

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Held at: Council Chamber - Civic Centre Folkestone

Date: Tuesday, 27 June 2023

Present: Councillors James Butcher, Bridget Chapman,
Laura Davison, David Godfrey, Anita Jones,
Elaine Martin, Connor McConville and John Wing

Apologies for Absence

Officers Present: Jake Hamilton (Case Officer (Committee)), Susan Priest (Chief Executive) and Jemma West (Democratic Services Senior Specialist), Rod Lean (Chief Officer – Place & Growth), Matt Rain (OD & Engagement Lead Specialist), Adrian Tofts (Strategy, Policy & Performance Lead Specialist), Olu Fatokun (Low Carbon Senior Specialist), Ola Owolabi (Chief Financial Services Officer).

Others Present: Councillors Stephen Scoffham, Rich Hollgate.

1. **Appointment of Chair**

Proposed by Councillor McConville,
Seconded by Councillor E Martin; and

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Davison be elected as Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 23/24.

2. **Appointment of Vice-Chair**

Proposed by Councillor Jones,
Seconded by Councillor Butcher; and

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Wing be elected as Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 2023/24.

(As there was no dissent the nomination was approved by affirmation of the meeting).

3. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest at the meeting.

4. **Appointment of members and election of Chairman to the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Sub Committee**

Proposed by Councillor Davison,
Seconded by Councillor Wing; and

RESOLVED:

1. **That Councillor McConville be elected as Chair of the Finance and Performance Sub-Committee for the municipal year 23/24.**
2. **That the Sub-Committee Members as set out in the agenda pack be appointed for the municipal year 23/24.**

(As there was no dissent the recommendations were approved by affirmation of the meeting).

5. **Minutes**

The minutes of the last Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 25 April 2023 were submitted, approved as a correct record, and signed by the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

A Member asked for an update on matters raised following the presentation by Southern Water at the previous meeting. It was noted that an update would be sought.

6. **Minutes of the Finance and Performance Sub-Committee**

The minutes of the last Finance and Performance Sub-Committee held on 07 March 2023 were submitted, approved as a correct record, and signed by the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

7. **Cabinet Member updates**

In accordance with the Constitution Councillor Stephen Scoffham, the Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Environment and Biodiversity attended the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to give an update.

He started by informing the committee that he was delighted to talk about the district-wide carbon reduction plan. He referred to the plan as important but difficult to write. He mentioned that 99.6% of carbon emissions that affect the

district are not in-direct control of the council. So, the Council were looking at a policy that requires public cooperation, public behavioural change and cooperation with businesses, local groups.

Councillor Scoffham made the committee aware of two main initiatives that were underway, the Carbon Innovation Lab and the Sustainable Futures and noted the recommendations set out within the report.

Councillor Scoffham added that carbon reduction is an open agenda that involves setting viable targets, that are achievable, working with local communities to maximise gains, and made reference to sustainability hubs across the district where communities could come together.

Members made comments on the following points:

- How can community engagement be initiated?
- The Councils plans to achieve EPC C by 2030 and EPC A by 2050 within the constraints of the Housing Revenue Account.

Councillor Stephen Scoffham, the Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Environment and Biodiversity responded to the comments, and made the following points:

- It was still early days, but options on initiating community engagement included ward members attending events, signposting people to funding, and supporting the public.
- Social wellbeing was part of a bigger agenda, but creating a flourishing community would lead to flourishing environments.

8. **Levelling Up fund delivery**

Members received a presentation on the Council's successful bid to secure a £20m levelling up bid to regenerate Folkstone Town centre called 'Folkestone - a Brighter Future'.

The presentation gave an overview of the Folkestone a Brighter future project and is appended to these minutes.

Members commented on various issues and made points including the following:

- With the project moving at such quick pace, how do the council ensure a diverse community engagement?
- Are there any plans for using disused shops in the high street?
- Are the council engaging with bus companies as there is talks of service cuts?
- The high street is a wind tunnel, are there any thoughts on how to mitigate this?

- Due to the short time frames until the phase one events, will more dates be introduced?
- Are the council looking to reconstitute the Folkestone Town Working Group?
- Are there any penalties if the project could not be delivered by March 2025?
- In the current financial climate, is there a risk of being unable to deliver aspects of the project?
- Is a KCC specialist assigned to the project?
- How many artist partners applied, and will they be focussing on the town or the whole project?
- Are the council looking at any change of road layout around Middleburg Square?
- Are there going to be more pedestrian crossings?

The Chief Officer – Place and Growth responded to the comments, and made point including:

- There are no direct plans for using disused shops, but in-directly it is hoped this will encourage investment and development while raising the profile of Folkestone.
- The Council is engaging with Stagecoach to future proof, so no opportunities are lost. They are looking to work on bus connections with the new linear layout.
- The council will be looking to tackle the wind tunnel with trees, but may have issues with services underground, so are looking at interventions to resolve these issues.
- The council is running the events two weeks longer than KCC's recommendations and will be distributing leaflets.
- Consideration was being given to whether working groups were effective and adding value, but reconstituting the Town Centre Working Group would be considered.
- It was hoped there would be no penalties for not delivering by March 2025. FHDC were ahead of a lot of other authorities.
- A dedicated KCC officer had been assigned to the project, which has been considered in the costing. They will see the project through to the end. A delivery agreement between KCC and FHDC was being finalised which details the roles and responsibilities.
- The Council had five applications from artists for the artistic commission with Creative Folkestone winning the commission.
- There will be changes to the road layout and the project team were looking to minimise traffic speeds and make the scheme pedestrian and cycling friendly with safer crossings.

