

Place Panels

Members' Information Pack

Canterbury, Whitstable and Herne Bay

Foreword

Vibrant high streets are at the heart of local communities, places where people meet, work and develop a sense of pride in the place they live.

Building a great place to live is a collective endeavour, one that must be undertaken jointly by local authorities, businesses, health providers, educational institutions and residents.

The Place Panels are a radical way for our urban centres to come together to tackle the new challenges we face. They are an attempt to shift decision-making power directly into resident-led boards, rather than imposing top-down regeneration plans following a detached consultation.

They are a new safe space where local people can help shape the priorities for where they live, focus on where money should be spent and shape projects that will transform their communities. An environment in which new ideas and new projects can be discussed openly to provide visible evidence of progress, not promises of change.

They are bodies designed to represent the interests of the local community in a way that politicians serving short terms or operating at the mercy of government reorganisation cannot; a way in which people can be at the heart of the solution and not just those who express the problem.

We are going on a journey which is deliberately different to the way this council has worked in the past; we look forward to having you on board.



Image: © Andrew Hastings

What are the Place Panels?

The Place Panels are strategic partnership groups that will support delivery of the recently adopted Canterbury City Centre Strategy and the Herne Bay and Whitstable Town Centre Strategies.

These town centre strategies were developed following engagement with over 1,000 residents and identify the unique opportunities and challenges of each town. They were adopted by Canterbury City Council in February 2026.

Since adopting the strategies, Canterbury City Council has been collating a list of new and innovative projects which may resolve each area's problems in a series of Project Directories. Projects have been suggested by local residents, stakeholders and businesses and the directory will encourage the community to also come up with new ideas.

It is the role of the panels to help prioritise the projects in the project directories and encourage partners to develop new entries where needed.

The panels will:

- Ground the work in an agreed vision for each place;
- Shape future priorities and action plans;
- Critique plans, identify opportunities and barriers to delivery;
- Advocate for additional investment and support; and
- Help all parties evaluate new ideas when they are brought forward.

They will maintain a strong local voice through local government reorganisation and future governance change.

The panels will currently be strategic and advisory bodies. They will guide, challenge, advise and add value, for example to council committees which may hold the investment in some of these projects.

The panels do not currently hold funding, but they can help all parties to secure new funds for projects that local people think will make the greatest difference to where they live.



