

FAVERSHAM 2020: Town Action Plan

December 2012



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Foreword by the mayor

On behalf of Faversham Town Council, I am delighted to welcome the publication of Faversham 2020: the Town Action Plan. The plan builds on the Faversham 2006 Health Check and explores in detail the opportunities the localism agenda can deliver for Faversham. It has provided a voice to residents, many of whom have articulated, perhaps for the first time, their views of, and vision for, the future of Faversham for which we are extremely grateful. We also extend our thanks to Alison Eardley of Action for Market Towns and Laurence Young of the Faversham Enterprise Partnership who delivered the project supported by the Town Action Plan Steering Group.

When the town council commissioned the Town Action Plan, our aim was to learn, in a more structured way, what residents wanted the town council to do and deliver on their behalf. The engagement process (details of which can be found at Annex A) has given people the opportunity to think carefully about their home town – what they like, what they don't like, and what changes they want to see – and to make a set of recommendations for change. The challenge now for the town council is to consider how the recommendations can be delivered. With over seventy recommendations covering nineteen themes, we need to take time and care to plan how this can be achieved in the short, medium, and long term. We also recognise many recommendations are for others to deliver and we will work closely with key partners where this is the case. Above all, we want to reassure everyone who took time to give their views, and all of Faversham's residents, that their town council does listen and seeks to deliver what is best for the long-term future of Faversham.

Since 2010, new opportunities, driven by the Big Society and the government's localism agenda, have emerged both nationally and locally. With those opportunities in mind, the town council will shortly publish its formal response to the Town Action Plan, where, as part of our business planning process, we will highlight our key priorities for 2013-14 and how we will deliver them. We will also identify where we will work with partners to facilitate delivery of the recommendations or where we will be championing delivery by others.

We intend to do this in time for the council's Annual Town Meeting on 20 May, and I invite you to come and discuss with us how we will be taking that work forward. We know that not everyone will have had the opportunity to comment and we hope this report will provide the impetus for a continuing conversation with you on the future of Faversham.



Cllr David Simmons, Mayor of Faversham

Executive summary and key recommendations

Executive summary

The Faversham 2020 Town Action Plan review has been commissioned by Faversham Town Council (FTC) and primarily seeks to inform the future operations of the council by providing it with a context of views received from a wide spectrum of the community it serves, an analysis of those views and recommendations for further action.

The review, however, is not tailored for the exclusive use of the council. Rather, it identifies a number of priorities that can be tackled by community groups and others, either in tandem with FTC or through initiatives of their own.

Commissioning of the review has been timely because its wider context is the national localism environment introduced by central government via its 'Big Society' agenda and, more specifically, by new powers granted to local community organisations and councils through the April 2012 Localism Act. Unlike the 1974 reorganisation of local government, the Localism Act does not prescribe new organisational structures nor the introduction of new civic entities, but gives communities opportunities to take a greater stake in the running of local functions, services and facilities if they wish to do so. During the review a number of people noted to the authors: 'Localism was made for Faversham.'

It can be seen this circumstance has, alongside recent changes of FTC circumstance and priorities, brought the town council to a crossroads; on the one hand does the council continue as an entity with a modest local profile, with some influence, but having a limited direct impact on local life? Or, on the other hand, does FTC make a measured assessment of the changed world around it and respond by embarking on a process of change, renewal and movement that leads to it operating at the heart of local affairs?

If the council takes the latter view it is of the utmost importance to acknowledge that the associated building up of a significant transfer of responsibility for functions, services and facilities to local, Faversham decision-makers will not be quick or straightforward. Reversal of the decades-long centralisation of public and third sector powers and activities once held locally into increasingly remote bureaucracies and hierarchies will not happen overnight.

As well as forming and working within a robust, feasible and community based vision of the town's future, FTC and other Faversham based organisations and institutions will need to address resource, finance and competency issues if they desire the return of decision-making and service provision to the local arena. It is important, therefore, to keep in mind the envisaged seven to eight year implementation horizon (to 2020).

From an FTC perspective the following recommendations are considered to be important in the first instance in order to give shape and impetus to the future work of the council.

Key recommendations

Strategic and organisational

In the period to November 2013 it is recommended FTC (recommendations 25 to 30 in the main text):

- 1) Agrees both for itself and for the town the vision statement the Faversham 2020 review has constructed and adopts the vision statement as a guiding template for its activities in the period to 2020
- 2) Reviews, renews and restates its roles and functions, and reviews and renews its committee and organisational structure and communication methods, particularly in relation to the new Localism framework (see above and Governance)

- 3) As part of the process recommended in 2) it reviews its decision-making, engagement and structures for the Faversham Creek Neighbourhood Plan (see Faversham Creek)
- 4) Institutes a programme of learning from progressive English local councils whose profiles match its own. Lessons learnt should be incorporated and implemented within the overall process of renewal (see Governance)
- 5) Using this process of review and renewal the council should set specific aims and objectives, with the Town Action Plan as the basis for the formation of a medium to long-term programme
- 6) From 2014 a scaled-down, annual Town Action Plan process of engagement with local residents and a review of aims and objectives should be built into FTC's planning

Tactical and operational

In parallel to the suggested developments related to the above and in order to maintain momentum on delivery, it is recommended FTC (recommendations 31 to 36 in the main text):

- 1) Researches and acts upon Localism 'quick wins' where functions and services can be readily undertaken locally, eg, FTC to be responsible for naming new town streets and designating temporary 'play streets' (see Governance)
- 2) Sets out its aspirations and plans for future use for community benefit of its historic charters, including Magna Carta (see Tourism, arts, culture)
- 3) Maintains local community and business support, including conclusion of the transfer of town allotment sites, pressing for improvements to town centre parking and engaging with town centre traders and others for economic benefit (see Allotments and green spaces, Business support, Parking strategy, Town centre regeneration). Also, improve and expand contact with area parish councils to increase collaboration for mutual benefit
- 4) Embeds and develops support for local tourism (see Tourism, arts and culture)
- 5) Commences discussion with Kent County Council (KCC) Library Services to explore ways to safeguard local library provision and improved use of the Newton Road site (see Faversham as a service centre)
- 6) Subject to the timing of the national rail franchising process vigorously engages with the Department for Transport and others as part of the shaping of the South East Trains franchise, with the aim of having upgraded the frequency, speed and capacity of rail services to Victoria and Cannon Street (See Transport).

As a first step, in order to enable the strategic and organisational recommendations in particular to be taken forward, it is recommended FTC holds facilitated workshops to debate its roles, functions, structures and communications.

Introduction to Faversham 2020

What is Faversham 2020?

In the early part of 2012, FTC decided to take steps to develop a vision and guiding strategy for their future activity. Councillors wanted to know what was important to local people — what they liked about the town, what they didn't like, what they considered should be improved and what should be the priorities for action — so they could set out a plan based upon local needs, wants and aspirations and which could help them determine where resources and effort would best be spent.

The report seeks to provide councilors with an objective assessment of the views of residents and users of the town such that councilors have a body of evidence and views from across the community available to them when steering a course into the future.

While a primary objective of Faversham 2020 has been to create a guiding document for the town council, the work highlights the value of an ongoing dialogue with residents and inspiring all those involved in the town to take a role in delivering a vision for Faversham. While data provided by agencies such as Swale Borough Council (SBC) and KCC were used to validate the exercise it remained at root a piece of work that discovered community views and sought to act upon them.

Faversham 2020 was in part inspired by new government policy, including the Localism Act of April 2012. This has presented councils and community organisations with new opportunities to take a greater role in local planning and delivery. FTC had previously taken part in a Market Towns Healthcheck, which was effective from 2006-2011 and which pointed to subsequent achievements such as construction of the West Faversham Community Centre, upgrades to the town's public realm and restoration of the Assembly Rooms. It also led directly to the Faversham Revival project, which, among other things, created the Faversham Rewards loyalty card scheme and contributed to the establishment of the Creek Creative arts centre.

FTC commissioned Action for Market Towns (AMT) and the Faversham Enterprise Partnership (FEP) to undertake the Faversham 2020 work. The review has been conducted by Alison Eardley, Policy Manager of AMT, and Laurence Young, Manager of the FEP. An FTC budget of £4,800 was set for the work and AMT providing match-funding support of £3,200.

The project was formally launched at the end of April, with a period of in-depth public engagement taking place from April and August. The final report was formally submitted to the council in December.

It is foreseen that the new plan will inform council and other parties' prioritisation into the future. In a similar way to the 2006 Market Towns Healthcheck, delivery of the adopted recommendations will need to take place over an extended period and it is considered the plan should roll forward until at least 2020.

As part of the delivery process it is proposed that the town action plan is reviewed and updated on a fairly regular basis, starting from 2014, to take account of changing circumstances and to allow fresh feedback to be inputted.

How does Faversham 2020 relate to other plans in progress?

Faversham 2020 does not exist in isolation. Rather, it seeks to take account of other plans and strategies relating to the town. Faversham 2020 is intended to be a strategy for FTC based on views of townspeople and residents in surrounding villages. It seeks to cover all aspects of the town and help guide the activities of FTC, assisting it in prioritising action based on local need.

At the SBC level there is the emerging Swale Core Strategy, 'Bearing Fruits'. This is an SBC district-wide document that sets out strategic planning and development objectives for the whole of the district for the next 20 years or so. Its focus is planning, spatial development, housing,

employment and so forth. The Faversham 2020 plan has borne it in mind in terms of what it says and how it affects actions that might be taken forward for Faversham.

At the local level, FTC is working on the development of a neighbourhood plan for the Faversham creek area. This plan relates only to the creek area and also specifically focusses on spatial planning and development, design and land use. Unlike the Faversham 2020 plan, the Faversham Creek Neighbourhood Plan can ultimately form a part of the Swale Local Plan as a formal planning document that carries legal weight in planning decisions relating to the creek area. To do this it must meet some basic conditions that will be tested at a public examination; it must also receive a simple majority at a local referendum.

It is worth noting that, while Faversham 2020 does not carry the legal weight that a neighbourhood plan can, it forms a building block upon which a town-wide neighbourhood plan could be built if FTC and others are minded to produce such a plan in the future.

List of annexes

- ❖ Details, including methodology, target audiences and volumes relating to how the local community has engaged with the Faversham 2020 project, can be found in **Annex A**.
- ❖ Throughout this document reference is made to supporting fact and figures. The source materials for these data can be found in the bibliography in **Annex B**.
- ❖ The existing 2001 vision statement adopted by FTC is set out in **Annex C**.