9. **Folca 2 proposed Works and Civic Centre Relocation**

Members received a presentation on the council's purchase of the old Debenhams (now called Folca) in Folkestone town centre in 2020, the aim was to secure control on a key anchor site within the town centre to ensure the

future use had a positive outcome for the town centre. The building was also used as a key outlet for the vaccination delivery during the pandemic.

The presentation gave an overview of the background and progress to date and is appended to these minutes.

Members commented on various issues and made points including the following:

- There needs to be quite a lot of work done with community engagement.
- Is the full potential of the building being maximised?
- Is the mixed space approach the correct approach?
- Phase two doesn't need to be as rushed, it was more important to take time and ask the community what they want.
- How much scope is there in the phase one budget with future proofing, sustainability, and energy?
- Could the change place toilets be prioritised?
- It would be nice to see the building have uses to benefit the community,
- A mixed council/community space would be positive and become more accessible with the bus connections.
- Can you confirm the time scales for Folca 1?

The Chief Officer – Place and Growth responded to the comments, and made point including:

- The Council is aiming to partially renovate the building as part of the LUF works this includes improvements to the windows, walls and roof creating a watertight shell ready for the next phase of works.
- The Council will be looking at the carbon reduction potential during the partial refurbishment for LUF and also the phase 2 works post LUF
- With regards to the Changing Places Toilet (CPT), there is a deadline for installation as part of the grant allocation. The CPT will therefore be but not necessarily open due to the health and safety issues as part of the wider refurbishment works this will, result in delays to opening the facilities.
- The Council is in dialogue with two GP practices; however this has to go through a process with Integrated Care Board (ICB) which is part of the NHS. ICB are currently looking at the spatial arrangements proposed. The project will also have to go through a council planning process.

Resolved:

- That a further report come back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee before phase 2 begins.

(The recommendations were agreed by affirmation of the meeting).

10. **Draft District-Wide Carbon Plan**

The Strategy, Policy & Performance Lead Specialist introduced the report which presented the draft District-wide Carbon Plan. Following the comments of the Committee, it is intended to take the draft plan to Cabinet in July to seek approval to hold a public consultation on the plan.

Members commented on various issues and made points including the following:

- Behaviour change was an important factor. What are the outlined plans to work with schools and young people?
- What are the plans for coordinating those actions that are outside of the council's control?
- What is the role of the Carbon Innovation Lab going forward?
- What does the leadership role work in practice?
- Going forward are the council going to do more work in promoting plans, grants, and schemes via social media?
- Members want to increase the number of people using public transport. What influence did the council have in respect of Stagecoach?
- The committee would like to see more events.
- Can schools be more involved? The TEDx-style event was a good idea and could be rolled out to schools. More effort was needed in order to target schools in deprived areas. There were benefits in upskilling, and creating roles such as youth champions could be empowering for young people.
- Available grants and funds needed to be made more accessible and engaging on the council's website.

The Strategy, Policy and Performance Lead Specialist, and the Low Carbon Senior Specialist responded to some of the comments, and made point including the following:

- The Council have contacted a number of schools, and are looking to expand this further.
- Previously, the Climate Working Group had received presentations from school children.
- If members have contacts with schools and are happy to pass them on, the team will follow through with making contact.
- The plan has not developed enough to confirm the plans for coordination actions outside of the council control, but a working group would need oversee and review any plan in the future. It's possible that the Climate change working group could fulfil that function.
- The Carbon Innovation Lab is an informal group that has met regularly to provide input into the plan. The team are looking to continue this input going forward.

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- The results of the consultation would be reported back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and at that stage it was hoped there would be more information available.
- The team would work with the council's communications team to see what further communications can be sent out via social media.
- The Council could look at more themed events in the future.
- The Council are currently working with five schools but are looking to expand on this.

RESOLVED:

- To receive and note report OS/23/01
- To note the work on the Carbon Innovation Lab and Sustainable Futures Forum already underway (Sections 2 and 3)
- To comment on the draft District-wide Carbon Plan and proposed approach to public engagement (Section 4)

(The recommendations were agreed by affirmation of the meeting).

