Minutes of the Pride in Place Neighbourhood Board Meeting held on Wednesday 7 October 2026 at 6.30pm at St Augustine's Church Hall, Slade Green Road, DA8 2HX

PRESENT: Cllr Donna Briant, Patricia Calera-Marco, Sophie Chaise, Sandra Fox, Daniel Francis MP, Melanie Hudson, Cllr David Leaf, Temitope Makinde, Kevin Mclaren (Chair), Afia Owoyale, Andre Squire, Sujatha Thaladi, Paul Wellington

IN ATTENDANCE: Rubina Arthur (Secretariat - LBB), Luisa Baker (Deputy Placemaking Project Manager – LBB), Victoria Jessen-Pike (Director – Publica), Caroline Lancett (Clerk – LBB), Annie Norton (Interim CEO – Bexley Voluntary Service Council), Kate Plowright (Transformation PMO & Project Officer – LBB), Sanaa Shaikh (Placemaking Project Manager – LBB), Paul Thorogood (Chief Executive – LBB)

The meeting commenced at 6.36pm and was quorate throughout.

1. Induction Training

The Clerk delivered a brief induction covering the Board's roles and responsibilities, governance arrangements, meeting procedures, documentation and expectations of Board Members. The importance of community-led, evidence-based decision-making, transparency and effective participation was emphasised. During the session, it was **AGREED** that individual contributions be attributed in future minutes. Members were also encouraged to identify future training needs and contact the Secretariat with any governance queries.

2. Standing Procedural Items

Apologies were received and **ACCEPTED** for Jonathan Smith and Cllr Stefano Borella. Diana Braithwaite (Bexley Place Executive Lead – SE London Integrated Care Board) and Julia Owen (Head of Strategy & Performance – LBB) were unable to attend and sent apologies before the meeting.

Declarations of Interest

The Chair reminded Board Members that outstanding declarations and other governance documents needed to be returned promptly to the Secretariat.

Action 1: Board Members with outstanding declarations, appointment letters or Codes of Conduct to return the completed documents to the Secretariat (Responsibility: relevant Board Members/Secretariat).

Minutes / Actions from last meeting

The Chair invited comments on the minutes of the last meeting (9 September 2026) and thanked the Clerk for the comprehensive record. No substantive corrections or matters arising were raised. The minutes were **APPROVED** as a true reflection of the meeting and would be signed by the Chair.

Any urgent matters

No urgent matters were raised.

3. Update on the Procurement of Consultant

Sanaa Shaikh introduced Luisa Baker from the Council's Placemaking Team and Victoria Jessen-Pike, a Director at Publica who had been appointed as part of the procurement process to secure a consultant.

Sanaa Shaikh reported that seven organisations had been invited to tender, five submissions had been received and the evaluation had included Andre Squire and Sujatha Thaladi alongside Council officers. Publica had been selected following a closely contested evaluation.

Victoria Jessen-Pike explained that Publica was a London-based urban research and design practice, with experience of Bexley through the Erith Town Centre Strategy. Its multidisciplinary approach combined urban design, planning, research and community engagement. Publica would be supported by Fourth Street on economic and commercial considerations and a cost consultant on investment options. Victoria Jessen-Pike emphasised that the work would begin by understanding Slade Green and its communities, rather than imposing preconceived solutions.

Victoria Jessen-Pike outlined four proposed workshops to begin as soon as possible: a local area walk/audit, a World Café to explore themes and ideas, a visioning workshop, and a workshop to assess priorities. This would inform a ten-year vision and a four-year investment programme, including project phasing, indicative costs, responsibilities, implementation considerations and an ongoing community engagement framework. The intention was to complete the plan by February 2027.

Paul Thorogood suggested that the early work of the Steering Group be shared with Victoria Jessen-Pike and her team (including, for example, potential quick wins and the capital/revenue allocation). Victoria welcomed any existing material.

Question 1: The Chair queried how Board Members would find time to participate in the proposed workshops and how they would be organised. Victoria Jessen-Pike explained that the practical arrangements had yet to be settled. Workshops were expected to last approximately ninety minutes to two hours. Some compensation for participants' time had been included in the budget. Victoria Jessen-Pike commented that involvement from a consistent core group of Board Members would be helpful, while timings could be flexible, including evenings. Sanaa Shaikh suggested a lead working group of Board Members with opportunities for all to attend if they were able. It was suggested that workshops could be combined with scheduled Board meetings where possible. In relation to the walks around the local area, consideration would be given to involving those familiar with different parts of Slade Green, rather than expecting one group to cover all areas. Victoria Jessen-Pike agreed to explore different geographical and temporal arrangements with the Publica delivery team.

