



Canvey Island Town Council Business and Action Plan 2023 - 2028

Introduction

Canvey Island Town Council has represented Canvey Island since 2007, after a public petition to the Government where it was agreed to the designation of this new parish within the borough of Castle Point. Previously Canvey Island Urban District Council had been the local government body before the major re-organisation of local government in 1974.

A Town Council is the first tier of local government and provides additional services on the Island to those provided by Castle Point Borough Council and Essex County Council. It is an elected body corporate with perpetual succession made up of local people representing the interests of the community. The Town Council is often the first point of contact for residents, and it can signpost people to help and support, that it cannot provide.

The Town

Canvey Island lies off the Southeast coast of Essex in the Thames estuary. It is a unique place with an interesting and diverse history much of which can be attributed to its relationship with the changing water levels of the River Thames and the fact that the whole of the Island is below sea level.

The Island is commonly known for its Dutch influence and became home to around 200 Dutch immigrants in the early 17th century, who it is reported 'sought refuge from the Duke of Alba, the butcher of Flanders'. Two tiny Dutch cottages are preserved on the Island from this period of the Island's history one is still inhabited at 'Canvey Village' the other is preserved as a museum.

At the start of the 20th century, the population of Canvey numbered about 300 people. At about that time, Canvey was heavily promoted as a holiday destination, primarily for Londoners, to escape the smog of the big city. By the end of the First World War the population had reached 1,795 and the people kept coming. Since the 1930's, the west side of the Island at Hole Haven has been developed for use as oil refineries, and oil and gas storage which has met with a great deal of public opposition. In more recent times, some of the land previously used for this purpose has been 'reclaimed' and is currently being developed as a nature reserve.

The population of the Island has grown significantly since the turn of the Century to a little under 40,000 (almost 16,000 homes). The Island is now largely urbanised and residents value highly the remaining green spaces on the Island. Canvey has been earmarked for significant regeneration within the proposals for Thames Gateway and many improvements in local amenities, facilities and infrastructure are expected because of this.

The Island lies below sea level and its relationship with the surrounding sea, whilst rich in bounties, has also brought its share of tragedy. The devastating floods of 1953 saw 59 people on the Island lose their lives. The whole Island was evacuated. A memorial to the people who lost their lives that day can be found at Canvey Library. There has been significant investment put into raising the height of Canvey's 14 miles of sea walls both immediately after the floods and again in 1975 when the wall was raised by a further two metres.

Council Services and Functions

Town Council is responsible to residents for several services including:

- Management of recreational areas such as Canvey Lake, Concord Beach Tidal Pool, Labworth Memorial Gardens, Bandstand, Covid Memorial Garden, and the Tewkes Creek Wildflower Meadow.
- Maintenance of trees at Tewkes Creek picnic area and 15 trees at rear of woodland.

- Consultee on Planning Applications within Canvey Island
- Annual Events - Christmas Event, Armed Forces Day, Garden Trail, Scarecrow Competition and Community Awards
- Town Centre Planters, Hanging Baskets and Festive Lighting
- Planters at Jones Corner, Eastern Esplanade, Ferry Road and Canvey Way
- Two Allotments sites, Winter Gardens and Smallgains
- Management of Canvey Lake Playground
- Providing financial support to local groups through the Grant Scheme
- Quarterly Newsletters
- Preparation and production of the Town Guide
- Notice Boards in each ward and Way Markers Signs in the town centre.
- Blue Plaque Scheme
- Community Warden presence
- Community partnership working
- Working in partnership with ECC on public rights of way, footpaths etc
- Point of contact for County, Borough, and many other public services.
- Consultee on crime and disorder reduction

