

Greenock Town Centre Regeneration Forum (GTCRF) Minute of Meeting

Held Wednesday 14 February 2024 from 1pm by Hybrid Format in Boardroom 2, Greenock Municipal Buildings and via Videoconferencing Microsoft Teams.

ATTENDING

Cllr J Clocherty (Chair)	Inverclyde Council - Ward 4
Cllr F Brennan	Inverclyde Council - Ward 4
Cllr G Brooks	Inverclyde Council - Ward 4
Cllr N McGuire	Inverclyde Council - Councillor - Ward 7
S Arkinson	Oak Mall Retail Consultant - Property Management - Reith Lambert
M Coventry	Trader Representative - Wee Crafty Owl Shop
A Crawley	Greenock Central Residents Action Group
C Elliott	CEO - Communities and Voluntary Sector (CVS) Inverclyde
G McMenemie	River Clyde Homes - Factoring Officer
S O'Dowling	Duty Manager - Oak Mall
S Vernal	River Clyde Homes - Housing Services Manager
E Montgomery	Inverclyde Council – Head of Physical Assets
M McNab	Inverclyde Council - Service Manager Public Protection
J Horn	Inverclyde Council - Regeneration Manager
M Thomson	Inverclyde Council - Environment & Technical Finance Manager
G Leitch	Inverclyde Council - Team Leader Consultancy
E Dickie	Inverclyde Council - Team Leader - Communications and Tourism
A Johnston	Inverclyde Council - Business Development Officer Town Centres
AM Bagstad (Minute)	Inverclyde Council - Committee Officer

1.0 **Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interests**

1.1 Cllr Clocherty welcomed everyone to the meeting, noting new members as follows:-

- S Arkinson - Oak Mall - Reith Lambert
- C Elliott - CVS Inverclyde

Cllr Clocherty, Cllr Brennan, Cllr Brooks, J Horn and AM Bagstad present, all others accessed the meeting remotely.

1.2 Apologies received from Cllr McVey, Cllr J Crowther, Cllr E Robertson, Insp. P Thompson, C Jewell, E Cannon, I Moffat, S Jamieson (J Horn substituting), R Ahlfeld and R Orr (G McMenemie substituting).

1.3 Cllr Brooks intimated a declaration for item 6 as a Board Member of RCH.

2.0 **Approval of Minute and Matters Arising**

2.1 Minute of the meeting held 22 November 2023, were approved by Cllr Clocherty.

2.2 No matters arising from previous minute.

3.0 Police Scotland Update

3.1 Apologies from Police Scotland due to work demands.

4.0 Greenock TCRF Budget (Report)

4.1 A Greenock TCRF Budget Finance Summary, was distributed prior to the meeting.

4.2 Updated projects as follows:-

- West Blackhall Street (WBHS) Phase 1, budget of £4.2m.
- West Blackhall Street (WBHS) Phase 2, current budget of £762k.
- Greenock Town Centre Signage, budget of £94k.
- Customhouse Quay Clock Restoration, budget of £120k.
- Customhouse Quay Square Restoration Phase1, budget of £170k
- Unallocated funds of £149k.

4.3 It was noted that WBHS Phase 1 is currently underway and scheduled for completion by July 2024. WBHS Phase 2, funding is still to be realised and the £762k is a cautious accounting entry, to reflect Inverclyde Council's (IC) share of the project costs.

4.4 Senior IC Officers will identify projects and bring these back to the forum to be considered under the Unallocated Funds of £149k. However, if any Community Groups or Forum members have any ideas or suggestions for possible TC projects, to please submit them to Ms. Horn.

It was confirmed there is no time limit for spending the £149k of Unallocated Funds.

4.5 A concern was raised, that the current WBHS Phase 1 works are impacting some traders and asked if there was any financial compensation in place for traders.

Senior Officers advised that IC and the Contractor are doing everything they can to mitigate any impact to traders and that there is no contingency for compensation with any IC projects. However, IC's Business Development Team were requested to liaise with Traders to identify any possible financial support from their Service.

Decided:-

- **Forum and Community Groups to identify possible TC Projects and submit suggestions to J Horn.**
- **Mr. Johnston to liaise with Team Leader, to identify any possible WBHS Trader financial support.**

5.0 Inverclyde Council (IC) Project Updates

5.1 VERBAL UPDATES

a) Stewart Centre

It was decided at the November 2023 meeting railing paint works would be carried out; these works have been added to IC's Project List, to be considered under the Employability and Future Jobs Programme, with works undertaken in due course.

Cllr Clocherty highlighted a few outstanding works from the previous external works and will liaise with Senior Officers on these items.

