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Grays Town Deal (Riverside) Programme

Transforming Grays



GRAYS TOWN BOARD MEETING

Notes of Grays Town Board meeting held on Thursday, 26th September 2024 at 13:00 via Microsoft Teams.

Present:

Lucy-Emma Harris	LH	Creative Places and People Partnership (Chair)
Jennifer Craft	JC	MP for Thurrock
Cllr John Kent	JK	Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member for Strategic Relationships, Reputation, and Influence, and Grays Thurrock Ward Councillor.
Cllr Lee Watson	LW	Cabinet Member for Good Growth
Cllr Tony Fish	TF	Representing Grays Riverside Ward

In Attendance:

Grace O'Donnell	GO	Deputy Area Lead for Kent, MHCLG (deputising for Gregory Wilkinson)
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Thurrock Council

Claire Demmel	CD	Executive Director of Place
Ewelina Sorbjan	ES	Chief Officer of Housing, Economic Development & Skills, Regeneration
Gregory McCullough	GM	Head of Regeneration & Place Delivery
Bernice Lim	BL	Regeneration Programme Manager
Olanrewaju Sunmola	OS	Senior Project Officer

Apologies:

Jayne Sheehan	JS	Vice Principal, South Essex College
Gregory Wilkinson	GW	Area Lead for Essex, Kent, Hertfordshire, and Thames Estuary Growth Board, MHCLG
Emma Taylor	ET	Deputy Area Lead for Essex, MHCLG

MEETING NOTES

1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies

LH welcomed Board members and other attendees to the meeting. Welcomed new members Jen Craft, MP for Thurrock, Cllr John Kent as Leader of the Council and Cllr Lee Watson, Cabinet Member for Good Growth.

LH informed Board apologies were received from: JS, GW and ET. Grace O'Donnell, Deputy Area Lead for Kent, will be deputising for GW and ET.

MEETING NOTES

2.	Previous Minutes and Matters Arising	
	<p>Minutes of the previous meeting held on the 8th March 2024 were agreed and accepted as a correct record.</p> <p>The Board to note that following the last Board meeting, there has been informal bi-weekly catch-up sessions with the Board up to purdah for the local election and subsequent general election.</p>	
3.	Chair's Announcement	
	<p>LEH announced that she will be stepping down as the Chair of Grays Town Board. The Board acknowledged the resignation of the Chair and expressed their gratitude for her expertise and contributions.</p>	
4.	Town Board Membership	
	<p>Following the departure of several members, the Board agreed to invite new members to join the Board.</p> <p>Taking into consideration the current delivery stage and the longer-term plan for Grays (activation of the area post completion and development opportunities for town centre), the Board considered and agreed to invite the following candidates to join the Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neil Woodbridge, CEO of Thurrock Lifestyle Solutions • Cllr Valerie Morris-Cook, Cabinet Member for Community Partnerships & Grays Riverside Ward Councillor • Wendy Townsend, Representative of Seabrooke Rise Community Association & Riverside Community Big Local • Abdul Bashir, Director of Desi Indian Dining Club • Cebrail Kolbukn, Manager of Izgara Meze Restaurant • Mark Tebbs, CEO of Thurrock Community and Voluntary Services <p>A declaration of interest was made by Cllr Kent with regards to his employment under Neil Woodbridge in Thurrock Lifestyle Solutions and by Cllr Fish as a Director Thurrock Community and Voluntary Services.</p> <p><u>Action:</u> BL to invite the above candidates to join Grays Town Board.</p>	BL

