Pride in Place — Bentilee & Ubberley Neighbourhood Board 7

Meeting: Pride in Place, Bentilee & Ubberley Neighbourhood Board Meeting 7
Date: 5 November 2026
Time: 4.00pm
Location: Discovery Academy — The Discovery Suite
Co-Chairs: Amy Harris & Simon French
Minute Taker: Waqas Butt

Attendees

Board
Simon French — Co-Chair
Amy Harris – Co-Chair
Cllr Sarah Jane Colclough
Lee Jones Jr
Tracey Johnson
Donna Firman
Andrew Firman
Mereoni Jegesa
Gareth Snell MP (Online)
Sha Owusu (Online)

Others
Waqas Butt — Pride in Place Coordinator VAST
Andy Meakin — Chief Executive, VAST
Vicki Gwynne — Local Authority Accountable Body representative

Apologies
Steve Adams
Cllr Lynn Watkins

Summary of Decisions

D1 The Board voted to submit the Investment Plan in the current submission window (7 in favour, 1 against, no abstentions). Gaps will be completed over the next fortnight, and the submission will be signed off at the next Board meeting before going to the Section 151 Officer and MHCLG.

D2 Board meetings will continue fortnightly until February to drive the second phase of engagement on specific projects under the four priorities.

D3 The Scheme of Delegation, as returned by the accountable body with one minor amendment, was agreed. The policy suite is now complete. The first 20-minute training session will cover the Scheme of Delegation.

D4 The small-grants panel will meet at the end of November to assess the applications received so far.

D5 The banners proposal for Dividy Road was approved, subject to highways and PFI contract permissions.

D6 Lighting and CCTV on Bentilee Park, and skip hire and general clean-up, were deferred pending further costings and a fuller proposal.

D7 The three strategic comms providers will be invited to pitch to a Board task group, after a virtual pre-meeting to agree what the Board wants from them. A recommendation will come back to the Board.

1. Welcome

Simon French welcomed members, including Gareth Snell MP and Sha Owusu joining online. Some members arrived later due to traffic.

The Board reviewed the actions from Meeting 6:

Quarterly monitoring return: circulated by Cassie Weaver and signed off by email.

Small grants: a meeting was held with Board members, who gave input on the documents. Panel volunteers were recorded by Cassie Weaver. Panel includes; Cllr Sarah Jane, Mereoni, Amy, Simon, Gareth.

Winter Fayre: this will be a Pride in Place / Our Bentilee Our Future branded event, including a hamper giveaway promised in the survey. Volunteers will come from the Board and from people signing up via the website.

Event presence: the Board asked for pull-up banners (with a QR code linking to the website) for every event, a short set of talking points so Board members can explain Pride in Place consistently to residents, and name badges for Board members.

Letter drop: some letters had been received. The remaining letters are being delivered and will be checked on Friday.

Board appointment process: not yet actioned. Carried to the next meeting, with consideration of the current board dynamic, given the strong and consistent attendance.

2. MHCLG Feedback

Gareth Snell reported on a follow-up meeting with MHCLG officials after their visit to the Board. Their feedback was very positive. They said the Board's arrangements for capturing the voices of young people were among the most advanced and thoughtful they had seen anywhere in the areas they administer. Compared with similar areas, the Board was in the vanguard. MHCLG were impressed by the frequency of meetings, the stability of membership (other areas have seen attrition and disengaged members) and the links to the programme of activity. When asked what could be improved, officials could not identify any immediate concerns. MHCLG has agreed that this feedback can be shared with the Board.

3. Decision on Whether to Submit in November

Simon French asked each member for a short view on whether to submit the Investment Plan now.

Gareth Snell was firmly in favour. He felt the Board should lead among its cohort and warned that delaying risks slipping to February. Plans submitted early would be funded from April, whereas later submissions would be considered as and when. Engagement would continue after submission, and further information could be provided if requested. Sha Owusu agreed, noting that delays to funding could affect the activities already planned. Other members in the room also supported submission, as the draft reflects the issues residents have raised, and it can continue to be refined.

Vicki Gwynne advised that the submission must be signed off by the Section 151 Officer. She will confirm how much time is needed for that review. The submission portal is now open, and MHCLG has extended the final deadline to 26 February. Plans are assessed as they are received, so earlier submission means earlier funding; this year, confirmation and funding arrived in early April. Indicative amounts can be included. Any projects the council would deliver (for example, playgrounds) need to be agreed early, so they can be built into council work plans and resident expectations can be managed. Andy Meakin noted that an extension could be requested as a contingency if needed.

