

Grays Town Board

24 November 2023. Notes of Meeting / Key Action Points

ATTENDANCE

Board Members

Cllr A Jefferies
Cllr T Fish
Justin Thomas, New River; Chair
Jackie Doyle-Price, MP, Vice Chair
Teresa O'Keeffe, Riverside Community
Lucy Harris, Creative Places and People
Partnership

Council

Mark Bradbury, Director of Place
Dave Smith, Chief executive
Olanrewaju Sunmola, Senior Project Officer

Apologies

Bernice Lim, Thurrock Council

		Action
1.	Welcome	MB
	BL was unable to attend so MB opened the meeting and welcomed everyone	
2.	Review of minutes	MB
	JT/MB briefly discussed where the last meeting concluded.	

3.	Progress Update	MB
	MB: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work on the activities centre is on pause. There is an agreement that the works to the river wall and creation to the new beach is progressing, there is a programme for that which Ola has shared and will be shared after the meeting if needed. In terms of Kilvert's field the issue is the yacht club, with my discussions with them they will not be moving the boat park easily if at all. Their lease is coming up to an end in a few years' time therefore we may need to revisit Kilvert's field earlier than expected. Regarding the Café, which I visited with Justin I think to achieve the objectives of creating a venue that broadens not just the time that it is used, but also the rate that people use it, you can achieve those aspirations and the river view by refurbishing the existing building. By building a summer garden on a deck as the same level as the top of the wall (outdoor barbeque/bar) – is achievable with public realm improvements and the ability to ensure visibility of the facility from 	

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	the riverside walk, which is cost effective and reduces increased business rates.	
4.	Discussion About Activities Centre	JT
4a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cost of the activity centre became large and when officers investigated further realised that the issue presented was who would take responsibility of the lease and overheads. - Advised that the designs and aspirations should have been redeveloped again to fit the original specification, however there was a time constraint. <p>TO:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Although there was not enough time to create a suitable design, aspiration was for the Sea Cadets to have a place, however the board had not agreed to commit a large sum of money to the sea cadets. As the initial plan was to create a space that was flexible and sustainable going forward, with a floor that could be hired as a venue which would bring residual income. - With regards to the Café discussions about it being moved were held and to add a first floor which would be levelled with the walkways that would allow for the ground floor to continue as a Café servicing the park users. While the first floor would be a night-time attraction with an evening Café which would be connected to the broad walk – those were the initial ideas, but it became too large, and there was a time constraint. - The community need to be put into consideration as they are to be served. <p>LH:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Spoke to the Sea Cadets, and they advised that they had not been contacted with relation to the activities centre. Therefore, if we are looking at designing something for them it would be essential to speak with them about their requirements. - Believes the Café area, Sea Cadets and activities centre would be a space that could be operated and hired by other people but would be a Sea Cadets venue predominately and had also expressed interest in managing the facility. - Clarification is needed on all the projects; way finding has been discussed frequently however care must be taken as it does not meet the criteria for levelling up. 	

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	<p>JT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The four projects, Kilverts field and Public Realm, Riverside wall and walk, the activities centre and the improvements to the Café should be linked in one comprehensive programme. - The costs to the two buildings increased beyond reasonable costs e.g the cost of activities centre became £5.5 million, would cost more than expected to run and maintain there were no tenants who would take on such a liability – a great aspiration but practically undeliverable likewise the Café. - The Café was expected to become a fully serviced restaurant which would operate effectively during the summer months but not during the winter and a trader would not be willing to take all the liability keeping in mind maintenance and operational costs. <p>JD:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It would not be feasible to combine the sea cadets and the Café as the purpose of having a Riverside activities centre was to have a functional space, the Sea Cadets would be the tenants. - The objective of the programme is to reconnect the community to the river, a leisure destination for people to use with a Café offering. But the prime purpose is for activity at the activities centre. <p>JT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meeting with designers is required to simplify the design which will be cost effective and has minimal overheads. - There is plenty of space around the existing Café to enhance and address the change in levels with the Riverside so that costs can be reduced and still deliver the kind of experience that has been anticipated alongside a new river front. <p>Cllr T Fish:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mark should give an update on all three business cases, which would enable board members to give their opinions. The board do need to be involved in the next stage; and will enable board members to provide specific tasks officers could carry out for the next meeting. <p>MB:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The council's role as an accountable body is not necessarily to deliver the programme, but to make sure that the governance of the process and the expenditure that is made adheres to the rules of the funds. - The council as a landowner is inevitably a delivery partner and is concerned about the on-going maintenance and sustainability. The board is leading on pushing the projects forward, designing and approving them and agreeing with the council how the council delivers them. 	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Going forward we are proposing that we meet regularly in a more workshop style, to understand where the projects are. - We need to provide the architects with a brief and engage the board members with the re-design. <p>DS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Understanding the of roles and responsibilities seems to be part of the problem. Clarity on roles and responsibilities is necessary and will assist with establishing a Towns board that has responsibility and leadership around both the design and delivery of the schemes in terms of representing the community. The council's role should be limited both to its accountability role and simply being part of the Towns board. - The board should appoint the programme manager, the council can facilitate that, and the individual will be accountable to the board to ensure their vision is delivered. <p>Cllr A Jefferies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A meeting with the Sea Cadets will be necessary to give them an update and refine what their needs are before the meeting in January. <p>JT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Yacht club – Sea Cadets would require access to the river through the yacht club. The Yacht club also have impact on the boat yard on Kilverts field, although they have two years left on their lease, they are part of the riverfront and would like to be part of the conversation regarding the regeneration of the riverfront. - Who is overseeing the engagement and negotiation with the yacht club? <p>MB:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Met with the Yacht Club in the past and their primary concern was their future security on the site and discussed what that may involve. They are potentially interested in a freehold/leasehold arrangement. - Recognises that they will need to be part of the discussions hence the meeting today. <p>Summary of advice provided at the meeting:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Appoint a dedicated project manager, that reports to the board. 2. Meet with the designers. 3. Continue with the beach project. 4. Arrange to meet in workshop style toward the end of Jan, Feb and March. 5. Have clear agreement of what we want to achieve by the end of March. 	
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	6. All plans to be agreed by the whole board with a clear programme for delivery for each of projects to progress to the next phase. 7. Return amendments to DLUCH if needed.	
5	AOB	
	None.	
	Next Steps	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ola Sunmola to circulate minutes. Mark Bradbury to speak with the designers prior to scheduling a meeting with them and the board. Meeting with Sea Cadets and Yacht Club to be arranged. 	