Decided:-

- **Stewart Centre railing works added to IC's Project List with works being undertaken in due course.**
- **Cllr and Senior Officers, to liaise on the Stewart Centre's External Works Project's snagging list.**

b) Greenock TC Action Plans

Shared Prosperity Funding (SPF) – The Consultancy Team (Ironsides Farrar Limited) have been appointed. Desk based work is currently being undertaken and next steps is to begin a wide ranging engagement process, which will include the public. Senior Officers will ensure the Forum is informed of progress and of future plans.

The Forum were asked to consider what engagement processes they feel would be key to effectively engaging with Ironsides Farrar; for example, town centre walkarounds.

Cllr Clocherty reflected on the success of the 2016 Greenock TC Charrette process, to develop a Greenock TC Masterplan; adding this led to a number of successful regeneration projects within Greenock TC and taking part in the engagement process is key for the success of any future funding bids and TC projects.

Members stated that intensive public engagement is key to the success of the consultation exercise.

The next Greenock TCRF meeting is scheduled for May 2024 therefore, Senior Officers will arrange an intermediate Forum engagement meeting with Ironsides Farrar.

Decided:-

- **Intermediate Engagement Forum meeting to be arranged with Ironsides Farrar.**
- **Senior Officers to provide updates and feedback to Forum members on progress and future plans.**
- **Forum members requested for thoughts/ideas on how to engage effectively with Ironsides Farrar.**
- **Intensive public engagement requested for the successful development of a TC Action Plan.**

c) Unlock Your Highstreet

Officers apologised for delay with this project and requested it be carried forward to the next Forum meeting, for an update.

Decided:-

- **Item update carried forward to next Forum meeting.**

d) Well Park and Lyle Fountain Signage

Officers apologised for delay with this project and requested it be carried forward to the next Forum meeting, for an update.

Decided:-

- **Item update carried forward to next Forum meeting.**

e) Towns Fund

The UK Government (UK Gov) publicly announce an allocation of £20m of levelling up investment to Greenock in October 2023 (potentially £2 million per year); to be managed by a Towns Boards ([Seven Scottish towns to share £140 million to improve long-term future - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)).

Guidance was published in December 2023, which sets out the requirements for developing a Greenock Town Board. The Board needs to be in place by 31 March 2024.

A report was submitted to IC's Environment and Regeneration Committee on 18 January 2024, with the following:-

It is recommended that the Committee:

- Notes the content of the report;
- Agrees on a recruitment process to appoint a Town Fund Chair;
- Delegates the authority to the Environment and Regeneration Director to support the Town Fund Chair in the creation, including membership of the Town Board, creation of an engagement plan and scheme of development of the Long Term Plan for Greenock, and designating the geographical area in scope;
- Agrees the membership of the Town Fund Chair letting group; and,
- Supports the need for an appropriate project resource.

The full report (item 16) can be viewed [here](#).

Going forward, Senior Officers will ensure there is a flow of information between the Forum and Town Board, to avoid duplication of objectives.

Once the Board is constituted, the next steps is to develop a 10 year Town Plan, with a three year investment plan. The UK Gov have not yet set spending timeframes, and this will be considered when developing the 10 year plan.

The UK Gov requested the Town Plan is submitted by 1st August 2024 however, Senior Officers are seeking additional time for the plan to be processed through IC's decision-making Committee(s) cycle. Funding will be released upon UK Gov approval of the Town Plan.

Members stated it's crucial the correct person is chosen as Chair, for leading the Town Board and requires someone who has the correct skills, vision, passion and who can effectively utilise the funding. Additionally, other Board representatives need to have the appropriate skills too. The Forum were reminded this is a Town Fund and not just for the Town Centre and a wider net should be cast for possible skilled members. If Forum members know of anyone with these knowledge, skills and attributes, they can submit their nominations to Ms. Horn and she will pass these onto Senior Officers.

Decided:-

- **IC Senior Officers to Recruit an appropriate Town Board Chair.**
- **IC Senior Officers and Town Board Chair to constitute full membership of Town Board as per UK Gov guidelines, by 31 March 2024.**
- **Create a 10 year plan with 3 year funding plan, for submission to UK Gov.**

- **Forum members who would like to suggest nominations for a Board Chair and other Board members, to email J Horn.**

f) Inverclyde Taskforce

The recent Taskforce meeting was rescheduled. However, due to the recent announcement of the EE move, the request for support in relation to skills and upskilling will be of more importance going forward.

