

**FOLKESTONE & HYTHE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**Folkestone – A Brighter Future**

**Town Centre Activation**

**BRIEF**

**August 2023**

**Prepared by:-**

**Folkestone & Hythe District Council**

**Civic Centre**

**Castle Hill Avenue**

**Folkestone**

**Kent CT20 2QY**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

* 1. Following a successful bid to the governments Levelling up Fund to deliver the programme Folkestone – A Brighter Future (FABF), Folkestone & Hythe District Council (FHDC) are seeking to commission consultants/contractor to lead on the activation of the town centre to complement the highway and public realm interventions.
  2. In addition, the commission will require consultants/contractor to identify a deployable strategy to ensure a strong legacy post project investment, with the aim to improve the townscape, support existing and future businesses, help attract inward investment and add to the vibrancy of Folkestone Town Centre.
  3. The contract with consultants/contractor will run until the project is due to be completed, currently scheduled for March ‘25.

## **2. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT**

* 1. In January 2021, FHDC commissioned the development of a Place Plan for Folkestone Town Centre. The purpose was to identify interventions necessary to future-proof the town centre as a desired place to live, work, visit and play, whilst supporting future economic growth.
  2. To develop the Place Plan consultants undertook an Urban Appraisal to understand the place and conducted an extensive engagement programme to ensure stakeholders, organisations, groups and members of the public had input to the development of the Place Plan and proposed interventions. More than 70 actions were identified in support of regeneration of the town centre.
  3. In September 2021, elected members endorsed ongoing activity to develop a detailed programme that resulted in a bid to the Levelling Up Fund, focussing on the priority projects identified in the Place Plan.
  4. Urban designers and architects We Made That, led a multi-disciplined team commissioned to work up a coherent package of interventions that would unlock transformational change for Folkestone and the town centre their aim was to progress the proposed seven priority project identifying their key benefits and outline costs, and then prepare an options appraisal recommending the projects to progress as part of the LUF bid. The seven priority projects were:
     + - * Station Arrival and town centre connections
         * Improved gateway to the town centre, including a new bus station layout
         * Folca (former Debenhams store acquired by the council)
         * Sandgate Rd town lab, public realm and “Guildhall Sq”
         * F51 environs and Payers Park
         * Harbour Line/Tram Road
         * Sunny Sands
  5. The Folkestone – A Brighter Future project comprises three work packages which will primarily bring improved infrastructure and public realm led interventions. These are:
     + Station Arrival and Town Centre Connections
     + Improved Gateway to the Town Centre and Bouverie Square
     + Folca, Sandgate Rd and Town Centre Public Realm
  6. As the Highways authority, KCC are our key delivery partner and are the Project Lead for all programme elements excluding the refurbishment works at Folca which are to be led by Folkestone & Hythe District Council.
  7. Creative Folkestone are the creative partners for the programme and will deliver artistic installations and interventions throughout the three work packages.
  8. There are key projects within the programme that will be the main focus of this commission and will require close liaison with the design team to ensure the design and proposed infrastructure will complement the proposed activation strategy to maximise the legacy vision.
  9. The Bouverie Square element will see the current bus station conversion to a multipurpose public space.
  10. Folca is a former department store acquired by the district council in 2020. FABF programme funding will enable initial works as part of a refurbishment programme.
  11. Our bid included the delivery of a “test lab” where new uses could be tested.
  12. Sandgate Road and Guildhall Street are the main arteries of the pedestrianised area of the town centre and identified as our primary retail area.

## **3. PURPOSE/SCOPE**

* 1. The following areas of the programme have been identified as the predominant focus for this commission:
* Bouverie Square animation and revenue generating opportunities.
* Folca refurbishment and delivery of a test lab
* Pedestrianised part of the town centre (Sandgate Road and Guildhall St)
* Other town centre specific actions from the place plan
  1. The consultancy team will work with FABF programme members throughout the project lifecycle to ensure a cohesive delivery plan.
  2. It is anticipated that interventions could be trialled and tested within the town centre during the project delivery phase, requiring engagement with relevant internal/external stakeholders and businesses, to bring schemes forward.
  3. To ensure delivery post project timeline, internal engagement on policy issues during process development, ensuring relevant permissions (e.g. highways/planning) are sought to successfully deliver initiatives to improve use of these various spaces.
  4. The role will also ensure there is a streamlined and efficient Town Centre Operating Model, to maximise opportunities as they arise, including revenue generating initiatives to cover ongoing/future expenditure, utilizing existing process or systems where appropriate.
  5. The role will be instrumental in the delivery of a “test lab” a provision of space(s) for innovation, experimentation, and enterprise, during the project lifecycle, with a secured legacy post project investment.

## **OUTCOMES and OUTPUTS**

* 1. Consultants/contractor will need to ensure evidence of deliverables are in line with the defined output and outcome evidence criteria as set out by DLUHC for monitoring report purposes.
  2. The consultants/contractor will be required to:
* Participate in regular project meetings relating to the areas in scope.
* Scope, agree, and successfully implement (including internal roles and responsibilities to maintain) a Town Centre Operating Model, utilizing existing systems and processes, with process and guidance notes for internal and external parties.
* Deliver a defined and adopted Market strategy with an associated delivery options appraisal.
* Implement a successful Market Improvement Programme, with areas of ongoing revenue opportunity for the council identified.
* Curated programme of events to promote and maximise the use of the town centre, driving footfall and how they can become self-sustaining post-delivery.
* Identification of any capital acquisition items to support town centre animation and recommendation to ensure ongoing quality/maintenance of items.
* Strategy and operational process for successful delivery of the test lab
* Options appraisal for the most efficient location of the test lab with curation of early adopters of the space and other potential inward investors for the commercial element of the scheme.
* Proposal for animation of Bouverie Square including seasonal and regular interventions.
  1. Representation at FABF public engagement events during project lifecycle.
  2. Internal and External stakeholder engagement to enable the refinement of proposed interventions.

## **Project governance**

* 1. The Council’s Chief of Place and Growth, Rod Lead is the Lead Officer for the successful delivery of Folkestone – A Brighter Future. Day to day activities will be facilitated by the Programme Manager, Senior Economic Development Specialist, Lorraine Smith.
  2. There is a formal governance structure during the project lifecycle, with the successful consultant required to attend regular meetings including weekly project meetings with the Client to present progress against agreed project milestones. Where necessary, attendance at the fortnightly Steering Committee meetings with other key members of the programme management and F&HDC senior leadership meetings and member briefings (to be assumed at least once every six months for each).

## **PROJECT TIMELINE**

* 1. The commission needs to align with the current project delivery schedule, currently the project officially to be completed by March 25, continued dialogue with DLUCH to potentially extend this deadline (due to DLUHC announcement and formal funding agreement slipping by 6 months). The anticipated substantive works completion date is September 2025.

This commission will align to the project schedule and will ensure a smooth transition to a sustainable delivery model created as part of the proposed outcome.

## **CONSULTANT SKILLS**

* 1. The Council is looking for a consultancy team/contractor that has experience of performing the role outlined above.
  2. The Consultants/contractor must be able to work proactively and productively with members of the project team and other service areas within the council to adopt any new processes to ensure the ongoing legacy post project investment.
  3. The consultants/contractor need to demonstrate previous experience relevant to the commission, including the curation to successfully animate town centre spaces. Including the engagement of existing businesses and organisations who may be impacted by change.

## **KEY DOCUMENTATION**

* 1. Folkestone Town Centre Place Plan
  2. Folkestone A Brighter Future Project Designs (LUF bid submission)
  3. Folkestone A Brighter Future Project key milestones