

THE LOVE GRAYS
MANIFESTO





Foreword

We want you, our business community, to help us create and lead an organisation that will make our town stand out from the crowd, marking Grays town centre a key visitor destination not just in Essex but the entire south east region.

For many years, various key town centre businesses and town centre influencers have informally come together and acted as a valued connection between Thurrock Council and the key operators within the town centre. With support from Thurrock Council, we want to evolve this group into a new not-for-profit organisation that includes businesses from every sector, ready to act as a vehicle for the delivery of town centre improvement projects.

When you read that Grays is the largest town centre in Thurrock, currently supporting more than **3 million** commuters each year, it's clear that there is a huge amount of opportunity for our town.

Grays has an extremely strong convenience retail economy and will soon have a new night life anchor, Wetherspoons. There is a burgeoning arts movement, exciting new developments in the pipeline and a new underpass all on the way. Thurrock is clearly one of the 'up and coming' places to live and raise a family in the south east, and with its proximity to Lakeside, it's beautiful rural boundaries and ease of access to central London, we could easily say the UK.

However, it's not always easy for businesses. Adapting to change and feeling that things are beyond your control is a common challenge. The future of the UK economy is unknown and with our population growing, and changing, it means the consumer market is changing with it. Growing demands for a more varied experience, alongside strong competition from other towns and Lakeside shopping centre means that now is the time to unite as a town centre community to make the most of the opportunities that the future will bring, and importantly stand together facing whatever hardships may come our way.

The new Love Grays Partnership plans to harness the combined power of the public and private sector to improve our town centre and stimulate sustainable prosperity in Grays, all while creating a strong voice for the Grays town centre business community.

Our most important project is to take the lead on the development of an independent, not-for-profit organisation - Love Grays Ltd - that will be charged with enhancing the profile and improving the economic position of the town.

The real journey begins now and we need every business in the town centre to engage and support us in our mission to make Grays better than it has ever been before.

If we are successful it will undoubtedly create an amazing and innovative opportunity for Grays Town Centre to prosper in a well-resourced and sustainable manner.

This is an exciting time for Grays, and we believe that the business community should be leading the way in helping Grays to realise its potential to become one of the leading town centres in the UK.

This is our vision, and this Manifesto will show you how we plan to do it.

Lewis Mills

Grays Town Centre Coordinator

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What Is The Loves Grays Partnership?

The Love Grays Partnership is a not for profit, local authority seed funded, business-led partnership, which aspires to make improvements to Grays town centre. There are more than 400 town centre partnerships and Business Improvement Districts (BID's) nationally, including local competitors such as Stratford, Southend and Romford.

This Manifesto sets out priorities for improvements to the area as well as how the Love Grays Partnership will be managed and operated. Love Grays Partnership will carry out projects or improvements that are additional to those already provided by the local authority.

What does it mean for me?

The Love Grays Partnership aims to support local businesses and organisations in many ways some, but not all, are included below:

- Provide a stronger unified business voice with significantly more influence.
- Businesses get the opportunity to shape their commercial area, effectively being able to control the space outside their businesses premises.
- Businesses are represented in issues affecting the area.
- An enhanced visitor experience resulting in increased footfall and increased spend.
- A cleaner, safer, more welcoming town centre.
- Facilitated networking opportunities with neighbouring businesses.
- Assistance in dealing with the Council, Police and other public bodies.
- Significant improvements to the look, feel and value of the commercial area.
- Better promotion and marketing of our town centre leading to improved perceptions.
- Targeted solutions for individual sectors and streets.
- Possible reduction in business costs and/or improved return.

Why Is This Important?

What will the Love Grays Partnership do for...

...National, Independent & Small Businesses?

Independent and unique businesses add personality and points of difference to the Grays town centre experience. Our businesses ensure there is a diversity of retail, food, drink and leisure opportunities in the town centre, and that a local sense of place shines through.

There are a number of hidden gems in Grays that the Love Grays Partnership will continually work hard to promote. Our promotional, event and campaign work will continue to help people discover Grays' burgeoning independent cultural scene, giving our members multiple platforms to shine.

In order to thrive we must retain our major brands, super market and our shopping centre as they are fundamental to the success of our town. By working with them to combine our PR and marketing reach, we can help attract more people both through their doors, and subsequently into the town centre, at the same time.

...Hospitality, Food & Drink and Night Time Economy?

