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WE MADE THAT

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WORKSHOP SUMMARY NOTES

Folkestone Town Centre Place Plan

Community engagement introduction

The engagement process for the Folkestone Town Centre Place Plan makes a commitment to listening to the full spectrum of Folkestone's communities. We Made That have held a series of focused workshops and one-to-one conversations over February and March. The team have spoken to strategic & delivery partners, key stakeholders, community & interest groups, business groups and residents groups. The presentations from each of the workshops are available to download, along with this text summary from each workshop.

Summary of involvement so far

- 28 one-to-one conversations with key stakeholders undertaken or upcoming
- 3 youth-focused events undertaken and upcoming
- 4 virtual workshops held to discuss priorities & ambitions
- 46 workshop attendees - local organisations, community groups and stakeholders
- Workshops held and upcoming with the Town Centre Working Group, Members & Officers

Next steps

We are very much looking forward to the public event on **Monday April 19th at 6pm** which will be a chance to reflect back the engagement discussion so far and provide a chance for everyone to share their views. **Details about this event and how to sign up will follow soon. Please do spread the word and advertise through your channels.**

The virtual webinar will share the emerging priorities and vision for discussion. This will be accompanied by a survey and printed pack for those who can't join virtually. Details of how a pack can be obtained will appear here soon.

We will also be planning further workshops, including one on licensing policy, with further details to follow.

If you would like to be involved or have any feedback, please email us at placeplan@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk

Stakeholder workshops

The themed workshops have been a great opportunity for a detailed discussion over priorities and ambitions for the Place Plan. This feedback has been incorporated into the development of emerging ideas, which will be reflected back at the public event.

We've had some really enjoyable and detailed discussions and it's great to see so much enthusiasm in discussing the Place Plan already. Having a themed focus and using small break-out rooms in Zoom helped us to make sure that everyone at the workshops had a chance to share their views. Strategic partners, key stakeholders, community group representatives and business groups were invited, most of whom had previously expressed interest in getting involved.

At all of the events we presented key findings from the appraisal & research work so far. We also posed a series of questions to discuss the Town Centre; what are people's ambitions and priorities, what is the town centre used for now and how can it maximise the opportunities of future developments? This was followed by an additional series of questions to guide a more detailed discussion according to four particular themes.

So far we have engaged 46 stakeholders and group representatives at the following workshop events.

1. Business, skills & employment workshop

This workshop focused on 'doing business in Folkestone – how can Folkestone become an attractive place for businesses to stay and scale? Discussion included how to expand on current success, such as Creative Folkestone, and how to support growth in other parts of the town centre. We also talked about opportunities to support skills and training, including opportunities for young people.

A selection of key highlights and priorities:

- Investment is important to improve the visual appearance of the core town centre area.
- Size of units and flexibility of leases are a particular challenge.
- An independent body or champion could help better support Folkestone's business' to scale and enhance their role in the town centre.
- The town centre is disjointed, despite many assets being close together, and connections should link the station through to the seafront.
- The Folca building presents a great opportunity as an anchor to the town centre, defining new uses and public realm.
- Investing & engaging with Folkestone's young people is really important, and a chance to engage more closely with residents in the eastern areas.

Groups who were invited:

- Kent County Council; Economic Development
- Hotel & Catering Association
- Folkestone Town Team
- Locate in Kent
- The Assembly Line
- Folkestone Harbour Arm
- Stand House
- Folkestone Fringe
- Folkestone College & EKC (East Kent College) Group
- Business Advisory Board
- FIRRG
- The Leas Resident's Association (TLRA)
- High Street Fund applicants; Chaos Cards, Space, L&B Restaurants, Richardson & Richardson, The Chambers, Grace Hill Studios
- Town Centre Animator
- The Workshop
- Kent & Medway Economic Partnership (KMEP)

2. Community & Culture workshop

This workshop focused on how to support new community uses and activities into the core town centre area, to encourage visitors whilst making sure that this offer is also attractive and accessible to local people. Discussion included finding opportunities to support vulnerable or under-represented groups. We also talked about opportunities to support young people and encourage them to stay in Folkestone.

A selection of key highlights and priorities:

- The current education, skills training and business support offer could be better linked up & promoted. Partnerships with colleges should be encouraged. A forum, physical high street hub or skills exchange could help make this visible.
- Supporting a more holistic offer that extends into the core town centre area will support Folkestone becoming a location for a family day out.
- Sunny Sands, the coastline and water-sports offer are important to local people as well as an attractive offer for visitors.

- The experiential offer could be broadened in the long term to include music and market events to activate the town centre
- Considering the Town Centre as a whole is crucial, to address the perceived east-west divide.
- Re-thinking property in the Town Centre through a different approach to uses & leases.
- Careful consideration of timings and the location of evening animation is important.
- The stark contrast between new developments & the most deprived communities is a challenge that must be tackled.
- There is consensus that the town centre doesn't encourage spending time, and that new uses could be focused around community, leisure and business support.
- The seafront development divides opinion. It is agreed that whilst this investment offers a great & positive opportunity, it must also be used to improve Folkestone for everyone. Some communities feel excluded & disconnected.