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Levelling Up Project

Folkestone A Brighter Future (FABF)

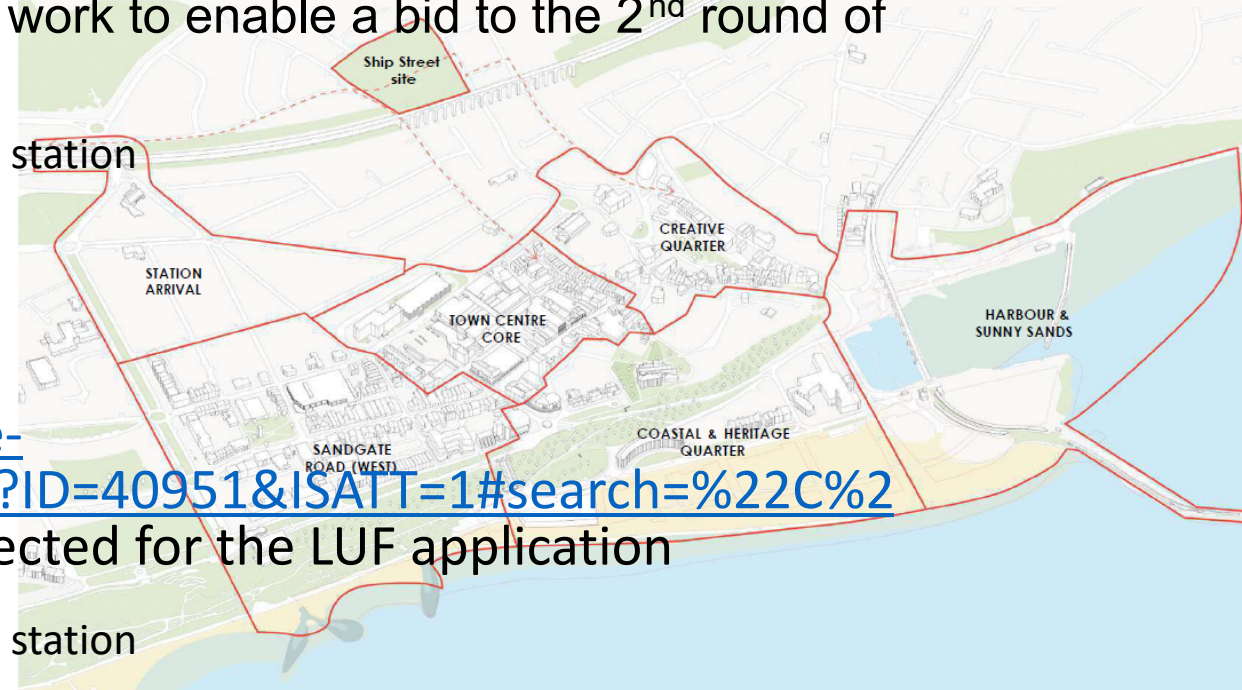
Rod Lean (Chief Officer Place and Growth)

Matt Rain (Organisational Development & Engagement Senior Specialist)