Vision

Canvey Island Town Council is extremely proud of its town and works hard to ensure it continues to be a popular and desirable place to live, work and visit. The staff and councillors support and assist its residents, listen to issues, and provide useful signposts to other people and organisations. It provides many services and functions to support the town and its residents. It was awarded the Community Engagement Award in 2013 and Canvey Island has an incredibly unique and thriving community spirit. The Town Council have made considerable improvements to the community, by taking over the management of open spaces, including the Band Stand which is a focal point of the seafront and tourist destination. It has created many new initiatives within the town such as Lake Watch, Speed Watch, its heritage blue plaque scheme, summer events, community beach clean and community information day events. It is actively attempting to preserve its green environment and encourages biodiversity, by responding proactively to planning applications to help safeguard the town from over development and developing projects such as tree planting to help with climate change and environmental degradation as well as being a Tree Charter branch. The Council support many local clubs and organisations and help them continue their vital work with the community and act as a voice for the residents by liaising with other organisations and authorities on key strategic issues to ensure the best outcomes for the town and its community. The Council value its professionalism and reputation, striving hard to maintain high standards and to be a good employer and has been awarded the prestigious Quality Gold Award. See the Councils Mission Statement (Appendix A)

Structure

Canvey Island Town Council consists of 11 Town Councillors, a Town Mayor, Deputy Town Mayor and 9 other councillors representing various wards which are East Ward, North Ward, South Ward, Central Ward, West Ward and Winter Gardens Ward. All 11 Town Councillors are elected every four years by residents, with the last election being in May 2023 and the next due in May 2027. A new Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor are elected every year by the Full Council.

The Town Council is managed by the Town Clerk (Proper Officer and Responsible Financial Officer), Deputy Clerk and employs 2 other staff members a Community & Events Officer and Community Warden. All staff work on part time hours.

Full Council meet once every six weeks on a Monday evening at the Council Offices in accordance with its Standing Orders and terms of reference. The Council changed its committee system in 2020 and now only has the following committees:

- Policy & Finance (no delegated powers)
- Planning
- Personnel

Some business is also considered through working parties. These groups work on one-off, short-term projects and make recommendations to Full Council.

Finances

Canvey Island Town Council is funded by the precept (part of the council tax which is allocated to the Town Council) and income from donations or services at events. The precept is public money and Council ensure that it is spent effectively and wisely. It will always look at best value whilst still providing high quality services, projects, and functions. The Council follows strict controls, and all activities are audited and transparent.

For the 2023-24 financial year, the precept for a Band D equivalent property is £22.77 per annum. The Council review its spending requirements on an annual basis, keeping its reserves at a sustainable level to minimise risk and earmark reserves for specific projects as required. It operates an income and expenditure budget and holds adequate general reserves.

Key Objectives

Canvey Island Town Council review its four-year plan annually and in line with its budgets.

The Council's Key Objectives over the next four years are listed below.

Project 1

Health & Wellbeing

The Town Council want the people in Canvey Island to live healthy, happy, and full lives and to be able to fulfil their potential, including those who might be vulnerable. We want everybody to live in a strong, sustainable, and supportive community with good opportunities for work and other meaningful activity and a healthy standard of living. We want everybody to be able to maximise their capabilities with control over their own lives, including the ability to make healthy lifestyle choices for themselves and their families. We want to ensure that everyone can enjoy life long into old age. We want everyone to have access to high quality health services delivered in the right way at the right time when they need specialist help and support.

Canvey Island has an estimated population of 38,689 with more than 55% being over 65. There are areas within Canvey Island that has low income and high health deprivation along with above average levels of obesity and below average life expectancy.

For some social isolation can be a huge issue. Social isolation is as deadly as smoking and can lead to all sorts of ill health including, mental health issues, weight management issues and inactivity.

In some cases, health impacts can be negated through non-medical means. For example, volunteering even for an hour can make people feel needed, respected, and fulfilled. Taking part in a guided walk or sitting on a 'chat a while' bench and talking briefly to a stranger can lead to more social inclusion and a

<p>happy life.</p> <p>Either setting up our own initiatives or by engaging with partners focus should be made in four areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving mental health and wellbeing • Addressing obesity, improving diet, and increasing physical activity • Influencing conditions and behaviours linked to health inequalities. • Enabling and supporting people with long-term conditions and disabilities. 	
Timescale	2020 - 2026
Budget	901 9019 – Health & Wellbeing Plan - £1,500
Comments	<p>The Town Council office is already a J9 location and has a Hate Crime Ambassador. It runs volunteer programmes such as Speed Watch as well as setting up Beach cleans and litter picks throughout the year which offers individuals the opportunity to get out of their house, feel a sense of worth and creates a community spirit.</p> <p>We would like to build on these, but they need to be relevant to our residents and their needs. We are lucky to have some fantastic volunteer groups and organisations already operating in our area that we need to be able to offer something that is not necessarily already available.</p> <p>As part of the plan in 2022 the council set up its 1st Community Garden and a successful Computer Project to teach residents how to use their own devices which is run by volunteers.</p>