Temitope Makinde requested advance information on the purpose, format and duration of each workshop so that Board Members could make informed commitments. Victoria Jessen-Pike agreed that a note would be prepared in relation to the proposed workshops and would be shared with Board Members.

Action 2: Publica to circulate a workshop outline, including objectives, expected duration, potential dates and participation arrangements (Responsibility: Publica).

Afia Owoyale raised the importance of engaging the wider community as well as the Board. Victoria Jessen-Pike explained that Publica would draw on existing engagement, including Sonar's work, rather than duplicating a separate public consultation exercise. The team's outputs would be suitable for sharing publicly. Board Members stressed the need for an effective communications approach and meaningful youth involvement.

Victoria Jessen-Pike described Publica's previous work with young people, including creative workshops and engagement through schools and community organisations. Annie Norton offered support through voluntary sector networks to reach young people who might otherwise be missed. The Board discussed the age range to be used for youth engagement and the need to consider this as part of its wider approach.

Question 2: Melanie Hudson asked how older residents, including those less confident online, would be involved. Victoria Jessen-Pike indicated that face-to-face engagement and involvement through local groups could be considered.

Action 3: Clarify expectations for youth and wider community involvement in Publica's work, including the age range and access for less digitally engaged residents (Responsibility: Board/Council/Publica).

Victoria Jessen-Pike left the meeting at approximately 7.34pm.

4. Appointment of the Deputy Chair

The Chair explained that the only nomination for Deputy Chair had been a self-nomination from Andre Squire. At this point in the meeting, Board Members were given a further opportunity to make nominations for the role of Deputy Chair but no further nominations were received.

Andre Squire was, therefore, **UNANIMOUSLY ELECTED** Deputy Chair to the Neighbourhood Board, following a show of hands.

5. Youth Representation Discussion

The Chair introduced the discussion, explaining that, although there was currently no formal youth representation on the Board, it was important that young people were actively involved in shaping the programme. The options presented in the meeting papers were outlined by the Chair, including inviting young people to participate directly in Board meetings, establishing a separate youth forum or advisory group to provide input to the Board.

Question 3: Patricia Calera-Marco queried the proposed age range for youth engagement and suggested that this should extend to twenty-four years rather than being restricted to younger teenagers. Patricia Calera-Marco also raised concerns about the practical arrangements for a separate youth panel, including the need for appropriate supervision and support. Patricia Calera-Marco suggested that inviting young people to attend Board meetings directly could be less administratively demanding, although it would be important to ensure that a sufficiently broad range of views was represented, including those of young people with disabilities.

Temitope Makinde supported the principle of direct youth representation but acknowledged that attending formal Board meetings could be daunting for young people. However, Temitope Makinde emphasised the importance of identifying an approach that would enable young people to contribute meaningfully and

confidently, rather than excluding them from decisions affecting their future. Temitope Makinde suggested that Board Members should work together to develop a suitable arrangement, recognising that young people could offer creative and valuable perspectives.

Melanie Hudson supported inviting two or three young people to participate directly in Board meetings, alongside opportunities for wider engagement through a youth forum and referred to previous experience of youth engagement in Slade Green.

Councillor David Leaf emphasised the importance of engaging young people promptly, given the limited timescale for developing the initial Pride in Place Plan. He noted that young people aged fifteen at the beginning of the programme would be twenty-five by its conclusion and that their views were therefore particularly relevant to the long-term vision. Councillor David Leaf suggested that the engagement already undertaken by Sonar should be used to inform the plan without delay, with support potentially available from Bexley Voluntary Service Council. Councillor David Leaf considered that immediate engagement and longer-term arrangements for youth representation were not mutually exclusive.

Sujatha Thaladi suggested that online engagement could be particularly effective, recognising that younger participants might depend on parents or carers for transport to meetings. She considered that virtual participation could help overcome some of these practical barriers.

Question 4: Patricia Calera-Marco asked whether Sonar could seek further views from young people during its ongoing engagement activities. The discussion highlighted that approximately eight to ten young people had expressed an interest in becoming involved, although further information was required about the age profile and diversity of respondents, including representation of young people with disabilities.

Afia Owoyale suggested that consideration should be given to appropriate remuneration or incentives for young people participating in engagement activities. The importance of recognising their time and contribution was emphasised and ensuring that engagement was mutually beneficial rather than simply seeking information from them.

Board Members **AGREED** that a small working group should explore the options in greater detail, including the most appropriate format for youth participation, the practical arrangements and links with existing engagement activity.

AGREED: A Youth Engagement Working Group would be established, comprising Temitope Makinde, Melanie Hudson, Annie Norton, Councillor Donna Briant and Paul Wellington. The group would consider arrangements for engaging young people, including direct representation, a youth forum and online participation, and report its recommendations to the Board.

