



# Agenda

Meeting: **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**  
Date: **16 February 2021**  
Time: **7.00 pm**  
Place: **Remote meeting**

To: **All members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

The committee will consider the matters, listed below, at the date and time shown above. The meeting will be open to the press and public and streamed live at [bit.ly/YouTubeMeetings](https://bit.ly/YouTubeMeetings).

Members of the committee, who wish to have information on any matter arising on the agenda, which is not fully covered in these papers, are requested to give notice, prior to the meeting, to the Chairman or appropriate officer.

1. **Apologies for Absence**
2. **Declarations of Interest (Pages 3 - 4)**

Members of the committee should declare any interests which fall under the following categories:

- a) disclosable pecuniary interests (DPI);
- b) other significant interests (OSI);
- c) voluntary announcements of other interests.

3. **Minutes (Pages 5 - 10)**

To consider and approve, as a correct record, the minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2020.

4. **Minutes of the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Sub Committee (Pages 11 - 16)**

To consider and approve the minutes of the meeting held on 12 January 2021.

## Queries about the agenda? Need a different format?

Contact Kate Clark – Tel: 01303 853267  
Email: [committee@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk](mailto:committee@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk) or download from our  
website [www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk](http://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)

5. **Folkestone Town Centre Regeneration (Pages 17 - 32)**

Report OS/20/11 provides an overview of work that is underway to develop a Place Plan for Folkestone Town Centre. The report presents a draft Folkestone Ambition which is intended to set an overall context for the town centre plan. The report then presents 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.

6. **Tenant Engagement Strategy and Action Plan (Pages 33 - 52)**

Report OS/20/10 outlines the draft Tenant Engagement Strategy and Action Plan for the Housing Service. The purpose of bringing the Strategy to Overview and Scrutiny Committee is to seek Members' views and comments at an early stage of development.

## **Declarations of Interest**

### **Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI)**

Where a Member has a new or registered DPI in a matter under consideration they must disclose that they have an interest and, unless the Monitoring Officer has agreed in advance that the DPI is a 'Sensitive Interest', explain the nature of that interest at the meeting. The Member must withdraw from the meeting at the commencement of the consideration of any matter in which they have declared a DPI and must not participate in any discussion of, or vote taken on, the matter unless they have been granted a dispensation permitting them to do so. If during the consideration of any item a Member becomes aware that they have a DPI in the matter they should declare the interest immediately and, subject to any dispensations, withdraw from the meeting.

### **Other Significant Interest (OSI)**

Where a Member is declaring an OSI they must also disclose the interest and explain the nature of the interest at the meeting. The Member must withdraw from the meeting at the commencement of the consideration of any matter in which they have declared a OSI and must not participate in any discussion of, or vote taken on, the matter unless they have been granted a dispensation to do so or the meeting is one at which members of the public are permitted to speak for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence relating to the matter. In the latter case, the Member may only participate on the same basis as a member of the public and cannot participate in any discussion of, or vote taken on, the matter and must withdraw from the meeting in accordance with the Council's procedure rules.

### **Voluntary Announcement of Other Interests (VAOI)**

Where a Member does not have either a DPI or OSI but is of the opinion that for transparency reasons alone s/he should make an announcement in respect of a matter under consideration, they can make a VAOI. A Member declaring a VAOI may still remain at the meeting and vote on the matter under consideration.

#### **Note to the Code:**

Situations in which a Member may wish to make a VAOI include membership of outside bodies that have made representations on agenda items; where a Member knows a person involved, but does not have a close association with that person; or where an item would affect the well-being of a Member, relative, close associate, employer, etc. but not his/her financial position. It should be emphasised that an effect on the financial position of a Member, relative, close associate, employer, etc OR an application made by a Member, relative, close associate, employer, etc would both probably constitute either an OSI or in some cases a DPI.

This page is intentionally left blank



# Minutes

## Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Held at:	Remote meeting
Date	Tuesday, 1 December 2020
Present	Councillors Gary Fuller, Peter Gane, Anthony Hills (In place of Miss Susan Carey), Michelle Keutenius (Vice-Chair), Connor McConville, Terence Mullard, Rebecca Shoob (Chairman) and John Wing
Apologies for Absence	Councillor Miss Susan Carey and Councillor Patricia Rolfe
Officers Present:	Andy Blaszkowicz (Director of Housing and Operations), Kate Clark (Case Officer - Committee Services), Ewan Green (Director of Place), Adrian Hammond (Housing Lead Specialist), John Holman (Assistant Director of Housing), Andy Jarrett (Chief Strategic Development Officer), John Bunnett (Development Director), Amandeep Khroud (Assistant Director), Susan Priest (Chief Executive), Charlotte Spendley (Director of Corporate Services) and Jemma West (Committee Service Specialist)
Others Present:	Councillors Godfrey, Mrs Hollingsbee and Monk were also in attendance as the relevant Cabinet Members.

### 29. **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Shoob declared a DPI in respect of the item relating to Draft Business Plan – Otterpool Park LLP (Minute No 33), in that she was a Director of the Board of Otterpool Park LLP. She left the meeting prior to the consideration of this item of business, and Councillor Keutenius took the Chair.

### 30. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 October 2020 were submitted and agreed. The Chairman confirmed that her electronic signature could be added to the minutes.

**31. Minutes of the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Sub-Committee**

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 November 2020 were submitted and approved. The Chairman's signature will be added to these minutes as approval.

**32. Draft Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2020/25 Consultation Responses**

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Transport and Special Projects, and the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Communities introduced the report which set out the responses received during the public consultation for the draft Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2020/25. The 8 week period of consultation ended on 2 October. Subject to the proposed amendments in the report, it was recommended that the Strategy be adopted by the Council.

- The strategy had been shared with all partners on the CSU for their comments.
- The street count the previous week had shown 11-12 cases, but this was being verified by partners.
- Those who had been sofa surfing were not necessarily classed as intentionally homeless, and each case was judged on the individual circumstances.
- There had not been any recent increase in homelessness presentations due to rent arrears or domestic abuse, but this was being closely monitored, and the council continued working to maximise the accommodation options available.
- Affordable rents made up a large proportion of new affordable homes. The key issue was due to government policy, and the funding available. The council's programme had been agreed in line with government policy.
- The rainbow centre provides daytime facilities for those living on the streets. The council were also looking at a strategy for the use of Next Steps funding, which included the delivery of units to support those with more complex needs, such as addiction. This work was in progress, and suitable accommodation was being sought. It was hoped six units would be acquired and in use by the spring of 2021. A support service will be in place to support people living in the accommodation.
- The Next Steps units and Housing First units were different projects.
- The Homelessness Forum would move the Working Group forward. The Working Group is likely to be a sub-group of the forum, made up of key local partners.
- Cabinet would be considering the Strategy at their meeting on 9 December, and both Cabinet and the Council would be very committed to the Strategy.

- There were around 35-40 people presently in temporary accommodation, but this changed on a daily basis. The council tried to avoid placing people in Bed and Breakfasts, but around 15 households (couples and single people) were presently placed in B&B accommodation.
- An annual review of the strategy would take place, involving all partners, and would be reported back to Members.
- In general terms, some single households were in Bed and Breakfast accommodation for longer than anticipated, sometimes 8-10 weeks. The council's aim was that families were in temporary accommodation for no more than 3 months. More detail on these figures would be provided to Members after the meeting.
- More one bedroom accommodation was being sought.

Proposed by Councillor Shoob,  
Seconded by Councillor Keutenius; and

**RESOLVED:**

1. **That report C/20/54 be received and noted.**

(Voting figures: 8 for, 0 against, 0 abstentions).

**33. Draft Business Plan - Otterpool Park LLP**

The Leader of the Council, in his capacity as Cabinet Member for Otterpool Park, introduced the report which presented the draft proposed business plan of Otterpool Park Limited Liability Partnership for the Committee's consideration.

Prior to the consideration of the report, Councillor Shoob left the meeting and Councillor Keutenius took the Chair. Councillor Mrs Hollingsbee also left the meeting.

The Chairman read out a statement reminding all members that it will not be possible for Officers to discuss commercially sensitive/confidential information during the open session of this meeting, and if members wished to discuss commercially sensitive / confidential information then it was recommended that a vote take place to move into private session.

The Director of Place, as representative of the council, gave a brief introduction and advised that consideration of the Draft Business Plan was a significant milestone in the development and delivery of the project.

The Director of Development, as representative of the LLP, outlined the Business Plan and introduced the Consultants (Tim Mitford-Slade from Strutt and Parker and Victoria Seal from BNP Paribas Real Estate) who were present at the meeting to address any detailed technical questions, should they be asked by members.

The Committee Members commented on various issues including the following:

- With regard to community engagement, how were current communities, such as Lympne, being engaged? This was vital in order for the new community to blend in.
- Under Phase one of the infrastructure, were other incomes being pursued?
- Could the project commit to zero carbon housing as the council could act as a trail blazer.
- Was there a transport strategy, particularly in relation to walking and cycling links?
- The term relating to new schools 'opening and filling up from the bottom' would benefit from clarification.
- There appeared to be inconsistencies between the report (paragraph 3.1.1) and business plan (paragraph 5.2) around enabling the LLP to deliver without further approval being required.
- How did the council arrive at the decision to form the LLP?
- Members asked whether the term 'shareholders' should be removed from the plan, given that there were no shareholders?
- What process was in place for the LLP to draw down additional funding?
- Members had control over the council and its processes.
- The project was ambitious and exciting.