The Love Grays Partnership needs to build on the existing retail offer and expand the leisure, food, drink and hospitality opportunities to stimulate and diversify our town centre into a broader, '18 hour' destination. Our aim is to focus on helping to encourage new venues to start-up in Grays all while helping our existing eateries to grow.

The Love Grays Partnership is committed to supporting this growing sector and, within just their first year of operation, the new market operators are aiding in putting greater emphasis on growing our evening economy.

...What will the Love Grays Partnership do for Banking, Professional & Service Businesses?

Grays Town centre sees **over 3 million** commuters access the town centre each year, is home to a growing range of banks and service businesses that attract people into the town centre; a favourite hairdresser or meeting a bank manager are equal reasons to visit alongside the retail and hospitality offer.

Thousands of people come to work in the town centre every day and Love Grays will aim to connect members with this large target market during their lunch breaks, journey to and from work encouraging them to stay longer and spend money in our town.

Our Commitment to Our Town

What we aim to do

The next section explores our priorities for Grays Town Centre and the areas of work we will focus on:

Project Areas

1. Events, festivals, profile and marketing
2. Green up Grays
3. Community building
4. Cultural economy
5. Evening and night time economy
6. The Market

Raising Our Profile, Controlling The Narrative And Creating our own Good News Stories

Events, festivals, profile and marketing

Many people have heard of Grays, however it is clear that the town centre unfortunately suffers from a negative perception from both residents and further afield. That being said, there are some great assets in our town centre and there is a lot of evidence of exciting and innovative reasons to visit or live here, however, we currently do not do enough to promote this or shout about the good news stories reinforcing what Grays has to offer. Love Grays will change this.

Promoting Grays as a destination using innovative and creative means to improve the profile as a destination is key to the success of our town. Our aim is to use PR, traditional and digital marketing campaigns to both manage Grays's profile, encourage more visitors and change perceptions.

Projects such as a new cutting edge citizen app and rewards scheme for people who visit, live and work in the town centre will be introduced. In addition, several small local cultural interventions aimed specifically at encouraging families to our town.

The Love Grays Partnership will take an innovative approach to creating a unique Grays Town Centre experience, specifically through hosting events and festivals to raise our profile while also encouraging our community to visit our Town Centre.

Over the next five years The Love Grays Partnership will establish a total of four self-sustaining, high profile, anchor festivals spread throughout the year. This will then be reviewed with a minimum of the two most successful being retained.

This will be achieved by introducing a major festival or event each year with each event adding a sustainable improvement to the town centre. This will leave a legacy through the improvement of the physical town centre space by leaving a positive lasting mark on our town.

Our festivals will not only offer opportunities for all businesses within the area to drive sales, but will also insure that the money invested has a long-lasting effect on the commercial spaces.

Improving Our Environment And Our Appeal For Everyone

Green up Grays

Great places are built on the foundations of safety, attractiveness and accessibility. Our goal will be to improve key areas such as the gateways to the town centre, introduce temporary, semi-permanent and pop up dwell and green spaces, and improve lighting and overall aesthetic of our town.

It is the Love Grays Partnerships ambition to foster a sense of civic pride in the town centres green spaces. We aim to do this through continued community engagement, working collaboratively with the various community groups and leaders to care for and promote our green spaces, ultimately generating a positive environmental impact on the town.

In addition, the street experience is in clear and constant need of monitoring and managing to ensure the experience of being in the town centre matches that of the public realm environment and our businesses members' aspirations.

The Love Grays Partnership will ensure that whether you're a visitor, business or resident, Grays town centre is a great place to be.

Building and Engaging Our Diverse Community

Community building

Over the last few years, through our work as the Grays Town Management Partnership, you have told us that growing business through networking, business support and improved communication between businesses is a primary requirement.

The new Love Grays Partnership will become a voice for its members and will create opportunities to support, network and represent businesses in Grays town centre. Through this 'voice', Grays will bring our businesses together to work as a single community ensuring that we are heard and can influence the changes proposed within our town.

There is a wealth of businesses that operate on the periphery of the main commercial area. We're aware that businesses on South side of the Grays Station, as well as those businesses on the outskirts of the town, may often feel ignored or forgotten with activity often being focused on the more populated main town centre spine.

The Love Grays Partnership will ensure these areas and communities are not forgotten and therefore, alongside benefiting from the wider changes we are proposing, a proportion of the annual budget is set aside to help drive footfall and support businesses just off the beaten track.