About Faversham

Location and geography

Faversham is a market town in north Kent, about 50 miles from London. The town is surrounded by fertile farmland with extensive wetlands to the north, between it and the sea; it occupies a location long favourable for human habitation. As well as being in the midst of good agricultural land the town has always had plentiful fresh water supplies and good transport links; raw ingredients for a successful community. Geographically the area encompasses a range of environments. Faversham's tidal creek flows north into The Swale some two miles away and the town's centre is on a ridge of chalk covered by brickearth that extends from the North Downs, whose dip slope is to the south. The marshes are alluvial flatlands.

A little history

Archaeological research, including by the Faversham Society Archaeological Research Group, shows the local area has had unbroken human habitation since the early Iron Age, with Stone Age evidence of earlier occupations. It is safe to say Faversham has been a place where people have continuously lived and worked for more than 3,000 years.

Roman occupation was followed by settlement by Germanic incomers. In Kent the predominant Germanic tribe were the Jutes and Faversham had an eminent place in the Kingdom of Kent established by them, being one of its seasonal capitals.

The town prospered in the Middle Ages becoming one of the country's leading ports, exporting indigenous foodstuffs and other goods to London and abroad. With the advent of gunpowder manufacture in the 16th century the town added explosives production to its repertoire and remained a national centre for that until the end of the First World War. The area's extensive brickearth deposits were exploited in the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries, further generating wealth and employment for the town. In the 18th century Shepherd Neame was the first brewer out of London to install a stationary steam engine.

Until the early 1970s the area's prosperity rested on two chief pillars, agricultural production and processing, and manufacturing. Faversham and its surrounding area has had fluctuating economic fortunes in the recent past. The national decline in manufacturing during the second half of the 20th century was reflected in Faversham and, while agriculture remains an important aspect of the local economy, the mechanisation of the industry means it is no longer a mass employer of local labour.

This varied pattern of economic activity has left Faversham with a rich legacy in its built environment, with fine domestic and industrial architecture from the 15th to 20th centuries surviving in considerable volume. The Faversham area has nearly 750 listed buildings.

Population figures

The population of the town has historically waxed and waned, often in line with its economic fortunes; the first half of the 20th century saw the town's population decline. However, during the past 50 years Faversham has absorbed a very substantial inflow of people. The 1961 census records Faversham's population as 12,293, the 2011 census records it as 18,628 (latest KCC figure 18,970). This represents a 51.5% rise in population, well in excess of the overall UK increase of 13% during the same period.

The villages, hamlets and rural communities around Faversham are home to a further c.13,500 people. The local area has also seen its population rise, albeit at a slower rate than the town. A generally accepted definition of the Faversham area is the Faversham and Swale East area of SBC, ie, from Teynham in the west to Dunkirk in the east and from Stalisfield in the south to The Swale in the north, plus the parish of Otterden.

Today, a brief review

As a place to live and to work, Faversham and the surrounding rural area can be perceived as a location with substantial positive assets.

As well as having a fine built environment the Faversham area possesses a good array of natural ones. Much of the countryside to the south of the town is within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and both the Oare Marshes Nature Reserve and the South Swale Nature Reserve at Graveney are designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest. A by-product of the agricultural intensity of the rural area is its pleasing patchwork of arable, grazing, orchard and woodland scenery.

Easy access to the M2, A2, Thanet Way and M20, mainline railway services to St Pancras, Victoria, Cannon Street, Dover and Ramsgate, proximity to Eurostar services, the Channel Tunnel and the Channel ports, and good links to Gatwick, London City, Heathrow and Stansted airports means the town has outstanding communications.

At a time of continued international recession, in the spring of 2012 Faversham had an unemployment rate of about 3%, a rate close to some historic definitions of national full employment. The UK unemployment rate at that time was 8.2%.

In addition to Faversham having an entrepreneurial tradition and an increasing volume of commercial sites to boost employment, it can be considered the town's good transport links make it possible for residents to readily seek and find work in neighbouring towns and further afield. This assertion can be supported by SBC data showing commuting out of the SBC administrative area running at just over 50% of the workforce, with more than a third of those workers travelling to Ashford, Canterbury and Maidstone, and 12% travelling to London. Commuting is not one-sided, with Faversham attracting people to it for work.

Faversham has many attractions as a place to live in addition to those noted elsewhere. Two overall attractions cited during the Faversham 2020 consultation are the human scale and layout of the town and its strong sense of place.

While Faversham has expanded substantially the town remains relatively compact with a human scale where, for example, from its centre it is possible to reach open countryside by foot in any direction within 10 to 15 minutes. The concentric nature of the town's development also means a good proportion of its public, leisure, commercial and retail services and facilities remain at its heart and are easily accessible to residents.

Enlightened SBC planning policies, supported by FTC and local organisations, seek to constrain built development to the defined planning 'envelope'. The 'envelope' can be broadly defined as the area within Love Lane to the east, the A2 to the south and the Western Link Road, with the northern boundary delineated by marshland. Adherence to these policies has enabled the town to avoid the ugly and shapeless urban sprawl which has blighted many English towns since the second half of the 20th century and contributed to their traffic and sustainability problems.

Faversham's sense of place is physically established by a singular collection of vernacular architectures and by the peculiarly Kentish features of the surrounding rural area. But, it is most overtly manifested by the people who live there. Comparisons with other localities show the Faversham area to be socially dynamic and collaborative with residents coming together for a vast array of social, cultural and commercial purposes. The faversham.org website alone lists about 90 local clubs and societies, excluding churches.

A lively retail and services sector is also evident in Faversham. In July 2012 an SBC survey showed the town centre had three empty retail premises, a far better occupancy rate other local towns. In August 2012 the UK national retail vacancy rate was 14.3%.

It remains true that Faversham is a market town in an enduring way now less common in Kent. As well as holding street markets three days a week the town is a significant retailing and service centre for both its own population and for that of the rural hinterland around it. Survey

work via village appraisals, for example, identified a continuing large-scale dependence on the town centre for shopping, employment and services.

While further education opportunities in Faversham are limited, the town is served by the University of Kent, Canterbury Christchurch University, the University of Greenwich, Mid Kent College and Canterbury College, all with campuses in either Canterbury or the Medway Towns. The town's two secondary schools, the Abbey and the Queen Elizabeth's Grammar, both currently achieve historically high academic standards and have increasing community outreach programmes. Among town and village primary schools Luddenham and Hernhill schools were in the top 20 in Kent in 2011-12.

However, it should be borne in mind the Faversham area has a mixed social profile with areas of acute social deprivation and difficulty sitting alongside more prosperous residential ones. For example, within the Priory electoral ward some areas were ranked by KCC in 2010 as being among the worst in the county for education, training and skills (14th out of 883 'Local Super Output Areas').

As recently as 2006 the then Davington Priory ward was measured as one of the most deprived in the SBC district, 5th out of 25, while the St Ann's ward was ranked 8th. The two wards were ranked 1,798th and 2,553rd respectively out of 8,414 wards nationally, with drug abuse, crime and single parenthood problems.

Civic governance and service provision

Faversham is served by the three-tier local government structure of Kent. FTC is the local council and a successor authority to Faversham Borough Council, abolished in 1974 at the time of local government reorganisation. SBC is the district authority, providing services to Sittingbourne, Faversham, the surrounding rural areas and the Isle of Sheppey. KCC is the county authority, operating services such maintenance of highways.

Following the 1974 local government reorganisation virtually all civic functions were moved from Faversham as an authority to SBC. However, the Localism Act of April 2012 strengthened the rights of local councils, as well as community groups, to operate services, own property and act as focal points for their communities. FTC has begun to engage with the opportunities offered by the localism agenda, and, for example, is conducting the Faversham Creek Neighbourhood Plan and working to take over from SBC the running of town allotment sites.

Faversham health services are via the Eastern and Coastal Kent Primary Care Trust that covers the Ashford, Canterbury, Dover, Shepway, Swale and Thanet local authority areas; policing is by Kent Police through its North Division, extending from Faversham to Dartford, with its main local base in Sittingbourne; KCC is the county education authority.

Observations

In the light of the town's many positive attributes it is perhaps unsurprising a 'key data for Swale' survey carried out by SBC in 2011 revealed that 86% of Faversham town residents were 'satisfied with their area as a place to live', against an all-England average of 80% and a return for Sittingbourne of 58%.

People taking part in the Town Action Plan consultation were noticeably buoyant about the town and the rural area and that is reflected in results recorded. Participants' comment was also noticeably more positive than that received during previous consultations, eg, for the Faversham Area Healthcheck & Action Plan in 2006.

Like any long-standing community Faversham has been subject to substantial and continuing change. The modern era has seen that trend maintained and, in some ways, accelerated. While the authors recognise there is a strong local desire to conserve and value the town's past, it is mythic to suggest the town has ever been anything other than receptive to change and to new ideas. Arguably, Faversham has been at its most prosperous and successful during those times



when it has been most open to change and innovation.

However, while the town has been through other times of extreme change, the radical transformation of Faversham, socially and in its physical environment, resulting from exceptional change during the past 50 to 60 years is without quantitative precedent in the town's history.

The broad desire expressed by many local people to now conserve and consolidate their community by building positively on its many innate good qualities, rather than by continuing to physically expand it, can be seen to be an intuitive response to the sustained and massive changes that have affected the locality since World War II.

Overall, the mainly positive tenor of feedback received and the willingness with which it has been given suggests now is a good time to plan for the future of the town.



A vision for Faversham

The need for a vision statement

Early in the Faversham 2020 process it was recognised by councillors and members of the steering group that the work needed to be put within a strategic framework. To this end the overarching vision statement set out below has been constructed.

Having a vision for Faversham builds upon and takes forward the existing vision statement (see Annex C) and is an important step in setting out where the town would like to be in the future. A vision offers guiding principles about what is important for Faversham and those connected with it and against which successes can be measured.

The steering group spent time with town councillors discussing what Faversham might look like in the future, taking into account its history, the views of residents and external factors that have influence. It was felt the vision should reflect Faversham's unique character rather than being a set of generic statements. In addition, it was considered the vision statement should be constructed to take into account underlying principles of sustainability, healthy living and good quality of life.

