

From: Mark Dance, Cabinet Member for Economic Development
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To: Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee - 13 September 2019

Subject: Members' Recent Visits to Folkestone & Hythe District Council and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper: None

Future Pathway of Paper: None

Electoral Division: All

Summary: This report is in two parts. It summarises the outcomes of the recent visits by KCC Members to Folkestone & Hythe District Council (F&HDC) and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) and outlines the programme of future visits to other Kent districts in 2019/20.

Recommendation: The Cabinet Committee is asked to receive and endorse the report.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 At the November 2017 meeting of this Cabinet Committee, Members agreed that officers arrange a programme of informal visits to Kent districts. The objective was to provide an opportunity for Cabinet Committee Members to gain an understanding of the economic development and regeneration opportunities and challenges within each of the Kent districts.
- 1.2 This report summarises the main outcomes of Members' visits to Folkestone & Hythe District Council on 14 June and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council on 12 July 2019.

2. Visit to Folkestone & Hythe District Council

- 2.1 The visit to F&HDC on 14 June was arranged with the full support of senior officers of the Council who provided a briefing about the economic development and regeneration opportunities and challenges for district which are listed below.
 - Highways & Transportation: Aiming for better transport modelling based on future trends not past trends, taking a long term view over 40 years and providing creative and imaginative solutions.
 - Broadband: connectivity very important, especially for communities on Romney Marsh.

- Lorry Park: consider support for a network of parking facilities across the county and country and improved KCC/HE working on this.
- Lydd Airport: potential for expansion will need KCC support for improvements to the road infrastructure.
- Support the examination in public for Folkestone & Hythe Core Strategy Review –outlining policy for the new garden town.
- Continued investment into the district’s No Use Empty scheme.
- Support Gypsy & Traveller site provision required by Places and Policies Local Plan
- Progress the district’s need for new, modern, flexible business space as part of the business rates retention pool.
- Strategic development sites across the district are:
 - Folkestone Town Centre
 - Otterpool Park
 - Folkestone Seafront
 - Princes Parade, Hythe
 - Nickolls Quarry
 - New Romney
- New Accelerated Delivery Board set up with range of partners represented including KCC and chaired by Damian Collins MP

2.2 The highlights of the visit are detailed more fully in Appendix 1 to this report. These issues will be followed up by Officers as appropriate and with the relevant organisations.

2.3 Presentations made on the day are available from the author of this report.

3. Visit to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

3.1 The visit to TWBC on 12 July was arranged with the full support of senior officers of the Council who provided a briefing about the economic development and regeneration opportunities and challenges for district which are listed below.

- Employment space - 200,000 square feet has been lost.
- Threat to High Street retail - vacancies in Royal Tunbridge Wells (RTW) is 17.4% compared to SE at 8.5%
- Broadband coverage
- Delivering growth with Zero Revenue Support Grant/Business Rates Retention Scheme
- Five Year Plan Vision: ‘To encourage investment and sustainable growth, and to enhance quality of life for all.’ Emphasis on ‘Place Leadership ‘

Eight Big Projects:

- New cultural and learning hub in RTW
- Explore delivery for a new theatre in RTW
- New Civic Centre and office space in RTW
- Additional off-street carparking in RTW
- New Local Plan for the Borough
- New sports facilities across the Borough
- Development of Community Centres in eg Southborough/Cranbrook/Sissinghurst/Paddock Wood

- Enhance public realm in the Borough

List of Priority Projects:

- The Amelia Scott
- Calverley Square
- Southborough Hub
- Royal Tunbridge Wells public realm Phase 1 (completed)
- Royal Tunbridge Wells public realm Phase 2
- Housing at Royal Wells, Sherwood, Knights Wood, Hollyfields
- Union House / 1887 The Pantiles
- Royal Victoria Shopping Centre purchased by British Land
- Cinema site

3.2 Key asks of KCC:

3.2.1 Highways and Transportation

- To work proactively with TWBC to ensure that proposals for housing and economic growth set out in the new Local Plan are accompanied by the necessary improvements in transport infrastructure, including delivery of a relief scheme for the A228 at Colt's Hill (a pre-strategic outline business case was recently submitted to Major Roads Network Programme by KCC).
- KCC to partner TWBC in lobbying Transport for the South East/Highways England/DfT for the dualling of the A21 from Kippings Cross to Lamberhurst.
- To deliver infrastructure that will facilitate travel by sustainable alternatives to the car, particularly specialist design of high quality cycle routes, both urban and inter-urban, and also 20mph schemes in residential areas and town/village centres, as supported by local people (and as set out in the Borough's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)).
- To help support the high street by improving the maintenance of the public realm: improving the quality of patching work, keeping highway signage and other assets clean and in good repair, and dealing with overhanging branches and hedges.
- Attendance of senior KCC Officers at Joint Transportation Board for relevant agenda items, so that matters (often brought to the Committee by local residents) can be resolved more satisfactorily at the meetings.

