

Folkestone Town Centre Working Group

Held at: Zoom - remote meeting

Date: Thursday, 12 May 2022

Present: Councillors Laura Davison, David Monk (Chairman),
Tim Prater and David Wimble

Apologies for Absence

Officers Present: Ewan Green (Director of Place), Katharine Harvey (Economic Development Advisor), Rod Lean (Chief Officer - Place & Growth), Sue Lewis (Committee Services Officer) and Llywelyn Lloyd (Chief Planning Officer)

Others Present: Manuel Fernandes (Manor Road Clinic), Roger Serginson (Assura), Gavin Ernest (GDM Architects) and William Beeston (We Made That)

1. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

2. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 March 2022 were agreed.

3. **Folca Medical Centre Update**

Manuel Fernandes (Manor Road Clinic) provided members with the background as to why this new medical centre is much needed.

He informed that in 2017 the closure of Folkestone East practice meant 3500 patients had to be registered elsewhere and following this Park Farm practice closed with a further 2700 patients moving elsewhere, therefore putting a tremendous strain on other practices in the area.

Many GP's have retired which identified a need for a training facility to be incorporated in the design that could potentially help towards filling the gaps left by them, which in turn would provide a growing workforce to call on.

This new medical centre will help all practices in the area and offer state of the art patient care, which would provide a services such as X-Ray, ultra sounds and CT/MRI scanners all based in one place. Patients would not have to travel out of the district for any of these procedures.

The centre would help to the regeneration of the town centre.

Roger Serginson from Assura, who specialise in the provision of health care facilities, and Gavin Ernest (GDM Architects) presented members with the proposed floor plans of the site informing that the new build medical centre will contain 5 floors accommodating the following:

- access and welcome lobby
- diagnostic area (x-ray, ct/mri scanners)
- consulting and treatment rooms
- staff areas
- waiting areas
- office/admin space
- separate access for support staff and doctors
- training space

Mr Serginson informed members that the design is near completion and the next steps will be to meet with the Kent and Medway Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to go through the proposals for sign off. Mr Serginson explained that the current building is unfortunately not capable of being redeveloped to provide the facilities required so a new build solution is the only option.

He also explained the design and operating principles of the building will meet a minimum BREEM standard of excellence.

Next Steps:

- Refine design and develop elevations
- Parking strategy
- Design panel review

The public will be able to view the proposals through formal consultation once the design panel review has taken place.

Members paid particular attention to the following:

- Proposed site start date – April 2023
- Royal Victoria Hospital – this will continue to serve the district and the new medical centre will not have a negative impact.
- Other residents of the district – the centre will deliver services to wider area of East Kent
- New build proposal –the design will be developed in such a way as to ensure it reflects the town centre setting.

4. **Levelling Up Fund Submission**

William Beeston from consultants We Made That updated members on the emerging bid which is being developed for submission by deadline of 6 July 2022.

The presentation covered a recap of the work undertaken for the Folkestone Place Plan priority projects, the recent guidance from the government for round 2 applications and the emerging levelling up bid.

Members were given the background to the development of the priority projects that emerged from the Place Plan work and the progress of developing these for the LUF submission.

The levelling up prospectus identifies 3 main areas for bids; transport, regeneration and cultural. Bids by local district authorities can be up to £20m and include a maximum of three projects within a package bid, whilst bids from local transport authorities, which in our case is KCC, can be for up to £50m. All projects are required to be delivered by the 31 March 2025 or 31 March 2026 in exceptional circumstances. The projects put forward by the Council will be high impact projects that will be visible to all.

Feedback has been positive with support for all the projects, although there have been some concerns expressed by members around accessibility of the bus station.

The proposed Bouverie Square and improved town centre connections project will focus on reconfiguring the bus station and the road network around Middleburg Square to enable more effective bus service operations and the creation of a new park in the heart of the town centre.

Mr Beeston informed the working group that officers are working with KCC and Stagecoach with regards both the Station Arrival and Bouverie Square and town centre connections projects, with both expressing their support for change.

The bid package will transform Folkestone town centre through these high impact and visible projects which will boost pride and thereby meet the government guidance for this funding. It will also meet the governments green agenda through encouraging greater use of public transport, cycling and walking.

Members paid particular attention to the following:

- Bus station changes and how this will affect residents – more detail is required on this to better understand the impacts on bus users.
- Changes to road network – the consultant team and Officers are working with Kent Highways on the proposed changes

- Harbour Line project– officers recognise that this is a good project, but it would not have the transformational impact on the town as required by the government guidance for this funding. Options for alternatives ways to fund this project will be considered in due course, if this is not included in the LUF bid
- Folca and Store 21 – officers recognise that these are key buildings which could be brought forward for mixed use redevelopment including potential employment and learning spaces. These options are being considered for potential inclusion in the LUF bid but it was stressed that these are not firmed up proposals and members will be advised further in due course.
- Parking review – the survey works have now been completed and officers will update members at the next meeting.

The proposed LUF bid will be presented to Cabinet in June, with more details on the Council's website in due course.

5. **Dates of Next Meetings**

An agreed date will be circulated to members in due course.