

Bexhill Neighbourhood Board

MINUTES OF MEETING 13 July 25

Venue: Rother Town Hall, Bexhill – Committee Room Time 14.00 to 17.00

Meeting Attendance

Board Member	Attendance	Attendance comment
Abi Newbury, FCA (Chair)	Y	N/A
Dr Binodh Bhaskaran (BB)	Y	In person
Dr Mandy Curtis (MC)	Y	N/A
Eleanore Gordon (EG)	N	Medical
Dr Kieran Mullan MP	Y	online
Cllr Doug Oliver (DO)	Y	N/A
Cllr Paul Wilson (PW)	Y	N/A
Simon Yates (SY) on behalf of Katy Bourne, OBE (KB)	Y	N/A
Nicola Walker, Police and Crime Commissioner Office	Y	N/A
Stewart Drew (SD)	Y	N/A
Ollie Jeffs (OJ)	Y	N/A
Kim Richards (KR)	Y	N/A
Cllr Ian Hollidge (IH)	Y	N/A

Secretariat/Governance

Anne Rathbone – Bexhill Neighbourhood Board and Partnerships Manager (RDC) (AR)

Ellie Foster – Bexhill Neighbourhood Board Officer (EF)

Joe Powell, Acting Director of Communities (RDC). For Governance and Accountable Body function. (JP) (on behalf of Anna Evett).

Lorna Ford, Chief Executive Officer, RDC (LF)

Observers/guests:

Frances McKenna (FM), Office Manager for Dr Kieran Mullan MP joining online

Apologies:

Anna Evett (AE), Rother District Council (Annual Leave)

Item 1: Chair's welcome and purpose of meeting; minutes of last meeting

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

Firstly, the Chair welcomed Ellie Foster, the newly appointed Neighbourhood Board Officer, who started on Wednesday 11 June 25.

The Chair then reiterated the purpose of the meeting as follows:

- For the Board to receive key updates and ratify/approve significant decisions/final document drafts. The Chair aimed to get through these as quickly as possible so the Board could spend a good amount of time working together to start to shape up our plans.
- To present updates from the working groups regarding development of priorities. Anna Evett was on leave, but Joe Powell and Lorna Ford were present in the role of RDC governance and also to advise the Board on key strategic alignments as we shape up our ideas for moving forward with the first 4-year investment plan.

The Chair stated that as usual, she looked forward to some interesting discussions, hearing the Boards views and identifying clear next steps.

Item 2: Declarations of interest for Members and Officers

The Chair read out the statement on Declaration of Interests as follows:

In doing Neighbourhood Board business, it is essential that we follow strict procedures in declaring our interests. Members are reminded of the need to declare any financial or non-financial 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 the Register is up to date to the best of her knowledge. Any members with new or changing Interests should inform AR/EF as possible.

Item 3: Action Log

The action log had been shared with Neighbourhood Board members in the papers for the meeting. AR confirmed that all but one action were up to date (this has now been picked up by EF) and a revised action log would be prepared.

Item 4: New Prospectus Implications and Plan for Neighbourhood Return update.

Our first return to central government was submitted by the deadline of 22 April 2025 and was approved by MHCLG.

The Terms of Reference were approved by MHCLG pending the Board's ratification. These were ratified and the latest version is now uploaded to the website.

The Chair gave an update regarding the meeting for Chairs across the country, which she attended on 10 June 25. At this meeting, the MHCLG Advisors explained the different intervention types that can be funded through the Plan for Neighbourhoods funding. These include large, long-term transformational projects and smaller, quicker to achieve 'micro' projects (which can still have a big impact).

A summary of the new prospectus was sent out to Board members, with an emphasis on implications to the Board. A summary for residents and businesses will be uploaded to the website.

The more detailed guidance on the plan was released earlier this week. In addition, we have now received an updated Evidence Base (Data Pack). Both of these have been circulated to Board members.

Item 5: Board Membership

In considering the effectiveness and long-term needs of the Board, the Chair has asked the Town Clerk of Bexhill-on-Sea Town Council (BoSTC) to become of member the Board. Cllr Wilson, the current Chair of the BoSTC and Mayor, is a member in an individual capacity, and it is important that as Councillors may change over time, that we have a stable presence that represents the Town Council. This will ensure that BoSTC can have input into priorities and plans that the Board need them to be on board with, from an operational as well as Council perspective. The Board approved this decision by the Chair.

Young people's involvement in decision making of the Board was also discussed. AR and EF are meeting the Member of the Youth Parliament (a Bexhill resident) on 17 June 25. They will report back to the Board on ideas for youth involvement in decision making going forward.

