

## Folkestone Town Centre Working Group

Held at:	Zoom Meeting
Date	Friday, 23 September 2022
Present	Councillors Laura Davison, Tim Prater, Lesley Whybrow and David Wimble.
Apologies for Absence	Councillor Danny Brook and Councillor David Monk.
Officers Present:	Andy Blaszkowicz (Director of Housing and Operations), Ewan Green (Director of Place), Rod Lean (Chief Officer - Place & Growth), Llywelyn Lloyd (Chief Planning Officer), Fred Miller (Transportation Lead Specialist) and Lorraine Smith (Economic Development Senior Specialist).
Others Present:	James Rhodes (Principle Consultant, SYSTRA), David Alderson (Director, SYSTRA).

### 1. **Appoint a Chairman for the Meeting**

Councillor Prater was nominated Chairman for the meeting.

### 2. **Minutes and actions from last meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2022 were agreed.

Councillor Davison asked if the presentation slides from the last meeting could be shared with her as she had been unable to attend the meeting.

### 3. **Folkestone Town Centre Parking Strategy**

Mr Rhodes provided Members with an update on their work to develop the Parking Strategy.

In response to the presentation, the following points were noted:

- A similar presentation should be offered to all District Councillors as it was very useful.
- Most of the Council's off-street car parks would have electric vehicle charging points by the end of the year. The Council had a 12 year

contract with a company to install charging points, it was expected that the number of charging points in the car parks would increase as demand for them rose.

- The Council employed 11 enforcement officers and there were two vacancies being filled. Patrols in Hythe would be prioritised during the times requested; however, it would not always be possible for officers to cover every area requested.
- Emissions based charging would be an option presented to Cabinet; however, it was important not to penalise those on a lower income who may not be able to afford a newer low emission vehicle.
- An engagement plan would be drafted and circulated to the Working Group. This could include resident associations.
- The impact on the local economy, businesses and market traders needed to be considered as part of the strategy.
- The enhancement and management of bicycle and motorcycle parking had been considered.
- A strategy for the provision of on-street charging points was under development.
- An accessibility expert was used to ensure that the car parks would be accessible to all.
- It was recognised that provision of parking at nearby supermarkets, such as Sainsbury's and Asda, could have a significant impact on how the Council's Car parks were used. However, it had not been possible to engage with these companies to establish their intentions for their car parks in the future.
- Variable parking charges for different places, times and residential status could be considered.
- Discussions were underway regarding the future of the Harbour Arm Car park. This could result in the loss of a significant number of parking spaces and would be included in the strategy. There was an existing policy for parking around the harbour that would need to be considered.
- Consideration could be given to parking around the Hospital in the strategy.
- Parking pressures resulting from the development at The Leas Pavilion, and along The Leas, particularly in relation to the loss of disabled parking spaces, would be incorporated into the strategy.
- A Park and Ride service could be successful; hours of operation, location and speed of service needed to meet people's requirements.
- An overflow strategy during peak summer periods would be considered.
- Most of the car parks offered contactless payment options.
- There was scheme that allowed residents to purchase a clock annually at the cost of £60 enabling them to park for free in the Council's long stay car parks for three hours, and short stay car parks for two hours.

#### 4. **Levelling Up Fund & Folca**

Mr Green provided Members with the following updates:

### **Levelling up Fund**

The application submission had been made and it was hoped the Government would advise of their decision towards the end of October.

### **Folca 1 – The Medical Centre**

Work had been underway in the background; the design team, who were working for the lead GP practices, were preparing floor plans for the site that would fulfil the needs of a modern medical centre. Once complete the proposals would be brought to the Working Group. Public engagement was paramount as the project progressed and was expected from the developers as part of the project delivery.

### **Folca 2 – Remainder of the Building (Non-Medical Centre)**

Refurbishment was thought to be the best approach for this part of the building. Refurbishment could enable future use for leisure, retail, and employment purposes. The Council intended to procure services to undertake technical surveys by the end of the year. These surveys would help to inform the decisions for the future use of this part of the site.

An update on Folca and Folca 2 would be provided at the next working group meeting.

The following comments were noted during consideration of the item:

- A request to include community usage as a potential future use of Folca 2.
- The condition of the building did not lend itself to be used for ad hoc events, however, in the short term, it could potentially be used for pop-up shops or something similar.
- Some Councillors and members of the public were concerned by proposals to demolish part of such a prestigious building. The project would need to offer a significant improvement to health services, to outweigh the loss caused by the demolition of the Edwardian element of the building.
- The former Store 21 site would make a good location to build a medical centre following demolition the building, however it was not owned by the Council.
- There would be a consultation exercise regarding the Folca 1 proposals once the plans had been prepared. This would indicate how the proposals would enable improved health service provision.