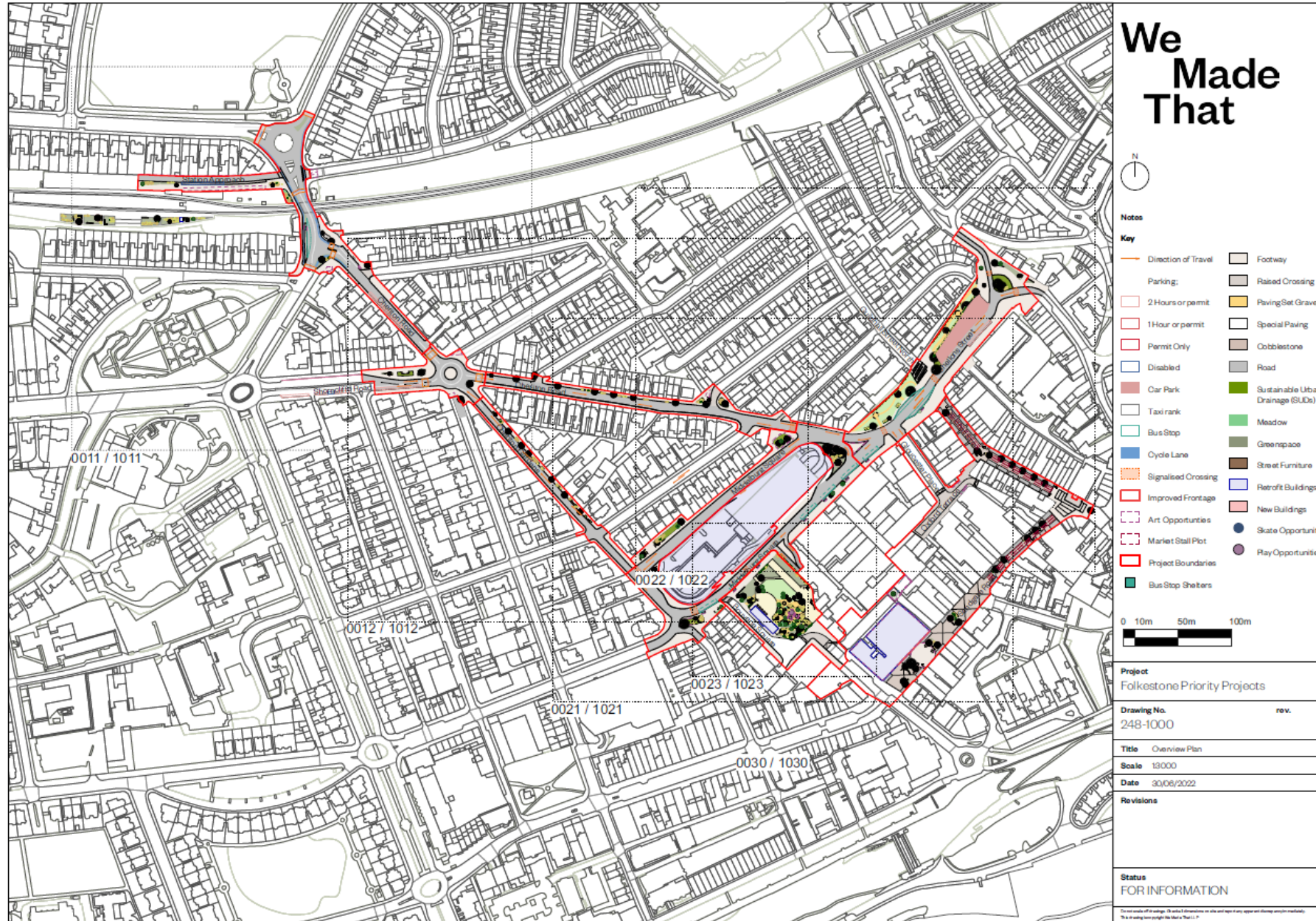
Levelling Up Fund - Overview



- In 2021, a Place Plan for Folkestone Town Centre was developed setting out the ambition for Folkestone Town Centre <https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/folkestoneplaceplan>
 - Urban Appraisal completed to inform the Place Plan output
 - More than 70 interventions identified
- September '21 Cabinet (C/21/34 <https://folkestone-hythe.moderngov.co.uk/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=38588&ISATT=1#search=%22C%2f21%2f34%22>) approved further development work to enable a bid to the 2nd round of Levelling Up Fund for 6 priority projects
 - Station Arrival and Town Centre Connections
 - Improved Town Centre Gateway – road layout and bus station
 - Folca, Sandgate Road and Town Centre Public Realm
 - F51 Environs and Payer Park
 - Harbour Line and Tram Road
 - Sunny Sands
- June 22 Cabinet (C/22/14 <https://folkestone-hythe.moderngov.co.uk/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=40951&ISATT=1#search=%22C%2f22%2f14%22>) The 3 projects below were selected for the LUF application
 - Station Arrival and Town Centre Connections
 - Improved Town Centre Gateway – road layout and bus station
 - Folca, Sandgate Road and Town Centre Public Realm