Cllr Sarah Jane Colclough raised concerns about the depth of engagement and the need to represent residents fairly, as a Board member, councillor and resident. Members acknowledged that there is cynicism in the community and that awareness of Pride in Place is low. They felt trust will be built when residents see

delivery, such as small grants, Youth Board funding and visible activity at events. Gareth Snell said the evidence and engagement to date support submission, provided the Board is realistic about doing more engagement and links delivery explicitly back to Pride in Place.

Some sections are still incomplete, including the financial information. These will be completed over the next fortnight, so the submission can be signed off at the next Board meeting.

Vote: 7 in favour, 1 against, no abstentions. The Board agreed to proceed with submission.

4. Presentation of Submission to Date and Next Steps

Tracey Johnson presented the updated draft, with changes highlighted. Additions include Appendix 3 (the 10-year vision) and strengthened governance arrangements, following a review against the MHCLG checklist. The draft draws on Board discussions, reports, local strategies, partnership learning and engagement figures as at 28 October; these figures will continue to be updated. The structure of the submission follows the MHCLG checklist.

The four priorities in the draft are:

Community power, trust and belonging: accessible small grants, support for local activity, and volunteering.

Children and young people's opportunity: young people shaping the vision, sport, creative activity, and informal and calm spaces. This will link to the soon-to-be-published report and actions on youth provision.

Safe, clean and green places: potential schemes such as Top Park, playgrounds, the greenways and Park Hall (potential schemes, not confirmed projects), plus road maintenance and safety.

Health, wellbeing and routes to the future: early help, social connection, better prospects, provision for older residents, drug and alcohol support, and access to facilities.

Submitting early keeps momentum and allows co-design to continue, although it does not guarantee approval. The submission needs high-level priorities and direction of travel; not every detail has to be confirmed.

Next steps: complete the remaining sections, including the online form, the four-year plan, and financial, management and compliance information, working with Vicki Gwynne next week. The final draft will then return to the Board for approval before Section 151 sign-off and submission. Andy Meakin reported that, according to a national network of infrastructure organisations, MHCLG is open to commenting on draft plans before final submission. This could be explored to smooth approval.

5. Small Grant Application Progress Update

The stakeholder launch took place on Tuesday 3 November and was well received. The process, application form and assessment panel are now in place. Members noted that few applications are usually submitted over the Christmas period. It was agreed that the panel will meet at the end of November to review applications received so far, using the scoring criteria, with Cassie Weaver coordinating. Members stressed that funded projects must clearly contribute to pride in place, and that communication should continue with the organisations who attended the launch. As grants are awarded, they will help show residents visible impact.

6. Policy Update

Policies outstanding – Delegation Statement

All questions raised at the last meeting have been answered, and the governance documents and policies are now live. The only outstanding item was the Scheme of Delegation. Vicki Gwynne returned it with one minor amendment, and the Board agreed it. It will be circulated, with any issues to be raised with Cassie Weaver. All policies are to be linked on the Our Bentilee Our Future website.

Training timetable

Training will be delivered in 20-minute slots at Board meetings, scheduled by the Co-Chairs and VAST around agenda time. The first session will cover the Scheme of Delegation.

7. Small Capital Projects Proposal

Small capital spends were proposed as a second quick-win strand alongside small grants, to deliver visible improvements.

Banners on Dividy Road

A quote was presented for 30 lamp-post banners for 12 months, including management £8,101 + VAT with a price also provided for 20 banners. The proposal is with the council's Head of Highways. Permission is also needed under the PFI highways contract, including use of the Pride in Place logo; a precedent was set for the centenary. A suggested approach is a schools artwork competition to design the banners, which would also support engagement, with installation likely after Christmas and New Year. Members stressed that the banners must be backed by a comms plan explaining what Pride in Place is.

Decision: Approved by vote, subject to permissions.

Lighting and CCTV on Bentilee Park

Further work is needed to confirm prices and locations. Deferred until costed information is available.

Skip Hire and General Clean Up

Two quotes were presented: a Bucknall-based company offering Saturday drop-off and collection (£528 x2 8 Yard and £672 x2 12 Yard), and A1, which does not work Saturdays (£360 1x 8 yard and 400 1x 12 yard). Locations would be informed by Cllr Lyn Watkins' previous clean-up projects, with volunteers supervising the skips, a litter pick and equipment supplied through VAST. A £10 licence would be needed for skips on council land.

Members raised concerns about cost, capacity, managing what is dumped and staff safety. They suggested a larger, better-targeted clean-up instead, such as hiring the Bin Warriors for several days on target streets, linked to the council's garden enforcement letters and to wider comms so residents know it is happening.

Decision: Deferred. The proposal will be worked up into a larger project and brought back to a future meeting.