The Director of Development and the Leader of the Council both responded to issues raised by Members, and made points including the following:

- Consultation and engagement was resource intensive. Due to the importance placed on the matter, a new member of staff had recently been recruited to provide more capacity to help develop relationships within the local communities. The team were tendering to establish a 'virtual community' to bring together the community and local businesses, with an opportunity to engage on different aspects of the project such as design, etc.
- The numbers reflected the assessed need of the development. If there was a need for more funding, other ways to bring in investment would be considered and sought with the necessary approvals being put in place. This could, e.g. include investment from Homes England who had expressed an interest in funding part of the infrastructure.
- The aspiration for zero carbon was there, but at the present time this would incur additional costs and the council's ambition is to create a low carbon new town, not a zero carbon town.
- The design did respond to the council's aspiration for environmental sustainability. It was also important to retain the ability of the scheme to be profitable. Other examples of zero carbon housing elsewhere in the country had been subsidised by local authorities. In the industry, there were many different definitions of zero carbon.
- Work continues on the Transport Strategy and this would be submitted in the spring, prior to the consideration of the outline application. The



promotion of more walking and cycling, and more use of public transport would be included in the strategy, as well as connectivity to surrounding areas, including Hythe.

- The intention is that the first primary school would be delivered before the first house was occupied. The phrasing around ‘filling from the bottom up’ could be clarified as the draft documents were finalised.
- A range of legal documents govern the relationship between the council and the LLP, and the business plan was also a means by which the LLP would be controlled, which is why the plan would be reviewed annually by members, and would act as an opportunity to reaffirm the activities of the LLP’s business plan. There were also two of the District Councillors appointed as Board Members.
- With regard to the formation of the LLP, the council could have employed a company to act as the delivery vehicle, but creating its own LLP would retain an element of control. Extensive external legal and financial advice had been sought as reported throughout the year in earlier decision-making reports.
- Although there were no other shareholders of the LLP at this point, it was something that could be considered in the future, for partners to come on board, should that be an appropriate action to progress.
- It was anticipated that over time the LLP would become self-sustaining. The LLP was only authorised to operate within the context of the business plan. Anything outside of the agreement would require an exceptional report. The necessary appendices to the plan were being worked up at present, but would clearly show how the LLP could draw down funding within the agreed range of activities. Members were reassured that there would not be unlimited uncontrolled finance for the LLP.

Proposed by Councillor McConville,  
Seconded by Councillor Wing; and

**RESOLVED:**

**That given the importance of this piece of work, a task and finish group be created to work alongside members and officers to get the Business Plan to its best possible version prior to consideration by Cabinet in January 2021.**

(Voting figures: 5 for, 1 against, 1 abstention).

Proposed by Councillor Keutenius,  
Seconded by Councillor Fuller; and

**RESOLVED:**

**That the report be received and noted.**

(Voting figures: 7 for, 0 against, 0 abstentions).

This page is intentionally left blank

# Minutes

## Finance and Performance Scrutiny Sub-Committee

Held at:	Zoom - remote meeting
Date	Tuesday, 12 January 2021
Present	Councillors Peter Gane, Connor McConville (Chairman), Patricia Rolfe and Rebecca Shoob
Apologies for Absence	Councillor Gary Fuller
Officers Present:	Andy Blaszkowicz (Director of Housing and Operations), Kate Clark (Case Officer - Committee Services), Ewan Green (Director of Place), Leigh Hall (Case Management Lead (Support Services)), Katharine Harvey* (Chief Economic Development Officer), Cheryl Ireland (Chief Financial Services Officer), Amandeep Khroud* (Assistant Director), Llywelyn Lloyd* (Chief Planning Officer), Susan Priest (Chief Executive), Charlotte Spendley (Director of Corporate Services), Lee Walker (Capital and Treasury Senior Specialist) and Jemma West (Committee Service Specialist)
Others Present:	Councillors David Monk and David Godfrey  (*for part of the meeting)

### 6. **Declarations of interest**

Councillors Rolfe, Gane and McConville declared an interest in that they are all directors of Oportunitas, dispensations have been applied and in this respect all members remained in the meeting taking part in discussions and voting on all agenda items.

Councillor Rolfe made a voluntary announcement as she is a member of New Romney Town Council.

Voluntary announcements made by Councillors Gane and McConville as they are members of Folkestone Town Council.

Councillor Shoob declared an interest with regard to her Directorship of Otterpool Park LLP. She remained in the meeting and took part in discussions and voting on all items.

**7. Draft General Fund Budget 2021/22**

Report C/20/66 sets out the Council's Draft General Fund Budget for 2021/22.

Members were reminded that an updated version of this report and appendix 1 were provided prior to this meeting.

Members' comments included:

- Off street parking – due to Covid19 an assumption had already been made in a reduction of income which had been built into the MTFs. It was mentioned a hope to reduce dependence on vehicles and parking spaces for the future, however alternative sources of income would need to be found. Since the pandemic, there are no plans, at present, to increase parking charges.
- New Homes Bonus (NHB) – it was noted that this has decreased due to legacy payments ceasing and less entitlement for 2021/22.
- FOI and Community Safety - The Transformation programme has meant a re-allocation of funding for these services.
- It was noticed that there is a significant reduction in income from Connect 38. This is due to recent vacant space due to the pandemic.
- A holding budget increase of £15K for the memorial arch, however members were advised that these funds are to be allocated to High Street improvements.
- Budget Consultation – it was agreed and confirmed the importance that all stakeholders are consulted. The consultation has been publicised through various channels. It was suggested that all councillors can help promote the consultation, maybe sending the relevant link to our website to those who ask.

The Chairman ended discussions on this item by asking if further information could be provided with regard to the Transformation project and the movement of officers.

Proposed by Councillor Connor McConville

Seconded by Councillor Patricia Rolfe; and

**RESOLVED:**

**To receive and note report C/20/66.**

(Voting: For 4; Against 0; Abstentions 0)

**8. Housing Revenue Account Revenue and Capital Original Budget 2021/22**

Report C/20/62 set out the Housing Revenue Account Revenue and Capital Budget for 2021/22 and proposed an increase in weekly rents and an increase in service charges for 2021/22.

Members were advised that the housing stock condition survey is still awaited and a better picture of the situation will be available once complete.

Referring to point 3.5.2 (Heating charges in Sheltered Housing) - 10% increase in heating and hot water charges is recommended. It was suggested that perhaps this is not the right time for this increase however it was deemed necessary and there are mechanisms in place to help tenants financially.

Reference was made to non dwelling rents. Non dwelling structures are mainly garages.

Turning to East Kent Housing, the Director of Operations and Housing gave a brief explanation of the events since EKH's transfer to its owners on 1 October 2020. The Vision for this district has been approved and progress has been made, ie additional resources, tenant involvement, stock condition survey. Value for money will be sought and this in-house service should become more proficient as it develops.

Cabinet member, Councillor David Godfrey, advised the importance of transparency and keeping members informed of all stages.

The Chairman, Councillor McConville, said he looked forward to the stock condition survey and the forthcoming Business Plan.

Proposed by Councillor Connor McConville  
Seconded by Councillor Patricia Rolfe; and

**RESOLVED:**

**That Report C/20/62 is received and noted.**

(Voting: For 4; Against 0; Abstentions 0)

9. **Update to the General Fund Medium Term Capital Programme and Budget Monitoring 2020/21**

Report C/20/65 updated the General Fund Medium Term Capital Programme for the five year period ending 31 March 2026. The report provided an updated projected outturn for the General Fund capital programme in 2020/21, based on expenditure to 30 November 2020. The General Fund Medium Term Capital Programme is required to be submitted to full Council for consideration and approval as part of the budget process.

Members were pleased to note that both this Council and Dover District Council were obtaining security over the vehicles required for the new Waste contract through a purchasing arrangement with the contractor which would not affect the contract rebate figure.

Mountfield Road Business Hub – it was confirmed that funding will be from a grant.

Members noted there were ambitious projects planned and assured officers that they would have their full support.

Proposed by Councillor Connor McConville  
Seconded by Councillor Rebecca Shoob; and

**RESOLVED:**  
**That report C/20/65 is received and noted.**

(Voting: For 4; Against 0; Abstentions 0)

10. **Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2021/22 and Treasury Management Monitoring report 2020/21**

Report C/20/64 set out the proposed strategy for treasury management for 2021/22 including Treasury Management Indicators. The report also provided an update on the council's treasury management activities that have taken place during 2020/21 against the agreed strategy for the year.

A presentation was given to members by the Capital and Treasury Senior Specialist which gave an informative summary of the report.

Members asked if there would be a possibility of this Council becoming a lender to other local authorities. Members were advised although this had happened previously, the relatively short durations the Council would lend money to other local authorities at the moment would not offer any better value than existing investment counterparties being used. However, the position is under constant review should suitable opportunities arise to invest with other local authorities.

Members noted that Folkestone Town Council (FTC) are a lender to the Council. It was confirmed that £500k was borrowed. Originally agreed at 0.25% below Base Rate. Given the current Base Rate, the Council are not paying any interest to FTC for the loan. It is a matter for FTC to decide where to invest their surplus cash.

The Chairman thanked the officer for this report.

Proposed by Councillor Connor McConville  
Seconded by Councillor Rebecca Shoob; and

**RESOLVED:**  
**That Report C/20/64 is received and noted.**

(Voting: For 4; Against 0; Abstentions 0)

11. **General Fund Revenue Budget Monitoring - 3rd Quarter 2020/21**

Monitoring report C/20/63 provided a projection of the end of the year financial position of the General Fund revenue budget, based on expenditure to the 30 November 2020.

Proposed by Councillor Connor McConville  
Seconded by Councillor Patricia Rolfe; and

**RESOLVED:**  
**That report C/20/63 is received and noted.**

Voting: For 4; Against 0; Abstentions 0)

12. **HRA budget monitoring - 3rd quarter 2020/21**

Monitoring report C/20/61 provided a projection of the end of year financial position for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) revenue expenditure and HRA capital programme based on net expenditure to 30 November 2020.