The recommended statement

It is recommended FTC adopts the following statement to replace the vision statement it has been using since 2001:

This council strives to work, and works with others, to:

- 1) Retain and enhance Faversham's uniqueness as a compact, historic Kent market town – a blend of countryside, strong local identity and high quality built environment – and ensure it remains an attractive place to live, work and visit
- 2) Meet the challenge of the localism agenda, to ensure Faversham Town Council leads the way in delivering the things local people need and want
- 3) Support the local economy, encourage more people to spend more money locally, raise awareness of local products and skills and lobby for increased training, all in order to enable Faversham's distinctive character and identity to be rooted in the continuing success of its traditional industries and be enriched by flourishing new businesses
- 4) Lead on the Faversham Creek Neighbourhood Plan to ensure development integrates the needs of people and nature
- 5) Nurture the town as a place that promotes healthy living and a high quality of life, with a town centre that is a safe and attractive community space for all, conveniently housing key services and encouraging a range of activities that attract increasing footfall
- 6) Ensure Faversham is an easy place for everyone to get to and to explore, with a focus on sustainable transport, and is a place that encourages efficient uses of resources

In addition, this council strives to:

- 7) Run efficiently and effectively, committing to exploring, understanding and servicing the needs, wants and aspirations of local people

Interpreting the feedback

The nature of views received

More than 1,200 individual pieces of feedback were gathered during the public engagement phase; these ranged from views on particular areas of the town, on service delivery, on support structures and on how the council might extend its leadership role, through to ideas about projects to be undertaken and priorities to be addressed. A large number of people talked about how much they liked Faversham, with many feeling that its reputation as a place to live, conduct business or visit had improved greatly over the past decade. It was viewed as a 'proper town', compact enough, yet providing lots of opportunities to get involved in the local community. Many mentioned the town's unique heritage as being a central factor to Faversham's attractiveness, bringing together traditions of beer and gunpowder, architecture, farming and agriculture, the creek and royal influences. The variety of shops, the plethora of historic pubs, the large cluster of leisure and cultural facilities and the fact most places can be reached by foot were all listed as positive. A strong sense of community spirit was recognised by many, with feedback received about friendly residents and traders, there being always something going on and the range of events and festivals.

Interpretation of those views

In order to give shape to the wide variety of feedback, views received were refined into 19 topic areas (see below), all of which can be seen to contribute to delivery of the overarching vision. Topic areas were analysed in detail in order to summarise the feedback, recommendations were then determined for each topic area for offering to FTC.

The recommendations

The feedback generated a range of recommendations. With limited resources and budgets, FTC may need to prioritise areas where it can add most value. Recommendations the authors consider should be addressed in the first instance are in the Executive Summary. The delivery role of local organisations and individuals should not be underestimated; many recommendations allow people with interests or expertise to deliver aims for the community.

Topic areas

The 19 topics areas are listed in alphabetical order on the following pages, they are:

Allotments and green spaces	Leisure
Business support	Local health servicesw
Cleanliness and maintenance	Older people
Education, employment and skills	Parking strategy
Faversham as a service centre	Safety, antisocial behaviour
Faversham creek	Tourism, arts, culture
Governance (local government)	Town centre regeneration
Green, environmental, sustainable	Transport
Housing, development, design and planning	Young people (up to 18 years old)
IT — broadband, wifi, cable	

Topic areas

Each of the following 19 topic areas is set out as a brief, self-contained section; each contains a summary of feedback, a short commentary and recommendations in headline form. Recommendations for each topic area are explored in more detail in the Recommendations Matrix.

Allotments and green spaces

Summary of views received

- ❖ Town allotments and green spaces, including cemeteries, are greatly valued
- ❖ Green spaces should be retained, not built on
- ❖ More allotments should be provided to cater for demand
- ❖ Stonebridge Pond is greatly valued
- ❖ Parks should be better planted, grass verges better maintained and cleaned

Commentary

The relatively high ratio of green spaces to built-up areas within the Faversham urban 'envelope' is an unusual and positive feature of the town much remarked upon; it is clearly a widely valued amenity.

It is important to residents that the town's green spaces are retained and maintained in good order. This includes 'informal' green spaces, such as roadside verges and the willow beds between The Knole, Wildish Road and Hazebrouck Road as well as 'set-piece' parks such as the Recreation Ground.

Faversham's allotment sites are among the valued green spaces, not just because of their availability for growing fruit and vegetables for the table, but as areas seen as green oases contributing to a wider patchwork of public open spaces. FTC taking over from SBC the freehold of the town's allotment sites sits happily within that perspective.

Some feedback relays dissatisfaction with the maintenance of these valued green spaces with consultees expressing concern that the town's open spaces are not maintained or planted to high enough standards. This concern appears to be part of a wider concern, touched on elsewhere in this report, that the physical public environment (built and natural) of the town is not being cared for to the level residents wish to see.

FTC supports a public realm group which, despite a limited budget, has undertaken much work to improve the environment of the town, including investment in the Faversham-in-Bloom group. Given the visibility of green space, and its relative importance to local people, the aims and successes of the public realm group could be highlighted more widely. Residents, too, have taken it upon themselves to spruce up parts of the town, examples being Abel's Acre by the Queen's Hall and the planters outside the library.

Recommendations

- 1) The importance of Faversham's green spaces should be recognised throughout FTC and SBC strategy, with specific statements included in relevant policies that they will not be built on, but retained for public use
- 2) In the shorter term, FTC should engage with SBC to press for a re-balancing of expenditure in favour of improved maintenance of open spaces
- 3) In the longer term, FTC should engage with SBC on passing to it ownership of town open spaces, with commensurate funding for their maintenance

- 4) The transfer of town allotments sites from SBC to FTC should be concluded for the start of the 2013-14 year
 - 5) Unsatisfied local demand for allotments should be quantified to assess whether provision of a greater numbers of plots should be investigated
-

Business support

Summary of views received

- ❖ Faversham is a great place to do business
- ❖ Greater support for existing and potential businesses is needed – networking, lower rates/ rents, training and development
- ❖ A need to market better the range of shopping in Faversham and access to this
- ❖ The street market is highly popular and should be expanded and better supported

Commentary

The feedback reflects a positive tone that Faversham is viewed as a good place to do business. The town, however, has not escaped the impact of recent recessions and whilst many businesses continue to thrive, there is scope for FTC to further support the environment within which businesses operate.

The FEP already provides an important role in bringing together business interests across the town and running the faversham.org website. Taking this work forward could include the development of a Business Expo style event for Faversham to showcase the town to a wider audience; Congleton provides a good example of how this might work in practice. In addition, developing a business-to-business event to increase local inter-trading and cross-marketing could prove worthwhile.

Similarly existing partnerships could be built up, for example, the Faversham Traders Group (FTG) could be supported to build on its bi-monthly group meetings to enable the growth of a business networking community, such as that operating in Swaffham which has proven highly beneficial to business opportunity in the town.

The co-ordination of the town's expanding street market offer needs attention to further support traders. This could include provision of electricity in the trading area, ensuring that consumers are clear about what is happening and when, and integration of the market with the shopkeepers' offers.

Some areas, such as the desire to reduce rates and rents are not within the control of FTC, however there is a role for lobbying, eg, encouraging SBC to give concessions to new businesses and lobby about the way in which retained rates are spent locally.

Recommendations

- 6) Support a dedicated programme to promote business development in the town, including scoping an Annual Expo, business networking community and training and development programmes
- 7) Lobby for a better deal for smaller traders on business rates
- 8) Increase collaboration between FTC, FTG, FATA, FEP, street market
- 9) Engage actively in national initiatives such as National Markets Day, to encourage future entrepreneurs to 'have a go' at trading.

Cleanliness and maintenance

Summary of views received

- ❖ There is too much litter, including overflowing public bins that need to be emptied more frequently
- ❖ There needs to be a cleaning schedule for public services such as toilets and park equipment
- ❖ Certain buildings around the town are in a state of disrepair and untidiness which, if left, will lead to a general air of neglect in parts
- ❖ There are too many weeds in areas, which looks unattractive

Commentary

Cleanliness of a town is one of the most visible aspects to residents and visitors, and, therefore, has a large impact on how a town is perceived.

Faversham is largely viewed positively in terms of how clean it is. However, there are pockets of concern that it is seen could be usefully addressed, such as the cleanliness of public amenities including children's play equipment and public toilets, and clearance of weeds on the margins of footpaths.

The twice-yearly litter pick in Faversham is a positive scheme and could benefit from further promotion as well as being integrated into a campaign encouraging local people to recycle and take pride in the public realm. Mold, in Wales, provides a good example of this with its Spring Clean, as does Glossop's Tidy Up project which focusses on waste education to prevent litter in the first place.

Recommendations

- 10) Undertake a regular audit of cleanliness to prioritise action
- 11) Further promote the twice-yearly spring clean of the town to widen participation and target this to needy areas
- 12) Continue to lobby private owners whose buildings or land are used/viewed by the general public to maintain and clean their property
- 13) Provide clear information to the public on how to report issues relating to cleanliness

Education, employment and skills

Summary of views received

- ❖ There should be more higher/adult training/education based in Faversham
- ❖ Schools/business communication is poor, pupils don't learn of local jobs available
- ❖ Many local schools are good, but the secondary schools should collaborate more
- ❖ More local jobs are needed alongside good commuting opportunities
- ❖ More vocational training/apprenticeships needed for pupils/younger unemployed

Commentary

Some feedback received reflected national issues as well as local concerns. There was a body of opinion that looked to the future and the changing nature of FE study arising from increasing university fees. This included views from school pupils.

That body of opinion sat alongside a set of views concerning the provision of local vocational and apprenticeship training, particularly for younger people.

Both sets of views converged on a need for the town to provide more educational and training output locally. It was foreseen this provision would be needed to service both known FE and training needs and a growing number of local students who would wish to continue their

education while continuing to live locally. There was commendation of the initiative to form an IT suite at the Alexander Centre.

KCC research in 2011 estimated there were about 100 16- to 18-year-olds in Faversham not in education who it was considered would benefit from local training and learning in a non-school environment. The research informed the Alexander Centre initiative.

These localist sentiments were reinforced by concerns that the town's two secondary schools and local businesses did not work closely enough to keep students informed of local job opportunities and keep local businesses well enough informed of young talent available. Pertinently, the authors attended discussion sessions at both secondary schools at which neither entity recognised this apparent deficiency, believing their local community and business engagement was both greatly improved and adequate.