Item 6: Budget and activity update

The capacity budget for 25/26 has been approved by MHCLG and is on track to be spent within the year. Spend categories are:

- Community and business engagement
- Staffing and support costs
- Development of a spatial town plan to form a basis for Neighbourhood Board plans, as well as those by the 3 Councils (ESCC, RDC, BoSTC).
- Branding and website review and development

Main activities since the last meeting were:

- All items on action log from Board
- Recruitment of the Neighbourhood Board Project Officer
- Taking forward all the priorities we are exploring (Item 7)
- Hotels meeting and background work
- Liaison with MHCLG, members and Chair
- Internal meetings at RDC to ensure our potential priorities fit with Local Plan
- Taking over lead for Economic Development Plan (as part of RDC part of NB Manager and Partnerships role) implementation
- Commissioning of the Comms (branding, design and website) support

- Business and community engagement development
- Other stakeholder and partner meetings

Item 7: Feedback from working groups

AR had sent out a detailed update confidential to Board members, given the early stage of our explorations. Three aspects in particular were discussed at the Board:

Town Spatial Plan:

This is a priority for the Neighbourhood Board and will help us to make the best possible use of the funding available, in collaboration with ESCC, RDC and BoSTC. It will also give us visuals that we can share with community and business in the town as well as use to promote Bexhill to new businesses and investors, to encourage their investment in the town. The timeline for commissioning the plan is on track:

- Working group established
- Draft contract for supplier ready
- Invitation to quote prepared and sent out
- Closing date for quotations 18 June 25
- Decision confirmed by selection panel 27 June 25
- Working draft to Neighbourhood Board September meeting
- Final product by 31 September 25 to inform final decisions re the first 4 year investment plan

Possibilities of Fountain repair:

We are looking into the possibility of repair of the Fountain. There are challenges but we are exploring how to overcome these.

A working group has been established and met 12 June 25. EF has been exploring companies and examples of work in other towns, and we will also do a piece of work to identify costs. This working group will report back to September meeting with updates to Board members at key points, by email.

Increasing footfall in the town centre:

This is an issue that has come out strongly in business engagement so far as well as from residents. Various options are being looked at to contribute to this including:

- Repurposing vacant buildings in the town centre
- Vinyls in vacant shop fronts
- Ways of directing people from the station into the town centre
- Signage/wayfinding

Email updates will be provided to Board members as we work with partners in other services to see how this can be progressed. When we have the town spatial plan this will help us pin down our options and begin to share them more widely.

Item 8: Break and networking

Item 9: Starting to shape up our plans

EF and AR put together an exercise which the Board worked through which included priorities the Board has previously discussed/explored, which were options to include in the Neighbourhood Boards plans.

The priorities the Board has discussed are all provisional at the moment as the Town Spatial Plan work may well identify other priorities that the Board thinks are strategically important.

Some priorities may be more realistic for the Boards second 4-year plan. There was space in the exercise for the Board to identify this.

There are also some potential 'add-ons' that can be incorporated alongside the Boards main priorities at relatively low cost. These include actions stemming from a 'Designing out Crime' approach. These were for the Boards consideration and feedback as well. The Neighbourhood Board now know that the deadline for submission is 28th November 2025 at the latest, so the Board needs to continue aiming for consensus on their plans, whilst we wait for the Town Spatial Plan to be completed – at end September 2025. Anne has asked prospective suppliers to provide the Board with a draft or at least a working document for our September meeting date.

Item 10: Next Steps

Covered in above agenda items

Item 11: Any other business

NW raised the issue of community safety. The PCC office will work with the Police to provide statistical reports on community safety implications and opportunities of various projects.

The Chair thanked everyone especially the guest attendees.

Next meeting of Bexhill Neighbourhood Board:

19 September 14.00 to 17.00 at Rother Town Hall, Committee Room.

Forward dates and agenda plan

Proposed dates	Forward agenda notes
19 th September 25 2.00pm to 5pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Action log• Budget update• Highlight report on Community and Business Engagement• Approve interests policy (following new prospectus)• Governance agreement between Neighbourhood Board and RDC

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment plans draft
Extraordinary Meeting if required for Investment Plan sign off). Date tba	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sign off plan
12 th December 25 2.00pm to 5pm (or	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action log • Highlight report on Community and Business Engagement • Investment plans sign off

Action Log

Outstanding actions - last updated by AR 17/06/25

RAG scores

Red = overdue or at risk

Amber = in progress

Green = complete

Action	Who	Deadline	RAG	Comments
Undertake consultation on governance agreement for comment and seek approval from legal and Section 151 officers at RDC as the Accountable Body.	AR	September meeting	A	Added 19 March 25
Investigate possibilities regarding dedicated specialist procurement across Eastbourne and Hastings.	AR	Report to next Neighbourhood Board meeting	A	Added 19 March 25
Take forward idea of business conference to follow on from town plan publication	AR	Update to next Neighbourhood Board	A	To follow Town Plan completion. Update to Board on Forward Plan for September 25
Register of interests developed Detailed Interests policy developed.	AR	Revised to after new prospectus received	A	Picked up on reconfirmation but needs to comply with new prospectus. To be finalised and presented for Neighbourhood Board approval at or before September meeting
Neighbourhood Board members kept informed of face to face engagement opportunities	AR to update members	ongoing	G	Ongoing
Pick up Register of Interests and Conflict of Interests policy	AR/EF	September meeting or before	A	In progress