3.2.2 Parking

- Make updates to the KCC website so that it is more customer friendly and properly reflects parking roles and responsibilities, particularly where requests for parking controls are concerned.
- KCC to work with TWBC to provide improved car park signage, in particular variable messaging signs regarding number of car park spaces available, as soon as possible (this work has been delayed for some time).
- KCC to support TWBC to properly enforce parking restrictions in all bus lanes.

3.2.3 Economic Development

- To continue KCC's support for 'The Amelia' Cultural and Learning Hub and to ensure that KCC services are integrated into the new service offering.
- To provide political and financial support for the Calverley Square Project which will deliver £30m per annum economic benefit for the Kent economy and provide KCC

with improved retained Business Rates. Cllr David Scott to discuss proposals with KCC Economic Development and Property departments as soon as possible.

- To support future bids within Tunbridge Wells for LEP funding (TWBC have not received anything apart from an allocation for the A26 junction improvements and the West Kent Sustainable Transport Fund) despite being enormously important to the Kent economy.
- To consider co-investing in the redevelopment of the Civic Complex to provide flexible office space recognising the strength of the local creative economy, as recommended in the recent Tunbridge Wells Cultural & Creative Industries Study (that was co-commissioned by TWBC and KCC).
- To support future bids for national funding (including any funds for the high street).
- Continued partnership working to improve broadband speeds across the borough, including in the most rural areas. In addition, future work on digital infrastructure e.g. 5G to facilitate smarter transport corridors.

3.2.4 Environmental

- Following the recent Council motion declaring TWBC's recognition of global climate and biodiversity emergencies, TWBC are seeking support from KCC for actions to meet the goal of making the borough carbon neutral by 2030.
- Provide a household waste recycling centre to serve residents in the east of the Borough and those in neighbouring areas.
- To work together to identify opportunities for TWBC maintained street lighting to be adopted and come under KCC's maintenance contract and provide an opportunity to access the KCC contract maintenance framework to maintain TWBC's residual lighting.
- To assist TWBC in the collection of good quality data and more critically, the analysis to be able to make informed decisions in supporting environmental improvements. (health data, local greenhouse gas emissions, renewable energy installations).
- Give support to TWBC in procuring renewable energy projects i.e. provision of technical specifications and tender documents to enable for instance, the procurement of solar PV.
- Develop a standard policy on EV charging across the county including on street charging, and the possible provision of charging hubs and provide procurement support i.e. possible framework to procure EV charging points and technical specifications.
- Continue to provide advice to the TWBC on transport innovations and low emission transport options i.e. hydrogen and alternative charging such as solar roads.
- Continue to support the TWBC in assisting the move to a low emission public transport bus fleet.
- TWBC and KCC to lobby government together, to permit the localised setting of planning and licensing fees (which are effectively subsidised by local taxpayers).

3.3 The highlights of the visit are detailed more fully in Appendix 2 to this report.

These issues will be followed up by Officers as appropriate and with the relevant organisations.

3.4 Presentations made on the day are available from the author of this report.

4. Programme of Further Visits

4.1 Further Member visits to Kent districts are being arranged in collaboration with district and borough officers. The format for each visit involves a day-long tour of the principal economic development and infrastructure developments within each district.

4.2 The visit programme for 2019/20 is:

Ashford	11 October
Thanet	22 November
Canterbury	13 December
Maidstone	5 February 2020

Further visits are being planned for the remaining districts.

4.3 As agreed by the Committee, should places be available, invitations will be extended to the Chair and Members of the Environment & Transportation Cabinet Committee.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 The cost of coach hire is approximately £350 per visit.

6. Recommendation

Recommendation: The Cabinet Committee is asked to receive and endorse the report.

7. Contact details

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