

# Bexhill Town Board

## MINUTES OF MEETING 04 October 2024

Venue: Rother Town Hall, Bexhill. Time: 2pm-5pm

### Meeting Attendance

Board Member	Attendance	Attendance comment
Abi Newbury, FCA (Chair)	Y	N/A
Dr Binodh Bhaskaran (BB)	Y	online
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 with Frances McKenna	Y	online
Cllr Doug Oliver (DO)	Y	N/A
Kim Richards (KR)	Y	N/A
Cllr Paul Wilson (PW)	N	Apologies given
Mark Streater on behalf of Katy Bourne, OBE	N	Apologies given
Stewart Drew (SD)	Y	N/A

### Secretariat/Governance

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 everyone back. Although we are waiting on confirmation of any Long Term Plan for Towns funding from the new Government, there is still a belief that the Bexhill Town Board has a lot to offer in terms of co-ordinating initiatives for Bexhill and encouraging partnership working.

The Chair reiterated the purpose of the meeting:

- Share any updates on Long Term Plan for Towns government intentions
- A brief update on LUP Managers activity, Town Board budget
- Discussion on strategic alignment and possible priorities so we are ready for future funding opportunities
- Identify next steps

## **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 and that the register of interests was up to date for all members.

## **Item 3: Action Log**

AR went through the action log. All actions are green (up to date or completed) apart from a few community engagement actions which are paused, pending an update on the Long Term Plan for Towns funding.

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

## **Item 4: Update on Long Term Plan for Towns funding**

There is no new update. Letters of representation for Bexhill have been sent from Rother District Council and a joint letter from the Chair and the MP.

Indications are that we may hear more around the time of the October budget.

Cllr Ian Hollidge confirmed that Bexhill Town Board has achieved well in terms of Community Engagement and planning, in comparison to other Town Boards.

SD, DO and JP emphasised that we should continue to be aspirational as to what we can achieve for Bexhill, as a town and as a hub of services and economic activity for the wider residents of Rother. We can have a role in helping to ensure that we have projects that are ready for inclusion in future funding applications and contributing to pro-active community engagement for any new developments.

## **Item 5: Budget update and LUP Manager activity**

AR gave an update on spend from the Town Board capacity funding. All allocations have been processed and the budget is paused pending advice from the MHCLG Advisors regarding future plans.

AR confirmed that she was continuing to work on Town Board business, identifying key strategies that relate to Bexhill and linking our learning from Community Engagement to these. AR has spent some time on the Levelling Up Partnership projects. This has been recharged from LUP capacity to the Town Board budget to accommodate time spent. AR gave an update on Levelling Up Partnership projects, particularly how they relate to priorities we have previously discussed.

## **Item 6: Break and Networking**

## **Item 7/8: Discussion on strategic alignments with other strategies and plans and next steps**

Small groups discussed what might be the key strategic priorities/themes from Government going forward; how the findings from our community engagement and what we have already discussed

might link to these themes and what we can do to be most prepared for any future announcements or initiatives from central government. Key points that came out of discussion were:

Government funding themes may not be radically different going forward, as the social, economic and infrastructure needs are the same. Housing and accompanying need for infrastructure; the role of skills, culture and creativity in economic development; encouraging enterprise and entrepreneurial spirit.

There are areas of high deprivation, which is why we were originally identified for Long Term Plan for Towns funding. There is a lack of opportunity for young people, we need a focus on job creation and for young people to be qualified to take advantage of this. The wellbeing of our young people is also a direct contribution to community cohesion and the prevention of anti-social behaviour. In other age groups also, poor health negatively impacts on productivity and economic health. Conversely, good social infrastructure (transport, business promotion, tourism promotion, community safety and good public transport are conditions for good social health).

Families are moving into Bexhill changing the demographics. However, many of them have to travel to other towns to work.

Positive messaging about the town is important, highlighting reasons why people should visit and stay. We need objective messaging about sea pollution based on facts.

Improvements to the look of the town centre can promote inward investment. Good recreation facilities, eateries are attractive to visitors and people moving into town.

The Local Plan has identified the utilisation of available land as a priority. This is an opportunity to promote opportunities for business that complement High St business. Planners are constrained by national regulations but some of these are under review. Repurposing of empty Town Centre properties is an opportunity for investment in housing and employment.

We can contribute through community engagement when projects are at early conception phase.

We also need to remember that many small businesses are social enterprises, so investment in Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprises (VCSE) is, and should be seen to be, a direct contribution to business development.

Local decision making is important and is a stated priority of the Government.

We should use our collaborative working and resources to conserve what is good about the town, plus attract further investment. As a Town Board, we should not lose our momentum but should choose specific goals to focus on.

### **Item 9: Any other business**

Consultation and liaison with High Street businesses (retail and hospitality especially) remains a priority. It is important to promote a range of business leadership roles – promoting the concept of business people being in community leadership positions. The Chairship of the Town Board is a good example of what can be achieved.

**Date of next meeting: Friday 13 December 2024, Rother Town Hall 14.00 to 16.30**