

Long Term Plan for Towns - Governance Arrangements

Cabinet	30 May, 2024
By	Louise Askew, Head of Regeneration and Growth
Cabinet Portfolio Member	Cllr Rick Everitt, Leader of the Council
Key Decision	No
Decision classification	Unrestricted
Call in status	Can be called in
Ward:	All Wards in Ramsgate

Purpose of the Report

This report outlines Thanet District Council's intention to adapt the Thanet Regeneration Partnership to include the governance arrangements for the Long Term Plan for Towns programme for Ramsgate.

Recommendation(s):

Cabinet is asked to:

1. Agree to revise the membership of the existing Thanet Regeneration Partnership Board so that it is compliant with Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities guidance, enabling it to deliver the governance requirements of the Long Term Plan for Towns programme as a Ramsgate Board.
2. Provide approval for the proposed governance arrangements to be submitted to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.
3. Acknowledge that with these arrangements, the current Chair for the Thanet Regeneration Partnership Board will have responsibility in ensuring that the existing governance arrangements fulfil the requirements of the Long Term Plan for Towns Programme as set out by central government.
4. Approve the suggested changes to the boundary as set out in Appendix 3 of this report, to include all green and blue spaces not included in the built up areas data set map of Ramsgate.
5. Authorise the Head of Regeneration and Growth in consultation with the Leader of the Council and Chair of the Board to update the Terms of Reference and Code of Conduct for the Regeneration Partnership Board to reflect the guidance.

6. Authorise the Head of Regeneration and Growth in consultation with the Leader of the Council to work with the Chair of the Board to develop a mechanism to add relevant representative organisations to the Board, and to amend its membership accordingly.

1. Summary of Reasons

- 1.1 With the recent award to Ramsgate of £20m of funding and support through the government's Long Term Plan for Towns Funding, as the Accountable Body, Thanet District Council is required to set up appropriate governance arrangements to facilitate delivery of the programme.
- 1.2 A decision is required by Thanet District Council's Cabinet to approve the intention to adapt the existing Thanet Regeneration Partnership to include the governance arrangements for the Long Term Plan for Towns programme for Ramsgate.
- 1.3 Using existing governance arrangements is being proposed in order to be able to facilitate the delivery of the development of a ten year vision and three year investment plan in the time frame set out by central government.

2. Background

- 2.1 At the budget announcement on 6 March 2024 Ramsgate was identified as one of 20 towns as part of the government's expansion of the Long-Term Plan for Towns programme. The aim of this funding is to provide places with ten years of endowment-style funding and support worth up to £20 million to invest in communities and regeneration. The funding allocation is on the basis of 25% Revenue and 75% Capital. The funding is provided as a flat amount over a period of time to deliver against a ten year vision.
- 2.2 The funding is for the whole area of Ramsgate, and as the guidance states, the funding should be focused on the issues that matter most to local people, including high streets, heritage and regeneration, and public safety and security.
- 2.3 Central government has published three sets of guidance available online - [guidance published Oct 2023](#), [guidance published Dec 2023](#) and [guidance published Mar 2024](#). The guidance requests that a Town Board is set-up, and it outlines the types of organisations that should be represented on the Board. The Board is required to lead on the development and submission of a Long-Term Plan, which comprises a ten year vision and a three year investment plan. The Plan will set out how funding will be allocated and spent, with the local authority as the body ultimately accountable for funding.
- 2.4 Central government has set out three high level themes for the programme, with a number of interventions identified and a range of levers and flexibilities to drive improvement and unlock barriers to regeneration and development. A new High Streets and Towns Taskforce will be established by the Department for Levelling Up,

Housing and Communities to work with towns to provide bespoke, hands-on support to towns to help them deliver and implement the interventions identified in their Long-Term Plan.

- 2.5 The funding should be focused on the issues that matter most to local people within the three investment themes - high streets, heritage and regeneration, and public safety and security. There are a range of published interventions to choose from (Appendix 1) within those themes. If Ramsgate wishes to spend the money on something not identified then a business case needs to be put forward and a digital form completed. Not sure what this looks like, but likely to be value for money based.
- 2.6 Towns will be required to demonstrate how they have developed plans in engagement with local people. As part of this plan, areas will be expected to bring something to the table, whether that's the time and resources of key people, local match-funding or properties to include in regeneration projects.
- 2.7 Central government will also develop a toolkit (Appendix 2) in partnership with local authorities. This will include identifying opportunities for extending and strengthening powers in the future and helping local authorities to make full use of new powers shortly coming into force. They will look at where local authorities can be granted more flexibility over exercising powers without requiring central government approvals.

