

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Held at:	Remote meeting
Date	Tuesday, 16 February 2021
Present	Councillors Miss Susan Carey, Peter Gane, Connor McConville, Terence Mullard, Patricia Rolfe, Rebecca Shoob (Chairman) and John Wing
Apologies for Absence	Councillor Danny Brook, Councillor Gary Fuller and Councillor Michelle Keutenius
Officers Present:	Andy Blaszkowicz (Director of Housing and Operations), Kate Clark (Case Officer - Committee Services), Holly Godwin (Case Officer - Corporate Services), Ewan Green (Director of Place), John Holman (Assistant Director of Housing), Susan Priest (Chief Executive), Lorraine Smith (Economic Development Senior Specialist) and Helen Sudbury (Housing Operations Lead Specialist)
Others Present:	Councillors David Monk, David Godfrey and David Wimble

34. **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Patricia Rolfe made a voluntary announcement in respect of Agenda item 5 (Folkestone Town Centre Regeneration) as she owns a business in New Romney High Street.

Councillor Peter Gane made a voluntary announcement, also in respect of Agenda item 5, as he is a member of Folkestone Town Council.

Both Councillors remained in the meeting taking part in discussions.

35. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2020 were submitted and agreed. The Chairman requested that her electronic signature to be added showing approval.

36. **Minutes of the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Sub Committee**

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 January 2021 were submitted and agreed. The Chairman's electronic signature will be added showing approval.

37. **Folkestone Town Centre Regeneration**

Report OS/20/11 provided an overview of the work that is underway to develop a Place Plan for Folkestone Town Centre. The report presented a draft Folkestone Ambition which was intended to set an overall context for the town centre plan. The report then presented both the objectives of the Place Plan and the related engagement strategy which is a key part of the process to develop the final plan.

Portfolio holder and Cabinet member, Councillor David Wimble introduced the report, initially advising members that the document for scrutiny is part of the Corporate Plan 2021-2030. He pointed out the importance of working with key stakeholders in creating a Place Plan to encompass sustainable change; retail; residential and traffic management, as well as the importance of connectivity, entertainment and the culture and history of Folkestone. Incorporated within this scope there would also be a review of the Council's Licensing Policy.

Councillor Wimble invited members of the committee to comment on the content of the document.

Members' comments and highlights included:

- Excellent chance to look at and encourage sustainable travel in the town and surrounding areas, ie cycle paths, 'Click to Cycle' and land train idea.
- Leas Lift – members to be updated on timeline
- Encourage retail, including independent and niche market shops.
- Mixed use of Town Centre to include sustainable exemplar housing, retail, leisure and entertainment, eg development of Folca.
- Attractive areas within Folkestone such as The Leas/Harbour Arm coupled with a fantastic coastline.
- Folkestone proximity to Europe and the advantages of this geographical link – 'Golden Gateway'.
- New ideas for connectivity between Folkestone town and the beach/harbour areas.
- The Council's Destination Marketing Plan produced a few years ago still relevant, concentrating on the key theme of tourism.
- Folkestone to be seen as the 'Capital' of the District.

Turning to the consultation members were advised this is to be an all-inclusive consultation, providing digital and paper copy access. Members were concerned that some groups could be missed, however assurance was given that all forms of communication would be used to promote the consultation and encourage responses, including public engagements and workshops.

School participation was an idea given by members, maybe arranging workshops with pupils to glean their ideas for the future of Folkestone town centre.

An important aspect of the Place Plan development will be a review of the current Licensing Policy, this will inform the development of the new License Policy which is subject to public consultation with a finalised policy planned to be in place for Autumn 2021.

Members then concentrated on the Infographic 'Draft Ambition for Folkestone', commenting as follows:

- Music and Arts – possibly add in Leas Pavilion.
- Heritage – expand; a broader reflection needed, maybe add in St Eanswythe history.
- Food and Drink – Promote new business incubators, encourage street food.
- Protect our Community – a suggestion to add in health and wellbeing.
- It was noted that the graphic at the top of the page contained two vehicles, members asked if this design could be relooked at.

The Director of Place thanked members for their comments on the infographic, he said that the one page design should not be too prescriptive and to remain flexible.

Proposed by Councillor Rebecca Shoob
Seconded by Councillor Patricia Rolfe; and

RESOLVED:
That Report OS/20/11 is received and noted.

38. **Tenant Engagement Strategy and Action Plan**

Report OS/20/10 outlined the draft Tenant Engagement Strategy and Action Plan for the Housing Service. The purpose of bringing the Strategy to this committee was to seek members' views and comments at an early stage of development.

Portfolio holder and Cabinet member, Councillor David Godfrey, introduced the report, advising members that the plan is for Strategy consultation, results presentation to Overview & Scrutiny Committee and then to Cabinet for approval.

Councillor Godfrey went on to say that the tenants are the main focus of this strategy, working closely with the Shepway Tenants and Leaseholders Board and officers is paramount.

Councillor Godfrey also drew members' attention to the Tenant Engagement Structure and the flowchart relating to this within the strategy.

Members' comments included:

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- Performance indicators – these are to be shared on a regular basis with tenants and leaseholders.
- Important to encourage participation in the consultation from individual tenants as well as groups of tenants.
- Consideration to be given to barriers to engagement, however it may be that some tenants want little involvement, whereas others may want more.
- The Shepway Tenants & Leaseholders Board (STLB) to be seen as a key conduit for tenants and F&HDC. The STLB could be seen as an outside body providing a continuous flow of information.
- An excellent relationship with tenants is crucial. By asking the right questions, it is hoped more people will take part in the consultation.
- A hope that tenants have a genuine voice, however all tenants' demands to be carefully considered.

Members thanked officers for an excellent report and strategy document. They were complimentary of the Housing Team and appreciated all the work that had been carried out so far.

Councillor Godfrey thanked all members for their input – he advised a consultation will now take place and results to come back to this Committee.

The Director of Housing and Operations also thanked members for their input, with further thanks going to the Housing Operations Lead Specialist and Councillor Godfrey.

Proposed by Councillor Rebecca Shoob
Seconded by Councillor Peter Gane; and

RESOLVED:
That Report OS/20/10 is received and noted.

Prior to the closure of the meeting, the Chairman, Councillor Shoob, gave thanks to all officers involved in the preparation and production of both reports presented this evening.