Action 4: The Youth Engagement Working Group to liaise with the Council's Education Team, Youth Services and Chris Clarke of Sonar, drawing on existing engagement findings and considering how youth participation could be maintained throughout the programme. The group would also consider the appropriate age range, accessibility, representation and any remuneration or incentives (Responsibility: Youth Engagement Working Group)

6. Finance Update

Paul Thorogood explained the programme's financial framework, including the distinction between capital and revenue funding, the role of Bexley as accountable body and the need for proposals to demonstrate benefit, deliverability and value for money. The programme included an indicative £12m capital allocation over a 10-year period, with approximately £118,000 of capital funding and £198,000 of revenue funding available in the initial period. This represented a considerable amount of funding and Board Members were advised that there was no requirement to spend the full allocation immediately, as unspent funding could be carried forward, subject to the requirements of the programme.

Paul Thorogood explained that capital expenditure might relate to the purchase of buildings, equipment or improvements to physical assets, while revenue expenditure could be viewed as more 'everyday' spending including, for example, consultants, flowers etc. Paul Thorogood encouraged Board Members to consider opportunities to work with existing landowners and partners, including the Council and Orbit, rather than assuming the Board would acquire assets itself.

The Board considered an emerging list of possible short-, medium- and longer-term projects, including improvements to flowerbeds, outdoor gym equipment, play facilities, traffic and public spaces. Board Members recognised that not every issue would qualify as an immediate 'quick win' and that some proposals would require larger projects, ownership discussions or additional investigation.

Paul Thorogood emphasised the importance of establishing whether proposed projects were already included in the Council's existing plans, to avoid duplication and identify opportunities to enhance planned improvements through additional funding. He explained that this would be particularly relevant to capital projects, which often involved more substantial infrastructure investment.

Annie Norton highlighted the potential to bring in other funding through partnerships.

Patricia Calera-Marco stressed the importance of involving other housing associations such as Hyde. Paul Thorogood acknowledged this and explained that he had referenced Orbit as, from the Council's perspective, they were significantly larger than other housing associations in the area.

Paul Thorogood suggested that the Board consider using some of the Pride in Place allocation as match funding to secure additional investment from external sources, such as the National Lottery and other funding programmes. This could enable the Board to undertake larger projects by combining its funding with contributions from other organisations. Andre Squire referred to potential links with developers and the Football Foundation. Daniel Francis MP and Cllr David Leaf offered to support approaches to relevant partners.

Question 5: Patricia Calera-Marco asked whether European grants were still available. Paul Thorogood explained that European opportunities were more limited but other sources, including National Lottery, heritage and sporting funders, could be explored.

Cllr Donna Briant suggested exploring match-funding opportunities through organisations such as Sport England and the Football Foundation, particularly for projects involving sporting facilities. It was noted that partnerships could provide longer-term benefits beyond the ten-year programme.

Question 6: Cllr Donna Briant questioned whether the Council had sufficient capacity to identify and pursue external funding opportunities. Reference was made to resources such as London Funders, which could help identify grants and funding from charitable and corporate sources.

Paul Thorogood suggested that a small working group of Board Members review the list of potential projects and identify three to five priorities for further consideration. The Chair supported this approach, emphasising the importance of smaller working groups in progressing the Board's work. It was also suggested that Members could undertake site visits to assess potential projects where appropriate.

Members discussed improvements to Craydene Recreation Ground, particularly the damaged sports equipment and lack of facilities for older children and teenagers. Councillor Donna Briant explained that concerns had previously been raised about the condition of the ground and the potential environmental impact of additional lighting. It was acknowledged that improvements to Craydene would require further investigation and were unlikely to constitute a quick win.

Several potential Christmas-related activities on the project list were highlighted and the need for early decisions if these were to proceed was stressed. Councillor Donna Briant offered to assist with reviewing the proposals, alongside Councillor Stefano Borella, and referred to other potential improvements, including the flowerbed in Forest Road.

It was **AGREED** to establish a Quick Wins Working Group to review the proposals and identify priorities. Members also discussed the possibility of using the Chair's delegated authority to approve small-scale, time-sensitive expenditure, particularly in relation to Christmas activities, where waiting until the next Board meeting could delay delivery.

Paul Thorogood explained that funding decisions would normally return to the full Board. However, where genuinely urgent action was required before the next meeting, the Chair's delegated authority under the Terms of Reference could be considered in consultation with the Council. Daniel Francis MP supported bringing the prioritised list to the November meeting except where timing made an earlier decision essential (through Chair's delegated action).