3. Relevant Issues

- 3.1 Timescales have been set out by central government for local authorities as part of the Long Term Plan for Towns Programme. This includes a deadline of 3 June 2024 to set up their Town Boards. The council has been provided with £50,000 capacity funding to support this where required. By 3 June it is expected that the council will have appointed a Chair for the Board who will set-up the Town Board, or repurpose an existing Board. The Town Board will be established and a plan for initiating community engagement will have been started.
- 3.2 By 1 November 2024 it is expected that the Town Boards will submit their Long Term Plans, comprising the ten year vision and three year investment plan. The Plan will set out how funding will be allocated and spent, with the local authority as the body ultimately accountable for funding. The council will be allocated £200,000 of capacity funding to support the development of the Plan, including additional community engagement activity.
- 3.3 The council has reviewed the guidance set-out by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and has discussed an approach with the Department to use the existing Thanet Regeneration Partnership Board for the Long Term Plan for Towns Programme. At a Cabinet meeting on [21 September 2023](#) approval was provided to set up a new Partnership Board as part of the council being in the Simplification Pathfinder Pilot. The technical FAQ guidance for the Long Term Plan for

Towns programmes from March 2024 states that - *'If an existing forum is to be repurposed, it is incumbent on the chair, supported by the local authority, to ensure the right people are around the table to fully reflect the priorities of the town and the requirements set out in the Guidance - this may require further appointments, if deemed appropriate.'*

- 3.4 The council has engaged with the Chair of the Thanet Regeneration Partnership Board to ensure that they agree to the proposed changes to the Board, and that they are content that they will be able to manage the two roles that the Board will have, and to ensure that it is representative of Ramsgate's communities.
- 3.5 The council has the experience and capability of supporting the Thanet Regeneration Partnership Board in the development of a stakeholder engagement plan, that will be actioned to support the development of a ten year vision and three year investment plan. As the accountable body for the funding the council has an important role to ensure that the spending of public monies is robust, and the Chief Finance Officer is required to provide their assurance that the plan and vision will be deliverable.
- 3.6 Central government expects that the constituent members of the Town Board will access the range of levers and flexibilities they have access to to drive improvement and unlock barriers to regeneration and development. The Board should drive the priorities for investment, identify where the powers set out in the policy toolkit can be maximised to deliver change and steer the long term vision for the town.
- 3.7 The proposal is to ensure that the right representation is on the Thanet Regeneration Partnership Board and to submit this to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on 3 June 2024 using the template and guidance provided on 14 May 2024 by central government. The guidance requests information to be submitted on:
- Town Board Chair;
 - Engagement with the local MP on the appointment of the Chair;
 - The proposed Town Board membership;
 - The Town Board's terms of reference;
 - Plans to engage and support community and civic organisations in the town to engage with residents to develop the Long Term Plan for their town;
 - Declarations of interest; and
 - Any requested amendments to the proposed town boundary.
- 3.8 Thanet District Council Officers will no longer be Board members, but will be attendees at the Board meetings. A review will also take place to ensure that the Board has the right representation from Councillors, from both Thanet District Council, but also the other layers of local government. The expectation is that there will be approximately 18 people on the Board.
- 3.9 The Thanet Regeneration Partnership Board will have two functions, one is the strategic oversight of the Future High Street Fund, Town Deal and Levelling Up Fund programmes projects. In this instance the Board is not a decision maker, but is there

to support the Accountable Body in the delivery of the capital funding from these programmes. For the Long Term Plan for Towns the Board Members will have a decision making role, working with the local authority to develop the Long Term Plan for Ramsgate. The Terms of Reference will take into account the different functions required within the two roles. It will set out how the agenda will be split to take account of the two roles, and that any Members of the Board, who specifically represent Margate, will not be part of the Long Term Plan for Towns decision making section of the agenda. This will ensure that the decisions being made about Ramsgate are for those engaged in Ramsgate.

