

Folkestone Town Centre Working Group

Held at:	Zoom Meeting
Date	Wednesday, 10 February 2021
Present	Councillors Danny Brook (Chairman), Laura Davison, Gary Fuller (In place of Tim Prater), David Monk, Douglas Wade and David Wimble*
Apologies for Absence	Councillor Tim Prater
Officers Present:	Kate Clark (Case Officer - Committee Services), Ewan Green (Director of Place), Jess Harman (Community Safety Specialist), Henry Kennedy-Skipton (Regeneration Lead), Llywelyn Lloyd (Chief Planning Officer) and Lorraine Smith (Economic Development Officer)
Others Present:	None

(* for part of the meeting)

36. **Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

37. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 December 2020 were agreed. The Chairman's electronic signature will be added to these indicating approval.

38. **Folkestone Ambition - Draft Infographic**

The Director of Place, Ewan Green, advised members this was a one page infographic draft. He was looking for comments and suggestions on this.

Members commented as follows:

- The infographic is too busy.
- Include reference to digital infrastructure/broadband under 'Connected and accessible transport'.
- 'Celebrate our heritage' seems too specific.
- Global warming and the effect this would have on Folkestone.
- Biodiversity – a greener Folkestone.

Members also asked how this would fit in with the Corporate Plan and Mr Green was keen to ensure the terminology used is in line with this. Ultimately this infographic will be taken to Cabinet for approval and working group members are welcome to email Mr Green with any further ideas they may have.

39. **Place Plan Update and Engagement Strategy**

Members were advised that 'We Made That' (WMT) have been appointed and had produced the draft Folkestone Town Centre Place Plan Engagement Strategy. The Director of Place went through certain aspects of the document confirming that the baseline is underway, also drawing members' attention to the engagement activities, ie proposed workshops, stakeholder meetings and public events. This strategy will be presented to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 16 February.

Members were keen that a broad range of stakeholders are consulted which would hopefully mean a broad range of ideas to inform and shape the plan.

The Chief Planning Officer said that We Made That have a proven track record delivering engagement strategies and the importance of a wide range of views for now and the future. The officer would be happy to arrange for a briefing to the working group from WMT.

Members' comments included:

- Licensing Policy Review and how this fits in with the Place Plan. A consultation is planned for June/July this year for policy approval in Autumn 2021.
- Night Time industries and managing the consequences of excess. The Community Safety Partnership and the Council's Community Safety Unit will be key consultees and in relation to the Place Plan and Licensing Policy.
- The importance of access to services in the town to help with mental health issues, domestic violence and other anti-social problems.

The Economic Development Senior Specialist encouraged members to email over any further comments or ideas they may have.

40. **Strategic Sites**

Three strategic sites are detailed in the report; Folca, Ship Street and Harbourline. Taking each site in turn members asked questions and made comments as follows:

Folca

- Pivotal to the town centre regeneration and an essential part of the Place Plan.
- Sustainability and connectivity important.

- Recently the building has become a mass vaccination centre for up to six months for which the Council will be remunerated for from NHS. These funds will be used to cover ongoing costs.
- Although initial market research was undertaken as to the use of Folca the Council does need to ensure the building generates income.
- Internal development of Folca is needed, however it may be that the external facade will remain, which is an important aspect of the building.
- Ideas coming forward included a medical provision, residential, leisure and mixed use.

Ship Street

Although the acquisition of this site is to be finalised, members were asked for their thoughts and comments on proposals which included affordable housing including social housing; consider climate emergency in the development of the site and walking links to Folkestone town and train station.

Harbourline

A proposed site which could be developed into cycle ways, cafes, shops and stalls. It would be a phased development approach including consultation with stakeholders. Ultimately providing an alternative scenic route to the harbour area.

Overall working group members agreed with the objectives proposed, the approaches and way forward of all three sites.

41. **Market Improvement Programme**

Members were advised of the proposals for the improvement programme. The request from officers was to receive feedback on the proposal and support to continue to develop the initiative including full costing ahead of formal council approval. The improvement programme would look to attract additional artisan markets, provide support to improve the current market including the introduction of a potential new trader scheme. Ideas and views were sought from today's working group.

- Pop up shops – on hold at present due to the pandemic.
- Art and antiques potential.
- Successful start to the Vegan Veganism Market which has seen two businesses secure permanent shops in the district.
- Important to attract traders, however listen to existing traders on how improvements could be made.
- Guildhall Street – fundamental to the market.

Timelines and investment proposals were also discussed with members.

42. **FHDC led projects update**

This item concentrated on the Folkestone Town Centre pedestrianised areas and the responsibility of these.

The intention would be to expand the ongoing FHDC responsibility of the areas and although members were keen to seek further details they generally agreed in principle that this is a beneficial way forward.

Turning to public realm initiatives in the Town Centre, the Economic Development Senior Specialist detailed improvements, ie bin replacement; heritage signage; planting schemes; and future replacement lighting to be carried out.

Also, details were given on Folkestone applications to the High Street Fund. This fund is still open for new applications. .

43. **AOB**

Prior to closure, the Chairman said he felt this had been a positive meeting. He reminded members of the impending Licensing Policy consultation and the importance of feeding comments to it