

Examination of Folkestone & Hythe District Council Core Strategy Review

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Examination webpage: <https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/core-strategy-review>

Inspectors' Note – Participating at Hearing Sessions

Introduction

As previously announced, hearing sessions will be held in Folkestone & Hythe District Council Civic Centre (F&HDC) on the following dates:

Physical Hearing Dates

- Week 1 - Tuesday 3 to Friday 6 November 2020
- Week 2 - Tuesday 10 to Friday 13 November 2020

Virtual Hearing Dates (Using Zoom Video Conferencing)

- Week 1 – Thursday 5 November 2020 (Morning) (Virtual Hearing)
- Week 3 - Wednesday 18 and Friday 20 November 2020 (Virtual Hearings)
- Week 4 - Monday 23, and Wednesday 25 November 2020 (Virtual Hearings)

The matters to be discussed at each session will be as previously set out in the document FHDC EX010 published on 22 May 2020. The final agenda will be published a few days before each session confirming the issues to be discussed and participants.

The hearing sessions will be held in the Council Chamber within the F&HDC Civic Centre with participation by physically attending. (The participation by joining a virtual session (by using online Zoom) or by phone will be now mainly be held following the physical sessions in weeks 3 and 4). Participants listed in document FHDC EX015 should confirm to the Programme Officer how they wish to participate if they have not already done so as soon as possible, and no later than one week before the relevant hearing session.

Observing hearing sessions

Due to the limit on numbers no one will be allowed to attend the Council Chamber to observe. All sessions will be broadcast live and will be subsequently available to view online via a link on the Council's website.

Participation by attending at the Civic Centre

The Council has undertaken a Covid-19 risk assessment of the Civic Centre, and a separate risk assessment specifically for the examination hearings. These set out measures, consistent with relevant legislation and Government guidance, aimed at ensuring that hearing will be safe. Both documents will be published in the examination library under Examination Document References FHDC EX016 and FHDC EX017.

Nobody should attend a hearing session if they have any of the Covid-19 symptoms on that day. Furthermore, neither should attend if Government guidance indicates that they should self-isolate, including because they had symptoms within the last 10 days, or any member of their household had symptoms in the last 14 days. If any participant is unable to attend for this reason, or due to other changes in personal circumstances, they should inform the Programme Officer as soon as possible. Arrangements will then be made for them to participate online or by phone.

Each participant must attend on their own. If any participant considers it essential to be accompanied to the venue by someone else, for example because they need particular care or support, please let the Programme Officer know as soon as possible and no later than one week before the relevant session.

Participants should arrive at the Civic Centre no later than 08:30am in order to allow safety procedures to be followed and the session to start promptly at 09:30am. Please queue outside the rear door of the Civic Centre located behind the main building within the parking area reserved for Councillors – this will be well sign posted on the days of the Hearings.

Everyone must maintain a two metre social distance at all times outside and inside the Civic Centre and must not mingle with others.

Unless exempt, everyone should wear a face covering before entering the Civic Centre and at all times other than when seated in their dedicated seat within the Council Chamber. Participants may wear a face covering at their seat if they wish to.

On arrival at the Civic Centre, participants will be met by a member of the Council Staff outside the building. They will be asked to have a temperature test, complete a health declaration form and provide test and trace contact details. Participants who have downloaded the NHS Covid-19 tracing app will be able to scan the QR code that will be displayed at the entrance to the Civic Centre, and Council Chamber. Once these procedures are completed, participants will be escorted to their dedicated seat in the Chamber.

No more than 28 people will be allowed in the Chamber during each session. An indicative seating plan in the Chamber is attached to the Annex to this note. This identifies a total of 28 seats (marked in red) that can be used safely. The 3 seats on the “top table” are for the Inspectors and the Programme Officer. A block of 5 seats on the right (when viewed from the top table) are for the Council Officers (including Barrister and any ICT support if necessary). The remaining block will be allocated to other participants.