- 3.10 At its meeting on Thursday 16 May 2024 the Thanet Regeneration Partnership Board provided its support to this approach as set out in this report. The draft report was provided for their consideration, and a discussion was held at the meeting. An approach to the Board being held in two parts, the first non-decision making, with members representing Margate leaving after that section. With the second part, including the new members representing Ramsgate joining the meeting to discuss the Long Term Plan for Towns programme, as decision making members. Members of the Board were keen that delivery proposals would come through the community, and through the stakeholder engagement they would feel as though they are part of the decision making for the programme. The Thanet Regeneration Partnership Board was comfortable that they were in a position to flex and embrace the new arrangement to help move this forward. There was also discussion about having a Vice Chair of the Board specifically from Ramsgate to support these new governance arrangements.
- 3.11 A number of task and finish groups will be set up. The membership of these groups will include sector or theme specific members of the Thanet Regeneration Partnership Board, relevant public sector officers and sector or theme specific community representatives. A discussion with the Board will take place to understand their view on how many of these groups should be set-up, and whether they will be based on sectors, themes, priorities for Ramsgate or gaps in current delivery. Sessions will be facilitated by a suitably qualified third party organisation, who will be commissioned using the capacity funding. The expectation is that the facilitators will be neutral and objective to ensure a robust and inclusive process.
- 3.12 Through the Margate Town Deal the council set up a People's Panel - a group of people who put themselves forward, who were representative of the population of the town. The People's Panel was a sounding board for the Margate Town Deal Board and the teams developing the projects. They ensured that projects reflected the views of people living in the town, and were 'Margate' enough. The Panel provided valuable feedback, which was used to develop and amend projects. The Peoples Panel is not a decision making Panel, but a very valuable resource to support the development of the vision and investment plan. An open call will take place to encourage people to put themselves forward for a Ramsgate People's Panel, and it is expected that there will be a mixture of in person and virtual engagement.

- 3.13 The council will work with the Board, and through a programme of capacity building of the community, voluntary and social enterprise sector, the intention is to work towards setting up either a Board or an entity, that in the long run is able to take more ownership of the management of the funds and the running of the programme. The intention is that this entity should have the capacity and capability to support the growth and regeneration of Ramsgate into the future, and still be in existence past the time period of the funding and vision. This intention will be submitted to central government on the 3 June deadline, and will feed into the vision and investment plan for 1 November deadline.
- 3.14 The proposed town boundary to be used for Towns Boards in England and Wales is the [ONS Built-up Area](#) geography. There is scope to make representations to the department to alter those boundaries, where an amendment remains within the spirit of the programme and includes, as part of the revised area, the town that was originally selected. The boundary for Ramsgate does not include any green or blue spaces - therefore missing out the land along the coastline and Jakey Bakers. The plan in Appendix 3 will be sent to central government when the council submits the plan for the Board on 3 June 2024, showing the area that should be covered by the programme for Ramsgate.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 A community organisation could be identified to facilitate the management and running of the Long Term Plan for Towns Programme. However, there doesn't currently exist a single community organisation, or constituted group of relevant community organisations that could take on this function at this time. The liability remains with the council, as the accountable body and this would create a significant risk for the council. This is not the recommended option.
- 4.2 A new Ramsgate Board could be set-up to deliver the required role as set out by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. However, this would add to the administrative burden on the council to facilitate more than one partnership Board. Having an existing Board with a set of Terms of Reference and Code of Conduct means that Ramsgate will be in a stronger position to start developing the engagement plan and the mechanism to develop the ten year vision and three year investment plan. This is not the recommended option.
- 4.3 The preferred option is as set out in the body of the report. This will allow the board to be established from existing structures and in accordance with the timescale set down by central government.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 There is no formal consultation required for this report, however the Long Term Plan for Towns requires a significant amount of community and stakeholder engagement

as part of developing a ten year vision for Ramsgate and three year investment plan. An engagement plan will be developed in consultation with the Board.

6. Corporate Implications

6.1 Finance and Resources

6.1.1 There are no direct financial or resourcing implications arising from the approval of the proposed recommendations.

6.2 Legal and Constitutional

6.2.1 The proposals detailed in this report are congruent with Government Guidance, 'Long Term Plans for Towns- Guidance for Local Authorities and Town Boards. The relevant provisions are cited in the body of this report.