Overall Project Area

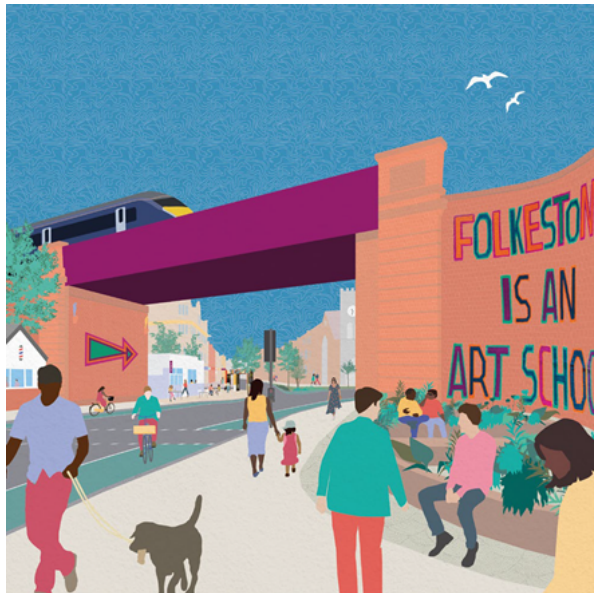
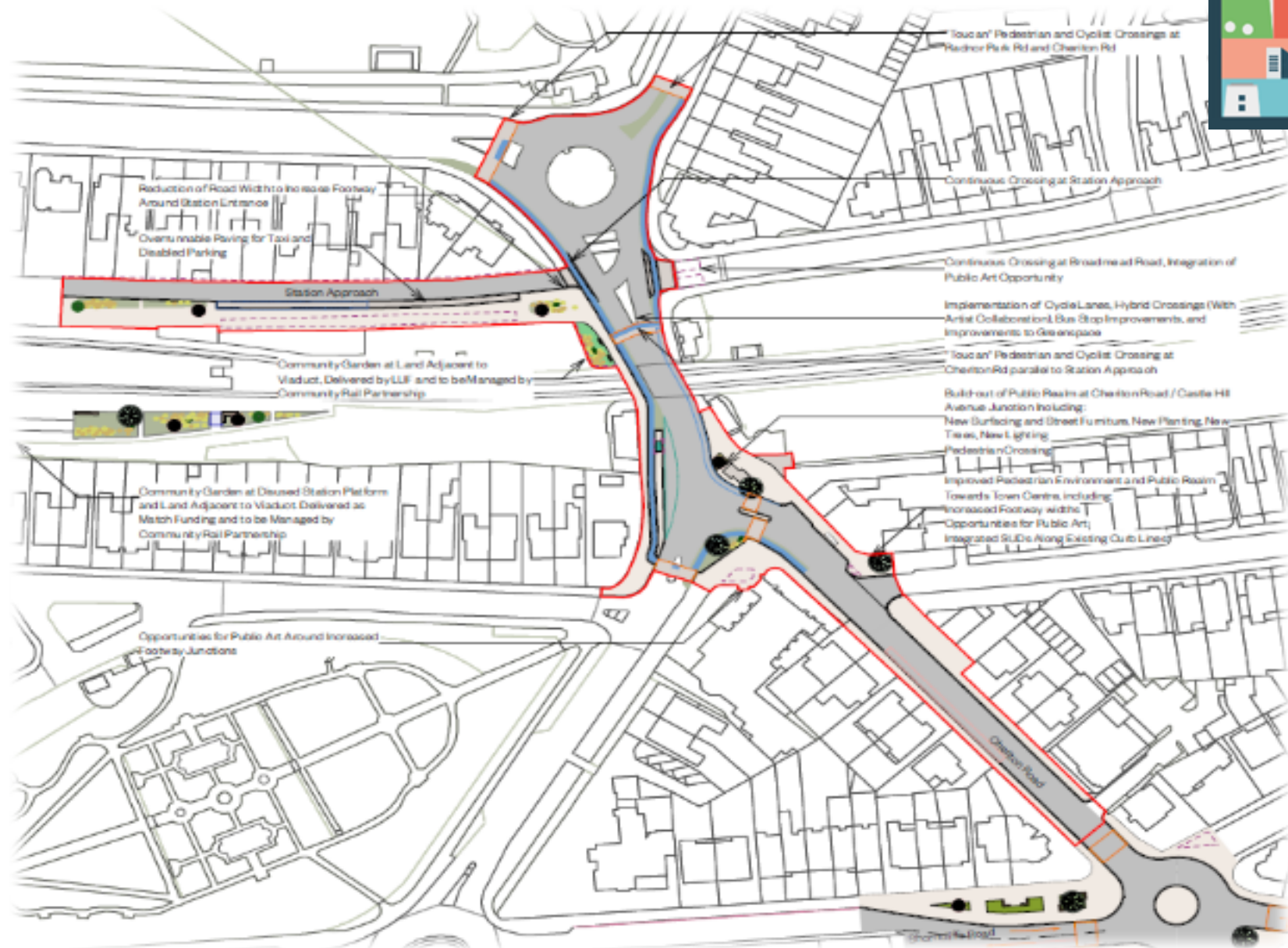




Station Arrival and Town Centre Connections

Station Arrival and Town Centre Connections

- Improving the “arrival” experience
- Additional planting opportunities
- More intuitive wayfinding

