

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

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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