Annexed to the main guidance is further detail in relation to the governance arrangements for Town Boards which provides the following:

- 1) Transparency - in line with the principles of public life, the operations of the Town Board must be transparent
 - i) The Town Board should publish membership and governance arrangement (including minutes of meetings and decision logs) on the Council's website
 - ii) Town Boards to meet quarterly and to publish:
 - a documented decision-making process outlining the voting rights of the board
 - profiles of board members
 - all board papers in advance of the meeting within 5 working days
 - draft minutes of meetings following the meeting within 10 working days
 - final minutes, once approved by the board within 10 working days
 - any conflicts of interest reported, within the published minutes
 - iii) Town Boards should follow lead council governance and finance arrangements when considering private reports, with the default position being that all papers are open to the public.

- 2) Code of Conduct - All Town Board members should sign up to a code of conduct based on the Seven Principles of Public Life (the Nolan Principles).

There should be clear processes for managing conflicts of interests (both commercial, actual, and potential) in decision making, which apply to all involved with the work of the Town Board.

3) Declaration of interests

The council should provide guidance on:

- the financial and non-financial interests individuals must declare
- the process Town Board members must follow for declaring interests
- the process for requesting an exemption

Town Board members must then complete a declaration of interests, which the lead council will then hold. This can be in a format the lead council already uses.

Town Board members are responsible for declaring their interests before the Town Board considers any decisions. The lead council must record:

- actions taken in response to any declared interest
- any gifts or hospitality given to the Town Board or individual members

6.2.2 Full consideration will need to be given to ensure that the proposed Town Board meets the above requirements.

6.3 Council Policies and Priorities

6.3.1 The Long Term Plan for Towns Programme has three main themes - Safety and security, High streets, heritage and regeneration; and Transport and connectivity. The funding allocated will help to deliver against the council Corporate Priorities of:

- To keep our district safe and clean
- To create a thriving place

6.4 Risk

6.4.1 The council has established the apparatus and experience for reviewing and managing the various key risks of delivering large externally funded capital and revenue programmes.

6.4.2 The council is responsible for ensuring that there are effective and adequate risk management and internal control systems in place to manage the major risks to which the external funding programmes are exposed.

6.4.3 As part of the development of projects robust risk registers are developed. The registers are live documents. The Risks identified in the Risk Register as “High” are reviewed regularly, and those that provide a risk to the Council will be on the Council’s corporate risk register.

6.4.4 Currently there are no project specific risk registers for this programme of funding to inform this decision making on the basis that the governance arrangements are being set-up. However, the single biggest risk from this programme is that the council is the accountable body, and therefore has overall responsibility and oversight of how the funding is allocated and spent, and is required to report to central government on that basis. However, the guidance from central government about the programme is that it is a grassroots initiative, with projects developed from the community up. Whilst the council welcomes this, there will need to be consideration given to any risks that the projects provide to either the council's own processes and procedures or budgets, and/or the impact on the Long Term Plan for Towns funding. The council will require robust project plans for any proposed projects to ensure that they deliver against the required outputs from the programme, value for money and other central government metrics for the programme. A risk register will be required for each project.

6.5 Climate Change and Biodiversity

6.5.1 There are no direct climate change and biodiversity implications from this report.

7. Equality, Equity and Diversity Implications

- 7.1 Councillors are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to the aims of the Duty at the time the decision is taken. The aims of the Duty are: (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it, and (iii) foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- 7.2 Protected characteristics: age, sex, disability, race, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief and pregnancy & maternity. Only aim (i) of the Duty applies to Marriage & civil partnership.
- 7.3 A screening tool has been completed, which demonstrates there are no direct equalities considerations arising and as a result and therefore a full EQIA has not been completed. Although there are no direct equalities considerations arising from this decision. The decision to use the existing Thanet Regeneration Partnership Board for the Long Term Plan for Towns governance arrangements will not directly impact either adversely or positively, those with a protected characteristic.

8. Crime and Disorder Implications and Community impact

- 8.1 There are no direct crime and disorder implications or negative impact on the community arising from the decision sought in this report. Ultimately this decision is likely to have a positive impact on the local community.

9. Subject History

N/A

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Appendices

Appendix 1 - Long Term Plan for Towns Investment Themes
Appendix 2 - A new toolkit for towns
Appendix 3 - Proposed Area

Background Papers

N/A

Report Sign Off

Legal Ingrid Brown (Head of Legal and Democracy & Monitoring Officer)

Finance Chris Blundell (Director of Corporate Services - Section 151)