Groups who were invited:

- Kent Police
- Porchlight
- Safe Haven
- Folkestone Rough Sleeper Initiative
- Folkestone Music Town - Music Board
- Rainbow Centre
- Pillory Barn
- Folkestone Town Council & Town Council Members
- Creative Folkestone
- East Cliff Creatives
- TEDx Folkestone Curator
- Kent Adult Education for the Folkestone area
- Action on Homelessness
- Serveco
- East Kent Mediation
- Salvation Army
- Forward Trust
- We are with you
- Kent County Council; Adult Social Care
- HEART (Heritage and Arts Tourism) Forum
- Go Folkestone
- Otterpool Park LLP
- Folkestone Flower Power
- The Leas Residents Association
- Alliance of Folkestone Residents Associations, (AFRA)
- Remembrance Line Association Ltd
- Community liaison for Folkestone's parish church
- Strange Cargo
- Friends of Folkestone Museum
- Central Gardens Residents' Association
- The Bayle Residents Association

3. Places, Heritage & Revitalisation workshop

This workshop focused on Folkestone's space and places – how can we make the most of Folkestone's abundant assets to attract visitors whilst making sure that this offer also improves the lives of current residents.

Discussion included how to use events and public realm interventions to support the offer, and which assets are most in need. We also talked about what kinds of new uses, community uses & events could be introduced to the core town centre area to help redefine its role.

A selection of key highlights and priorities:

- There should be a long term vision for heritage & tourist assets which are currently disconnected. The Church of St Mary & St Eanswythe is a significant community & heritage landmark.
- Supporting local communities and creation of local jobs is key. The focus should not just be on new residents and visitors.
- The Town Centre lacks a civic heart, open and public space of significant size. There are specific places that could be improved
- Bouverie Place is doing well but there is a trend of declining retail demand, exacerbated by a long high street leading to issues with empty shops.
- Development in the town centre could include affordable or intergenerational living.
- The pandemic offers a chance to attract people to live and work in Folkestone, particularly due to the easy access to London. Flexible work space in the town centre could be provided to support this.
- The Otterpool development presents a great opportunity but must also be integrated with plans for the Town Centre.
- There is a perception that the creative industry ends in the creative quarter and is separate from the rest of the Town Centre, but it is an important part of attracting people to Folkestone year-round.
- The topography of the town is a challenge. The Leas Lift is important and could be accompanied by a contemporary additional offer to connect the town centre to the coast.

Groups who were invited:

- Kent County Council; Strategic Planning & Policy
- Homes England
- Sunflower House
- Friends of the Leas Pavilion
- Otterpool Park LLP
- Alliance of Folkestone Residents Associations, (AFRA)
- Shepway Sports Trust
- Leas Lift CIC
- Stand House
- F51 skatepark
- Guy Hollaway Architects
- Ellandi
- Primary Care Estate, East Kent, Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)
- David Hicken Associates
- Trinity Capital Limited
- HEART (Heritage and Arts Tourism) Forum
- The Friends of St Mary and St Eanswythe
- Go Folkestone
- Rotary Club
- Folkestone Roads Review
- Barton Willmore
- Radnor Estate
- MPL Group
- Leas Pavilion
- Friends of the Leas Pavillion
- SAGA
- Folkestone Museum
- Folkestone Town Council

4. Transport, Active Travel & Leisure workshop

This workshop focused on discussing the opportunities for a radical new vision for Folkestone's transport infrastructure as well as how to support active travel choices supporting more sustainable futures. A particular focus was around pedestrian & public realm links and improvements to better connect the station to the coast, to help strengthen the role of Folkestone Central station.

A selection of key highlights and priorities:

- Arrival into Folkestone by all modes of transport is not visually appealing and needs addressing.
- The ring road, lack of bus routes and changing topography are particular challenges that mean that people are deterred from travelling from the coast into the Town Centre. Walking & cycling connections should be improved.
- A vision for rest of town centre and making bold infrastructure changes will help to reconnect the harbour to rest of core town centre.
- The Place Plan needs simple messages that are easily accessible.
- Parking is an issue and a concern. Low carbon options could be encouraged as part of a visitor offer.
- The ring road is a particular challenge that needs addressing. This should be re-imagined, along with the Saga building and bus station.
- There is little good quality hotel accommodation in the core town centre. The new F51 skatepark offers an opportunity to rethink the hotel offer and tie in with other events.

Groups who were invited:

- Folkestone Road Review
- Aspen House Leaseholders Alliance
- Shepway Sports Trust
- Visit Kent
- Kent County Council; Growth Environment
- Kent County Council; Transport & Highways
- Stagecoach
- SPOKES; East Kent Cycling Campaign
- Click to Cycle
- Cycle Shepway
- Network Rail

Other groups included in one-to-one conversations:

- Folkestone & District Local History Society
- Strategy & Policy Senior Specialist, Folkestone & Hythe District Council
- Cycling UK
- Folkestone Harbour and Seafront Development Company/The Roger De Haan Charitable Trust
- Creative Quarter Strategic Regeneration Group
- Turner Schools