

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Held at:	Council Chamber - Civic Centre Folkestone
Date	Tuesday, 30 January 2024
Present	Councillors James Butcher, Laura Davison (Chair), Anita Jones, Alan Martin, Elaine Martin, Connor McConville and John Wing (Vice-Chair)
Apologies for Absence	Councillor Bridget Chapman.
Officers Present:	Michael Bailey (Tenant Engagement & Wellbeing Senior Specialist), Andy Blaszkowicz (Director of Housing and Operations), Ewan Green (Director of Strategy and Resources), Jake Hamilton (Committee Services Officer), Rod Lean (Chief Officer - Place & Growth) and Matt Rain (OD & Engagement Business Partner).
Others Present:	Councillor Jim Martin.

34. **Declarations of Interest**

Councillors James Butcher and John Wing both declared a voluntary interest as Directors of Oportunitas.

35. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on were submitted, approved, and signed by the Chair.

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

The minutes of the meeting held on were submitted, approved, and signed by the Chair.

37. **Change of Membership - Finance and Performance Scrutiny Sub Committee**

The Committee noted the change of membership for the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Sub Committee.

38. **Cabinet Member updates**

In line with the Constitution Councillor Jim Martin, Leader, and Cabinet Member for Otterpool Park and Planning Policy provided the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an update which covered various topics, including:

- Planning Performance and Planning Enforcement. - The Leader confirmed there is a real focus on making sure planning applications are dealt with in a timely manner and that performance in this regard is good and improving.
- Otterpool Park. The Leader provided members with an update which outlined the current direction for Otterpool Park.

Following Councillor Jim Martin's update, members raised several points, including:

- An update regarding Otterpool Park Solar Farm – Councillor Jim Martin confirmed that the development of a solar farm on land owned by the Council adjacent to Otterpool Park is progressing. In addition, following the resolution to grant outline planning consent for the Otterpool Park development he is confident that great strides can be made to achieve the council's aspirations to reach net zero.
- Otterpool Park LLP Governance Review – It was noted that progress in delivery of the Governance Action Plan will be reported to Members by East Kent Audit Partnership through regular reports to the Audit and Governance Committee. Councillor Jim Martin advised that positive progress is being made and that this included recent changes to the Otterpool Park LLP team structure.
- Does the council have an indication as to when Members can expect to see the first houses being built? Councillor Jim Martin advised it will probably be 2027/28.
- Does the delay in Otterpool Park have an impact on the Council's housing targets – It does put additional pressure on the planning system; however, members are aware that central government have introduced flexibility in housing targets.
- Does the Council have a plan b, should a partnership with Homes England not be fulfilled – Yes, the Council has alternative plans.
- What can communities do to make their voices heard in relation to traffic disruption considering the upcoming introduction of biometric passport checks at Euro Tunnel and the Dover Docks – Both the Euro Tunnel and the port of Dover have plans in place. All being well, Euro Tunnel are expecting the new restrictions to result in an 8-minute delay. Members asked whether the Operation Brock could come back to the committee once the review had been finalised.
- Can members have an update regarding Southern Water – Councillor Jim Martin explained that he had attended several meetings and is having discussions with all levels of the organisation and Kent County

Council (KCC). He did however advise members that he and other Leaders from councils across the Southeast are pressing Ofwat and the Environmental Agency (EA) for action to be taken against Southern Water due to its failings.

39. **FABF phase two public engagement feedback**

Matt Rain, OD & Engagement Senior Specialist, provided Members with a presentation and feedback following the 'Folkestone – A Brighter Future' (FABF) phase two engagement.