Last, but most importantly, Grays town centre is fortunate to support a huge variation of ethnic and cultural groups and the Love Grays Partnership will actively look to engage with the full mix of communities across the borough to ensure our town centre realises its potential to be an inclusive and diverse town.

Future Proofing Grays

Cultural economy

Many towns and cities across the UK are seeing the huge potential for arts events and venues to add economic value and a more diverse clientele to their areas. However, the strategic potential of the sector has yet to be fully appreciated by many.

The Love Grays Partnership aims to be ahead of the curve by embracing and creating a vibrant cultural & creative identity for Grays town centre that will stimulate networks of related businesses such as cafes & bars.

Cultural diversity and activity will play a key part in strengthening the area's brand and in attracting new business investment all while contributing to people's health and sense of wellbeing.

Digital and experience economy

It is eighteen years since the famous book by Joseph Pine and James Gilmore: "The Experience Economy" was published. Therefore it is no surprise that more brands – retail or leisure – are trying to create memorable events and experiences that capture their audience's imagination. A result of this 'change in direction' a new breed of consumer has arisen that is attuned to this proposition, one we must become comfortable communicating and engaging with.

The Love Grays Partnership will both embrace the new digital age while ensuring the business members it supports can take advantage of the changing face of how modern consumers engage with cultural, digital landscape, our high street and our business community.

Prioritising Safety, Vibrancy and Diversity Not Just During The Day But Also In The Evening and At Night

Evening and night time economy

Grays doesn't currently have a night time economy, but we need one.

To boost our town centre and help it realise its potential as a vibrant 18hr economy, the Love Grays Partnership will introduce several initiatives to enhance the vibrancy and improve the safety of our evening and night time economy.

We will also introduce events to help encourage greater footfall and longer stays, provide enhancements to bridge the gap between office hours and our evening entertainment, and develop a 'What's On at Night' guide within our new destination website to reflect an enhanced evening offering.

We will also advertise our new evening events and festivals nationally to attract visitors from beyond our boundaries all while exploring the option of developing an evening market to attract additional footfall.

Love Grays will look to lead the way in developing our late-night economy by creating an evening economy forum, working with community safety to support their initiatives to keep the community engaged in all evening activities.

Putting the Market at the Heart of Our Town

Enhancing the Market

The marketplace has historically been, and should become once again, the very heart of Grays town centre. It is an integral component in creating a successful and thriving town centre for all. Revitalising the market will have both immediate impact on the High Street itself, as well as far reaching benefits to Grays town and its community.

The Love Grays Partnership, working with Tudor Markets (the new market operators), will be the catalyst for the future evolution and success of Grays market.

To accomplish this, our work will focus on achieving a 'Vision for Grays Market' and look to introduce new, quality traders, an evening market and an all-round better offer.

How It Will Work and How Decisions Will Be Made

The new not-for-profit company, Love Grays Ltd, will be a collective of 20 Grays business owners or representatives, Thurrock Council and key town centre influencers dedicated to making Grays a prosperous, thriving and safe town centre.

The membership structure is outlined below:

Membership

Membership is free to any organisation or business that operates or does businesses in Grays town centre. Aside from benefiting from the numerous projects and activities, as a member you can attend the AGM, be elected on to the board and have access to company accounts and minutes, all while influencing both the strategic direction of the Partnership and the town centre.

Management

The Love Grays Partnership will be managed by the Grays Town Centre Coordinator and the Executive Group. The executive group meets monthly and is made up of the Chair, two Vice Chairs, a Treasurer and the Company Secretary. They will register with Companies House as directors of the Love Grays Ltd Company. Each year, the Board members will elect a Chair and Vice Chair(s) from its private sector members.

The Executives report to the full board which meets bi monthly. The full board consists of ten fixed non-executive directors and ten elected non-executive directors who represent business and economic sectors.

The board operators have one vote per executive director/non-director

Governance

The Love Grays Partnership is a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee and therefore will abide by the articles of association, its terms of reference and its finance and procurement policy. All will be available on the Love Grays Website.

Minutes of all meetings will be posted online 14 days post event.

Get Involved

Becoming involved is easy and costs nothing. Simply complete the membership form included with this document and return it to the Town Centre Co-ordinator.

Alternatively, you can request an electronic copy of both the manifesto and the application form by contacting us at the following email or postal address.

Together we a stronger.

Contact

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Next Steps and Process

January 2019: Membership drive and board elections

February 2019: final board elected and Love Grays Partnership formal set up

March 2019: Love Grays Partnership launch and business forum

April 2019: Delivery of projects begins