Proposed by Councillor Connor McConville  
Seconded by Councillor Rebecca Shoob; and

**RESOLVED:**  
**That report C/20/61 is received and noted.**

Voting: For 4; Against 0; Abstentions 0)

This page is intentionally left blank



This Report will be made public on 8 February 2021



Report Number: **OS/20/11**

**To:** Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
**Date:** 16 February 2021  
**Status:** Non Key  
**Responsible Officer:** Ewan Green, Director of Place  
**Cabinet Member:** Councillor David Wimble, Cabinet Member for the District Economy

**SUBJECT:** FOLKESTONE TOWN CENTRE PLACE PLAN

**SUMMARY:** This reports provides an overview of work that is underway to develop a Place Plan for Folkestone Town Centre. The report presents a draft Folkestone Ambition which is intended to set an overall context for the town centre plan. The report then presents 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.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. To receive and note report OS/20/11.
2. Overview and Scrutiny Committee are invited to comment on (1) the draft Folkestone Ambition and (2) the approach being taken to develop Folkestone Town Centre Place Plan.

## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 Members will be aware that the emerging Corporate Plan 2021-30 'Creating Together Tomorrow' recognises the need to reinvigorate all district town centres, particularly investing in Folkestone town centre.
- 1.2 This objective will build upon the high-quality place-led regeneration achieved to date, particularly in the Old Town, and the town's growing strength in niche retail, leisure, cultural activities and the creative economy.
- 1.3 To achieve this the Council will work with partners and communities to develop a Folkestone Place Plan which will set out a vision and direction for Folkestone town centre including necessary infrastructure investment required to achieve sustainable change. Alongside physical interventions the plan will also consider future management and animation of the town centre.
- 1.4 In order to guide and inform the Place Plan it is proposed that the Council expresses more fully an overall ambition for the wider town of Folkestone. This will set-out in high level terms the ambition for Folkestone as a 'place' based upon its' geography, inherent assets, heritage, culture and future potential.
- 1.5 In tandem, the Council is required by Section 5 of the Licensing Act 2003 to review the Statement of Licensing Policy every 5 years. The current policy was adopted in January 2016 and is therefore due for review. The work undertaken to develop the Place Plan will inform this policy review in relation to the town centre.
- 1.6 In order to progress the Place Plan a consultant team led by urban design specialists We Made That has been appointed to provide expert technical advice, undertake wide ranging engagement and develop the final plan and associated interventions and actions.

## **2. COUNCIL AMBITION FOR FOLKESTONE**

- 2.1 Attached as Appendix 1 is a draft infographic which sets out a high level vision and ambition for the town of Folkestone. This has been developed following feedback from partners and stakeholders as part of the development of the emerging Corporate Plan 2021-30.
- 2.2 The purpose of this is to have in place an overarching statement of ambition which promotes Folkestone the 'place' across the district and beyond and informs strategic plans, projects and future investment. It has been developed as positive statement of intent.
- 2.3 Committee is asked to comment on the content of the draft document.

### **3. PLACE PLAN OBJECTIVES AND ENGAGEMENT**

- 3.1 The rationale underpinning development of the plan is to set an ambitious, medium to long-term direction of travel in order to ensure a successful and vibrant future for Folkestone's Town Centre.
- 3.2 The COVID 19 Pandemic has brought into sharper focus the need to have a plan which facilitates not only economic recovery but also the strengthening of the social, environmental, creative and heritage elements which make Folkestone unique.
- 3.3 It is recognised that this will be best achieved by having one strategic plan to guide future actions from the public, private and community sectors.
- 3.2 The objectives of the Place Plan, refined and endorsed by the Town Centre Working Group, are to:
- Create collective vision for the Council and wider stakeholders
  - Key Investment/development opportunities – setting our ambition
  - Establish a civic 'heart' & purpose – “One public estate”
  - Create great animated public spaces for residents and visitors
  - Create a broader leisure offer 'for all'
  - Encourage Town Centre living as a vital component of a vibrant mixed use with a strong evening economy and meeting our housing need.
  - Create an exemplar in sustainability and reap the benefits of compact growth
  - Foster a dynamic/flexible employment environment transitioning away from a solely retail lead economy
  - Deliver a shift in transport movements & maximise accessibility
  - Future town centre animation, markets, management and maintenance
  - Link to the “The Place Campaign” to promote Folkestone
  - Identify the challenges, issues and the potential solutions
  - Set out how the many different partners play a role in the future of the Town Centre.
  - Review and test existing plans to ensure that impacts of COVID 19 and market trends are recognised
  - Set an Action Plan for Folkestone Town Centre
- 3.4 In addition to the above the development of the Place Plan will also include a review of the Council's current licensing policy in relation to the future of the town centre. This will then inform the review of the District wide policy which will be undertaken over the next 6 months.
- 3.5 Public and stakeholder engagement is crucial to both the development, and, and the eventual success, of the Place Plan. A Stakeholder Engagement Strategy has been developed and this is attached as Appendix 2. This is based upon a multi-faceted approach, which is considered will ensure that as wide as possible a range of stakeholders and the community have the opportunity for meaningful engagement.

The engagement strategy seeks to maximise the use of digital exhibition and interactive platforms during stakeholder activity which are as follows:

- A series of internal stakeholder meetings
- Focussed stakeholder engagement
- External stakeholder workshops
- Public events
- Priorities & vision
- Testing of ideas
- Digital engagement via project blog, website and social media presence

3.6 The final output from objectives and engagement outlined above will be an ambitious overarching strategy and a prioritised action plan future intervention. This will then be subject of consideration by the Council.

3.7 Committee is asked to comment on the objectives and engagement strategy.

#### **4. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES**

4.1 There are no perceived risks.

#### **5. LEGAL/FINANCIAL AND OTHER CONTROLS/POLICY MATTERS**

##### **5.1 Legal Officer's Comments**

There are no legal implications

##### **5.2 Finance Officer's Comments**

There are no financial implications.

##### **5.3 Diversities and Equalities Implications**

The Place Plan will consider the needs of all residents regardless of whether or not they have a protected characteristic. The differing needs of people, including those with different protected characteristics, will be considered during the development of the development and kept under review as the project progresses. The final draft Place Plan will be the subject of an Equalities Impact Assessment Screening.

#### **6 CONTACT OFFICERS AND BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Councillors with any questions arising out of this report should contact the following officer prior to the meeting

Ewan Green, Director of Place

Telephone: 07783659864

Email: [ewan.green@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk](mailto:ewan.green@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)

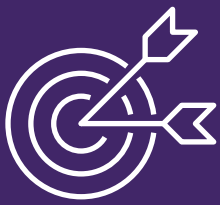
The following background documents have been relied upon in the preparation of this report: None.

**Appendices:**

Appendix 1: Draft Council Ambition for Folkestone

Appendix 2: Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

This page is intentionally left blank



# Our ambition for Folkestone

Celebrate Folkestone's unique character and assets

Provide opportunities for residents and businesses to thrive

Create a vibrant and prosperous town – the destination of choice

## To achieve this we will:

### → Harness Folkestone's unique creativity

- The Old High Street
- Creative Quarter
- Internationally renowned Triennial



### → Capitalise on the music and arts talent

- A thriving Music Town
- Quarterhouse performance space
- Historic Leas Cliff Hall



### → Celebrate our heritage

- The Bayle
- Folkestone Museum
- Step Short Arch



### → Protect our community

- New medical provision
- Positive community leadership
- Strong voluntary and community sector



### → Cultivate a strong leisure offer

- F51 – extreme urban sports park
- Selection of sports facilities
- East Cliff sports

### → Encourage tourism

- Investment in our coastal assets
- Award winning beaches
- Stunning Coastal Park



### → Invest in the town centre

- Folca – Folkestone's meeting place
- Major retailers and niche shops
- A vibrant and expanded market
- Attractive sustainable homes



### → Champion the food and drink scene

- Vibrant Harbour Arm
- Distinctive restaurants and bars
- Local quality produce



### → Support employment and education

- Live and work opportunities
- Creative, digital and advanced manufacturing sectors
- Internationally renowned employers
- Building future skills with East Kent College



### → Connected and accessible transport

- Easy access to Europe via the Channel Tunnel
- Well planned cycling and walking routes
- 2 x High Speed train stations – 53 minutes to London



This page is intentionally left blank







# INTRODUCTION

## Purpose of this document

An engagement plan has been put together to ensure that the Place Plan proposal is guided by the views and priorities of strategic and community stakeholders as well as the wider public, residents and visitors. The engagement plan is subject to client approval to proceed.

## Covid-19

In light of current guidelines and lock-down restrictions, all proposed activities will be planned using virtual tools. Opportunities for activities to be held in person, particularly the final public event, will be reviewed according to the latest government guidance.

## Stakeholder register

Folkestone & Hythe District Council have been compiling a database of stakeholders, groups and individuals who have already expressed interest in the Place Plan's development. There will be a particularly focus to engage these voices at an early point in the project process.

