

Bexhill Town Board

MINUTES OF MEETING 12 JULY 2024

Venue: De La Warr Pavilion (Marina, Bexhill, East Sussex, TN40 1DP); STUDIO Time: 2pm-5pm

Meeting Attendance

Board Member	Attendance	Attendance comment
Abi Newbury, FCA (Chair)	Y	N/A
Dr Binodh Bhaskaran (BB)	Y	N/A
Dr Mandy Curtis (MC)	Y	N/A
Eleanore Gordon (EG)	Y	N/A
Cllr Ian Hollidge (IH)	Y	N/A
Ollie Jeffs (OJ)	Y	N/A
Dr Kieran Mullan MP	Y	N/A
Cllr Doug Oliver (DO)	Y	N/A
Kim Richards (KR)	Y	N/A
Cllr Paul Wilson (PW)	Y	N/A
Mark Streater on behalf of Katy Bourne, OBE	Y	N/A
Stewart Drew (SD)	Y	N/A

Secretariat/Governance

Julia Ashton – Policy & Performance Officer, Housing & Regeneration (RDC) – Minutes assistance

Anne Rathbone – Levelling Up Partnership Manager (RDC). For LTPT Partnership and Town Board. (AR)

Joe Powell, Head of Service – Housing and Regeneration (RDC). For LTPT Governance and Accountable Body function. (JP)

Observers/guests:

None

Item 1: Chairs welcome and minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting were taken as approved and are uploaded on the Bexhill Town Board website.

The Chair welcomed the new MP, Dr Kieran Mullan and congratulated him on his election.

The Chair also welcomed Stewart Drew to his first full Town Board meeting.

The Chair reiterated the purpose of the meeting:

- Remind ourselves of requirements of the return
- Update on community and business engagement
- Take any comments on Marshall Regen work
- Moving forward on agreeing our vision and discussing priorities and plans

Item 2: declaration of Interests of Town Board members

The Chair read out the Declaration of Interest statement that is standard for every meeting:

“In doing Town Board business, it is essential that we follow strict procedures in declaring our interests. Members are reminded of the need to declare any interests immediately prior to the commencement of the agenda item in question. Please could you bear this in mind as we go through the agenda today. Please also remember you are abiding by the Nolan Principles which I intend to ensure the Board stand by in all its business”.

AR confirmed that she had sight of all relevant interests that need to be taken into account in discussions today.

Dr Kieran Mullan, MP confirmed that he had no interests to declare.

Action: AR to update the Declaration of Interest Register as required**Item 3: Resignation of Howard Martin**

The Chair noted the resignation of Howard Martin from the Town Board. The Chair asked for the Board’s thanks for his contribution and passion for the town to be recorded. The Chair confirmed that she had written personally to Howard with her thanks.

The appointment of Board members is part of the Chair’s role, consulting with Board members as she feels appropriate. There will be no further appointments however until sometime after 1st August 24 when the Board’s plans are submitted to MHCLG. Meeting this deadline must now be our absolute priority.

Item 4: Action Log

AR went through the action log. Most actions are on schedule or already completed. Those that were still to be completed were delayed by the pre-election period restrictions but are in progress. These include:

- Targeted consultation with older people in addition to what has already happened – through Day Centres and GP surgeries across the town
- Ongoing work to ensure that young people's voices are embedded into the work of the Board

Action: AR to keep action log updated with actions from this meeting and to report back on or before next Board meeting

Item 5: Requirements of the Return

The Chair confirmed that although guidance was given by MHCLG in May, however this was still emerging. AN noted the importance of adhering to the broad principles of the guidance ensuring it is community led and engagement is ongoing and highlighted the need to set ourselves achievable targets, on the menu areas covered, identify next steps with the opportunity to discuss any additional projects for further down the line.

It was noted that AR was currently working on the vision document and 3-year investment plan for the return, which should reflect the views of the community engagement. She emphasised the importance of achieving clarity as far as possible regarding the projects that might sit under the different interventions from the Menu of Interventions. This does not commit anything specific at this stage but gives a steer on how funding should be allocated proportionally across the funding themes and intervention areas. This required a quick turnaround – AR would send a draft to all Board Members by next Friday 19th July, with AR working with a temporary Board review group to ensure the 1st August deadline is met. There is still flexibility in the process to make amendments to these key menu areas later.

There was also a requirement for a vision statement and an accompanying document addressing the accountability function. This latter document has been drafted by RDC and is going through internal approval processes. JP and AR to take further and then provide to the Board as it will require Town Board ratification.

AN noted the need for a temporary Board review group going forward, to act as a sounding board and to provide context regarding wider strategy, possible match fund potential etc. Dr Kieran Mullan MP also offered his input (via his office) so that there is an extra review function. AR emphasised that she would still be sending drafts to the whole Board to keep them in the loop and give opportunity for comment.

KM queried why there was no MHCLG present at the meeting as there had been in similar meetings he had attended, and that they would be able to give instant advisory notes. The Chair explained that they had been at the initial BTB meeting however post the pre-election period the officials had been thinly stretched, but there was an expectation that they would rejoin later in this process. This input would also be important, after the initial return, when there would be more requirement for steer.