8. Strategic Comms Support
Quotes for external provider

Andy Meakin presented three quotes from local providers, including iCreation and Baba Boom, against a remit drawn from the last meeting. The remit covers raising awareness of Pride in Place, strengthening resident involvement, reaching seldom-heard communities, targeted communications, transparency and "you said, we did" reporting, success stories, brand identity, a newsletter (digital and print), social media management, website search optimisation, stakeholder

communications and performance reporting. The offers were broadly similar, with different emphases (for example, door-to-door and video storytelling, PR and media relationships, or community storytelling workshops). Several had little focus on the website and social media.

Views differed. Some members felt the proposals would not deliver the results needed and questioned the value for money. Others saw them as a necessary investment, given limited capacity and specialist skills in-house, low brand recognition and low social media engagement (around 23–26 Facebook followers). Gareth Snell, who declared that he knows all three organisations, asked that providers be held to outcomes and metrics, not just outputs.

It was agreed to hold a virtual pre-meeting on Wednesday 11 November at 4pm to agree the questions and outcomes the Board wants. The providers will then be invited to pitch, virtually, on Friday 13 November. Andy Meakin will share the full quotes by the following morning, and a recommendation will come to the next Board meeting.

Alternatives

Alternatives and complementary approaches discussed included approaching local media (for example, local radio) about upcoming events and activity, building on a recent news article that many residents cited as their source of information, and using events where residents come together. Members also stressed the need for a clearer communication plan built around the four priorities, so residents can help shape what each priority looks like in practice.

9. AOB

Agree meeting timetable

Board meetings will continue fortnightly until February, allowing for the Christmas break. Calendar invitations are to be sent to all members. The meeting on 19 November will be hybrid, as some members are unavailable in person. The next agenda will focus on final sign-off of the submission and a project plan for phase-two engagement up to February.

Youth Board Update

Each participating institution is recruiting young people and will put forward two to join the Youth Board. The first Youth Board meeting will be held in December at the Neighbourhood Centre. Contact has been made with partner organisations working with children who are home educated or not in education, so they can also take part. Institutions have been asked for payment details so that their

youth group grants £500 can be released, which should prompt engagement activity in about two weeks. A letter has gone by email to parents of home-educated children, and the family support team will knock on doors to explain the programme. Members praised the positive feedback received on the youth work.

Process for Board Appointment

Carried to the next Board meeting.

Meeting Date	Action	Owner	Progress
05/11/26	Complete the outstanding sections of the submission (online form, four-year plan, financial, management and compliance information) and bring the final draft for Board sign-off.	**All**	**Next meeting (19 Nov with meetings planned throughout next week**
05/11/26	Confirm the time the Section 151 Officer needs to review the submission; arrange sign-off and submission.	**Vicki Gwynne**	**Next meeting**
05/11/26	Explore whether MHCLG will comment on a draft before final submission.	**VAST**	**Before submission**
05/11/26	Identify any council-delivered projects early and confirm feasibility and timescales with the relevant directorates.	**Vicki Gwynne / VAST**	**Ongoing**
05/11/26	Coordinate the small-grants panel meeting at the end of November.	**VAST**	**End of November**
05/11/26	Circulate the agreed Scheme of Delegation; link all policies on the website; schedule training, starting with the Scheme of Delegation.	**VAST**	**Next meeting**
05/11/26	Order pull-up banners with a QR code; produce talking points for Board members at	**VAST**	**Next meeting**

	events; arrange Board name badges.		
05/11/26	Progress Dividy Road banners with Highways / PFI; plan a schools artwork competition.	**VAST / Vicki Gwynne**	**In progress**
05/11/26	Obtain prices and locations for lighting and CCTV on Bentilee Park.	**Council/VAST**	**Future meeting**
05/11/26	Work up a larger clean-up proposal (e.g. Bin Warriors on target streets) with costs and comms.	**VAST**	**Future meeting**
05/11/26	Share the full comms quotes; hold the virtual pre-meeting (Wed 11 Nov, 4pm) and the provider pitches (Fri 13 Nov); bring a recommendation.	**Andy Meakin / Cassie Weaver / task group**	**Next meeting**
05/11/26	Approach local media (e.g. local radio) about upcoming events.	**VAST**	**Ongoing**
05/11/26	Send fortnightly meeting invitations to February; set up 19 Nov as hybrid.	**VAST**	**ASAP**
05/11/26	Confirm delivery of the remaining letters from the letter drop.	**VAST**	**Friday 6 Nov**
05/11/26	Brand the Winter Fayre as a Pride in Place event; prepare the hamper; recruit volunteers.	**VAST**	**Before 28 Nov**
05/11/26	Release youth group grants once payment details are received; confirm the date of the first Youth Board.	**VAST**	**December**
05/11/26	Bring the Board appointment process to the next meeting.	**Co-Chairs / Secretariat**	**Next meeting**

Date of Next Meeting

Date: Thursday 19 November 2026 (hybrid)

Venue: The Discovery Academy 4pm-6pm