It was **AGREED** the Quick Wins Working Group would comprise Sophie Chaise, Melanie Hudson, Sandra Fox, Paul Wellington and Cllr Donna Briant/Cllr Stefano Borella and would review proposals and identify potential early priorities, without pre-empting the Board's formal funding decisions.

Action 5: Quick Wins Working Group to review the list of potential projects, identify a shortlist with indicative costs and timescales, and report to the November meeting (Responsibility: Sophie Chaise, Melanie Hudson, Sandra Fox, Paul Wellington, Cllr Donna Briant/Cllr Stefano Borella).

Action 6: Council officers to identify relevant land and asset ownership information and explore potential partnership and match-funding opportunities (Responsibility: Council).

AOB

Next Meeting

The Chair confirmed that the next Board meeting would be held on Tuesday 3 November 2026 at St Augustine's Church Hall.

Logo

Andre Squire reported on the community logo exercise. Although some ideas had been received, the emerging designs presented practical difficulties, including suitability for letterheads and reduced-size use. He proposed further work with a graphic designer and consideration of a simpler logo reflecting local themes such as railways, community and the marshes. An update would be provided at the November meeting.

Action 7: Further develop the logo proposals and bring an update to the next Board meeting (Responsibility: Andre Squire/Council).

Communications and Engagement

The Board **AGREED** to the formation of a Comms Working Group comprising Patricia Calera-Marco, Temitope Makinde and Andre Squire. Members discussed using Bexley publications, Connect Bexley, social media and community groups to reach residents. It was suggested that the Board's working groups could make use of WhatsApp for communication outside of formal meetings. The Clerk cautioned that platforms such as WhatsApp should only be used for organisation purposes and discussion but formal Board decisions should not be made through informal messaging channels.

Action 8: Comms Working Group to explore appropriate publicity channels, including Bexley publications and community communications, and clarify any governance or information-sharing requirements (Responsibility: Council/Patricia Calera-Marco/Temitope Makinde/Andre Squire).

Expenses Policy

The draft Expenses Policy was considered and **APPROVED** subject to final sign-off by the Council's legal team and confirmation of financial administration. If further changes were made to the Expenses Policy, the document would be brought to a future meeting for consideration by the Board.

Boundary Map and Evidence Pack

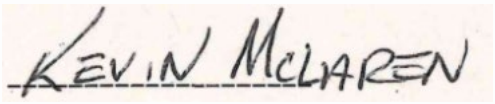
Members discussed the updated programme boundary and the importance of keeping elected representatives for neighbouring wards informed where the boundary crossed ward lines.

Question 7: Melanie Hudson asked about the inclusion of Erith Park. The relationship between the agreed area and statistical boundaries, including Lincoln Road and Crayford Marshes, was explained. Members were advised that a more detailed evidence pack would be circulated separately.

Action 9: Circulate Board agendas and minutes to relevant neighbouring ward councillors where the programme boundary extends into their wards (Responsibility: Council/Secretariat).

Action 10: Circulate the detailed evidence pack separately to Board Members (Responsibility: Council).

There being no further business, the Chair closed the meeting at 8.41pm.

Signed:  Date: 3 November 2026

Summary of Actions

Action 1: Board Members with outstanding declarations, appointment letters or Codes of Conduct to return the completed documents to the Secretariat (Responsibility: relevant Board Members/Secretariat).

Action 2: Publica to circulate a workshop outline, including objectives, expected duration, potential dates and participation arrangements (Responsibility: Publica).

Action 3: Clarify expectations for youth and wider community involvement in Publica's work, including the age range and access for less digitally engaged residents (Responsibility: Board/Council/Publica).

Action 4: The Youth Engagement Working Group to liaise with the Council's Education Team, Youth Services and Chris Clarke of Sonar, drawing on existing engagement findings and considering how youth participation could be maintained throughout the programme. The group would also consider the appropriate age range, accessibility, representation and any remuneration or incentives (Responsibility: Youth Engagement Working Group)

Action 5: Quick Wins Working Group to review the list of potential projects, identify a shortlist with indicative costs and timescales, and report to the November meeting (Responsibility: Quick Wins Working Group).

Action 6: Council officers to identify relevant land and asset ownership information and explore potential partnership and match-funding opportunities (Responsibility: Council).

Action 7: Further develop the logo proposals and bring an update to the next Board meeting (Responsibility: Andre Squire/Council).

Action 8: Comms Working Group to explore appropriate publicity channels, including Bexley publications and community communications, and clarify any governance or information-sharing requirements (Responsibility: Comms Working Group).

Action 9: Circulate Board agendas and minutes to relevant neighbouring ward councillors where the programme boundary extends into their wards (Responsibility: Council/Secretariat).

Action 10: Circulate the detailed evidence pack separately to Board Members (Responsibility: Council).