



## GRAYS TOWN BOARD MEETING

Notes of Grays Town Board meeting held on Thursday, 12<sup>th</sup> December 2024 at 11:00 via Microsoft Teams.

### Present:

Neil Woodbridge ( <b>Chair</b> )	<b>NW</b>	CEO of Thurrock Lifestyle Solutions
Jennifer Craft	<b>JC</b>	MP for Thurrock
Cllr John Kent	<b>JK</b>	Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member for Strategic Relationships, Reputation, and Influence, and Grays Thurrock Ward Councillor.
Cllr Lee Watson	<b>LW</b>	Cabinet Member for Good Growth
Cllr Tony Fish	<b>TF</b>	Representing Grays Riverside Ward

### In Attendance:

Harry Briton-Watkins	<b>HBW</b>	Jen Craft MP's Staff
<b>Thurrock Council</b>	<b>TC</b>	
Dave Smith	<b>DS</b>	Managing Director Commissioner
Gloria Ighodaro	<b>GI</b>	Chief Officer of Housing, Economic Development & Skills, Regeneration
Louise Neilan	<b>LN</b>	Assistant Director of Communications and Engagement
Gregory McCullough	<b>GM</b>	Head of Regeneration & Place Delivery
Bernice Lim	<b>BL</b>	Regeneration Programme Manager
Olanrewaju Sunmola	<b>OS</b>	Senior Project Officer, Regeneration
Kevin Howlett	<b>KH</b>	Head of Communications

### Apologies:

Cllr Valerie Morris-Cook	<b>VMC</b>	Cabinet Member for Community Partnerships & Grays Riverside Ward Councillor.
Jayne Sheehan	<b>JS</b>	Vice Principal, South Essex College
Wendy Townsend	<b>WT</b>	Representative of Seabrooke Rise Community Association & Riverside Community Big Local
Abdul Bashir	<b>AB</b>	Director of Desi Indian Dining Club
Cebraill Kolbukn	<b>CK</b>	Manager of Izgara Meze Restaurant

## MEETING NOTES

<b>1.</b>	<b>Welcome, Introductions and Apologies</b>	
	NW welcomed Board Members and other attendees to the meeting.	
<b>2.</b>	<b>Extraordinary Town Board Meeting</b>	

## MEETING NOTES

Purpose of the extraordinary meeting is for the Town Board to agree next steps following the decision on the 5<sup>th</sup> December to write to MHCLG for guidance on changing Town Deal projects at the stage.

### 3. Discussion Points

Note: A paper setting out the background of Grays Town Deal and considerations moving forward was circulated to Board Members in advance of the extraordinary meeting along with the Grays Town Investment Plan.

NW thanked the Council for the Town Deal paper and noted that it is useful document to inform the Board's decision on whether to write to MHCLG; to explore changing Town Deal projects fundamentally.

NW acknowledged that most of the members are new to the Grays Town Board, and it is usual for new members to question decisions made by the previous Board. He noted that the Board was going through the 'Forming, Storming, Norming' stages, however there is a need to head towards the 'Performing' stage quickly – the Board has no choice but to do so.

NW cautioned the Board against decisions which may alarm MHCLG. He highlighted the risks of changing Town Deal projects fundamentally and recommended placing letter to MHCLG on hold. He also highlighted the opportunity to influence the new build and create something amazing.

JK agreed with NW and reiterated the need to maintain credibility with the Government. JK acknowledged given the opportunity to start afresh, these projects may not be selected for the Town Deal, however he accepts the current status and stated that there is still an opportunity 'to do some really good stuff' and 'to make a positive effort to maximise this opportunity on the table'.

JC agreed to place MHCLG letter on hold. She would like clarity on the degree of influence the Board have on Project 4 Grays Beach Riverside and Kilvert's Field (which includes a new Café) and Project 5 Riverfront Activities Centre – the scope for change. She would be content with a slight pause on the programme.

TF agreed with JC.

NW reiterated the opportunity to influence the use/nature of the new build through the Operator selection process. He noted that the Operator selection is critical to the success of the new build.

NW stated that the Grays Town Deal programme meets with wider regeneration agenda.

GI suggested that the Board give some thought as to how they would like to participate in the Operator selection process; who may want to get involve in the selection process.

GI highlighted the importance of having the Board's support on the Grays Town Deal Programme and need to give MHCLG confidence. She stated that it is 'our starting point to prove track record' and there will be more funding opportunities.

NW concurred and noted the wide skillsets on the Board. He called upon Board Members to draw on their experience and connections to create something really positive and fabulous.

NW highlighted the potential opportunity to utilise some of the £1.3m Creative People and Places Arts Council grant for audience development in this area. This is an opportunity to build on the cultural strategy and pull together all the other strategies, to create interesting opportunities and get everyone excited.

NW highlighted the importance of communicating the scheme and Board's aspiration to the community.

DS agrees with the Board's comments. Whilst these projects wouldn't necessary be the projects that the Board would have chosen or indeed arguably the most impactful in terms of return, there is a need to search for a pragmatic solution. This is part of the wider regeneration of Grays and there is a need to develop a vision which connects all the various projects in the Town Centre.

The Board agreed to place letter to MHCLG on hold.

**Actions:**

- BL provide a summary of the Projects 4 and 5, and the associated Town Deal grant requirements.
- Board members to share their thoughts and ideas for the new build with GM and BL ahead on the next Town Board meeting.

**BL**

**All**

## MEETING NOTES

<b>4.</b>	<b>Delivery Timescales</b>	
	<p>BL explained that the Operator selection process will commence once MHCLG has approved the amalgamation of Project 4 Grays Beach Riverside and Kilvert’s Field (which includes a new Café) and Project 5 Riverfront Activities Centre through a Project Adjustment Request (PAR).</p> <p>BL highlighted the tight delivery timescales for Projects 4 and 5 with the current projection of full grant commitment in March 2026.</p> <p>JC agreed with the submission of the PAR and look forward to further discussions on the possibilities for the new build.</p> <p>LW is also content with the submission of the PAR considering the reputational risk, risk of funding withdrawal and funding clawback.</p> <p>The Board approved the submission a PAR to MHCLG and delegates authority to the Chair and deputy Chair to sign off the PAR on behalf of the Board.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> BL to circulate PAR to the Board Members.</p>	<b>BL</b>
<b>5.</b>	<b>Date of Next Meeting</b>	
	Next meeting to be held on Thursday 9 <sup>th</sup> January 2025 at 13:00.	