Provision of more jobs locally was also a strand running through the feedback. Combined with feedback received for other topics, this formed a theme that it was desirable that a greater volume of local jobs should be provided, but this should not happen at the expense of the local environment.

Recommendations

- 14) The case for greater provision of Faversham based FE and adult education needs to be assembled and articulated to service providers
- 15) The initiative to form an IT suite at the Alexander Centre should be supported as should similar schemes in other venues
- 16) Greater job and career communications between the town's two secondary schools and local businesses should be encouraged
- 17) With partners explore the need for a locally based 'routes into work' function

Faversham as a service centre

Summary of views received

- ❖ Faversham plays a key service centre role for the town and a large hinterland
- ❖ The town has assets and services that need to be safeguarded, including the library, banks and post office
- ❖ Public toilet provision is good, but could be improved with disabled and baby changing facilities, plus greater provision on the east of the town
- ❖ The West Faversham Community Centre is becoming popular
- ❖ The library should be a community hub with wifi, teaching rooms, job centre, etc

Commentary

Faversham's vital role as a provider of key services to both its residents and a wider rural hinterland is clear from the feedback. In an era of cutbacks it has thus far retained a breadth of core public and privately operated services such as high street banks, post office, library, public toilets and leisure facilities.

The public engagement revealed areas residents felt could be improved, safeguarded, or further provided: the library was seen as an excellent asset to the town and has recently been enhanced to house a registry service. KCC was keen to hear the views of Faversham residents about library services as ongoing budget cuts have forced them to explore with communities innovative and efficient ways to maintain local library services. For Faversham there is certainly scope to explore how the library might develop in the future to ensure it is retained.

Public toilet facilities was another hot topic with many stating that a toilet at the library, with baby change facilities, was desperately needed to service that side of the town. Others

mentioned some toilets were not properly maintained as well as a lack of disabled facilities, particularly at the Rec. While existing toilets are not currently under threat, it would be worthwhile exploring how the service can be kept in light of budget cuts. Some towns, eg Sandwich, have opted to take over running the service, while others, eg, Kendal, have initiated more innovative community toilet schemes.

The town is host to a number of bank branches which provide a key service and they should be retained.

A further theme emerging from the feedback was the number of venues looking for new custom, activities looking for a 'home' and new services being requested. Some joining up of demand and supply could be a useful step.

Recommendations

- 18) Explore future options for the library with KCC and residents
- 19) Explore using existing venues to host new or expanded services
- 20) Undertake an audit of key services and put in place mechanisms for each to safeguard and improve them – this may involve exploring potential for local organisations to take over services run by public bodies such as SBC
- 21) Include relevant key community services on list of local assets of community value

Faversham Creek

Summary of views received

- ❖ Area needs to be reconnected to the town and access improved all round
- ❖ Dredge waterway and improve infrastructure (bridge, sluice, paths, moorings)
- ❖ The area should be for jobs, tourism, leisure and traditional barge/maritime crafts
- ❖ No more housing by the creek
- ❖ Closing the creek bridge for repair and then to let barges through will bring the town centre to a standstill
- ❖ The creek should be returned to what it was
- ❖ There is no sound economic case made for major investment in the creek
- ❖ It is not clear the creek is important to the future of the town
- ❖ The creek needs to be connected to/part of the bigger Faversham picture
- ❖ The creek needs less talk, less muddle, fewer groups, better plans, more action

Commentary

Given the creek has for some years been a cause célèbre for groups of dedicated local activists it was unsurprising this subject attracted a large volume of comment.

Much comment urged action be taken to restore the waterway and its infrastructure. Behind this sentiment was a range of motivations; most respondents wanted the creek brought to a point where it could be used more for related employment and leisure and tourism purposes, some had a more rose-tinted view, wanting the area 'returned to what it was', while others saw it as a place for cultural and artistic activities, festivals and events.

Alongside this outlook, however, was a smaller, more sceptical strand of opinion, questioning whether the substantial financial outlay needed to upgrade the area could be justified when set against probable economic returns, particularly in relation to other town priorities and doubting the 'creek project' was run effectively ('less talk, more action').

As an FTC-sponsored Faversham Creek Neighbourhood Plan exercise is now under way, the Town Action Plan has not focused heavily on this topic, confining itself to recommendations to improve the conduct of processes associated with it.

Recommendations

22) As part of the wider communications strategy for the Faversham Creek Neighbourhood Plan and delivery of the plan itself, the case for redevelopment of the creek area needs to be clearly articulated. This should include construction of a cost/benefit case to demonstrate the economic case for redevelopment of the creek area, assessing that against cost/benefit cases for other local investment priorities

23) The Faversham Creek Neighbourhood Plan and other town development plans need to be integrated

24) FTC is the official 'sponsor' of the neighbourhood plan and needs to regularly review its internal decision-making and communication in this area to ensure continued coherence and consistency in its development, that all residents and stakeholders are kept up to date with progress and that the strategic aims of the Faversham Creek Neighbourhood Plan project are addressed

Governance

Summary of views received

- ❖ FTC and local groups should take over from SBC
- ❖ Faversham/FTC should develop confidence/self-sufficiency and run local affairs
- ❖ Localism was made for Faversham and is a big opportunity
- ❖ FTC is anonymous and needs more community engagement and openness
- ❖ FTC does not engage with local villages and parishes
- ❖ There are too many fragmented agencies delivering services
- ❖ Things take too long to happen

Commentary

A single, over-riding theme emerged within this subject, the desire on the part of local people for Faversham's services, facilities, property and future development to be controlled and operated locally. Like some other themes that emerged during the Town Action Plan consultation this is not a surprise. It appears widely accepted that Faversham is a large enough town with an able enough population to be able to successfully run its own affairs to a greater degree than it currently does.

Specifically, a strong wish was articulated for FTC to take a more active and central role in the life of the town and the local area. The council was seen by some as anonymous and timid. While this may be uncomfortable news for councillors, and seem a distortion to those who work with it, that negative perception points positively to substantial opportunities for FTC to take a more active role in local life.

April 2012's Localism Act introduced a new era in English local government. FTC, like all local councils, can, if it wishes, now act for its community in a more direct and expansive way. Town Action Plan feedback indicates councillors have a broad mandate from the electorate to do that and FTC thus has an opportunity to reinvigorate its corporate aims and processes.

The Localism Act includes four new powers for local council and community activity:

- Neighbourhood Planning – giving communities more say about land-use and development in their area
- Community Right to Build – giving communities the right to build small-scale, site-specific projects without going through the normal planning application process
- Community Right to Challenge – giving communities the right to bid to run local services
- Community Right to Bid – giving communities the right to add assets of community value to a special 'safeguard' list and, in the future, give them greater opportunities to buy and take over

the running of those assets should they come up for sale.

SBC has issued a Localism Prospectus, setting out what it sees as priority service areas for local community take up and the procedures it is obliged to follow when considering Expressions of Interest under the Community Right to Challenge power.

The financial and resource cost of taking on powers is an issue that has rightly exercised town councillors in the past and it is noteworthy that none of the service areas SBC identifies where it would welcome an Expression of Interest are ones that generate income to it (see Parking strategy). Rather, they are ones which are nett costs. However, it may be possible for FTC to negotiate a balanced approach with SBC where the transfer of service areas which are income generators is packaged together with transference of some that are costs to the district authority.

Recommendations

Strategic and organisational

25) Agrees both for itself and for the town the vision statement the Faversham 2020 review has constructed and adopts the vision statement as a guiding template for its activities in the period to 2020

26) Reviews, renews and restates its roles and functions, and reviews and renews its committee and organisational structure and communication methods, particularly in relation to the new Localism framework

27) As part of the process recommended in 26) it reviews its decision-making, engagement and structures for the Faversham Creek Neighbourhood Plan (see Faversham Creek)

28) Institutes a programme of learning from progressive English local councils whose profiles match its own. Lessons learnt should be incorporated and implemented within the overall process of renewal

29) Using this process of review and renewal the council should set specific aims and objectives, with the Town Action Plan as the basis for the formation of a medium to long-term programme

30) From 2014 a scaled-down, annual Town Action Plan process of engagement with local residents and a review of aims and objectives should be built into FTC's planning

Tactical and operational

In parallel to the suggested developments above and in order to maintain momentum on delivery it is recommended FTC:

31) Researches and acts upon Localism 'quick wins' where functions and services can be readily undertaken locally, eg, FTC to be responsible for naming new town streets and designating temporary 'play streets'

32) Sets out its aspirations and plans for future use for community benefit of its historic charters, including Magna Carta (See Tourism, arts, culture)

33) Maintains community and business support, including conclusion of the transfer of town allotment sites, pressing for improvements to town centre parking and engaging with town centre traders and others for economic benefit (See Allotments and green spaces, Business support, Parking strategy, Town centre regeneration). Improve and expand contact with area parish councils to increase collaboration for mutual benefit

34) Embeds and develops support for local tourism (See Tourism, arts, culture)

35) Commences discussion with KCC Library Services to explore ways to safeguard local library provision and improved use of the Newton Road site (See Faversham as a service centre)

36) Subject to the timing of the national rail franchising process vigorously engages with the Department for Transport and others as part of the shaping of the South East Trains franchise,

with the aim of having upgraded the frequency, speed and capacity of rail services to Victoria and Cannon Street (See Transport)

As a first step, in order to enable the strategic and organisational recommendations in particular to be taken forward, it is recommended FTC holds facilitated workshops to debate its roles, functions, structures and communications.

Green, environmental, sustainable

Summary of views received

- ❖ Supporting and promoting use of local produce/products should be encouraged
- ❖ There should be more imaginative civic planting in greater volume
- ❖ Walking and cycling in and around the town should be encouraged
- ❖ Renewable energy sources should be used more
- ❖ Campaigns that enable Faversham to be more sustainable should be supported

Commentary

Sustainability is important because actions pursued today affect the future. Decisions made now need to be sound in order to avoid limiting the choices of future generations. Fundamental elements of developing the town as sustainably as possible should be reflected in future work by FTC. This means understanding and balancing impacts that decisions and actions have on the local economy, environment and population.

From the business point-of-view the sale of local food and drink via local outlets is estimated to total between £1.2 million and £2.8 million a year. It is estimated independent local food outlets provide between 85 and 160 full and part time jobs with more than 250 jobs supported by local suppliers.

The most supported view received was that planting of town public areas should be more colourful and extensive and should feature wild (not bedding) plants. There was limited support for tree planting.