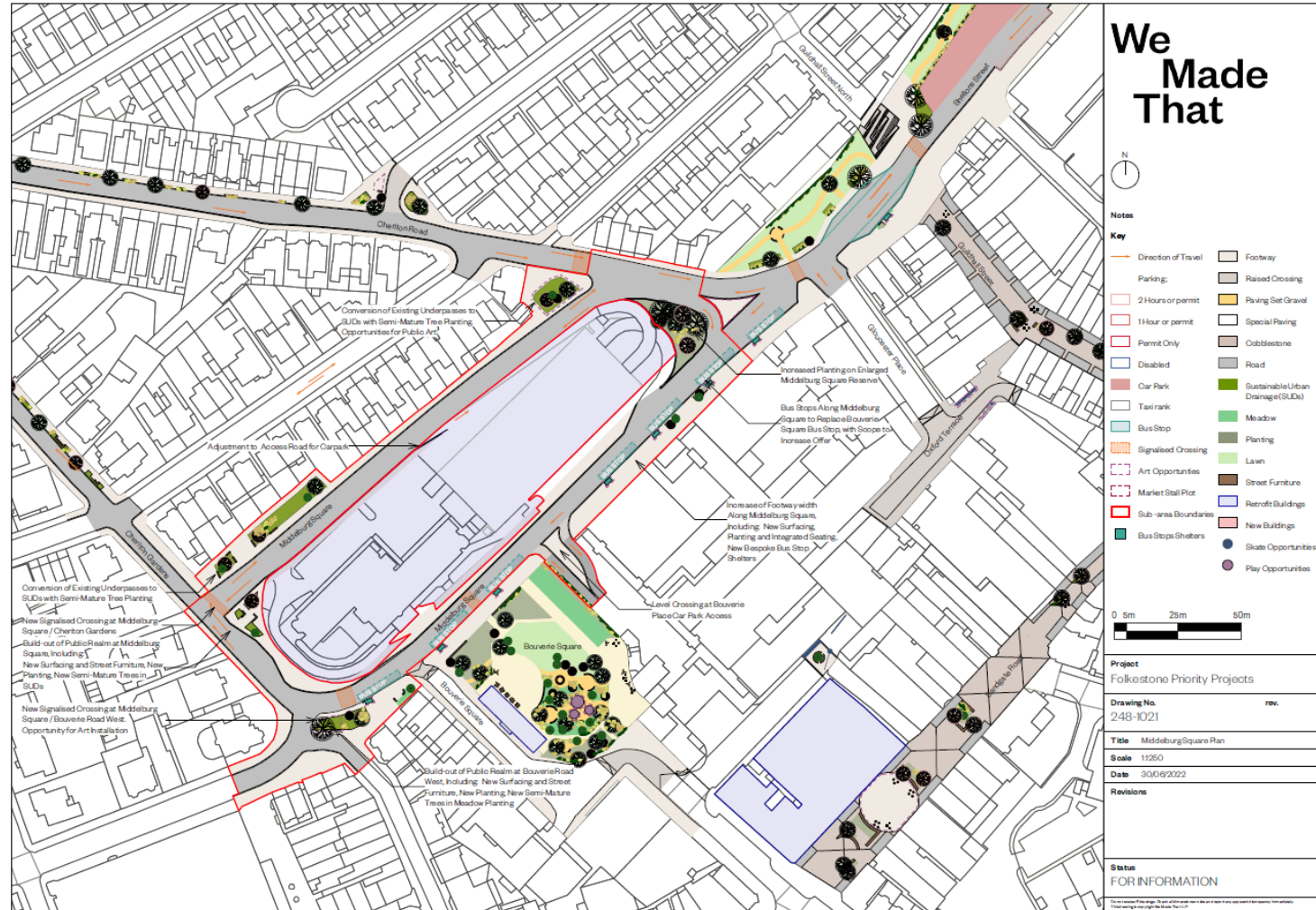


Improved Town Centre Gateway



- Overhaul of legacy highway system
- Introduction of more green space
- Relocation of bus station to linear bus stops
- Restoration of public square with green space and play area

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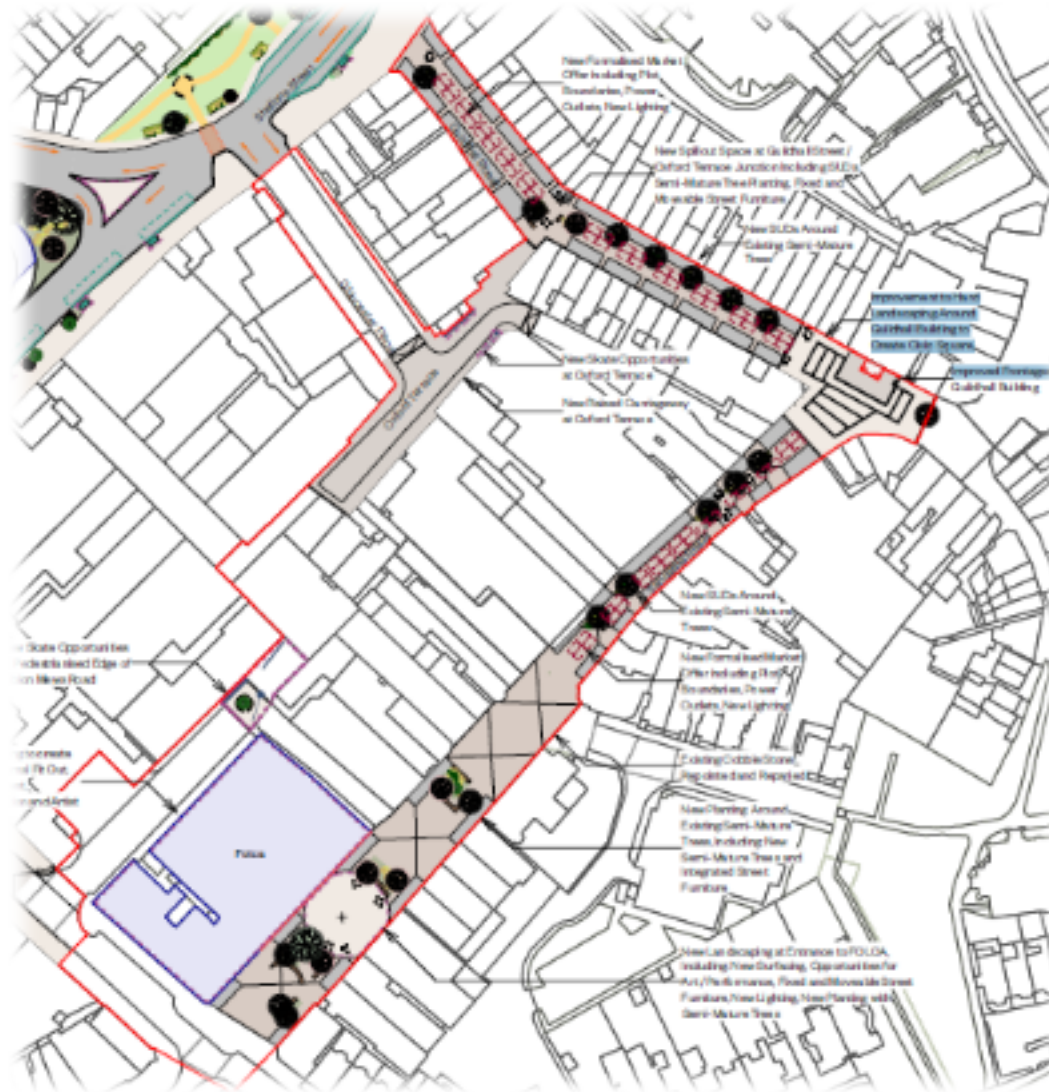