Item 6: Summary of Community Engagement

AR updated that community engagement has been very positive with lots of different groups contributing, we are making progress on the gaps, and this is an ongoing process. AR thanked the community and business organisations who had helped with the engagement so far.

SD queried whether all the pipelines from community engagement had been covered at the BTB meetings to date and AN noted that due to the tight deadlines although we were already discussing the strong key themes emerging, from the community engagement, there were still smaller subthemes to consider more fully. She confirmed that there would be ample opportunity for us to do a deeper dive, and more flexibility throughout the process after this tight initial phase.

AR to send out an overall summary from community and business engagement by end Friday 19 July to accompany a first draft submission.

Cllrs Wilson & Hollidge both noted the importance of mapping any key themes, which showed up in community engagement, to the previous large Town Council Surveys of 2010 and 2021 and having an overview of any ownership issues, feasibility studies, long term maintenance costs. AR confirmed that one of the assessment criteria for working through ideas was business viability so all these areas would be covered by this process.

JP reassured the meeting that what this initial phase was focused on was to set the framework and identify the key community engagement themes and vision. He felt the MHCLG process was one that encouraged that collaborative approach between community, business and council and fostering these relationships at the same time as identifying feasibility. He re-iterated that the meeting function today was just to set that framework, incorporating the high-level vision, rather than to discuss all the specific ideas, potential issues now. As we have only had 9 weeks to date, we needed to go at pace to meet the deadline. Any funding approval would come after November 2024 by which point we will have set up specific working groups to start going through the assessment criteria and eligibility for any potential project.

AR confirmed next meet with MHCLG on Tuesday 16th July when we will be given an indication of any updates available.

Action: AR to notify the Board when deadline date confirmed.

Item 7: Draft final report on quantitative data from Marshall Regen

AR to distribute the draft final data report for TB members to review and comment.

Action: AR. This has now been actioned.

Item 8: Vision

A draft vision had been previously circulated to Town Board members. There was general approval, and some specific elements were suggested to be included, additionally to the original draft. Some were already included but members asked them to be strengthened.

- ✓ Collaboration between sectors and organisations
- ✓ Accessible to coastline and countryside
- ✓ Upskilling and education – aspiration
- ✓ Creating jobs
- ✓ Opportunities for those who feel left out – disenfranchised
- ✓ Add community organisations/groups
- ✓ Reflecting diversity
- ✓ Safety
- ✓ Young people
- ✓ Our community strives for aspirational educational opportunities for all which provides future employment for all.

Action: AR to redraft vision and send round to Town Board members for final comment/approval to go into the application. The vision can then be added to the website in due course.

Item 9: Feedback from Moderation meetings and proposed ‘long list’ of intervention priorities

Taking into account suggestions received from public, community organisations and businesses, a discussion took place regarding BTB’s 3-year investment plan priorities during these meetings. This was a high-level direction of travel, with examples of the more obvious and popular types of interventions and looked at which can directly inform the direction of travel in the submission including the 3 year plan return.

From the discussion the following key priorities emerged:

- Some key local assets / areas for upgrade
- Access into town, pathfinding & signposting within Bexhill
- Access to sport and activities for young people
- Environmental community safety – ‘designing out crime and anti-social behaviour’

There was an emphasis too on ensuring any of the long-listed projects for consideration had the relevant landowners / asset owners’ consent, and when working collaboratively with them they were clear on the terms of engagement, funding provision and any attached costs delegated to them. If it was found an iteration of the project had previously been attempted, or there was an overlap re. funding, it was key that BTB were able to identify

ahead of time and access any prior feasibility studies or surveys. This would help ensure a clear overview of viability and sustainability, in terms of the eligibility criteria, helping make it a robust mechanism.

JP confirmed that RDC were keen to enable these community led projects and were able to help assist with intelligence with strategic asset management in identifying possible sites to facilitate projects. KR confirmed that RDC had also been instrumental in helping their latest project find appropriate land.

The Chair thanked members for their valuable contributions and insights and agreement with key priorities to list.

Item 9: Next steps

It was agreed that the temporary review group would continue with progressing investment plans and sign off, with AR feeding drafts to the whole Board for comment and to the Chair for sign off.

The Chair thanked the TB members for all their work to date in this particularly busy period, commenting that we were in fantastic shape in terms of how we are working collaboratively and the agreed vision, and that she felt optimistic about the return to MHCLG. She confirmed that we would be reverting back to quarterly meetings and reminded members the importance of reading the supporting documents sent with next Agenda, ahead of meeting. She also thanked AR for her continued contribution and support and thanked the new MP for Bexhill, Dr Mullan, for attending and coming on board in just his first week in office.

DO thanked the Chair for driving the Board so strongly, to date, as well as AR for her significant output and the level of communications thus far.

Item 10: Any other business

PW mentioned event at Sidley Cricket Club, Sunday 21st July 12pm to which all Board members were invited.