Each designated seat will have its own microphone and arrangements will be made for cleaning of these in-between breaks/sessions. Sanitising wipes will be provided to allow users to clean their own desk/microphone prior to, and after each session.

There will be comfort breaks of between 20 and 30 minutes during the morning and afternoon sessions, as well as a longer lunch break (up to an hour in duration). If participants wish to leave their seat they may do so, but please wait until the Inspectors have left the room, maintain two metres social distancing and do not mingle. There are seating areas outside the Council Chamber, which can be used by participants during breaks. However, if any wishes to leave the building they will need to be escorted to the relevant exit and if they wish to re-enter the building they will need to have another temperature test and sign in again.

There are toilet rooms available for participants on the corridor outside the Council Chamber. Social distancing should be respected during the use of these facilities with no more than two people inside each room at any one time. They are well marked for access.

No refreshments will be provided within the Civic Office, nor are there any catering facilities for participants to use. There are a number of shops, and cafes available within a few minutes-walk of the Civic Centre, although the duration of a lunch break cannot be guaranteed. Participants may wish to bring their own food and drink but everyone is requested to only consume water in the Chamber during hearing session.

No paper documents will be available or can be circulated before, during or after hearing sessions. Participants should therefore only bring paper or electronic copies of the all documents they may need. Wi-Fi access will be available for all participants in the Chamber.

At the end of the sessions, participants will be escorted from the building using the exit from the back of the Council Chamber.

If the fire alarm sounds, everyone must leave the building promptly and safely and go to the assembly point in the rear of the staff car park which is at the furthest one from the Civic Centre¹. Whilst social distancing should be adhered to as far as possible in such circumstances, the first priority is to leave the building. When safely out of the building all should maintain two metres distancing.

If a first aider is required the Programme Officer will have a list of all those working in the Civic Centre during the Hearing Sessions.

Participation at Virtual Hearings by Zoom or by phone

Participants who cannot or do not wish to attend hearings in person must inform the Programme Officer as soon as possible, and no later than one week before the session (unless this is unavoidable due to changed circumstances). Participants will be invited via email; and this will set out the steps that will need to be taken to join the virtual sessions once the sessions have been set by the Inspectors.

The virtual sessions due to connectivity cannot currently be run at the same time as the hearings in person although all the relevant matters will be still be covered at these by the Inspectors.

Further details will be issued shortly for all those participants who have requested to attend the hearings using “virtual” video conferencing communication.

If any participant wishes to contribute by phone or by attending a virtual hearing instead of a physical one they should inform the Programme Officer as soon as possible, and no later than one week before session so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

If technological problems, or unexpected circumstances mean that a participant is unable to participate they should inform the Programme Officer. If they cannot make their contribution later in the session or at a “virtual” hearing then arrangements will be made for them to exercise their right to be heard on one of the reserve days or at another time if deemed necessary by the Inspectors. In such circumstances, the participant may find it helpful to watch the relevant session online via the link on the Council’s website.

Privacy

The hearings will be conducted in line with the Council’s data protection policies and processes. Please ensure that you read the privacy notice that will be available on the Examination and News Section of the Core Strategy Review Examination before attending your relevant hearing session. If you have any questions regarding the policy or if you would like a copy sent to you please contact the Programme Officer directly.

Further Information

If anyone has any queries about the hearing sessions, please contact the Programme Officer.

Finally, we are sure you will appreciate that during this difficult time arrangements may need to alter at very short notice so please keep up to date with the examination website or in contact with the Programme Officer.

Philip Mileham and Kevin Ward

Inspectors

Kevin Ward

Mr Kevin Ward BA (Hons) MRTPI

Phillip Mileham

Mr Philip Mileham BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

ⁱ The Fire Alarm is tested at 08:00 each Wednesday so if a session is being held and the alarm is held at any time other than this then it is likely that the building will need to be evacuated in response to the alarm