There was considerable support for Faversham being more sustainable across a range of issues, such as: better recycling, greater use of coppiced wood, more solar power, an emphasis on greater use of local produce, a 'no plastic carrier bag' scheme and materials for building/repairs to be less environmentally harmful and sympathetic to the existing townscape. There were some very specific suggestions, including solar-powered lighting being rigged in the trees by the swimming pools.

Improvements to walking and cycling facilities also received support on the basis they were sustainable activities, as well as ones that promote healthy activity for all age groups.

There are many examples of local councils and communities who have improved sustainability awareness and undertaken projects to improve the sustainability of their towns, and which could be emulated in Faversham. For example, Faringdon's annual 'Ecoweek', Todmorden's Incredible Edible project and various community orchards, eg, in Swaffham. There are also increasing numbers of communities looking to supplement their energy provision with local energy, again this could have merit in Faversham.

Recommendations

37) Explore ways to promote more sustainable living and working across the town, for example support local food and crafts producers, exploring options to reduce waste and implement more efficient use of resources

38) The town council's work to increase floral decorations in and around the town centre should continue, but with greater heed given to the nature of the decorations

39) Improved walking and cycling facilities should be introduced as part of an overall upgrade of town transport infrastructure

Housing, development, design and planning

Summary of views received

- ❖ Faversham's compact nature is a major asset, greatly liked and must be retained
- ❖ There is a need for more social/affordable, larger family and retirement housing
- ❖ Development/repairs must be in keeping with the townscape and use appropriate materials
- ❖ Brownfield sites should exclusively be used for new development, no greenfield development should be permitted, the local 'green belt' should be safeguarded
- ❖ There must be sufficient services to cope with any population increases
- ❖ The creek needs revisiting in terms of access and how sites are used
- ❖ Green spaces within Faversham are precious and should not be lost

Commentary

Much opinion was expressed during the engagement process about the potential development of Faversham and a separate paper was submitted to SBC by the authors on behalf of the Town Action Plan project in order to input those views to the emerging Local Plan. While most feedback supported retention of Faversham as a compact, small market town, there was a sense of needing to balance this against national and local needs for further housing and employment opportunities.

A recurring theme was that boundaries of the town should remain intact, new development should take place only on brownfield sites and it should only be undertaken if related services and infrastructure were provided. FTC could play a key role in determining expenditure related to Community Infrastructure Levy and New Homes Bonus within Faversham. The design of new build was highlighted, with recent 'eyesores' being cited that should not become the norm.

Residents were keen to get involved in planning for Faversham's future and this should be seen as positive. The Localism Act gives new rights to local councils and local people about this. FTC could act as a lead in promoting these opportunities and steering the town into a shared future vision, including the Faversham Creek Neighbourhood Plan where FTC already leads and may need more populace involvement as work progresses.

From the feedback it can be seen a more integrated approach with delivery partners in terms of housing, planning and business development will be vital in future to ensure everyone works to the same aim and meets local needs.

Recommendations

- 40) Work with representative groups to establish a planning vision for the town to inform future development; this might be a design statement, wider neighbourhood plan or supplementary planning document
- 41) Take action to increase the level of engagement with residents on the emerging Faversham Creek Neighbourhood Plan
- 42) Publicise local opportunities for taking the initiative on planning issues
- 43) Consult with local people on forming a list of Assets of Community Value

IT – broadband, wifi, cable

Summary of views received

- ❖ Faversham town centre should be a free wifi zone
- ❖ Local IT infrastructure needs improvement (connectivity, facilities, speed)
- ❖ Employment will be maintained and created through improved IT infrastructure
- ❖ IT training locally needs improvement; including web, social media, office skills
- ❖ Venues around town should offer wifi; in particular the library should be an IT hub, including for delivery of training

Commentary

As an attractive small town with good road and rail links to London and the wider south-east, Faversham is well placed to develop as a centre for IT-rich employment by smaller firms and as a town that caters well for home-based employment, both full-time and occasional. Improvements in IT services are seen as important to this.

Respondents focussed chiefly on the employment and work benefits of upgrading the town's IT infrastructure, but clearly that would benefit leisure and community use too. A focus on improving IT training tied in with feedback concerned with the need to increase skills training locally overall.

Several developments might assist achievement of these aspirations. First, Faversham is one of 41 'rural market towns' included in early phases of BT's superfast broadband rollout. Switch-on in Faversham is currently happening. The UK-wide programme is scheduled to complete in 2015. Second, the Alexander Centre Trust is working with the Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School to develop an IT suite at its building in Preston Street. The suite may be suitable in due course for FE and adult education.

In addition there is potential to use IT innovatively; examples in other towns that could be relevant to Faversham include the Wireless Godalming project that provides free wifi to residents, businesses and visitors across the town, and the 'ithame' iPhone application which provides information on the town.

Recommendations

- 44) The Alexander Centre project creating an IT suite for possible further and adult education use should be supported as should schemes in other venues
- 45) Early implementation of superfast broadband provision should be capitalised on by publicising it to employers, developers, venue owners and residents
- 46) Development, with others, of innovative uses of IT that promote Faversham should be explored
- 47) Investment in local IT development should be viewed as, and acted on, as an integral part of the wider Faversham investment/employment agenda

Leisure

Summary of views received

- ❖ The variety of sports/leisure facilities available locally is positively appreciated
- ❖ However, some people seem unaware of facilities available
- ❖ There is a desire for more sports equipment to be made available in public parks

Commentary

This topic heading attracted a mixed bag of comment. While there was some positive

appreciation of the range of sports and leisure facilities available in Faversham, there was also a considerable volume of comment expressing a desire for more to be provided and another stream of comment which indicated a number of residents may not be at all well informed about what is already in situ. There was also an unrealistic expectation of how much more can be provided by way of sports facilities and the standard to which they can be provided.

Tennis courts, parks, the Whitstable Road gym club and the cinema were among the facilities picked out for praise. However, Faversham Pools, one of the town's most popular and heavily used amenities, was among those highlighted critically: it needed to be bigger, better, cleaner; it was too expensive and needed to modernise. The tennis club in the Recreation Ground was mistakenly thought by some to be a private, exclusive club. Availability of facilities in the evening and at weekends also had some criticism.

There was little recognition of the free leisure and health opportunities offered by, for example, walking and cycling. Rather, the emphasis was on greater provision of equipment, preferably free.

While there were some tangible suggestions for change which appeared to hit a mark, such as provision of picnic benches for visitors, much comment seemed to arise from a poor understanding of what is available in and around the town. There also seemed to be a lack of recognition that leisure equipment and services come at a cost.

Recommendation

48) Sports providers should be encouraged to promote and advertise their services and facilities more effectively

Local health services

Summary of views received

- ❖ Retaining and expanding local health services provision is considered important
- ❖ Faversham Cottage Hospital and its minor injuries unit is greatly valued
- ❖ GP surgeries and their services are greatly valued

Commentary

Healthcare in Faversham is the responsibility of the Eastern and Coastal Kent Primary Care Trust. The town has two sets of GP surgeries and the Cottage Hospital, housing a Minor Injuries Unit. Emergency care is available at Kent and Canterbury Hospital in Canterbury and at the William Harvey Hospital in Ashford.

Feedback was surprisingly slim, which could imply residents are fairly content with the provision in health care services in Faversham. However, it might be that those with specific views or concerns were not reached by the research or were unaware of local healthcare issues. National changes afoot which impact locally include the new General Practice Clinical Commissioning Groups which report to the PCT and have delegated powers for commissioning and resource allocation. Faversham will not fall be the Swale banner, but sit within a 'Canterbury' (C4) zone.

While there appears to be an appreciation that major and specialist medical services, eg, major surgery, cannot be provided in Faversham because of their costs and logistics, local provision of more day-to-day health services was viewed as extremely important.

Some concern was expressed that local facilities might be downgraded with services relocated to remote, less accessible sites, possibly because of changes to provision or budget cuts. Downgrading Canterbury's A&E and removal of its birthing centre was seen as retrograde, with concern expressed about poorer accessibility of alternative centres.

In addition, there was a view that wider healthcare provision in Faversham, eg for addiction and special needs, needed improvement. Lobbying over expenditure, for example the provision of X-ray equipment in Faversham Cottage Hospital, was recognised as a continuing project.

With changes taking place there could be a critical role for FTC in providing leadership through representation of Faversham's need at the various committee levels as well as by understanding and relaying information about what is happening to local healthcare.

There may be a need to undertake further research locally in this topic area.

Recommendations

49) Opportunities to locate as many primary care services as possible in Faversham should be identified and pursued

50) The work of entities such as the Friends of Faversham Cottage Hospital should be supported

51) Liaison by FTC with local health professionals should be improved to enable councillors to better understand issues faced by the health services

Older people

Summary of views received

- ❖ Older residents are major users of the town centre
- ❖ Concerns about access and mobility – too few buses into town, difficult for mobility impaired to get about, taxis are very expensive for those on pensions
- ❖ Concern that needed sheltered accommodation could be lost
- ❖ Praise for the services of AgeUK in Faversham and Teynham

Commentary

The feedback suggested this demographic warranted specific mention as a topic in its own right. It is a valuable observation that older residents tend to be disproportionately heavy users of Faversham town centre. This is a perspective often overlooked. The circumstance may arise for a number of reasons - for example, the elderly having greater difficulty in travelling to and using out-of-town centres and older people tending to be 'old-fashioned' shoppers, liking smaller shops rather than large supermarkets.

Whatever the reasons for the situation, it suggests that just from a commercial point-of-view there is justification for greater attention being paid to measures that might encourage the elderly to use the town centre more.

It also seems self-evident that placing sheltered accommodation close to the town centre has multiple benefits, for the quality of life of the elderly and for town centre vitality. It was perceived as a concern that Herbert Dane Court is to close.

Recommendations

52) Provision of sheltered accommodation within easy reach of the town centre should be a planning guideline

53) Town centre design should always take the needs of all types of users into account

53) Explore, with partners, options for providing a function that coordinates the known local youth resource for volunteering with day-to-day needs of the elderly, such as assistance with shopping in the town

Parking strategy

Summary of views received

- ❖ More on-street parking with longer wait times needed for businesses/town centre
- ❖ Upgrade car parks (family/disabled spaces, surfaces, signage, ticketing, lighting)
- ❖ High parking charges/poor voucher system and limited lengths of stay discourage visitors and town users
- ❖ Too many double-yellow lines
- ❖ Traffic wardens are too zealous
- ❖ Improve signage to car parks for motorists and from car parks for pedestrians
- ❖ People park badly in on-street permit zones

Commentary

Like many towns Faversham needs to provide in a limited space parking adequate for residents, visitors and businesses. A closer marriage of supply to demand is needed in order to address issues identified. But, this is not an easy subject, with few quick wins.

