K in 2024/25 and £200K in 2025/26, as set out above be approved;**
- (3) the submission to the Government's MHCLG of the budgetary position approved here be authorised; and**
- (4) at future Board meetings there should be a standing item for a report of expenditure and commitments to that point against the approved Budget (as amended by the Board from time to time).**

62. DECISION MAKING BETWEEN BOARD MEETINGS

The Board was reminded of a recent example of the position concerning Banners on street lamp-posts highlighted that there was not an established protocol for decisions on such matters between meetings of the Board. The report submitted to the Board set out a proposed protocol that would seek to accommodate decision making between Board Meetings.

In relation to the protocol, it would be expected that at least eight Board Members respond (being the quorum for Board Meetings). It would also be expected that Board Members would be given at least seven days to respond. The use of the protocol would be monitored to ensure that business planning ahead of Board meetings was robust and, consequently, decision making remains primarily a matter for the Board in actual meetings.

It was AGREED that the following protocol for decisions between Board meetings be approved (incorporating the above expectations and monitoring):

- (1) Identify the relevant policy/budget provision adopted by the Board;**
- (2) notify Board Members of the previous decision and the proposal to implement/amend the approved position. This notification would include a statement as to why the decision needs to be taken between Board meetings rather than waiting for the next Board meeting;**

- (3) Board Members would be invited to express their views on the proposal;
- (4) the expressed views of Board Members and the proposal (including any modification picking up the views of Board Members) are then referred to the Accountable Body's Section 151 Officer and the Board's Chair by the Accountable Body's Deputy Chief Executive. The referral will also set out those Board Members who had not expressed a view;
- (5) the Accountable Body's Deputy Chief Executive will make the formal decision following consultation with the Section 151 Officer and the Board's Chair;
- (6) the decision will be published by the Accountable Body; and
- (7) all decisions taken between Board Meetings will be reported to the next following meeting of the Board.

63. PRESENTATION ON COMMUNITY REGENERATION PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

This item was not considered by the Board.

64. FUTURE MEETINGS

The Board considered arrangements for its future meeting.

It was AGREED that suitable dates, times and venues for meetings of the Board be identified and circulated to Board Members on the basis of meetings being held in May, July, October and December 2025 and March 2026.

The meeting ended at 12:04pm

Chair of the Board