Cllr Clocherty highlighted approx. 1,100 local jobs have been lost due to the closure of businesses or businesses moving out of the Inverclyde area e.g. (IBM, EE, Amazon and Webhelp). The removal of jobs and the lack of employment in the area, seriously impacts other local businesses. It is an economic necessity that jobs remain in Inverclyde for the sake of the wider Inverclyde economy, and he has faith that the Taskforce Officers, Members and MSP will make this a priority discussion with Government agencies.

g) Levelling up Fund (LUF) Transforming the 'Heart of the Town'

A Levelling Up Fund Update report was submitted to IC's E&R Committee on 18 January 2024 (item 4 can be viewed [here](#)) which highlighted two preferred signalised junctions under consideration, for the Road works.

IC have notionally agreed demolition with Oak Mall and working on a Demolition Plan and Timeline.

Senior Officers are working on a Communication Strategy for all planned works and timeline and hope to have this in place by the start of the 2024 financial year. A public space for progressing the Communication strategy is still be formalised with the Oak Mall.

Decided:-

- **Senior Officers to provide update on Demolition Plan and Timeline.**
- **Senior Officers to secure a public space for Communication Strategy.**
- **Senior Officers to finalise Communication Strategy.**

h) West Blackhall Street Public Realm Display Wires WBH Street

Phase 2 funding has not been confirmed, but Senior Officers are meeting with funding provider on 20 February 2024.

First Section of works are the Widening of Footways and Inserting Speed Tables from Westburn Street to Nicholson Street. Works are progressing well and scheduled to be completed by the end of February 2024.

Three trader issues arose, which the contractor addressed immediately. Work schedules are being rearranged to help and support businesses to remain in operation. The Contractor physically engages with each business before and during all works. Although roads are closed to the general public, they are still open to delivery vehicles.

A snapshot of what the footpaths will look like upon completion was shared with the Forum ([Appendix 1](#)).

Section two works from Nicholson Street to Argyle Street, will commence once Section one is complete.

If Phase 2 funding is confirmed, the programme of works may change slightly, to go back and carry out the Road and Cycle work elements of the programme. Senior Officers will communicate this to all interested and affected parties.

If Phase 2 funding is not secured, the existing Road will remain as it is and there will be no cycle path.

Various road feasibility studies are being carried and going forward, Senior Officers will consider all options, costs and possible delays if the next phase of funding is secured.

It was highlighted drivers who use the private Oak Mall carpark are going against the one-way traffic order, to access the A770 and was this a liability for IC.

It was advised that adequate signage is in place to raise all drivers' awareness of the current Traffic Orders in place, therefore the risks, liabilities and responsibilities of drivers using roads against the order; lies solely with the driver.

Decided:-

- **Senior Officer to provide progress and Phase 2 funding update to next forum meeting.**

6.0 River Clyde Homes (RCH) Update (Verbal)

6.1 RCH are currently looking at their Maintenance Budgets for the year ahead. If the Forum have any requests for specific projects, these can be submitted to RCH for consideration; if the projects align with RCH's Strategic Objectives; they will be added to their ongoing maintenance programme.

6.1.1 It was requested that the area around 118 WBHS, with run-off water problems, is added as an urgent project under the Maintenance programme.

6.1.2 The Cathcart Street residents meeting held at the end of 2023, identified many maintenance issues, but significantly highlighted residents want to live in a safe place with a decent roof over their head; therefore, the whole of Cathcart Street should be prioritised under the maintenance programme.

6.1.3 Recent member visits to Charles Place and Kilblain Court residents, also identified many maintenance requirements and can these locations also be considered under the Maintenance programme of works.

6.2 Ms. Vernal liaised with colleagues who had attended the Cathcart Street Residents meeting and reported that it was a very informative meeting, where residents' voices were heard. Residents acknowledged that some anti-social issues had been addressed under the partnership working of RCH, IC Wardens and Police Scotland. RCH stated that dealing with the anti-social issues in the area will take time; nevertheless, the situation will be closely monitored, and legal action will be taken when appropriate evidence is gathered. Ms. Vernal added they liaised with Cathcart Street owners, who agreed that the anti-social issues within the area need to be addressed before any investment works are carried out.

6.3 Ms. Vernal also advised the meeting highlighted an environmental concern within Cathcart Street with overflowing bins and ripped rubbish bags that had not been uplifted by IC's Environmental Services. RCH have been cleaning the bins out every

week which has incurred costs to RCH and requested member support to resolve this matter with IC's Environmental Services.

Cllr Clocherty has written to IC's Head of Environment, to raise this issue and will feedback on the outcome.

6.4 An overview was given of the complexities of managing TC tenement back Court Yards due to the multiple owners and RCH being a minority owner, therefore RCH don't have the ability to be able to instruct works without ownership buy-in.

As a result, RCH and Inverclyde Community Development Trust (ICDT) have developed a partnership, to provide positive work experience, skills and training to ICDT trainees, by carrying out environmental works within the TC area, with the next round of environmental improvements being carried out this year.