Image: © David Willis



Image: © Andrew Hastings

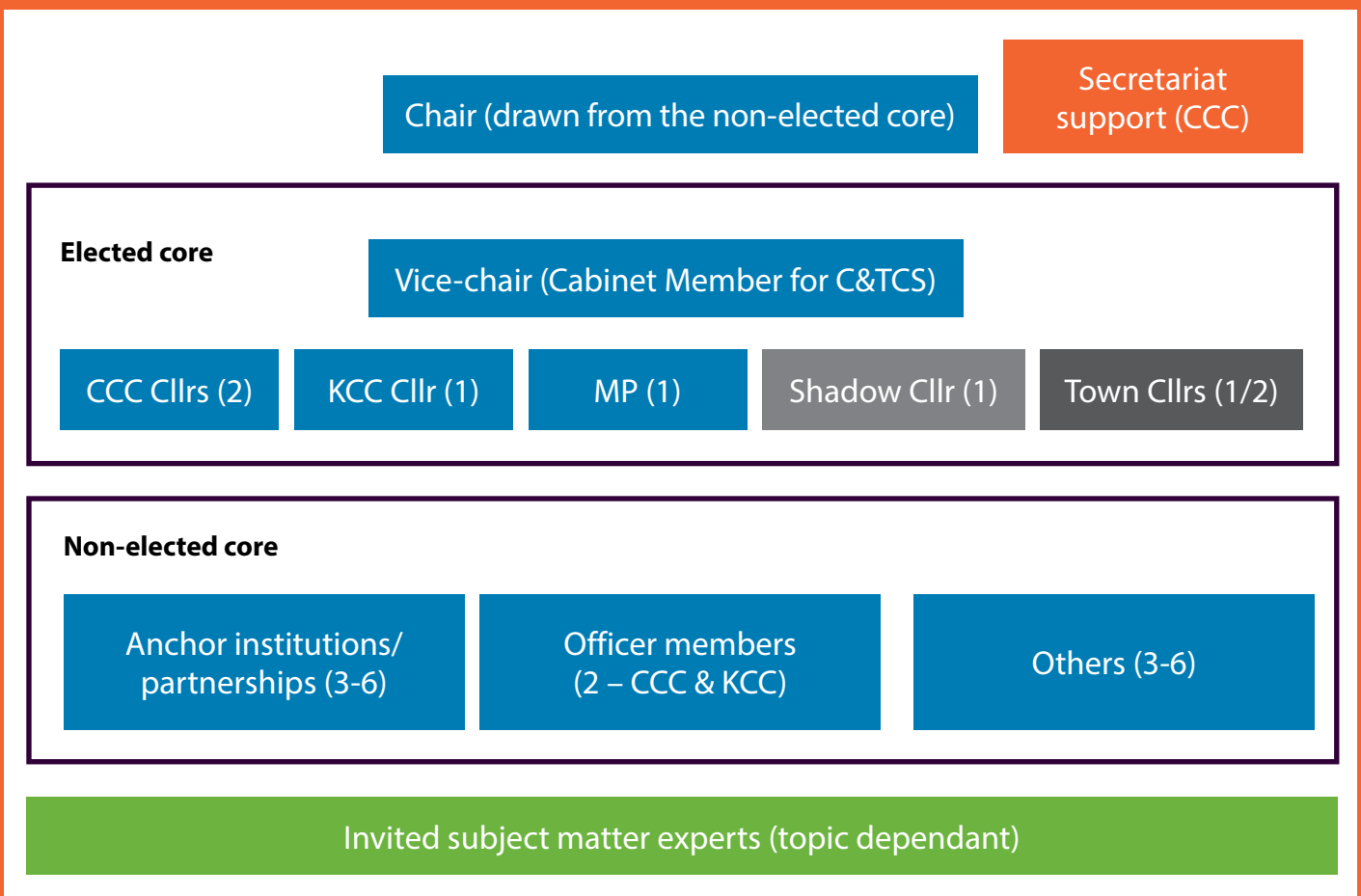
What will they look like?

The panels will have three parts:

- An elected core made up of city councillors, county councillors and local MPs. In future, this may also include town councillors and so-called 'shadow' councillors. In the event of local government reorganisation (LGR), 'shadow' councillors would represent any successor authority due to take over from Canterbury City Council;
- A non-elected core made up of anchor organisations, institutions, businesses and residents; and
- The chair of each panel will be drawn from the non-elected core.

All members will be people who live or work in the area or have a strong connection to the place. The panels will be supported by senior city and county council officers.

Canterbury City Council will also provide secretariat support to the panels.



Why are the Place Panels important?

Canterbury, Whitstable and Herne Bay each have ambitious strategies setting out a long-term vision for their future.

The panels will help ensure that these strategies are not documents that sit on a shelf. Instead, they will:

- Keep the focus on delivering the agreed vision for these places;
- Bring together organisations that can influence change;

- Encourage collaboration across sectors;
- Promote local priorities to regional and national decision-makers, alongside councils and other bodies seeking to improve the three places; and
- Support a joint approach to future investment and regeneration.

The panels will also play a particularly important role as local government arrangements evolve over the coming years, helping to maintain continuity and local influence.

The role of Place Panel members

Place Panel members will act as champions for Canterbury, Whitstable or Herne Bay.

Members of these panels will contribute their experience, networks, knowledge and perspectives to help support the future success of their place.

Members will be expected to:

Show strategic thinking

- Actively contribute to panel meetings about the future of their place.
- Support delivery of the city and town centre strategies.
- Inform future action planning and prioritisation using project directories created for each place.
- Help identify strategic opportunities and challenges relating to the strategies.

Foster partnerships

- Work collaboratively with other members.
- Support joined-up approaches across organisations and sectors.

- Build relationships that help unlock opportunities and remove barriers.