Following the presentation, members raised several points, including:

- As per the feedback in relation to the location of bus shelters, has this been addressed? – The council is working with Stagecoach to see where amendments can be made.
- How will the nature of Shellons Street being a bit of a 'wind tunnel' be addressed – The council is considering several actions, including side panels for the bus shelters and tree planting to act as a buffer.,
- Is the information from the consultation in relation to bus routes available online and will Stagecoach be in attendance at the next event – Yes, the information is on the website and, officers will extend an invitation to Stagecoach to attend the next consultation event.
- Members raised concerns regarding traffic management and congestion – The proposed plan, should minimise traffic approaching Middleburg Square. Kent County Council (KCC) as the highway authority are examining the plans to ensure that traffic management changes will result in a positive improvement.
- Members also raised concerns regarding anti-social behaviour – The council is working closely with other organisations, including the Kent Police Design Out Crime team, on how they might mitigate these issues.
- Will the next FABF event include more detailed plans – Yes, the aim is to incorporate further detailed updates e (e.g.) the bridge connecting Guildhall Street.
- Will these events include other organisations, such as Cycle Shepway – The Council is working with outside organisations to gather views and seek to ensure accessibility issues are considered in the round for everyone.
- Will an equality impact assessment (EQIAs) be carried out – Yes this is a requirement ([Equality impact assessments \(EQIAs\) | Folkestone & Hythe District Council \(folkestone-hythe.gov.uk\)](https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/equality-impact-assessments-eqias)).
- How can members of the public provide feedback – Comments can be made via the public engagement events, or alternatively by email. The email address is out the council's website (public.engagement@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk).
- What can the council do to encourage more comments/feedback going forward – The council is always thinking of ways to encourage more feedback. Possible suggestions include incorporating questions into the VR experience, tablets being provided during engagements, Members

suggested providing a way of recording verbal feedback at the engagements may encourage more comments.

- Is there an intention for the project to return to this committee at a later date – Yes, when further updates are available.

40. **2023 Tenant Satisfaction Survey Action Plan**

Michael Bailey, Tenant Engagement & Wellbeing Senior Specialist, introduced the item and outlined the report.

The report presents the findings from the 2023 tenant satisfaction survey, and the resulting draft Action Plan which has been developed in partnership with the Strategic Tenant Advisory Panel.

Following the Tenant Engagement & Wellbeing Senior Specialist's update, Members raised several points, including:

- Members noted that the overall results look excellent and congratulated the team.
- Members asked for clarification regarding 2.5 of the report, Effective handling of complaints and the distinguishment between the council's formal definition of a complaint and a request for service. Members asked whether these could be determined within the survey – The council has analysed the comments within the survey to determine which were service requests and these have been raised with the repairs team.
- Members noted the difference in satisfaction across the wards and highlighted that central wards were more satisfied than rural. The Tenant Engagement & Wellbeing Senior Specialist noted that the council is aware and wants to do more to engage with rural areas.
- It was noted that only 20.4% responded to the survey. Members would like to see an increase in responses. It was mentioned that the council may possibly be employing an external organisation to conduct the 2024 tenant satisfaction survey. It was thought that tenants may engage more with an external organisation and the feedback provided by tenants could be anonymous.
- Members asked whether a breakdown by ward of the 684 responses could be provided – The Tenant Engagement & Wellbeing Senior Specialist, confirmed this could be provided.
- Members noted an error in the report (Maintaining building safety) and the officer confirmed that the report will be updated. The report states that Romney Marsh had the lowest percentage (72%), however, Folkestone East had a lower percentage of 70%.
- As per Appendix 1, page 5, general observations, it was noted in terms of equality, a number of groups showed a slightly lower level of satisfaction. Members asked whether there was any particular reason – The Tenant & Wellbeing Senior Specialist, believed this was due to the groups being a smaller proportion of the council tenants and noted that no comments in the survey pointed to any tenants feeling discriminated against due to their protected characteristics.

- How does this report feed into the wider procurement work – The council is looking to involve residents in the procurement process for the new repairs contract. A key part of The Strategic Tenant Advisory Panel's role will be to looking at the proposed contractor's approach and engagement with residents, i.e. how they work and interact with tenants, keeping appointments and how they improve their tenant satisfaction, etc.
- Members asked when they can expect to receive an update regarding the tenant's action plan. The Tenant Engagement & Wellbeing Senior Specialist, advised they are hoping to provide a further update in May/June 2024.

Proposed by Councillor Connor McConville,
Seconded by Councillor Alan Martin; and,

Resolved:

- 1. To receive and note report OS/23/08.**
- 2. To note the results of the 2023 tenant satisfaction survey attached as Appendix 1**
- 3. To note, and provide any comments on, the draft Tenant Survey Action Plan attached as appendix 2.**

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