Decided:-

- **Forum members to submit any maintenance works required within the TC to RCH for consideration for their ongoing Maintenance Programme.**
- **Cathcart Street issues to be monitored and legal actions taken when appropriate.**
- **Cllr Clocherty to report back on the outcome on refuse issues in Cathcart Street.**
- **Ongoing progress updates from RCH and ICDT of TC partnership environmental works.**

7.0 Any Other Competent Business (AOCB)

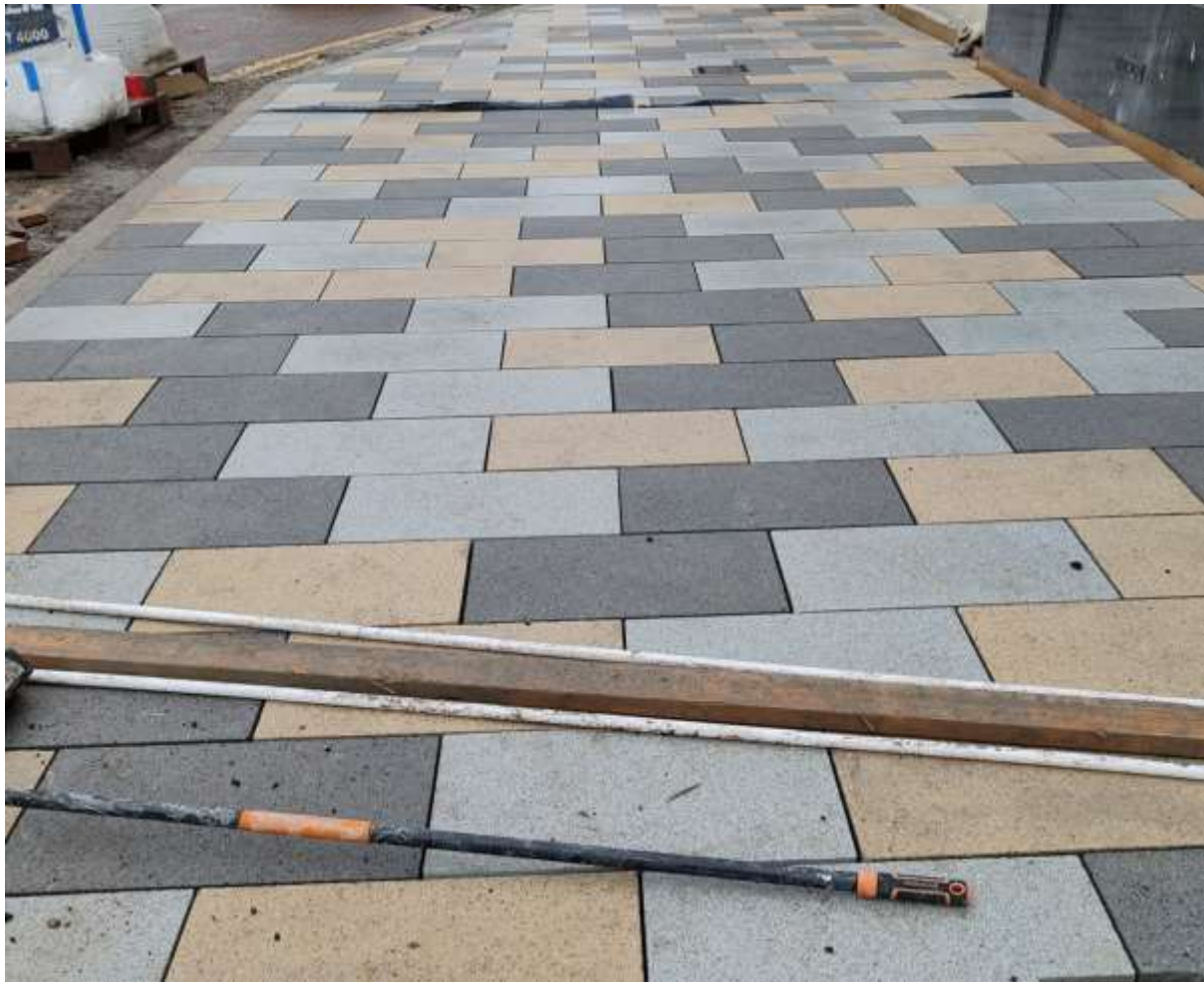
7.1 It was noted the new Head of Regeneration, Planning and Public Protection, N McIlvanney, will join the next Greenock TCRF meeting.

8.0 Date of Next Meeting

To be confirmed.

Chair Signature Date

APPENDIX 1



Snapshot of what West Blackhall Pavements will look like upon completion of works.