

## **Folkestone & Hythe District and Parish Councils' Joint Committee**

Held at: Remote Meeting

Date: Thursday, 17 November 2022

Present: Councillors Michael Boor, Laszlo Dudas, Frank Hobbs, Mrs Jennifer Hollingsbee, Roger Joyce, Terence Mullard and Paul Thomas

Apologies for Absence

Officers Present: Olu Fatokun (Low Carbon Senior Specialist), Andrew Hatcher (Revenues and Benefits Lead Specialist), Rod Lean (Chief Officer - Place & Growth), Sue Lewis (Case Officer (Committee)) and Adrian Tofts (Strategy, Policy & Performance Lead Specialist)

Others Present:

### **6. Appointment of Chairman**

Parish Councillor Frank Hobbs was appointed Chairman for the meeting.

### **7. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **8. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 July 2022 were submitted and agreed as a correct record.

### **9. Welfare Support Update (Revenues and Benefits)**

A presentation on Welfare and Support was given by Andrew Hatcher, Revenues and Benefits Lead Specialist, a copy of which is attached to the minutes.

He reminded the committee of the Government support which has already been delivered, including the recent cost of living payments.

The presentation shows the 6 areas the team work on paying particular attention to the following:

- Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) which is an emergency short term fund to help those find solutions to their needs. This is a fund that those on housing benefit can apply for. The Council has already received 346 applications of which 263 awards have been given. Applications can be found on the Council's website.
- Financial Support Payments (FSP) which is designed to assist people who have applied for council tax reduction and who facing exceptional hardship. The Council has already received 401 applications with 272 awards being made. This is funded with KCC.
- Household Support Fund which is an additional fund from government to support vulnerable households, this fund is managed by KCC and the monies are distributed to district councils.

Phase 1 - This fund has already been used to help households in need of basic living requirements such as beds, mattresses, food and heating. The Council has worked alongside local suppliers to provide the necessary items, with the Council receiving an additional £50,000 as they had done such good work in the area.

Phase 2 - The housing support fund helps pensioner households in the same way but also by supporting financial needs and energy costs.

Phase 3 - Alongside this the Council are awaiting further information in respect of targeted funding predominantly for energy support.

- The Welfare Team have been campaigning to get more take up of pension credit and council tax support.

The team have engaged with a number of community groups and these are shown in the presentation slides providing help, guidance and training on issues such as loan sharks and problem debts.

Working with Refernet an online signposting service created by Kent, the team have been able to signpost people to the right support but also provide additional support when needed. Examples of the help given are provided.

The team have been awarded a number of accolades for all their hard work, which they are very proud of.

Following a number of questions Mr Hatcher informed that a poster providing the essential contact information to assist households who

need help has been produced with the help of other organisations. This has already been distributed in a number of parishes but those that still require copies can direct their requests to [Andrew.hatcher@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk](mailto:Andrew.hatcher@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk).

Members congratulated the team on all the hard work they have been doing and in achieving their awards.

#### 10. **The Carbon Innovation Lab and District Wide Carbon Plan**

A presentation by Olu Fatokun, Low Carbon Senior Specialist on Carbon Innovation Lab and District Wide Carbon was given. A copy of the presentation is attached.

A climate emergency was declared in 2019 and since then the Council has made a declaration to: “develop a strategy for Folkestone & Hythe District Council to play a leadership role in community, public and business partnerships for our Carbon Neutral 2030 commitment throughout the district.”

With 5 priority areas of focus; Road Transport, Residential, Commercial and Industrial, other activities and Land Use absorption, together with the CI-Lab objectives, as shown, the Council has held 3 meetings to discuss a number of issues and these are shown within the presentation.

Following these meetings it was seen that 2 priority areas have emerged - sustainable transport and behavioural change and from these 4 emerging projects have developed;

1. Our Schools – working alongside schools to develop an eco-school programme, some of which is already being achieved.
2. Local Businesses – to engage and encourage local businesses.
3. Privately Occupied Homes – encourage individuals to participate and work with the council
4. Active Mobility – work to provide better walking and cycling routes, work alongside KCC to gain funding.

Town and Parish Councils can help to improve health and wellbeing in their local areas, highlight examples of initiatives in the areas to help others participate. Members can send their initiatives to council officers who will encourage others to do the same and provide an update to Cabinet in due course.

During discussions with members the following points were noted:

- Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC) will be meeting with Sarah Deakin, KCC and Janet Hill, Swale BC to discuss a way forward for parishes to help and promote new initiatives.

- Encourage developers to look at what they can do when building new sites.
- Town and Parish Climate Conference will be held in the new year and it is hoped that Councils officers will be able to attend and present.
- Encourage walking to and from schools.
- Look at KCC bike ability programme and encourage schools to join in, some have already.
- Look at ways to encourage international networks to reduce carbon emissions and reduce light pollution.

It was clear that people need to keep talking, start acting on changes and encourage others to do the same.

11. **Next Steps for Folkestone Town Centre - UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Levelling Up Bids**

Rod Lean, Chief Officer - Place & Growth presented members with an update in respect of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and Levelling up bids. A copy of the presentation is attached.

**UKSPF**

This is new funding for local investment as part of a suite of complementary levelling up.

There are 3 key UKSPF priorities, Community and Place, Supporting Local Business and People and Skills. FHDC allocation is £1M over 3 years, but before this can be allocated an investment plan is required setting out the districts priorities which then has to be signed off by Central Government to unlock the allocation.

The Strategic context is shown in the attached slides with focus on 2 main themes, cost of living and skills, with 3 selected key interventions, again as per slides, all of which will enhance and add value to the overall schemes put forward as part of the LUF.

The Council are awaiting approval of the investment plan bid which is hoped to be announced in the next two weeks.

**Levelling up Fund**

The Council was allowed to submit one bid for funding up to the value of £20M with 10% match funding from public or private sector. The application deadline to apply for funding was August this year.

Members were informed that FHDC had been listed on the category 1 priority list, this is because Folkestone and Hythe District Council has 3 areas of high deprivation, therefore areas that need the most help.

The bid had to be right and demonstrate deliverability of projects by March 2025. The Council felt they could deliver on this and, therefore, chose to focus on the Folkestone place plan and identified 74 projects which were then narrowed down to 6 priority projects; Station Arrival and Town Centre Connections, Improved Town Centre Gateway, Folca, F51 and Payers Park, Harbour Line and Tram Road and Sunny Sands.

Of these 6 the council then had to work on what best suited the bid and agreed the following 3:-

- Station Arrival and Town Centre Connections
- Improved Town Centre Gateway – road layout and bus station
- Folca, Sandgate Road and Town Centre Public Realm

The final LUF bid totalled £19,791,819 with the Council part £2,199,091.

Members can see within the plans attached the desire to improve the station arrival area and Cheriton Road moving towards Folkestone Town Centre, with improvements to Middelburg square, bus station area and the area around Shellon street and part of Sandgate Road.

Stagecoach have agreed the relocation of the bus station and approve the plans put forward following traffic management proposals.