Act as advocates

- Act as champions and ambassadors for Canterbury, Whitstable or Herne Bay.
- Promote opportunities for new investment, renewal and regeneration.
- Support coordinated messaging and advocacy at local, regional and national levels.

Steward the strategies and directories

- Help maintain momentum behind delivery of the strategies.
- Ensure local priorities continue to be represented.
- Support long-term place-based thinking and decision-making.

Show good governance

- Declare any relevant interests.
- Operate in accordance with the Panel's Terms of Reference.
- Uphold the Nolan Principles of Public Life.

Who are we looking for?

There is no fixed idea about the role in the community or the profession or job that a potential panel member might have.

We are seeking people who will care passionately about Canterbury, Whitstable or Herne Bay and who want to contribute to their future success. We welcome applications from people with different backgrounds, experiences and perspectives.

But given the focus of the city and town centre strategies we would be particularly interested in hearing from:

- Business people, entrepreneurs and activators (i.e. people that can mobilise and inspire other businesses);
- Community leaders and/or volunteers;
- People with experience of regeneration or place-making;
- Individuals involved in heritage, tourism, hospitality or the visitor economy;
- Young professionals; and
- People from cultural and creative organisations.

We are committed to achieving a diverse membership that reflects the three places and their communities. Applications are encouraged from all backgrounds.

Person specification

Ideally candidates should demonstrate some or all of the following:

Essential

- A strong interest in Canterbury, Whitstable or Herne Bay;
- Motivation and commitment to improving your chosen place;
- Ability to think strategically;
- Good communication and interpersonal skills;
- Ability to work collaboratively with others;
- Willingness to contribute constructively to discussions;

- Commitment to acting in the wider interests of the place; and
- Availability and the time to commit to the panel.

Desirable

- Experience of leadership, governance or partnership working;
- Knowledge of opportunities and challenges within your preferred choice of place;
- Experience in business, community development, regeneration, culture, tourism, education, heritage or related fields; and
- Ability to engage with networks that may support the future success of your chosen place.

Time commitment

The role will typically involve attending panel meetings in person at least twice per year.

The panels will also be encouraged to hold an annual joint session involving representatives from all three panels.

Members may also occasionally be invited to participate in:

- Time-limited workshops or working groups created by the panels; and
- Support and inform stakeholder engagement activities, as a panel member.

These roles are unpaid voluntary positions.

Appointments will normally be for an initial three-year term.

What will you gain?

By joining one of the Place Panels, you will have the opportunity to:

- Influence the future direction of your place;
- Provide advice and recommendations to the local authority to help shape important projects;
- Contribute to projects that make a lasting difference;
- Work alongside senior leaders from across different sectors;
- Develop your understanding of place leadership and regeneration; and
- Play a meaningful role in shaping our places during an important period of change and opportunity.

How to apply

To apply, please send your CV and a supporting statement or cover letter (750 words max) to **democracy@canterbury.gov.uk**

Please use your application to tell us:

Your name and details of your address or place of employment.

- Which Place Panel you wish to join (Canterbury, Whitstable or Herne Bay).
- Your connection to that place.

- Why you would like to join that Panel.
- What experience, skills, knowledge or perspectives you would bring.
- Any organisations or interests that you represent.

Shortlisted candidates will be invited to take part in an informal interview as part of the recruitment process. This will be led by the Cabinet Member for Economic Development & Regeneration and the council's Director of Place.

The closing date for submissions is **Monday 2 November 2026**.

Timetable

The following (indicative) timetable will be used up to the first meeting of the panels.

Stage	Timing
Recruitment launch	Week commencing 12 October
Application deadline	Monday 2 November
Shortlisting and interviews	From 3 November
Appointments	By 13 November
First meeting of panels	December 2026/January 2027

Further information

The Place Panels are being established by Canterbury City Council as part of the delivery of the [Canterbury City Centre Strategy and the Whitstable and Herne Bay Town Centre Strategies](#).

The council has also produced a [Project Directory](#) for each place to accompany the strategies.

If you have any questions or need further information, please contact:

Democratic Services
Canterbury City Council
Email: **democracy@canterbury.gov.uk**
Telephone: **01227 862 000**