An increasing population and increasing car ownership is putting pressure on parking space and it can be foreseen that, unless measures are taken to increase the volume of parking space, retain car park prices at affordable levels and upgrade both on-street and off-street provision, conditions for businesses, residents and visitors will deteriorate.

Faversham car parks are managed by SBC via a contract with Apcoa Parking Ltd, as is regulation of parking across the town. They are maintained by SBC. Parking income is retained by the district authority; it is unclear to what extent money gathered in is reinvested into parking facilities and the wider public realm.

FTC recently undertook a town centre parking review which begins to unpick the issues.

Examples of best practice include: Sleaford TC which runs the town's car parks and provides a good case study of research into usage and which led to reducing car park charges. Other local councils who directly run their town's car parks include Padstow TC, Launceston TC (a multi-storey car park), Lyme Regis TC and Wheathampstead PC. Sudbury TC is seeking to run its town's car parks. Other local councils, such as Ludlow TC, have instigated overall reviews of parking and traffic management to good effect.

Recommendations

- 55) FTC lobbies SBC for improvements to car parks, particularly Central Car Park
- 56) Local knowledge is applied more extensively to parking through FTC taking a greater role in steering and operating town parking provision
- 57) Over the longer-term FTC seeks a formal role in managing car parking in the town

Safety, antisocial behaviour

Summary of views received

- ❖ Parts of the town could benefit from additional CCTV
- ❖ Faversham feels safe, although it can feel a bit threatening in the evening
- ❖ There is some vandalism and graffiti
- ❖ Some of the pubs attract antisocial behaviour
- ❖ Parks, including play areas, need extra monitoring against antisocial behaviour
- ❖ The subway next to the station feels unsafe

Commentary

It is important that local residents and visitors to the town feel safe - inside their homes, while out and about and at different times of the day. Local crime and anti-social behaviour figures show criminal activity is either in line with or below the national average, with the exception of shoplifting, which, while not rising, is above the national average. However, feedback indicates people perceive there is a higher level of criminal activity than exists.

Feedback about antisocial behaviour in particular came out fairly frequently, but this is being addressed. In 2012, neighbourhood police officers in Faversham have been targetting anti-social behaviour during weekends with increased patrols in the town centre. Officers have also used the Section 27 'direction to leave' order, which gives officers the ability to direct a person to leave an area for up to 48 hours if they are believed to be, or have the potential to be, involved in alcohol related disorder.

The town is covered by Swale Safe, the local radio-based crime-reduction partnership with more than 140 members across the Swale district linked by radio to each other, the local police and the Medway CCTV control centre. The system has been useful for events such as the hop festival and the Olympic Torch visit.

Learning from other towns may be useful, eg, Hythe and Dibden, in Hampshire, who operate a virtual neighbourhood watch system with a mailing list of 7,000 locals and who also have wider initiatives to reduce the perception of feeling unsafe in the evening, such as improved street lighting and landscaping initiatives. Rugby is also an example of a community which takes good measures to address the issue.

Recommendations

58) Regular feeding in to Kent Police by FTC of perceptions of Faversham residents and dissemination of information on this topic to residents

59) Explore opportunities, with others, to improve street lighting and other safety solutions in relevant areas of the town

60) Explore opportunity to extend Swale Safe to include a virtual neighbourhood watch system for residents

61) Publicise better the 'channels to action' that residents/visitors can take if witnessing crime or its aftermath

Tourism, arts, culture

Summary of views received

- ❖ Introduce more events and festivals building upon local heritage, produce and crafts, in particular food and drink
- ❖ Improve communication of Faversham to its target audiences
- ❖ Broaden the local loyalty card scheme to include local attractions
- ❖ The Tourist Information Centre needs greater visibility
- ❖ Improve access and movement for visitors around the town
- ❖ Make more of the creek as a visitor attraction
- ❖ Use Magna Carta for the town's benefit

Commentary

Faversham benefits from an interesting and rich heritage, a good rural position with waterside access and a growing artisan community. Links to London and the near continent are excellent and the plethora of local organisations supporting cultural development in the town is a great asset. The town is also fortunate to have a Visitor Information Centre.

The town's growing arts scene is viewed as an important aspect to build on, as is the food and drink sector. Linking attractions and opportunities should be encouraged.

As a visitor destination Faversham has much to offer, but its story needs to be told in a more focussed way that appeals more to visitor segments it wishes to attract. The Faversham Area Tourism Development Framework published in October 2010 sets out priorities for the town going forward, based on research undertaken at the time. The Faversham Area Tourism Association (FATA) has achieved much on a voluntary basis and in 2012 FTC has taken steps to support this by employing a Tourism Consultant. FTC has also started discussion of how it may use its unique collection of historic charters, including a Magna Carta, for town benefit.

There are many UK examples to take inspiration and best practice from, including Godalming Staycation, Neath Food and Drink Festival and Art on the Fence, an innovation promoting affordable local art in Colwyn Bay while also providing attractive street entertainment.

Recommendations

- 62) Oversee and monitor delivery of the Tourism Development Framework including support for FATA and the work of the Faversham Society
- 63) Improve communication to residents and visitors
- 64) Develop and implement plans for Magna Carta
- 65) Explore opportunities for supporting tourism development within the emerging neighbourhood plan as part of Faversham's wider tourism offer
- 66) Take an active stance on promotional activities and product development that showcases local talent and produce

Town centre regeneration

Summary of views received

- ❖ A desire to retain the independent feel of Faversham's shopping offer, but not at the exclusion of larger stores that complement the existing offer
- ❖ The night time economy could be improved
- ❖ Explore new funding opportunities, for example, a BID (Business Improvement District)
- ❖ Wifi to be available in the town centre
- ❖ Greater footfall should be encouraged through better promotion of the town
- ❖ Banning traffic on market days is controversial, but pros seem to outweigh cons
- ❖ Tackle empty shops in an innovative way
- ❖ Have affordable town centre parking

Commentary

The role of town centres is changing as they become 'destinations' as opposed to places simply to go shopping. Increased competition from supermarkets and the Internet has had the effect of drawing people away from the more traditional shopping outlets and Faversham needs to address this.

At the national level, while the Portas Review covered already well-worked themes, it has renewed the focus on town centres, proposing a series of recommendations to help sustain them. This requires a multi-faceted approach, taking in a range of elements, to ensure the town centre appeals to a range of users for a range of activities. Safeguarding key services, supporting new and existing businesses, maintaining a safe and accessible centre and providing opportunities for focal events across the year is vital – similar to the way in which an out-of-town shopping centre takes a co-ordinated approach to its activity as a single entity.

FTC has made substantial headway in bringing together partners to explore ways to diversify

the town centre offer. The successes should be built upon, eg, developing a renewed vision for the town centre that builds on the positive changes that local traders and others have begun to work on would be a useful step; it is a process promoted nationally as a positive step to support local business.

Specific aspects the vision might explore include opportunities for a Faversham BID (an initiative led by local businesses where additional funding from businesses is input for regeneration, adopted elsewhere in the country), development opportunities for the town centre, expansion of the local loyalty card to include, eg, more services and visitor attractions, expanding the events programme, parking and the night-time economy. In addition the introduction of fundraising schemes should be explored such as the highly successful local lottery that is operated in Penrith. This might be a project that the Traders Group, representing wider organisations, might be well-placed to take forward.

Recommendations

67) Develop with businesses, residents, freeholders and service providers a renewed, shared vision for the town centre and an accompanying action plan

68) Support the improved pedestrian environment provided by traffic-free streets on market days (Tuesdays, Fridays and Saturdays)

69) FTC to continue its support for town centre vitality, including public realm improvements

Transport

This section brings together views and recommendations received under the following headings: Buses, Cycling, Pedestrian access, Rail and Road network; it also addresses issues raised regarding disability access. Parking issues are addressed separately.

Summary of views received

Buses

- ❖ A better bus route between Faversham and Whitstable would be welcome
- ❖ Bus shelters do not have enough seating/cover
- ❖ There are not enough disabled access buses
- ❖ Bus timetabling needs re-examining
- ❖ Buses are an essential way for many to reach services in Faversham

Cycling

- ❖ The number of designated cycling paths should be increased to enable greater access in and around the town
- ❖ Provide cycling facilities across the town
- ❖ Improve the quality and safety of cycle paths
- ❖ Encourage responsible cycling

Pedestrian access

- ❖ Improve access for wheelchairs, mobility impaired, mothers with buggies
- ❖ More town centre pedestrianisation welcome, though there are some trader concerns
- ❖ Footpaths and walking routes should be clean and safe
- ❖ Paths, when appropriate, to be natural; tarmac is environmentally unfriendly and expensive
- ❖ We should develop walking routes for visitors, including a town centre route
- ❖ Cars parking on pavements is dangerous for pedestrians
- ❖ Improve signposting for pedestrians

Rail

- ❖ The station is an excellent asset for Faversham and well-positioned
- ❖ The HS1 service has led to fewer and slower services to Victoria and Cannon Street
- ❖ The cost of travel to London is of concern to commuters
- ❖ The subway next to the station needs to be cleaned much more frequently
- ❖ A connection between Faversham and Ashford would be useful

Road network

- ❖ Support for traffic calming in parts of the town, eg, 20mph speed limit, speed bumps, pavement widening, crossings, to combat perceived dangerous traffic
- ❖ Road signs need attention
- ❖ Too many heavy lorries come through narrow residential streets
- ❖ Flooding is an issue in places – eg. A251/A2 junction, central car park
- ❖ An additional link to the M2 to the west of the town would be welcome
- ❖ Road surfaces require attention - potholes, surfacing

Commentary

Transport attracted by far the largest postbag of the consultation. It covered a wide spread of issues, from strategic concerns about the Faversham-London rail service to more day-to-day concerns about maintenance of town footpaths.

There appeared to be two main contexts driving the concerns expressed. The first was a need for the essentially good routes between Faversham and the outside world to be upgraded for business and commuting in order to support continuing town prosperity. Within this, there was extensive feedback about the need to restore to pre-HS1 levels mainstream commuting routes to Victoria and Cannon Street.