MEETING NOTES

	<p>The Board agreed that Antony Atkin, Thurrock District Commander Chief Inspector, Essex Police, as representative of Thurrock Community Policing Team would be invited to provide specialist advise at the relevant phases of the programme.</p> <p><u>Nomination of New Chairperson</u></p> <p>The Board agreed to invite Neil Woodbridge, CEO of Thurrock Lifestyle Solutions to be the Chairperson of Grays Town Board.</p> <p><u>Terms of Reference</u></p> <p>The updated Terms of Reference will be circulated to Board Members in advance of the next meeting where it will be ratified.</p> <p><u>Action:</u> BL to circulate updated Terms of Reference.</p>	BL
4.	Declaration of Interest	
	<p>LEH reminded Board members to declare interests that may affect the board decisions. Board members confirmed there were no other conflicts beyond those declared during the Town Board membership discussion.</p> <p>BL advised that a Declaration of Interest form will be circulated to all Board members before the next meetings. This form is to be completed and returned to the Council.</p> <p><u>Action:</u> BL to circulate updated Declaration of Interest form.</p>	BL
6.	Programme Update	
	<p>BL presented the Highlight (Progress) Reports for all projects, noting that the delivery programmes are being refined.</p> <p><u>Project 3: Grays Riverfront</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. A pre-planning engagement event was held from the 5th to 28th August with 113 attendees to the drop-in sessions and over 2,000 visitors to the project page at the Council's online engagement site 'Your Place, Your Voice'. There is a strong support from the local community, with 84% of the 92 feedback responses being in favour of the proposal. b. Planning application for this project will be submitted in the first week of October. Following that, the Project Team shall start to prepare the tender documentation to secure a Design and Build Contractor. 	

- c. The latest projected completion date is August/September 2026, which is earlier than the previously projected October 2026.
- d. MHCLG has confirmed that a Project Adjustment Request (PAR) is not required for the slippage in programme.

Project 4: Grays Beach Riverside and Kilvert's Field

Project 5: Riverfront Activities Centre

- a. There are standing concerns about the long-term operational viability of the new buildings within the Grays Town Deal Programme; Project 4 upgrade of the Lightship Café and Project 5 which is the development of a Riverfront Activities Centre.
- b. Therefore, the Lightship Café was descoped from 429m² to 270m² and the Activities Centre from a 526m² to 362m² with the view of reducing operational liability of these buildings.
- c. Subsequent, market intelligence indicated that greater operational efficiency would be achieved by combining the Café with the Activities Centre which would help secure the long-term financial sustainability of the facilities as well as delivering the ambition set out in the Grays Town Investment Plan. Thus, a combined facility supported by a viable operating model is being developed.
- d. Impulse Leisure, who operates the Council's leisure facilities has expressed a strong interest in operating the new combined facility and the utilising the wider park area to create a leisure campus on the riverfront. However, Womble Bond Dickenson's legal opinion is that the Council will not be able to utilise the existing agreement as the basis to directly enter into new contractual arrangements with Impulse Leisure in respect of the new facility.
- e. The Board acknowledged the present status and approved the issue of an Invitation for Expression of Interest to secure an Operator for the combined facility.
- f. A Project Adjustment Request will be required for MHCLG's approval to combine Projects 4 and 5.
- g. Planned activities for the forthcoming period include completing the operational viability for the combined facility, updating the business case, preparing the Project Adjustment Request for the variations, finalise and issue Invitation for Expression of Interest for an Operator.

MEETING NOTES

	<p>h. Completion is projected at the end of 2026. Efforts will be made to improve the delivery timescales.</p> <p>i. Operational viability, cost price inflation and extended delivery timelines are the key project risks.</p> <p>j. <u>Lightship Café</u>: Vacant possession strategy was discussed and approved by the Board.</p>	
7.	AOB	
	<p>a. <u>Ground Investigations</u></p> <p>BL advised that ground investigation works in and around the Kilvert's Field and Grays Beach Riverside Park will take place between the 18th November and the 13th December 2024. Temporary partial park closure will be required to facilitate ground investigation works. BL will liaise with the Communication Team to notify the local community of the works and associated disruptions.</p> <p>b. <u>Decision Log</u></p> <p>CD requested that a decision log is provided to reflect how the changes to the programmes have been recorded.</p> <p><u>Action:</u> BL to compile decision log.</p>	BL
8.	Date of Next Meeting	
	<p>Bi-monthly Teams meeting invite have been issue meetings to be held on the fourth Thursday of every two months at 13:00.</p> <p><u>Post-Meeting Note:</u> Next meeting to be held on Thursday 5th Dec at 13:00.</p>	