

This Report will be
made public on 11
March 2019

Folkestone

Hythe & Romney Marsh
Shepway District Council



Report Number **C/18/85**

To: Councillor John Collier, Cabinet Member for the
District Economy
Date: 11 March 2019
Status: Non-Key Decision
Corporate Director: John Bunnett, Place and Commercial

**SUBJECT: SUBMISSION OF EXPRESSION OF INTEREST TO FUTURE HIGH
STREET FUND**

SUMMARY: This report sets out Folkestone & Hythe District Council's intention to submit an Expression of Interest in response to the Government's announcement of establishing a Future High Streets Fund that district councils can bid for.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION: The submission of an Expression of Interest to the Government's Future High Streets Fund may result in Government funding to take forward our ambitions for Folkestone Town Centre.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1) **Approve the decision for the Council to submit an Expression of Interest to the Government's Future High Street Fund.**
- 2) **Agree to approval of the content of the Expression of Interest submission being delegated to the Corporate Director for Place and Commercial.**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In December 2018 the Government announced plans to create a Future High Streets Fund (FHSF) to support local areas to respond to the major changes that have been affecting High Streets over the past decades. This was in response to recommendations from a review undertaken by Sir John Timpson, which was to establish a High Streets Taskforce to support local leadership, as well as this FHSF. The objective of the FHSF is 'to renew and reshape town centres and high streets in a way that improves experience, drives growth and ensures future sustainability.
- 1.2 The FHSF will comprise £675 million, of which up to £55 million will be specifically to support the regeneration of heritage high streets. It will be used to support local areas to prepare long term strategies for their high streets and town centres and to co-fund investment in physical infrastructure or in land assembly. The types of investment that the fund would co-fund includes:
- Improvements to public and other transport access and to flow and circulation.
 - Congestion-relieving infrastructure.
 - Infrastructure to support new housing, workspace development and existing communities.
 - Regeneration of heritage high streets.
 - Investment in land assembly to support densification of residential and workspace in place of under-used retail units.
- 1.3 The FHSF prospectus makes it clear that district councils are seen as best placed to bid for this funding, but Expressions of Interest will be required to evidence support from a number of stakeholders. In the case of our district, this includes other tiers of local government (i.e. Kent County Council & Folkestone Town Council), KMEP and SE LEP, the private sector (Ellandi, Creative Foundation, F&H Business Advisory Board, Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce) and community groups (FTCM, Folkestone Town Team).
- 1.4 The FHSF prospectus sets out the number of bids that any one district council can make and in the case of the Folkestone & Hythe District, we are limited to one application for a single town.

2. FUTURE HIGH STREETS FUND APPLICATION PROCESS

- 2.1 The Prospectus for the FHSF indicates an intention to have two rounds of applications – one in 2019 and a second which will be no earlier than 2020. For the current first round, expressions of interest are to be submitted by 22 March 2019, with decisions on the successful applications announced in spring 2019. The detailed business cases for capital projects in these towns are then

expected to be developed during summer 2019 with submission for capital funding during the autumn.

2.2 While the fund is largely capital funding, some revenue funding will be made available to support the development of the project proposals.

2.3 The EOI itself is a word limited application which focuses on a number of key themes:

- **Defining the place** – the geographical area of the extent of the high street/town centre area covered by the proposal and description (500 words); information about the population and importance of the area as a centre of social and economic activity (750 words)
- **Setting out the challenges** – what these are; the evidence (no work limit) and the rationale for selecting the town centre (500 words)
- **Strategic ambition** – explaining what our vision is and how this links to the challenges identified (750 word limit)
- **Engagement and alignment of vision** - links to other funding streams and wider plans/strategies(750 words)
- **Support for vision** – explanation of support (500 words) and include letters of support as annexes

2.4 Over recent years there has been work undertaken by FHDC and partners that has considered retail and leisure in Folkestone Town Centre, all of which have articulated the issues and challenges facing the town centre. These have included:

- Places and Policies Local Plan (submission draft 2018)
- Core Strategy Review (Consultation Draft – regulation 19, Jan 2019).
- Shepway Town Centre Study (2015) by Peter Brett and Associates
- Employment Land Review (Feb 2017):
- Retail and Leisure Need Assessment (Dec 2018) by Lichfields
- Folkestone Coastal Community Team Economic Plan (2016)

2.5 Some of the data in these reports, that are required in the EOI, are out of date so the support of a consultant – Jo Wynn-Carter has been commissioned to support the ED team to gather the most up-to-date evidence to support our Expression of Interest.

2.6 In addition, we have also had detailed discussions with the lead officer of the FHSF at MHCLG, the KCC lead officer, East Kent ED colleagues, and with Ellandi who have been working closely with Government on this. Mark Robinson, an owner director of Ellandi (owner of Bouverie Place) is also Vice president of REVO – an organisation for those involved in shopping centres, which has been working closely with government on this initiative. All of these discussions have given us some useful pointers for our EOI submission.

2.7 It is clear that the government is looking at this EOI stage for towns where there is:

- a clear strategic vision of how to address the issues and challenges

- a programme of investment to deliver that change, with identified capital projects
- partner buy-in to both the vision and programme
- identified capital projects which are at a stage where the business case can be developed over summer 2019
- realistic revenue requirements to support the development of the capital bids

2.8 FHDC is clearly not at the stage indicated above, but we believe that we should still submit an expression of interest for a number of reasons, including:

- Considerable work has been undertaken to gather up-to-date data and evidence on the issues and challenges and to put in place mechanisms for updating this regularly.
- Momentum is gathering on working with partners to develop our vision and development plan to address the issues and challenges. Ellandi have commissioned this work, with support from FHDC. This is due to be available by the end of March and will form the basis for seeking partner and stakeholder buy-in through the F&H Accelerated Delivery Board and from working closely with Folkestone Town Council, the Folkestone Coastal Community Team, Folkestone Town Team and Folkestone Town Centre Management.
- This will demonstrate to MHCLG our seriousness in tackling the issues and will stand us in better stead for a round two submission.

3. FHDC SUBMISSION OF AN EXPRESSION OF INTEREST TO THE FUTURE HIGH STREETS FUND

3.1 It is proposed that Folkestone & Hythe District Council submits an Expression of Interest application to the Future High Streets Fund by the deadline on 22nd March 2019 and that the approval of the content of this is delegated to the Corporate Director for Place and Commercial.

4. LEGAL, FINANCIAL AND OTHER CONTROLS/POLICY MATTERS

4.1 Legal

There are no legal implications arising directly out of this report. In the event the Council is successful in obtaining Future High Streets Funding, Legal Services will (upon instruction) advise on the terms and conditions of the relevant grant agreement.

Financial

There are no financial implications directly arising from this report however, if the bid is successful and external funding received then a full and comprehensive analysis will need to be undertaken.

Equalities.

There are no Equalities implications arising as a direct impact of this report

5. CONTACT OFFICERS AND BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

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