Project 2

<p>Community Gardens</p> <p>The Town Council created its first Community Garden in 2022 in Sycamore Close. These gardens are to bring residents together and help reduce crime in the area by increasing visibility and engaging citizens in positive initiatives in an urban area.</p> <p>Community gardens offer people and the community many benefits. They provide opportunities for both recreational gardening and food production and are good for the environment. Gardens contribute to biodiversity of species and help to support populations of pollinators.</p> <p>Community gardens contribute to a healthy lifestyle by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ providing fresh, safe, affordable herbs, fruits, and vegetables ▪ helping to relieve stress and increase sense of wellness. ▪ getting people active, which improves overall physical health. ▪ providing social opportunities that build a sense of community and belonging. ▪ giving people an opportunity to learn and share knowledge on gardening, nature, and cooking. 	
Timescale	2022 - 2026
Budget	901 9019 – Health & Wellbeing Plan - £1,500 (additional funding will be sought) 901 9022 – Sycamore Close - £1,094 (remaining funds from grant received)

Comments	The Town Council are keen to continue this project to include more community gardens and any project that has the benefit of enhancing the health and wellbeing of its residents whilst also helping the environment.
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Project 3

Band Stand The Town Council took over the management of the Band Stand in 2019, fully refurbished it and wishes to enhance the community asset further by holding regular events during the summer periods, whether this be the usage of local businesses, community groups or bands or the Town Council.	
Timescale	Summer of 2022 - 2026
Budget	210 4237 – Band Stand Events - £1,500
Comments	The Town Council have written to all local businesses and developed a hiring policy for the usage of the community. The Council continues to use this facility to hold small scale events such as the Water Safety Information Day and Litter Picking events.

Project 4

Gunny Open Space The Gunny is an area of open space (1.3Ha) in the Big Local area in Canvey Island. It includes a Scheduled Ancient Monument (a WWII gun battery) and in the past contained a skate park. In recent years it has been poorly maintained and today is mostly used by dog walkers. The Big Local Partnership identified the need and support for a new local hub for the whole community. In September 2021 a planning application was submitted to create a new park on The Gunny together with a community building. The application has the support of residents, the Town Council and Historic England. Ownership of the site has been transferred from Castle Point Borough Council to Canvey Island Town Council. The Town Council will transfer the development of the site in line with the planning permission to Trust Links on a long-term lease.	
Timescale	2023
Budget	901 9021 – Gunny Project - £3,500
Comments	The Town Council have agreed to maintain any play/gym equipment when installed which will be covered by 5% of the development cost provided from the grant given by the Big Local.

Project 5

Canvey Lake

The Town Council is developing plans for a sustainable habitat for wildlife at Canvey Lake. The impact of climate change has seen extreme heat, lack of rainfall and the shallow nature of the lake cause serious problems at the site in recent years. Working with partners including the Environment Agency, Essex County Council, Castle Point Borough Council, Anglian Water and Essex Wildlife Trust, a plan is being developed to see how the lake can live up to its designation as a Local Nature Reserve whilst striking a careful balance between reality and the desire to increase biodiversity and retain the lake as a public amenity.

Timescale	2023 - 2028
Budget	901 – Earmarked Reserves – Lake Enhancements - £20,000
Comments	The Council is looking to work with the Essex Wildlife Trust to prepare a Biodiversity Management Plan as well as options for re-profiling the lake if this is possible.

Completed Projects

Community Information Days

The Town Council held a very successful Community Information Day in July 22 working in partnership with Canvey Library which provided various stalls around the Town Centre informing residents of services available within the community. This included statutory organisations, community groups showing what they have to offer, activities, entertainment, and safety information.

Due to the success of the event the Council would like to build on this service to provide further days which will benefit residents and provide information and advice on relevant issues.