The second was a need for better linkages and facilities within the town, particularly foot and cycle path connections between the town centre and surrounding areas, and included a recognition that the needs of families with younger children, the elderly and the disabled should be specifically built into transport planning in the future.

Concerns highlighted fit within the broad theme identified elsewhere that Faversham residents and users value its high quality physical environment and are concerned to ensure it is maintained to a high standard. This concern surfaced in various guises.

Both areas of concern (upgrading external routes and improving town linkages) can also be seen to fit within a need for a more integrated local approach to transport issues.

In addition, the emphasis on sustainable transport, particularly local walking and cycling, fits with the broader, local 'green' and 'healthy living' agendas that have emerged.

Recommendations

70) A more strategic, integrated approach to Faversham transport needs is taken based on data recording pedestrian and traffic movements around the town, peak pressure points and future needs

71) Greater emphasis in future transport planning is placed on the ease and safety of pedestrian and cyclist movement in and around the town, with recognition of a need to create a comprehensive local cycle path network

72) Maintenance, repair and cleaning of footpaths is enhanced and pedestrian signage further improved

73) FTC should engage vigorously with SBC, KCC and the Department for Transport to seek restoration of the Faversham commuting services for Victoria and Cannon Street

Young people (up to 18 years old)

Summary of views received

- ❖ Youth clubs should be safeguarded
- ❖ There is not enough for older children (12+) to do
- ❖ There are lots of activities for younger children, but many have long waiting lists so scope for further provision
- ❖ Parks could be better designed/equipped for younger children/disabled children
- ❖ Awareness of employment opportunities in the town could be improved
- ❖ Many young people are keen to get involved in voluntary activity
- ❖ Some young people would like a more direct say in the way Faversham is run

Commentary

There was a lot of feedback relating to young people. Faversham is popular with families in part due to its range of good schools, services and location. The town is well-equipped with leisure facilities, including the swimming pools, cinema, library, theatre, gym club and sports clubs, although the potential loss of the South Road youth centre was flagged as detrimental. Churches also provide venues and organised activities for young people. Kent population figures show the following for Faversham: 57.5% of the population is aged 20 to 64 (10,900 people), 24% below 20 (4,570 people) and 18.5% 65 and over (3,500 people). This compares to average figures for Kent of 50.6% aged 20 to 64, 25.9% below 20 and 23.4% aged 65 and over.

With the rising cost of living it is important to ensure there are enough facilities and opportunities for younger people. Parents with pre-school and primary aged children felt the town was well-equipped for them, with Sure Start Children's Centres receiving a lot of excellent feedback. Some suggested there could be more classes and activities provided as waiting lists are long and many stated they found it difficult to find out what was on offer in the town, many finding out by word of mouth or by 'accident'. Another area of concern was a lack of facilities for disabled children, particularly in public parks. There was concern among parents and younger children people about the limited range of activities for older children (12+). Suggestions for improvements included holiday activities in parks, improved leisure facilities, places indoors to 'hang out' with friends. Shopping for younger people was flagged as somewhat limited, with many opting to travel to Canterbury for this. Pupils at the secondary schools spoke of a lack of knowledge about potential employment opportunities in the town.

A recurring theme from young people themselves was a strong desire to have a greater involvement in the way in which Faversham is run. While a youth council for the Swale area exists, those engaged in it felt it too focused on other parts of the district and would prefer a forum for Faversham itself. FTC has a youth working party, but it does not have young people serving as members. In addition, there was a desire to be involved with the wider community, eg, through voluntary work and involvement with events, but there was a lack of knowledge of what mechanisms existed for this. Some venues spoke of a desire to engage more with younger people and to extend opportunities for them, possibly through schools, but were unsure how to do that.

Recommendations

- 74) FTC to explore the potential to establish a town youth council
- 75) FTC to revitalise the Youth Working Party
- 76) Look at ways to create a more formalised volunteer bureau (this could be extended to older people with leisure time available for community work)
- 77) Communicate activities for young people in a more co-ordinated way
- 78) Explore opportunities for greater provision of facilities and activities, where possible integrating venues and delivery agents

Recommendations matrix

Feedback into the Town Action Plan generated the recommendations listed in the Topic Areas section. These are explored here in more detail. The recommendations could assist FTC develop its understanding of how to approach areas important to residents and provide guidance on they might be addressed. It can be seen FTC may have a number of roles:

- ❖ Champion – helping set community direction and prioritisation
- ❖ Deliverer – taking opportunities that deliver recommendations, having established a clear vision and effective organisational structure
- ❖ Facilitator – bringing together stakeholders to achieve the recommendations and providing support to them.

The role of other local organisations and individuals in delivery should not be underestimated. Many recommendations enable people with an interest or expertise to come forward and be supported to assist with delivery of an aim alongside and on behalf of the community.

Topic area	Recommendations	Possible next steps
Allotments and green spaces	1. The importance of Faversham’s green spaces should be recognised throughout FTC and SBC strategy with specific statements included in relevant policies that they will not be built on, but retained for public use	<p>Community engagement to determine green spaces to include on a list of assets of community value could take place</p> <p>Provision of adequate green space for community use could be made integral to the emerging neighbourhood plan</p> <p>Exploration of opportunities to bring unused land back into community use via the Community Right to Reclaim Land could take place</p> <p>An audit of land could be undertaken for designation as Local Green Space in the Faversham Creek Neighbourhood Plan or similar planning documents</p>
	2. In the shorter-term FTC should engage with SBC to press for a re-balancing of expenditure in favour of improved maintenance of open spaces	<p>FTC could press SBC for greater focus on maintenance of parks and open spaces (also see Green, environmental, sustainable)</p> <p>The faversham.org website could publicise the routes for the public to use to report maintenance issues</p>
	3. In the longer-term FTC should engage with SBC on passing to it ownership of town open spaces, with commensurate funding for their maintenance	<p>Exploration could take place of the merits and achievability of taking ownership or managements of open spaces either via Asset Transfer or the Right to Challenge</p>

Topic area	Recommendations	Possible next steps
	<p>4. The transfer of town allotments sites from SBC to FTC is concluded for the start of the 2013/14 year</p>	<p>NB. Funding is available for feasibility studies via the Community Right to Challenge Grant Programme as well as the Community Ownership and Management of Assets Fund</p> <p>FTC is in the process of taking ownership of allotments. Emphasis could be placed on the allotment societies taking the lead role in development, within a context of FTC providing overall direction</p>
	<p>5. Unsatisfied local demand for allotments should be quantified to assess whether provision of a greater numbers of plots should be investigated</p>	<p>In partnership with allotment associations an audit of allotments available versus demand could be completed. As part of the proposed green spaces audit (Recommendation 1) an audit of potential land for allotment space could be undertaken</p>
<p>Business support</p>	<p>6. Support a dedicated programme to promote business development, including scoping an Annual Expo, business networking and training and development programmes</p>	<p>Exploration could be supported of funding opportunities and appetite for such undertakings which would have an impact on promoting the value of Faversham as a business location. Partners could include local businesses (via groups such as FATA and FTG), local press, local and county-wide associations such as VisitKent, the Local Enterprise Partnership, KCC and SBC, developers, landowners, local transport providers (inc HS1)</p> <p>Local businesses have an established traders group (FTG) and a tourism association (FATA) exists. There is scope for other sectors – eg, home workers - to come together to network</p>
	<p>7. Lobby for a better deal for smaller traders on business rates</p>	<p>Continue support of organisations that represent Faversham needs nationally, eg, the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and AMT</p> <p>FTC could sign up to Fair Rates for</p>

Topic area	Recommendations	Possible next steps
		<p>Retail and support others to do so Publicity could be provided to local businesses on the rate relief schemes operated by SBC</p> <p>Work could take place with local MP to raise issues and highlights concerns that can be voiced at the national level</p> <p>FTC could work with SBC to determine how money retained at district level via the Rates Retention Scheme (from April 2013) can be invested into Faversham</p>
	<p>8. Increase collaboration between FTC, FTG, FATA, FEP, street market</p>	<p>FTC to continue to support local business, management of Faversham Rewards, production of regular newsletters and support to tourism</p> <p>Exploration could be made of the value of joining the National Association of British Market Authorities (NABMA)</p>
	<p>9. Engage actively in national initiatives such as National Markets Day to encourage future entrepreneurs to 'have a go' at trading</p>	<p>Involvement in schemes like National Markets Day, Independents Day (run by Skillsmart to promote independent shops) could be scoped</p> <p>Exploration could take place of other national initiatives that might promote the vitality of Faversham as a place to visit</p>
<p>Cleanliness and maintenance</p>	<p>10. Undertake a regular audit of cleanliness to prioritise action</p>	<p>Local voluntary groups/volunteers could be brought together to audit and report findings to the environment function at SBC as part of lobbying for increased expenditure</p> <p>Businesses could be supported in taking responsibility for cleanliness and maintenance of their immediate locations and this principle extended to residents</p>
	<p>11. Further promote the twice-yearly spring clean of the town to widen out</p>	<p>FTC (and new volunteer group?) could lead in increasing awareness</p>

Topic area	Recommendations	Possible next steps
	<p>participation and target this to needy areas</p>	<p>of spring cleans to increase volunteer uptake. Perhaps look to extend the spring clean to cover a whole weekend or long weekend. Partners could include schools, local groups, businesses and residents</p>
	<p>12. Continue to lobby private owners whose buildings or land are used/ viewed by the general public, to maintain and clean their property</p>	<p>FTC could work with FTG to encourage businesses to maintain commercial premises to high standards</p> <p>NB. Funding available via the Heritage Lottery Fund Townscape Heritage Initiative for regeneration of conservation areas.</p>
	<p>13. Provide clear information to the public on how to report issues relating to cleanliness</p>	<p>Information could be made available via the faversham.org website (and public notice boards) on how to report cleanliness issues, how to get involved in the spring clean, and how to access the latest minutes of the Public Realm Group. The Alexander Centre and the library lobby could display this sort of information</p>
<p>Education, employment, and skills</p>	<p>14. The case for greater provision of Faversham-based FE and adult education needs to be assembled and articulated to service providers</p>	<p>Based on need identified FTC could act as the lead to bring together partners including CAB, FE and training providers, local schools, SBC, Kent Libraries, Skills Funding Agency, the LEP and VisitKent to evaluate supply and demand in the area and determine a strategy for delivery based on a robust evidence base This could form the basis of a town Training and Development Group to take forward this work</p>
	<p>15. The initiative to form an IT suite at the Alexander Centre should be supported as should similar schemes in other venues</p>	<p>Delivery of this recommendation may rely on individual providers themselves, but could be supported within Recommendation 14</p> <p>FTC could lobby for provision of training and IT initiatives in existing venues (this could also relate to Recommendation 14)</p>