## Key things to consider

- Consent of groups we're trying to engage
- Appropriateness of digital tools; considering digital divide & access to equipment
- Process planning and sign off before engaging stakeholders
- Research and mapping
- Keeping the wider public informed & providing clarity over how they can shape the Place Plan
- Coordination with other programmes & networks
- Combination of physical & digital tools to extend reach to 'The Seldom Heard' where possible
- Integration with current business support package programme to support Covid recovery
- Support through promotion on existing platforms
- Support and engage under-represented groups where possible
- Opportunities to support local suppliers and businesses in public event preparation

**NB: this document is subject to review as the project develops.**

## Revisions tracker:

First draft issue to FHDC	25-01-2021
Revision A	03-02-2021
Revision B	04-02-2021

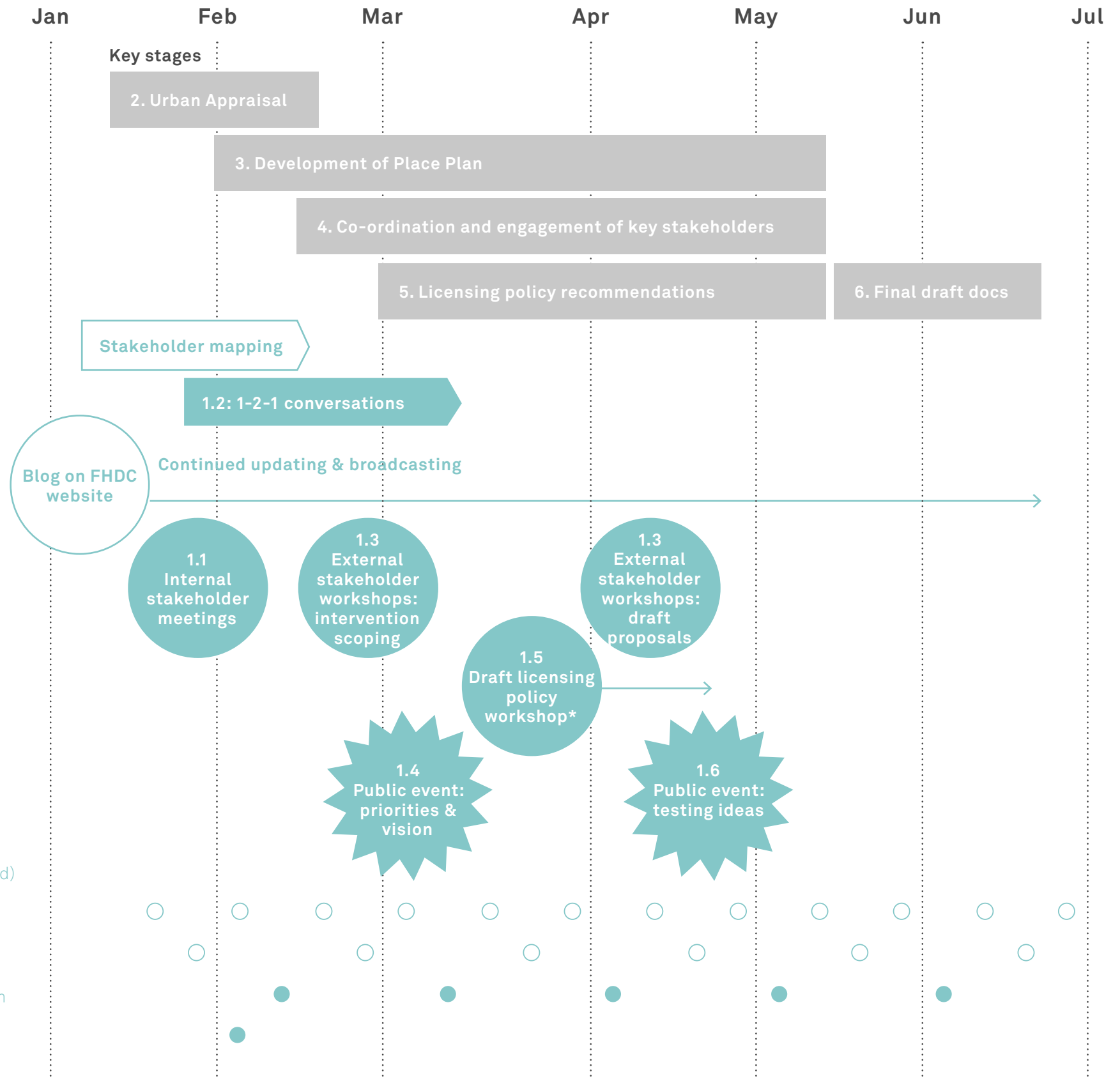
**Stakeholder meetings**  
(FHDC to confirm timescales of statutory consultation, if required)

Client & consultant team lead

Client & wider consultant team

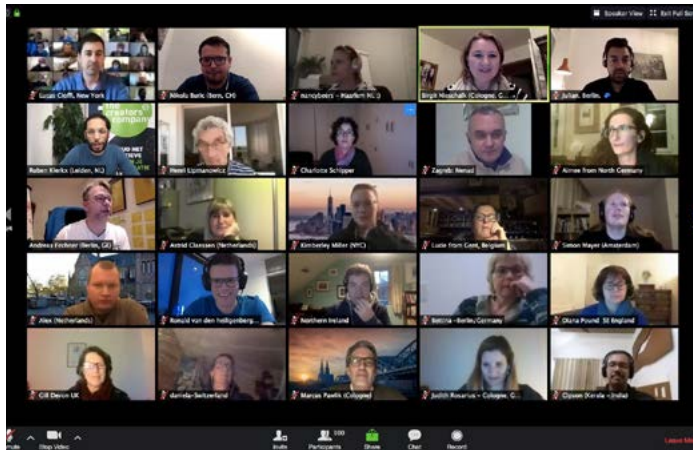
Working Group & Place Plan team

Presentations to CLT, Cabinet Members & Scrutiny Committee when required



# 1.0 ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

## 1.1 Internal stakeholder meetings



**What:** Introduction to project and design team. To start informing the development of the Place Plan, these meetings will help gain a greater understanding of internal stakeholder insights and priorities.

**When:** Now - end February

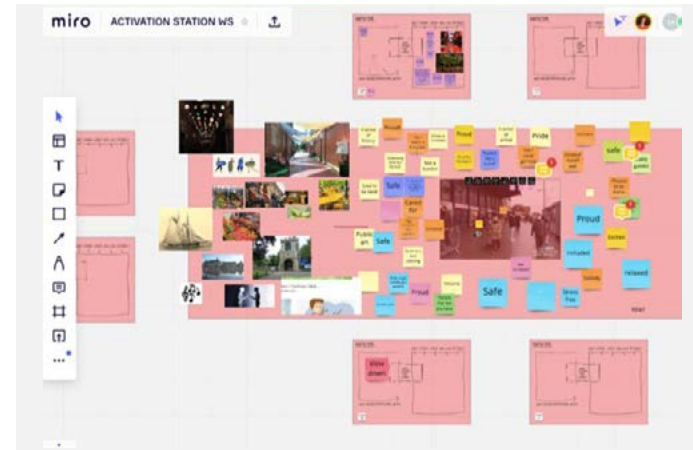
**Who:** To be confirmed by FHDC. Contacts include:  
 — FHDC Licensing Policy Officers  
 — FHDC Development & Regen Officers  
 — FHDC Infrastructure Policy Officer  
 — Kent County Council (KCC)  
 — Working Group  
 — FHDC to identify other contacts and meetings

**Led by:**  
 — FHDC (WMT/Consultant team in attendance)

**How & where:**  
 — FHDC invite only  
 — Invites to workshops as appropriate  
 — Introductory meetings help over virtual video conferencing such as Zoom/Microsoft Teams  
 — Meetings with Working Group occur monthly

PRIORITY STATUS: PROPOSED

## 1.2 1-2-1 conversations



**What:** Conversations with individuals or small groups who have expressed interest in being involved. This is aimed at understanding priorities and gauging interest in attending a workshop event.

**When:** Now - end February

**Who:**  
 — Key groups & individuals who have previously expressed interest about Place Plan  
 — Contacts gathered by FHDC so far, including: Strategic Partners (eg Network Rail/KCC/Homes England), Creative Folkestone, Seafrost Development Company, Business Groups, including Folkestone & Hythe Business Advisory Board, FIRRG, Team, Ellandi, Roger De Haan, Guy Hollaway.

**Led by:**  
 — WMT

**How & where:**  
 — WMT invite only (FHDC to share contacts)  
 — Telephone or virtual video conferencing

PRIORITY STATUS: PROPOSED

## 1.3 External stakeholder workshops



**What:** These will be run at two points in the programme: at the intervention scoping stage in February to identify priorities, and at the draft proposals stage in early April to test early ideas. These events could start bringing different opinions together & sharing priorities, followed by breaking out smaller groups. Themes for sub-groups to be confirmed and could include: Business, skills & enterprise, Heritage, spaces & places, Transport, active travel & leisure, Community & culture, Planning & Development

**When:** end February/beginning of March and April

**Who:**  
 — Individuals/groups who expressed interest to FHDC & any others from research at Stage 1.1/1.2  
 — Invite extended to Working Group members & those who express interest during the 121s  
 — NTIA to initiate discussions with stakeholders & authorities about Licensing, such as the Police

**Led by:**  
 — WMT

**How & where:**  
 — WMT invite only virtual conferencing event eg Zoom  
 — Virtual methods can be accompanied by physical content, depending on digital literacy

PRIORITY STATUS: PROPOSED

## 1.4 Public event 1: priorities & vision



**What:** Webinar or presentation to share priorities, vision and sites (long list) that have been gathered during research and initial conversations with stakeholders. An opportunity for wider public to feedback and questioning.