Timescale	2023 - 2026
Budget	210 4235 – Community Engagement - £1,000
Comments	The Council also held in 2022 a Water Safety Day in Aug and an Energy Saving Information Day in November.

Community Computers

The Town Council found during the pandemic that many services available to residents had been computerised. It decided that it wanted to purchase a laptop for community use to provide an internet service to members of the public which will be restricted to services that have been reduced by other authorities as the library will be available for all other uses. Many services no longer allow residents the ability to pay over the phone such as rent, or council tax so are pushing the use of the internet which many of the older community do not have or struggle with. Although the Library provide a computer service it is not always a private area should residents need to pay bills which can be provided in the council office.

As part of the Health & Wellbeing Plan the council started friendly drop-in sessions in 2022 to provide help and advice where one-to-one support is given. These sessions are held at the offices, with

volunteers, where attendees could use either the council's laptop or bring in their own devices.	
Timescale	2022 - 2026
Budget	210 4235 – Community Engagement - £1,000
Comments	The Town Council received funding from the ECC Community Fund for 3 laptops and the ECC Technology Fund for 3 Samsung tablets. The Town Council will continue this community scheme whilst it is still needed.

School Holiday Activities	
The Town Council have found that many families need free or affordable activities during the school holidays and plan to hold fun days by contacting local businesses that provide sports clubs for children and can arrange a day in school holidays where free sessions could be provided. Working in partnership it can provide a space, if needed, they would provide the service with the possibility of gaining new members.	
Timescale	2022 – 2025 – completed in 2022
Budget	210 4235 – Community Engagement - £1,000
Comments	The Council will engage with Active Essex to work in partnership to provide services such as 3030 Essex and Essex ActivAte. The Council held various free events during the summer holidays. It is anticipated that these or similar events will continue.: Lake Picnic, Outdoor Crafts, a Football Activity Day and Messy play.

Budgets

Canvey Island Town Council's budget preparations begin in September/October of each calendar year. It is reviewed by each committee and submitted to the Policy & Finance Committee to make recommendations to Full Council. The final budget is set in the December/January of the next year. Once the budget is agreed all spending is kept within budget. Should any further financial requirements be needed it is requested at Full Council by the Town Clerk.

Budgets are monitored by the Responsible Financial Officer and Town Clerk and reported to the Policy & Finance Committee at its quarterly meetings where the accounts are verified by the committee. General and Specific Reserves are set as part of the annual budget process.

Mission Statement

Canvey Island Town Council will work continuously to improve the social and economic well-being of the community and to provide accountable, efficient, and effective services; through engagement with the community and to work in partnership other public service providers, local businesses, and the voluntary sector

Objectives

1. To encourage community cohesion, community pride and enthusiasm. To work with the residents of Canvey Island to better understand their needs and in turn explain how we will address those needs within the resources and powers on the Council.
2. To provide a democratic representational voice for the Canvey Island community.
3. To support and contribute to the economic and social life of the town and regeneration of the local community, in partnership with residents, other tiers of local, regional, and national government, voluntary agencies, groups and individuals to meet the needs and aspirations of the community.
4. To encourage and promote the economic and commercial vitality of the town and help strengthen and diversify the local economy by where possible source goods and services from the Canvey area.
5. To preserve the unique identity of Canvey Island and promote its heritage.
6. To help to create a socially inclusive and caring community which embraces all its residents, irrespective of age, gender, culture, income, race, or religion and which seeks to develop their well-being, knowledge, understanding and mutual co-operation.
7. To organise, promote and manage a variety of events within Canvey Island that positively enhances the social, economic, educational, leisure and tourism aspects of town vitality. In addition, to also support and advise in the facilitation of current events and to assist with the bureaucratic nature of such as activities.
8. To protect and improve the environment of the town and promote sustainable development of the town to meet the needs of the present residents without jeopardising the needs of future generations.
9. To be accountable, approachable, and visible and to ensure that the resources at the Council's disposal are used to the most effective degree possible and to the greatest possible benefit to the town ensuring cost effectiveness and value for money.
10. To continue valuing and developing employees thereby stimulating innovation for the benefit of the town.