

Folkestone Town Centre Working Group

Held at:	Folkestone Room - Civic Centre Folkestone
Date	Tuesday, 11 February 2020
Present	Councillors Danny Brook (Chairman), Laura Davison, Tim Prater and David Wimble
Apologies for Absence	Councillor David Monk
Officers Present:	Mrs Jess Harman (Community Projects Manager), John Bunnett (Development Director), Sue Lewis (Committee Services Officer), Llywelyn Lloyd (Chief Planning Officer) and Lorraine Smith (Economic Development Officer)
Others Present:	Ellandi LLP Watermelon Research

13. Declarations of interest

Councillor Laura Davison declared a voluntary announcement in that she is the Ward Member for Folkestone Central Ward.

Councillor Danny Brook declared a voluntary announcement in that he is Ward Member for Folkestone Central Ward and also has a business in the town.

14. Minutes and actions - 10 December 2019

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2019 were submitted, approved and signed by the Chairman.

15. F& H High Streets Fund

Folkestone Town Centre Applications:

Lorraine Smith provided members with statistics on applications and spend so far and although this related to the town centre only the intention would be to make available a district wide version to be distributed to all district Councillors on a regular basis. The Folkestone specific chart will continue to be shared at the Working Group meeting.

She informed members that there had been 10 applications for Folkestone Town Centre, 4 reviewed in October, 3 more recently, still pending and 3 new applications.

The total value of applications received is nearly £250,000, with further interests on funding being sought in the form of health related businesses and community lead projects.

An advert for a Project Officer to help the team manage the applications has been circulated and is still in the recruiting stage.

The Panel intends to meet quarterly or as and when required, particularly if volume of applications rise, then more panel meetings will take place.

16. **Folkestone Town Centre strategic site update**

Debenhams – due to the recent closure of the site, officers are now working hard to gain access so that they can do window animations/vinyls to improve the look of the building but as it is not owned by the Council this is proving difficult but works are ongoing.

Officers were provided with an updated on proposed council led projects

17. **External Speakers**

Ellandi LLP, leading investment manager in community shopping centres presented members with their findings on how to deliver change, aspirations and concerns for the town centre, understanding implications of change and potential ambitions for Folkestone Town Centre.

Watermelon Research presented members with a summary of the output following surveys conducted in October 2019 commissioned by the Council.

Watermelon gave an overview of residents and visitors perceptions of Folkestone Town Centre and a snapshot of business insight relating to Folkestone as business location.

The outcome of the survey highlighted 4 main areas:

1. Better shopping experience – in the form of independent shops and larger retailers.
2. Evening activities – regular users may stay longer in the town centre if other things are offered. This may also help towards curbing anti-social behaviour.
3. Community support/business support – support for local businesses now and community options.
4. Advertising – promote transport links, location by the coast and the closeness to London.

Both presentations concluded that the Council needs to understand people's aspirations and needs to decide what to do now. There is a definite need to attract families. Ellandi LLP have provided members with a good balance for the future of the town centre and it is up to members now to decide a way forward.

Officers understood that a huge amount of information has been presented to members today and suggested another meeting is set in the next two weeks to establish a way forward.