Folca, Sandgate Road and Town Centre Public Realm



- Refurbishment and separation of former department store to enable occupation
- New public realm in pedestrianised area (seating, and planting etc.)
- Animation to enable/support new uses

Public realm, wayfinding will be subject to artistic input and uplift adding to Folkestone's USP





Folkestone A Brighter Future

- Deliverability of projects required by 31 March 2025
- Passed subsidy control check and received MOU 17th March
- Inception meeting with DLUHC 17th April
- KCC are the delivery partner for highways /public realm works
 - Delivery Partner Agreement in development
 - Appointed **Aecom** design consultant for all Highways/public realm works
 - Phase 1 design feasibility report received April 23
 - Programme schedule is in draft for 2nd phase development
 - Tender for **artistic partner** awarded to Creative Folkestone
- Robust project management and governance in place with regular reporting back to members.



F-ABF Budget

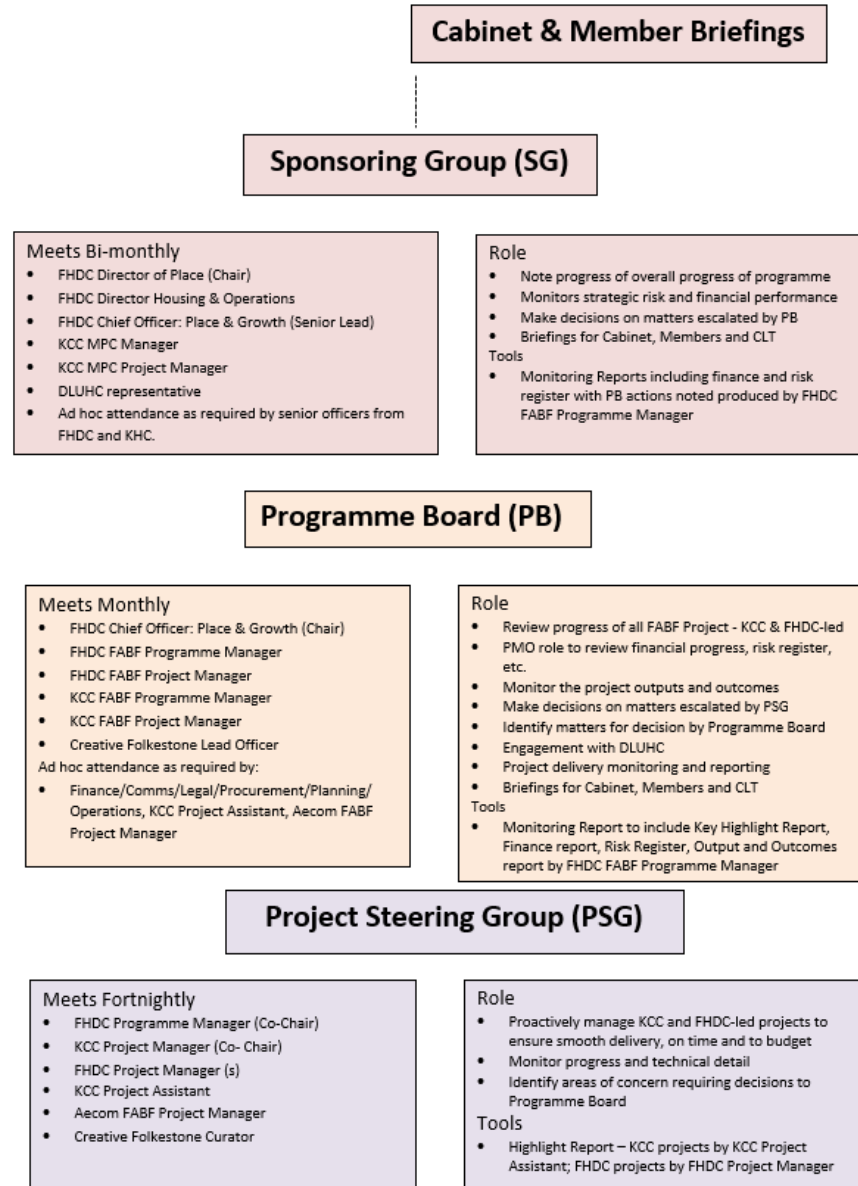
The total cost (including professional and project management fees) of the projects are in the table below:

Project	£
Station Arrival and Town Centre Connections	£4,246,806
Improved Gateway to the Town Centre and Bouverie Square	£11,690,369
Folca, Sandgate Road and Town Centre Public Realm	£6,053,735
Total	£21,990,910

LUF 'ask' £19,791,819
 FHDC funding £2,199,091



Governance Structure





Folkestone A Brighter Future

Communication and engagement strategy key objectives.