**When:**  
 — March  
 — Opportunities to 'piggy-back' off other community events to be identified

**Who:**  
 — Wider public & stakeholders

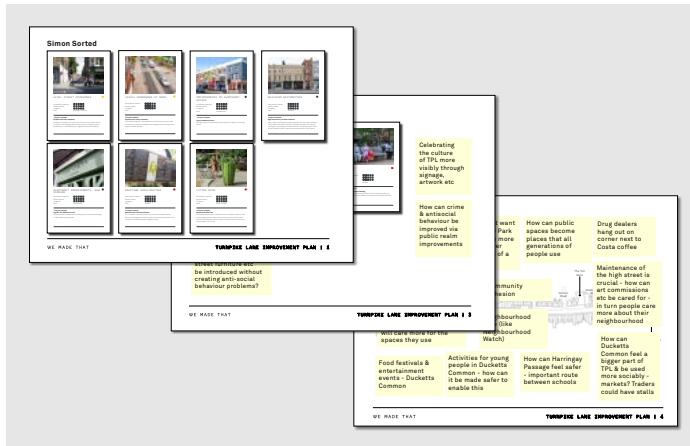
**Led by:**  
 — WMT

**How & where:**  
 — Webinar presentation; recorded for FHDC website  
 — Virtual exhibition & online survey, such as Google Forms (see examples in section 2.0)  
 — Broadcasting through FHDC blog, stakeholders platforms/social networking sites  
 — Potential for physical presence or posted flyers/postcards to publicise event  
 — Invited by WMT; contacts gathered during stages 1.1 - 1.3. FHDC to help research wider contact list  
 — Opportunity for local commissioning

PRIORITY STATUS: PROPOSED



1.5  
Draft licensing policy workshops



**What:**  
Workshop focused on discussing the draft licensing policy and its development.

**When:**  
Beginning April (FHDC to confirm date to coordinate with stages of licensing policy statutory process)

**Who:**  
To be confirmed by FHDC client team:  
— FHDC officers, including Licensing Policy, Development & Regeneration  
— CLT (Leadership Team)  
— Working Group  
— Cabinet  
— Strategic Partners

**Led by:**  
— NTIA (consultant team attending)

**How & where:**  
— WMT/NTIA invite only  
— Virtual video conferencing such as Zoom/ Microsoft Teams

PRIORITY STATUS: PROPOSED

1.6  
Public event 2: testing ideas



**What:**  
Wider public engagement event to test Place Plan design ideas. Webinar or presentation reflecting back the insight gathered at Public Event 1 and raising awareness of the developing design proposal for the Place Plan.

**When:**  
— End April  
— Opportunities to 'piggy-back' off other community events to be identified

**Who:**  
— Wider public & stakeholders

**Led by:**  
— WMT

**How & where:**  
— Webinar presentation; recorded for FHDC website  
— Virtual exhibition & online survey, such as Google Forms (see examples in section 2.0)  
— Potential for physical site occupation, depending on Covid-19 guidelines  
— Broadcasting through FHDC blog, stakeholders platforms/social networking sites  
— Potential for physical presence or posted flyers  
— Potential to procure services and goods from local businesses where possible, for example printing  
— Potential for activity pack or guided tour

PRIORITY STATUS: PROPOSED

1.7  
Project blog & website



**What:**  
Project blog to be hosted on FHDC corporate website, providing accessible feedback in the form of regular updates, contact information, progress updates & engagement event invitations.

**When:**  
Throughout project

**Who:**  
— General public

**Led by:**  
— FHDC Comms team to lead  
— WMT to help prepare blog posts  
— FHDC to manage enquiries

**How & where:**  
— Website address tbc

STATUS: IN PROGRESS

1.8  
Project stakeholders



**What:**  
Presentations and engagement with project stakeholders as and when required.

**When:**  
FHDC to confirm when required

**Who:**  
To be confirmed by FHDC client team:  
— CLT (Leadership Team)  
— Working Group  
— Cabinet  
— Strategic Partnership Group  
— FHDC Officers  
— Scrutiny committee

**Led by:**  
— FHDC

**How & where:**  
— FHDC invite only

STATUS: IN PROGRESS

## 2.0 DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT EXAMPLES

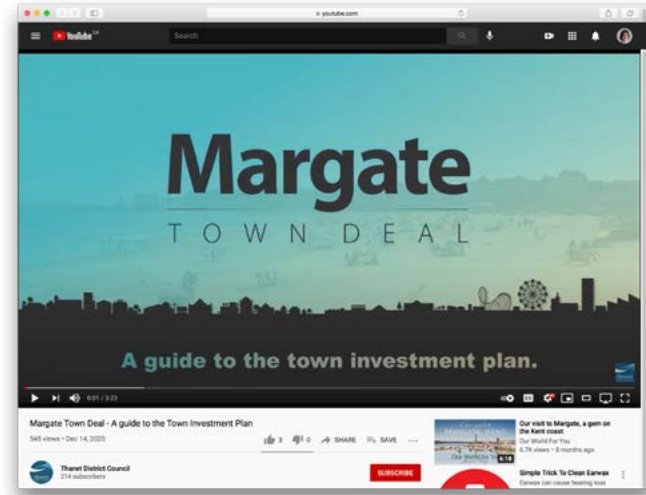
### Digital exhibition & interactive platforms

Applicable to the following engagement plan stages:

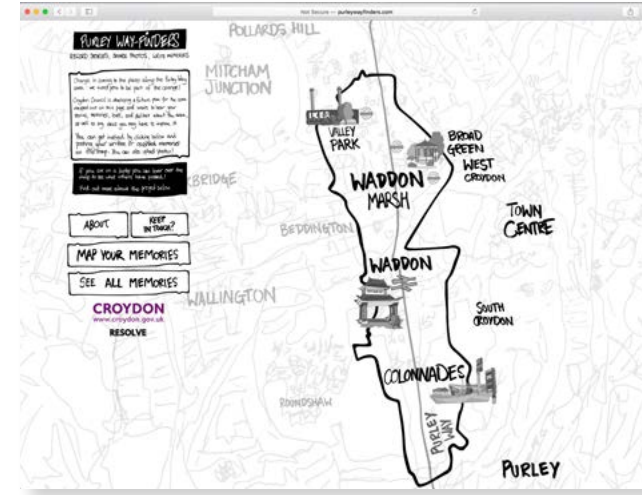
- 1.4 Public event 1: priorities & vision
- 1.6 Public event 2: testing ideas

Examples:

- Existing client website/platform
- PDF publication
- Pre-recorded video
- (Physical exhibition could be used in combination with digital exhibition)
- Project website/blog



↑ Pre-recorded presentation, Youtube



↑ Project specific website and identity

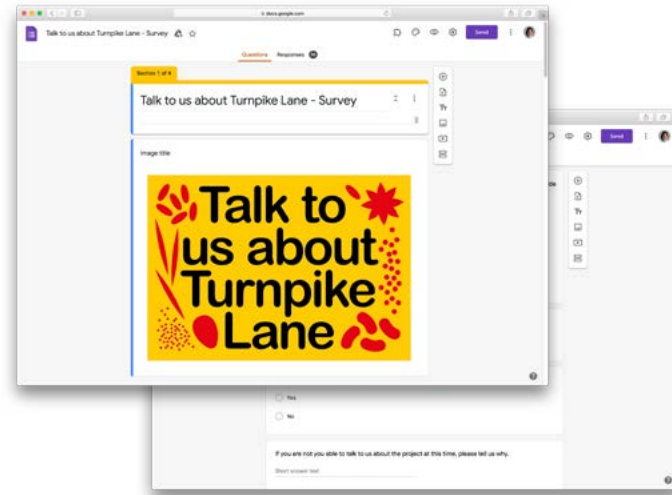
### Online survey

Applicable to the following engagement plan stages:

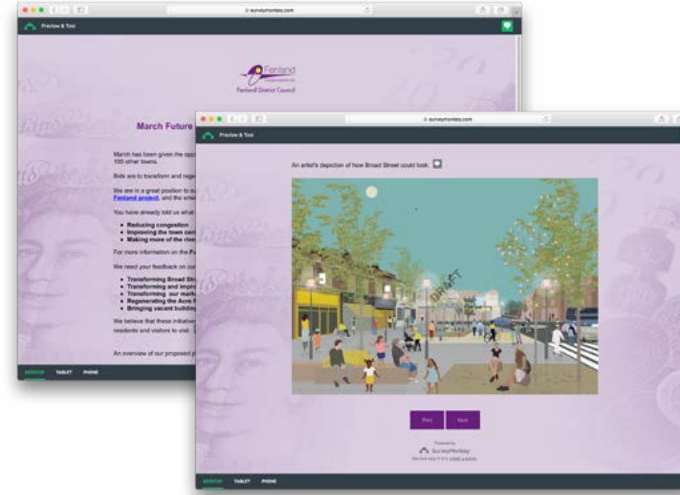
- 1.4 Public event 1: priorities & vision
- 1.6 Public event 2: testing ideas

Examples:

- Existing client platform
- Google forms
- Physical hard copy



↑ Google Forms survey



↑ Fenland District Council, survey for FHSF application, Survey Monkey\*



↑ Croydon South End, shop window exhibition



**Video conferencing & phone communication**

Applicable to the following engagement plan stages:

- 1.1 Internal stakeholder meetings
- 1.2 1-2-1 conversations
- 1.3 External stakeholder workshops
- 1.5 Draft licensing policy workshops

Examples:

- Zoom
- Telephone
- Miro

There are many additional tools available that can help with workshops such as whiteboards for live markups and breakout rooms for smaller groups.



↑ Plumstead High Street public workshop, make:good & Royal Greenwich, Miro

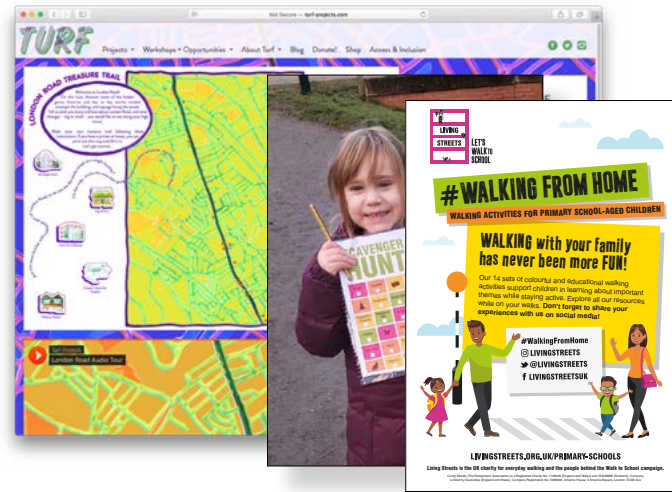
**Participative activity & social media platforms**

Applicable to the following engagement plan stages:

- 1.1 Internal stakeholder meetings
- 1.2 1-2-1 conversations
- 1.3 External stakeholder workshops
- 1.5 Draft licensing policy workshops

Examples:

- Downloadable walking tour
- Printable activity for school children
- Physical posters and surveys and physical site occupation to complement online engagement
- Youtube video / pre-recorded presentation



← London Road online treasure trail & guided tour  
→ Walking activity pack, Streetspace



↑ Basildon Town Centre masterplan, outreach activity for young people at home

### 3.0

## STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT CATEGORIES

#### Stakeholders to engage with on a 1-2-1 basis (1.2)

- KCC highways
- Folkestone Town Council
- Network Rail
- Folkestone College
- Creative Folkestone
- Strand House
- Ellandi
- Folkestone & Hythe Business Advisory Board
- Guy Hollaway
- Folkestone Harbour and Seafront Development Company
- Key landowners and businesses such as: Saga, Radnor Estate, Aldi, Stagecoach, MPL Group

These individuals & groups will be invited to the themed workshops (1.3).

#### Stakeholders to be invited to External Stakeholder Workshops (1.3)

- Relevant members and officers
- KCC
- East Kent College
- Kent Adult Education
- Creative Folkestone
- Homes England
- Otterpool Park
- Head of Primary Care Estate - East Kent
- Pillory Barn
- Environment Agency
- Folkestone Town Team
- The Workshop
- FIRRG
- Shepway Sports Trust
- TedX Folkestone
- East Cliff Creatives
- Hotel and Catering Association
- The Bayle Residents Association
- The Leas Resident's Association
- Friends of the Leas Pavilion
- Heritage and Arts Tourism Forum (HEART)
- Shornecliffe Trust
- Go Folkestone
- Stagecoach
- Retail Inspired/Town Centre Animator
- Folkestone Music Town
- Folkestone Works
- Folkestone Local Centre
- Locate in Kent
- Visit Kent
- SPOKES; East Kent Cycling Campaign
- Folkestone & District Local History Society
- Folkestone Research & Archaeology Group (FRAG)
- High Street Fund Applicants
- F51 skatepark
- SE LEP & KMEP
- Chair of Remembrance Line Assoc Ltd
- Other relevant professional practices and consultancies

We will continue to review invitees based on continuing stakeholder research, FHDC feedback & 121 conversations.

WE MADE THAT LLP  
Unit 21 Tower Workshops  
58 Riley Road  
London SE1 3DG

T +44 (0)20 7252 3400  
[www.wemadethat.co.uk](http://www.wemadethat.co.uk)  
[studio@wemadethat.co.uk](mailto:studio@wemadethat.co.uk)

We Made That LLP is  
registered in England &  
Wales. Reg no. OC367789



This Report will be made public on 8 February 2021

Report Number: **OS/20/10**

**To:** Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
**Date:** 16 February 2021  
**Status:** Non key decision  
**Responsible Officer:** Helen Sudbury – Housing Operations Lead Specialist  
**Cabinet Member:** Councillor David Godfrey - Cabinet Member for Housing, Transport and Special Projects

**SUBJECT:** TENANT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

**SUMMARY:** This report outlines the draft Tenant Engagement Strategy and Action Plan for the Housing Service. The purpose of bringing the Strategy to Overview and Scrutiny Committee is to seek Members' views and comments at an early stage of development.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. To receive and note report OS/20/10.
2. To seek Members' views and comments on the draft Tenant Engagement Strategy.

## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 The housing management service transferred from East Kent Housing to the Council on 1 October 2020. The Council is fully committed to building a world class housing service where officers work together with tenants and councillors to deliver the best possible housing outcomes. As part of this journey, tenant engagement is key and this Strategy and Action Plan describe how we will do this.

## **2. REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS**

### **2.1 Regulator of Social Housing Standards:**

There are several regulatory requirements that housing providers must adhere to. For the purposes of tenant engagement the Council must follow the requirements of the Regulator of Social Housing's Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard 2017. The following are the three required outcomes for all social housing providers:

- Customer service, choice and complaints
- Involvement and empowerment
- Understanding and responding to the diverse needs of tenants

### **2.2 The Charter for Social Housing Tenants**

The 2020 Housing White Paper 'The Charter for Social Housing Tenants' was produced building on the lessons learnt from the Grenfell Tower fire. The part of this document that is important to tenant engagement is 'To have your voice heard by your landlord'. The key themes are that:

- Engaged tenants should be a key part of any landlord's governance and scrutiny arrangements.
- Tenants who don't want to attend formal meetings or join a formal group need to have ways to feedback to their landlord to ensure their voices are heard and their needs are identified.
- Engagement opportunities are tailored to tenants' needs and interests, encouraging and supporting greater involvement.

This Charter also enforces that information should be published and available to tenants on how their landlord is performing in key areas of service delivery.

## **3. THE TENANT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY**

- 3.1 The Strategy has been developed to ensure the Council complies with the regulatory requirements. It describes what tenant engagement is, how we will support tenants and staff to deliver our vision and how we can reduce barriers to engagement. It states how we will communicate with tenants and share our performance with them.

The Strategy also illustrates the engagement structure that it is based on four streams of activity:

- 3.2 **The Tenants' Voice** – this is the formal, strategic group of involved tenants, who will work with senior managers to ensure the housing service is compliant and continually improving. The chair will meet regularly with the Director of Housing and Operations and the Cabinet Member for Housing, Transport and Special Projects to hold councillors to account with regard to its housing service.
- 3.3 **Your Choice** - will draw on the pool of residents who have expressed an interest in active engagement. It will include smaller groups of tenants who come together to do specific tasks such as reviewing a service or process.
- 3.4 **Your Choice Plus** - will involve seeking the views of as many tenants as possible either on issues that affect all tenants or more locally based issues, in ways that are accessible, convenient and do not require ongoing commitment. This could include satisfaction surveys or quick polls using social media.
- 3.5 **Business Insight** - is making good use of all the data and information that we possess about tenants or receive from tenants about services and satisfaction and includes learning from best practice in other organisations. We use this information to improve services.

#### 4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 The development of the Tenant Engagement Strategy has been supported by TPAS (Tenant Participation Advisory Service) who are experts in tenant engagement. Officers from across the housing service have had an input into the Strategy as members of a tenant engagement project group.
- 4.2 As the document is now in draft, we are very keen to have councillors' views and comments at an early stage. Alongside this we will be consulting with the current Tenant and Leaseholder Board, directly with a larger cohort of tenants who have expressed an interest to be involved and to the wider tenant community via the website and the Tenant Newsletter.
- 4.3 Following the consultation the Strategy and Action Plan will be amended accordingly and brought back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for final comment prior to being presented to Cabinet for formal approval.

## 5. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

### 5.1

Perceived risk	Seriousness	Likelihood	Preventative action
The Strategy is not approved or is not implemented, therefore the Council will not be compliant with the Regulator	High	Low	Thorough consultation at an early stage will lead to the Strategy and Action Plan being approved.
Tenant and Leaseholder Board not willing to embrace the new structure	Medium	Low	Informal and formal consultation process set up to allow plenty of time for meaningful feedback.

## 6. LEGAL/FINANCIAL AND OTHER CONTROLS/POLICY MATTERS

### 6.1 Legal Officer's Comments (NM)

The Tenant Engagement Strategy and Action Plan will need to be monitored and reviewed to ensure it continues to meet the regulatory requirements as set out in the report.

### 6.2 Finance Officer's Comments (CI)

There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

### 6.3 Diversities and Equalities Implications

There are no diversities or equalities implications arising directly from this report

## 7. CONTACT OFFICERS AND BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Councillors with any questions arising out of this report should contact the following officers prior to the meeting:

Helen Sudbury, Housing Operations Lead specialist  
[Helen.Sudbury@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk](mailto:Helen.Sudbury@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)

### Appendices:

Appendix 1: Draft Tenant Engagement Strategy

# Tenant Engagement Strategy

## Hearing our Tenants' Voice

2021-2024

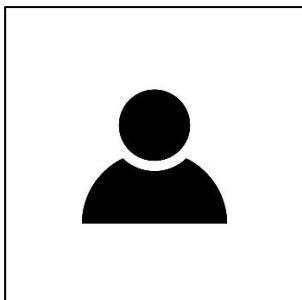
Housing Service



# Contents

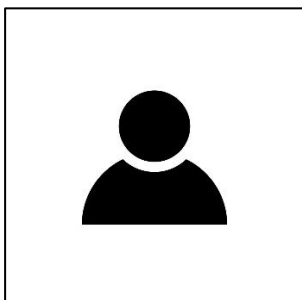
- Foreword ..... 2
- 1. Introduction..... 3
  - 1.1. About the Housing Service ..... 3
  - 1.2. Vision ..... 4
  - 1.3. Strategic Priorities..... 4
  - 1.4. Regulatory Requirements ..... 5
- 2. About Tenant Engagement..... 6
  - 2.1. What is Tenant Engagement? ..... 6
  - 2.2. Impact & Outcomes of Meaningful Engagement..... 7
  - 2.3. Tenant Engagement Structure..... 8
  - 2.4. Supporting a Tenant Engagement Culture..... 10
  - 2.5. Barriers to Engagement..... 11
  - 2.6. Valuing Diversity ..... 12
- 3. Training for staff and for tenants about Tenant Engagement ..... 12
- 4. Communication ..... 12
- 5. Tenants' Key Priorities..... 13
- 6. Monitoring Our Performance ..... 13
- 7. Action Plan ..... 13
- 8. Tenant Engagement Action Plan..... 0

## Foreword



### **Councillor David Godfrey, Housing Portfolio Holder**

I believe that the people living in the homes the Council provides have the best insight into what they need from their housing service. The district includes large rural spaces with towns and villages, as well as densely populated urban centres. It is important that our tenants and leaseholders living in these areas have a range of opportunities to share their knowledge and experiences with us. Our aim is to work in partnership with tenants to improve the housing service, making a positive difference to you, your neighbourhood and the wider community.