- To ensure insight is provided by stakeholders and the community into project activity, milestones, and potential impacts during construction.
- Stimulate a wide interest in the programme, it's purpose and expected outcomes.
- Ensure a 'voice for all' is enabled through creative and innovative means of engagement.
- Create an environment to promote genuine two-way communication.
- F&HDC communications platforms will keep the community abreast of programme progress and the timeline of activity and key milestones



Folkestone A Brighter Future

Communication and engagement strategy

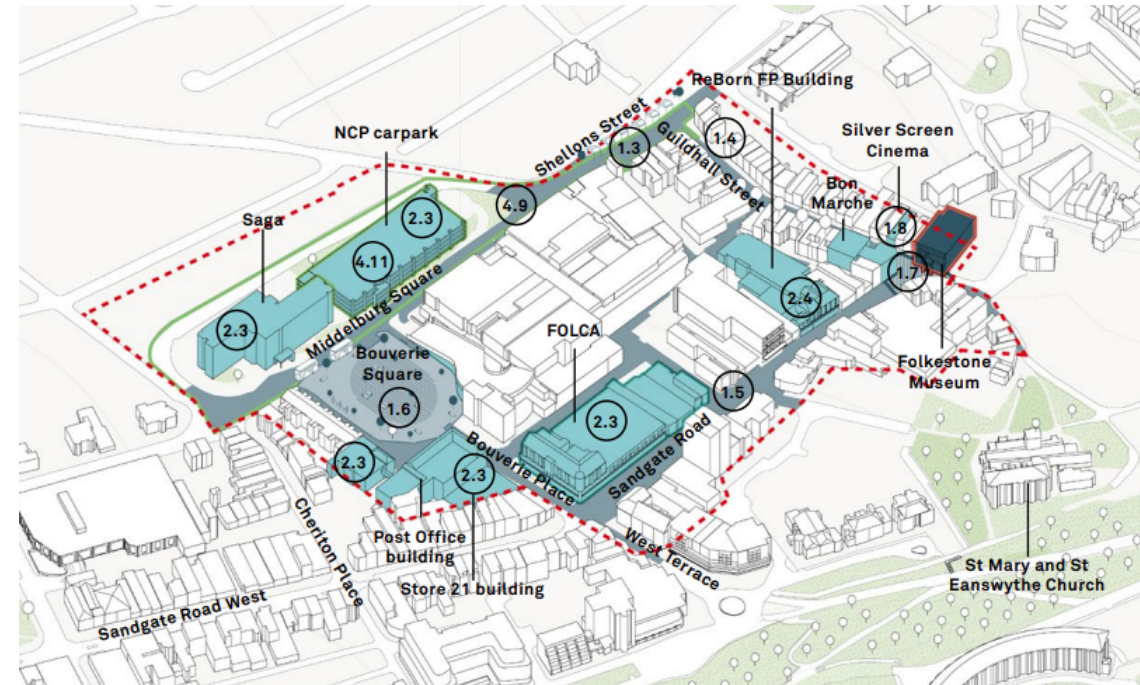
key Audiences :

- Internal stakeholders, members and strategic partners
- Wider stakeholder engagement
- Public engagement
- F&HDC Staff engagement

Folkestone A Brighter Future



- Communication and engagement strategy developed.
 - 1st public consultation expected early July on Station arrival, Cheriton Rd & Cheriton Gdns
 - 2nd Public Consultation aims to use new ways to engage through VR technology
 - Intention is to create a [digital twin](#) (2 minute video) of Folkestone Phase 2



Folkestone A Brighter Future



Legacy opportunities

- Can share the model with other stakeholders who can use it to visualise how developments will look
- Watford are using it for pre-apps and charging customers £500 as part of the planning application process
- Skills transfer to upskill members of staff and the local community in using VR and digital twinning models
- Wirral have found it is invaluable for *“Informing development projects, improving design, assisting with consultation and engagement, and to support business development.”*

Programme Schedule – key next steps

- Phase 1 Station arrival/Cheriton Road/Cheriton Gdns/Middelburg Sq.
 - Design review – June '23
 - Public engagement (exc. Middelburg Sq.) – July '23
 - RIBA stg 4 Technical design & approval – Jan '24
 - Public engagement “you said, we did” – Mar '24
 - Contractor procurement – Nov '23 to Sept '24
 - Construction – Mar '24 to Feb '25
- Phase 2 Bouverie Sq, Shellons St, Guildhall St and Sandgate Rd
 - Design review – Aug '23
 - Public engagement (inc. Middelburg Sq.) –September '23
 - RIBA stg 4 Technical design & approval - Feb '24
 - Public engagement “you said, we did” - Mar '24
 - Contractor procurement - Nov '23 to Sept '24
 - Construction – May '24 to Sept '25