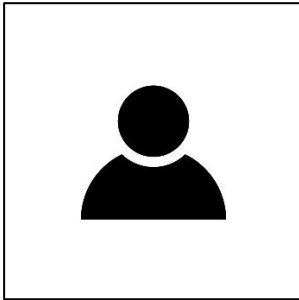
### **Elaine Bostock, Chair, Shepway Tenant and Leaseholder Board**

I joined the STLB for many reasons, anti-social behaviour, tackling the stigma associated with being a council tenant, supporting the vulnerable, helping to reduce crime, improving the local environments and ensuring quality services and value for money.

Tenant Engagement gives us tenants a bigger profile and louder voice that the council must listen too. We act as their moral compass to do the best for all tenants.

Being part of the creation and consultation process of the Tenant Engagement Strategy means that I have been able to oversee and work in partnership with FHDC and TPAS in putting together a realistic and relatable Strategy that will benefit the tenants and put us (The Board) in a position to oversee and hold to account, when necessary, the senior management of the housing service, We will also have

regular, open communication from our Councillor and fully ongoing support for Tenant Engagement, in order to carry on our responsibilities as Tenant and Leaseholder Board members for our District. I have been the chairperson for many years now, but I'm still learning - even with lockdown and Covid, tenants still need us in their corner improving their homes and environment.



**Andy Blaszkowicz, Director, Housing and Operations**

This strategy sets out Folkestone & Hythe District Council's commitment to engage with our tenants and leaseholders (collectively referred to as tenants in this document). Involving them in the decisions which affect their homes, local communities and the delivery of the housing service.

Understanding the changing needs and aspirations of our tenants is vital if we are to deliver a truly great housing service. The Council has developed this strategy jointly with tenants to ensure that the variety of opportunities created for genuine engagement include things that interest them, are accessible to all and take into account different lifestyles and availability to participate. We look forward to working with our tenants and encourage everyone to get involved.

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1. About the Housing Service**

Folkestone and Hythe District Council (the Council) provides just over 3360 affordable rented homes in the district and manages 215 leasehold properties, as well as a small number of shared ownership properties. In October 2020 the Council established a housing management service to manage these properties.



## 1.2. Vision

The vision for the housing service is 'To create a world class, digitally enabled service that is easy to do business with and where tenants are at the heart of everything we do'. This includes providing a range of inclusive and accessible engagement options at every level. We want to use people's individual and collective skills to shape and build the service and future of affordable housing in Folkestone and Hythe.

This three year Tenant Engagement Strategy has been developed to fulfil the current and future expectations of the Council, its tenants, the Regulator of Social Housing and central government.

## 1.3. Strategic Priorities for the Council

This strategy and customer centred aims of the housing service are directly linked to the ambitions outlined in the Council's Corporate Plan for 2021-2030, 'Creating Tomorrow Together'. The plan has four service ambitions:

**A Vibrant economy:** Focus on attracting investment into the area, adapting to changes in the economies of local business and high streets in the area to increase employment, aspirations and the success of local businesses.

**Quality Homes and Infrastructure:** Ensure better access to a wider choice of high quality homes for all residents in the district, embracing sustainability.

**Positive Community Leadership:** To support and contribute to the health and wellbeing of residents. Addressing inequalities of access to resources and welfare services between communities, such as education, transport and health provision.

**A Thriving Environment:** Providing and maintaining open spaces and investment in green infrastructure to enhance our natural environment. Part of this is the aim that Council services will generate net zero carbon emissions by 2030.

The work undertaken to achieve these ambitions will be driven by six key principles, which include continuous improvement, and a commitment to be transparent, stable and accountable. The work we do alongside tenants in the delivery of the housing service is all part of the optimistic plans for our district detailed in 'Creating Tomorrow Together' 2021-2030.

## **1.4. Regulatory Requirements**

### **Regulator of Social Housing Standards**

There are four consumer regulatory requirements that housing providers must adhere to. For the purposes of Tenant Engagement the Council must follow the requirements of the Regulator of Social Housing's Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard 2017. The following are the three required outcomes for all social housing providers:

- Customer service, choice and complaints
- Involvement and empowerment
- Understanding and responding to the diverse needs of tenants

The Standard underpins the principles of co-regulation and tenant engagement. Co-regulation means that councillors are responsible for ensuring that their landlord services are managed effectively and comply with all regulatory requirements. The Council must also support tenants to shape and scrutinise service delivery and to hold councillors to account where standards are not being met.

### **The Charter for Social Housing Tenants**

The 2020 Housing White Paper 'The Charter for Social Housing Tenants' was produced building on the lessons learnt from the Grenfell Tower fire. The part of this document that is important to tenant engagement is 'To have your voice heard by your landlord'. The key themes are that:

- 'Engaged tenants' should be a key part of any landlord's governance and scrutiny arrangements.

- Tenants who don't want to attend formal meetings or join a formal group need to have ways to feedback to their landlord to ensure their voices are heard and their needs are identified.
- Engagement opportunities are tailored to tenants' needs and interests, encouraging and supporting greater involvement.

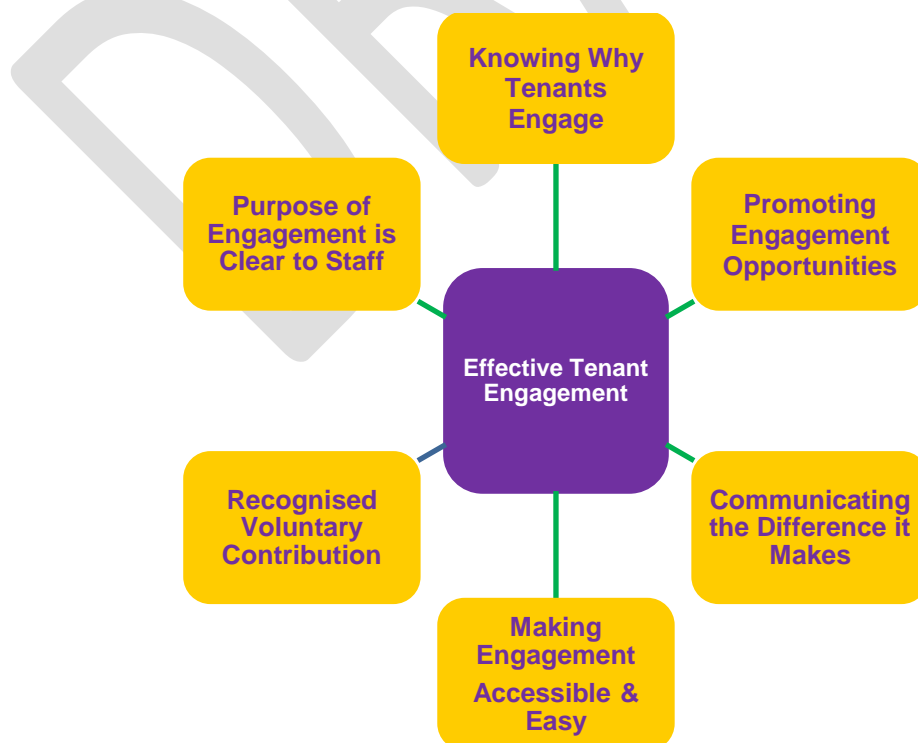
This Charter also enforces that information should be published and available to tenants on how their landlord is performing in key areas of service delivery.

## 2. About Tenant Engagement

### 2.1. What is Tenant Engagement?

'Tenant Engagement' is a term used to cover many different activities within a housing service through which tenants can contribute to how the service is delivered. As part of its vision the Council will ensure that tenants are provided with a range of flexible options for involvement and engagement at different levels, which include both formal and informal settings in person and on line.

#### Key Elements of Effective Engagement:



The Council is creating ways for tenants to participate in engagement activities safely; supporting tenants to learn and explore new ways of working and communicating to ensure engagement thrives.

### 2.2. Impact & Outcomes of Meaningful Engagement

Effective engagement reaches all tenants not just those already involved, ensuring everyone has opportunities to contribute. It is not only about what tenants can tell us about their housing experience and needs, but also about giving tenants an understanding of what a housing provider must consider when delivering the service. This exchange of information promotes meaningful engagement, realistic expectations, as well as better decisions making, which improves outcomes and value for money.



The knock-on effect increases customer and staff satisfaction, of pride in a person's home, neighbourhood and workplace, leading to a sense of place within the community. Good engagement is built on mutual respect and the Council has an enormous appreciation for the dedication shown by the Shepway Tenant and

Leaseholder Board over the years, and for the experience and knowledge of its members. The aim is to expand engagement to increase the positive the impact and service outcomes.

### **2.3. Tenant Engagement Structure**

Over the life of this Tenant Engagement Strategy we aim to develop a structure which allows tenants to participate as much or as little as they want. We see this as different streams of activities.

**The Tenants' Voice** will be a small group of representative tenants who will work with the Council at a strategic level. Their brief will include monitoring performance against the expectations of the 'Charter for Social Housing Residents' and the Regulator for Social Housing's Consumer Standards and specifically the 'Tenant Involvement and Engagement Standard'.

Working alongside the senior managers and the Housing Portfolio Holder, to help deliver year upon year of improved service delivery, The Tenants' Voice will make recommendations to the Assistant Director and Director of Housing and share the views of tenants, which have been gained through evidence from the 'Your Choice' and 'Business Insight' channels.

It is recognised for tenants to be able to perform this strategic role, they will require on-going support, training and appropriate resources.

**Your Choice** will draw on the pool of residents who have expressed an interest in active engagement. It will include smaller groups of tenants who come together, probably online, to:

- Examine a particular service area in detail and make recommendations for changes, known as Task and Finish groups
- Examine and comment on proposals for changes to key policies
- Be involved in local issues such as major works on an estate
- Be part of particular interest groups
- Take part in local area walkabouts/inspections

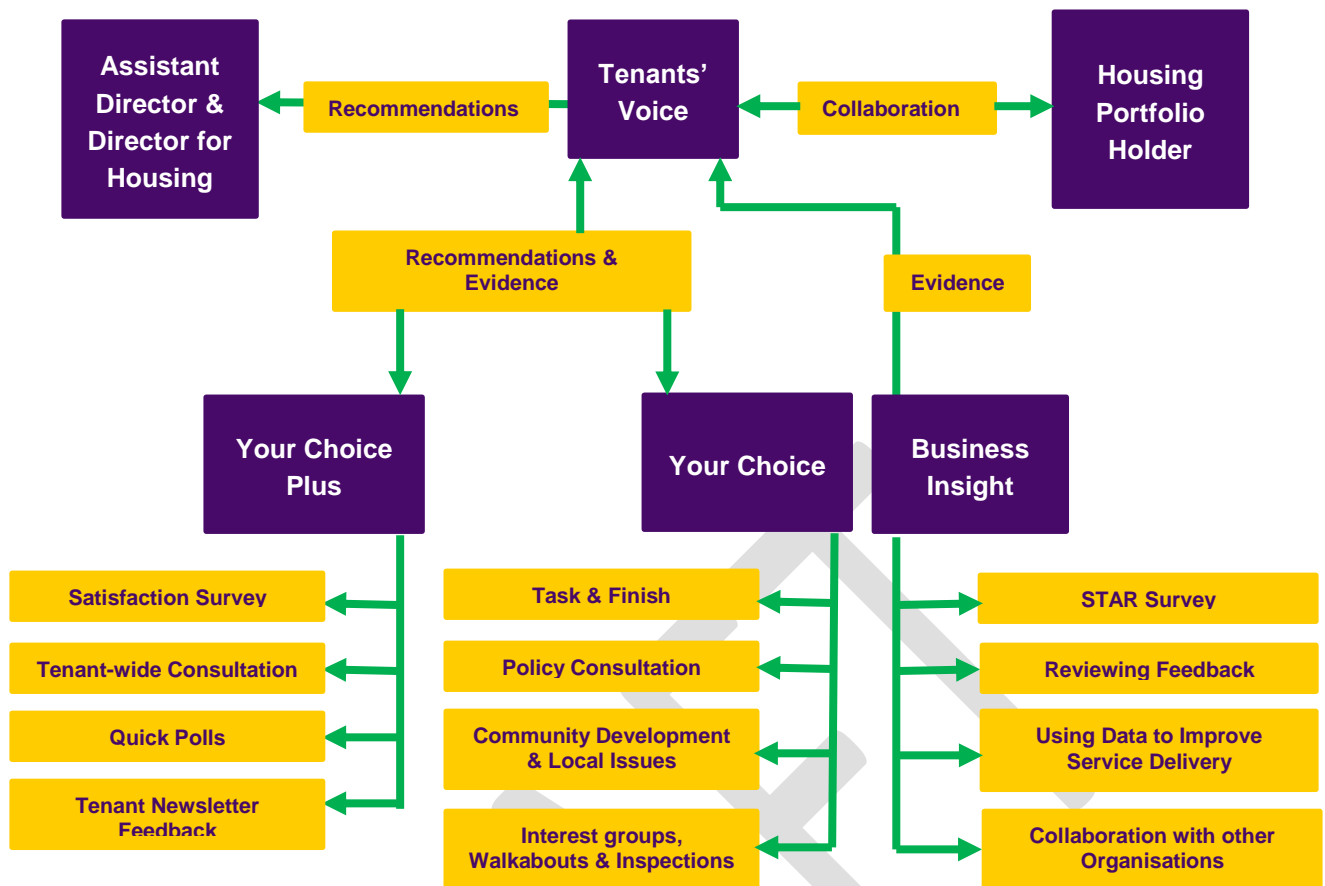
- Be Estate Champions
- Be mystery shoppers

**Your Choice Plus** will involve seeking the views of as many tenants as possible either on issues that affect all tenants or more locally based issues, in ways that are accessible, convenient and do not require ongoing commitment. This could include for example:

- Satisfaction surveys
- Local or tenant-wide online or postal consultations
- Quick polls using social media
- Seeking responses to articles in the Tenants Newsletter

**Business Insight** is making good use of all the data and information that we possess or receive about services and satisfaction. It includes learning from best practice in other organisations. Some examples include:

- Tenant Satisfaction Survey – we will conduct an extensive survey using the STAR system so we can compare our results with other landlords
- Reviewing feedback received, including complaints and compliments, social media comments and contractor satisfaction surveys
- Working to improve our customer profile data
- Working to make best use of transactional data – the reasons our tenants contact us, such as to report a repair or a neighbourhood problem, which combined with profile data can help us to understand the important issues to different groups of tenants
- Exploring collaborative working with other landlords and organisations
- Aiming to introduce real-time data so we can quickly identify and respond to issues or concerns.



## 2.4. Supporting a Tenant Engagement Culture

Tenant Engagement comes from and promotes a culture of mutual trust, respect and partnership between tenants and the landlord. It exists when these interests work together towards a common goal of better housing conditions and housing services. Tenant engagement will not be the responsibility of one member of staff, but will be an expectation of all members of the housing team.

The key principles of a tenant engagement culture are that:

- Tenant engagement should be a continuous process where participants share information and ideas, working towards a common understanding of problems and agreeing solutions.
- All participants need to have all the information available to consider issues properly, this needs to be clear, timely and accessible.

- All participants need to have all the information available to consider issues properly. Information needs to be clear, timely and accessible.
- Decision-making processes should be open, clear and accountable.
- Tenants should have enough time to consider issues properly. They should have the opportunity to work out a common view.
- The landlord must recognise the independence of the tenants' voice.
- Good working relations evolve gradually so must be flexible to adapt to local circumstances.
- Tenants need adequate resources for training and access to support in order to be organised and methodical when required.

## **2.5. Barriers to Engagement**

It is important to identify the barriers that stop tenant engagement and how these can be overcome. We recognise there are many barriers which prevent engagement, including:

- Lack of skills, training and/or confidence needed
- Understanding published information
- Time, work, family, caring constraints
- Transport, travel and other expenses

The Council is therefore committed to offering solutions and opportunities for tenant engagement to be easy to access for as many tenants as possible. These solutions include, but are not limited to:

- Providing training and support for tenants who would like to engage in any way
- Providing information in a range of formats to ensure it can be understood by all
- Providing information in a timely way, allowing tenants a reasonable and appropriate period to understand the information before commenting or giving feedback
- Providing transport and covering the financial costs incurred by tenants and leaseholders in carrying out their roles



- Offering a wide range of engagement methods to suit all lifestyles, and in emergency situations to allow tenants to continue to engage safely
- Arranging meetings at times and locations, or online, which are accessible and safe for tenants
- Providing practical support to establish engagement groups.

## **2.6. Valuing Diversity**

At the heart of this the housing service is our commitment to providing a fair and equitable service and ensuring that tenants are treated without discrimination. This strategy helps to deliver this commitment. We will make sure that in delivering our services we continue to be inclusive and representative. We want all our tenants to have the opportunity to be involved, regardless of age, disability, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, marital status or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity status. We are committed to a digital agenda but we also will provide information in other formats when required.

## **3. Training for staff and for tenants about Tenant Engagement**

For this strategy to be successful it will be important that key staff and tenants have the right skills and approach. This will require a comprehensive training programme to help develop the right culture within the housing service, and to equip tenants with the necessary understanding of the service.

## **4. Communication**

High quality communication is key to keeping tenants informed, and to developing a landlord/tenant relationship that encourages feedback and engagement. Quality can be measured in terms of the style, frequency and content of communications. As part of this strategy the Council will:

- Publish a tenants newsletter 2 times per year, and work with tenants on its content and style
- Produce key performance information

- Ensure all consultation documents and correspondence are produced in a clear and accessible style
- Maintain an accessible and up to date housing section of the Council's website
- Maintain a regular and up to date presence on social media

## **5. Tenants' Key Priorities**

Based on feedback received from the STAR satisfaction survey conducted in December 2020, tenants' key service delivery priorities are:

- Repairs & Maintenance
- Landlord being easy to deal with
- Treating tenants fairly

Listening to tenants' views, this Strategy will focus on engaging with tenants in relation to these key areas.

## **6. Monitoring Our Performance**

It is important that tenants hold us to account, we do what we say we will do, and that our performance against the commitments set out in this strategy are visible to tenants, councillors and other key stakeholders. To do this we will:

- Produce a detailed action plan which will show how this strategy will be delivered.
- Develop a set of key performance indicators to measure key aspects of the strategy
- Produce regular briefings on tenant engagement activities
- Produce a Tenant Engagement Annual Report setting out the work and achievements in this area

## **7. Action Plan**

This Strategy sets out our aims, ambitions and commitments for developing tenant engagement for the next three years. We acknowledge that we are not there yet,

and that this work will involve many different tasks, projects and work streams. Alongside this Strategy we have produced an action plan which includes:

- Developing a training programme for staff and tenants
- Considering innovative ways to digitally engage with tenants
- Working to improve tenant profile data
- Working to improve tenant contact details, especially email addresses
- Developing the engagement structure
- Designing and implementing a recruitment process for the Tenants' Voice group
- Develop a Terms of Reference and work plan for the 'Tenants Voice' Group
- Developing social media platforms

DRAFT

## **8. Tenant Engagement Action Plan**

To be inserted