Topic area	Recommendations	Possible next steps
	16. Greater job and career communications between the town's two secondary schools and local businesses should be encouraged	This could be undertaken as part of proposals above
	17. With partners explore the need for a locally based 'routes into work' function	Loss of the JobCentre was mentioned frequently during the engagement. Alongside recommendations in the Business Support section setting up a 'routes into work' service could be explored, eg, as part of an extension of the role of the library or other venues hosting IT and training facilities.
Faversham as a service centre	18. Explore future options for the library with KCC and residents	<p>FTC could prioritise early discussion with KCC Libraries on how to safeguard services in Faversham, possibly extending the remit and use of the facility to enhance its role in the community</p> <p>Exploration could take place of how library services are run elsewhere a good example may be Suffolk, which has undergone significant change due to budget cuts, but without loss of local libraries</p>
	19. Explore using existing venues to host new and expanded services	Actioned primarily by suppliers. FTC may be a conduit between suppliers and providers through councillors' links and local knowledge
	20. Undertake an audit of key services across the town and put in place mechanisms for each to safeguard and improve them – this may involve exploring potential for local organisations to take over services run by public bodies such as SBC	FTC could invest in an audit of key services, the relative priority of each, risks to each and paths to safeguarding them. This might include exploring use of the Right to Challenge, the Right to Build, asset transfer, lobbying directly or via umbrella organisations (eg, Campaign for Community Banking Services, AMT) or via local MP
	21. Include relevant key community services on list of assets of community value	As above, FTC could have a role in promoting this new right to local residents and, with their input, compile a list of assets of importance to add to the list held by SBC. Work

Topic area	Recommendations	Possible next steps
		<p>could also include thinking on how to buy and manage an asset should it come up for sale. NB. Funding available for feasibility work via Community Rights funds</p>
<p>Faversham Creek</p>	<p>22. As part of the wider communications strategy for the Faversham Creek Neighbourhood Plan and delivery of the plan itself, the case for redevelopment of the creek area needs to be clearly articulated. This should include construction of a cost/benefit case to demonstrate the economic case for redevelopment of the creek area, assessing that against cost/benefit cases for other local investment priorities</p>	<p>FTC to lead on this. In the short term, this could comprise analysis of social, economic and environmental benefits of redeveloping the creek area in order to articulate the value of the neighbourhood plan to residents as part of an engagement process</p> <p>Over a longer period this may require construction of an evidence base to underpin assertions, required for the examination part of the neighbourhood plan process and for actioning site redevelopment</p>
	<p>23. The Faversham Creek Neighbourhood Plan and other town development plans need to be integrated</p>	<p>FTC to ensure the Faversham Creek Neighbourhood Plan is highlighted in work-streams, and vice versa</p> <p>Existing and proposed work-streams, including the neighbourhood plan, should include, as relevant, links that support mutual delivery</p>
	<p>24. FTC is the official 'sponsor' of the neighbourhood plan and needs to regularly review its internal decision-making and communication in this area to ensure continued coherence and consistency in its development, that all residents and stakeholders are kept up to date with progress and that the strategic aims of the Faversham Creek Neighbourhood Plan project are addressed</p>	<p>In order to move forward the neighbourhood plan has to succeed at examination and referendum. The local community needs to be aware of what the plan is, its scope and purpose, benefits of it and the community's role in the examination and referendum if it is to ultimately become a legal document within the Swale Local Plan</p>
<p>Governance: strategic and organisational</p>	<p>25. Agrees both for itself and for the town the vision statement the Faversham 2020 review has constructed and adopts the vision statement as a guiding template for its activities in the period to 2020</p>	<p>As a first step in a process of renewal there should be agreement of an updated vision statement. The work could be via a full council meeting or separate workshop style discussion</p>

Topic area	Recommendations	Possible next steps
	<p>26. Reviews, renews and restates its roles and functions, and reviews and renews its committee and organisational structure and communication methods, particularly in relation to the new Localism framework</p>	<p>FTC to begin a process of review of functions, committee structures and operational effectiveness, bearing in mind best value outcomes, the changing role of the council as a result of increased opportunities available via the Localism Act and including the Faversham Creek Neighbourhood Plan and the General Power of Competence. This could include exploring models of best practice displayed in other town councils via existing case study material and also tailored visits</p>
	<p>27. As part of the process recommended in 26) FTC reviews its decision-making, engagement and structures for the Faversham Creek Neighbourhood Plan (see Faversham Creek).</p>	<p>As Faversham Creek above, FTC could set out the new opportunities available to it and the town</p>
	<p>28. Institutes a programme of learning from progressive English local councils whose profiles match its own. Lessons learnt should be incorporated and implemented within the overall process of renewal</p>	<p>Town councils in England could be researched, including via use of the resources of AMT and other national organisations, in order to identify a sample of councils (say, up to six) from whom lessons can be learnt. Contact could be made with such councils, reciprocal visits and exchanges arranged. Best practice, good operational methods and strategic aim setting methods learnt could be implemented</p> <p>NB. Research into identifying new funding sources, both in the form of grants and new income streams, should be included in this work</p>
	<p>29 Using this process of review and renewal the council should set specific aims and objectives, with the Town Action Plan as the basis for the formation of a medium to long-term programme</p>	<p>A documented set of aims and objectives for achievement by FTC could be prepared by FTC and updated annually. This should not be a heavyweight report, but a working document against which progress can be measured and priorities set and periodically re-evaluated. Such techniques could be used to assist the council match budgets, resource, expertise and</p>

Topic area	Recommendations	Possible next steps
	<p>30. From 2014 a scaled-down, annual Town Action Plan process of engagement with local residents and a review of aims and objectives should be built into FTC's planning</p>	<p>experience to projects and workloads</p> <p>The Town Action Plan has been constructed to allow for a periodic refocusing of community priorities in the light of changing circumstances. A light-touch consultation with the local community could be undertaken periodically in order to ensure FTC aims and workloads maintain their community relevance</p>
<p>Governance: tactical and operational</p>	<p>31. Researches and acts upon Localism 'quick wins' where functions and services can be readily undertaken locally, eg, FTC to be responsible for naming new town streets and designating temporary 'play streets'</p>	<p>Roles and functions that could be relatively quickly and easily adopted by FTC that did not bring with them significant resource or financial expenditure, but which increased local responsibility and accountability, could be researched and their delivery incorporated into FTC functionality</p>
	<p>32. Sets out its aspirations and plans for future use for community benefit of its historic charters, including Magna Carta (See Tourism, arts, culture)</p>	<p>FTC to undertake the agreed exercise to identify options for the charter collection, assessing possible future actions against costs and benefits. From this a feasibility study could be undertaken for the selected option. Assess feasibility and, if appropriate, proceed with project. The approaching 800th anniversary of the signing of Magna Carta needs to be borne in mind</p> <p>NB. Funding for such work may be available from sources such as Heritage Lottery Fund</p>
	<p>33. Maintains local community and business support, including conclusion of the transfer of town allotment sites, pressing for improvements to town centre parking and engaging with town centre traders and others for economic benefit (See Allotments/ Green Spaces, Business Support, Parking Strategy, Town Centre Regeneration). Improves and expands contact with area parish</p>	<p>Current community and business support activity should continue, until the strategic and organisational reviews are completed. As part of tactical activity, approaches could be made to local parish councils to establish links for areas of common interest, eg, tourism promotion</p>

Topic area	Recommendations	Possible next steps
	councils in order to increase collaboration for mutual benefit	
	34. Embeds and develops support for local tourism (See Tourism, Arts and Culture)	As part of the recommendation above, support to the Faversham area tourism development programme should be progressed by developing the new working relationship between FTC, FATA and the FEP
	35. Commences discussions with KCC Library Services to explore ways to safeguard local library provision and improved use of the Newton Road site (see Faversham as a service centre)	<p>KCC are currently seeking views on the future of Kent library services; FTC could actively engage with county about local library services</p> <p>The council could also engage with KCC and SBC about the future of the Newton Road library site, it having been identified as one for possible future redevelopment</p>
	36. Subject to the timing of the national rail franchising process vigorously engages with the Department for Transport and others as part of the shaping of the South East Trains franchise, with the aim of having upgraded the frequency, speed and capacity of rail services to Victoria and Cannon Street (See Transport).	The national rail franchising timetable has been put back by tendering problems for the West Coast main line. This delay could give FTC and others the opportunity to work up proposals for future input to the Department for Transport for the improvement of the heavily used and important commuter and leisure services into Victoria and Cannon Street
<p>.....</p> <p>Green, environmental, sustainable</p>	37. Explore ways to promote more sustainable living and working across the town, for example support local food and crafts producers, exploring options to reduce waste and implement more efficient use of resources	<p>As an organisation FTC could commit to reducing waste, using local providers and producers and raising efficiency levels</p> <p>Opportunities could be explored for local food producers, crafters, entrepreneurs to mobilise their business, eg, via 'have-a-go' market stalls (see Business support, Recommendation 9), 'Meanwhile Use' in empty shops or business networking and Totally Locally</p> <p>The setting up and promoting of wi-fi across the town and promotion of</p>

Topic area	Recommendations	Possible next steps
		<p>the benefits of superfast broadband could be supported</p> <p>FTC could promote sustainable living across the town, eg, by encouraging development of sustainable local energy solutions and making it easier for businesses and homes to access them</p>
	<p>38. The town council's work to increase floral decorations in and around the town centre should be continued, but with greater heed given to the nature of these decorations</p>	<p>Working with SBC, FTC could establish (as an extension of the Public Realm Group?) a group comprising, eg. residents, potential sponsors, interested designers, to identify possible sites for further planting and suggest planting that is indigenous</p>
	<p>39. Improved walking and cycling facilities should be introduced as part of an overall upgrade of town transport infrastructure</p>	<p>FTC could bring together local groups with an interest in this area (via the public realm group?). Key steps could be identifying stakeholders (cycle groups, walkers, other road users, SBC, KCC) and setting up a focus group to kick-start ideas. Should be reflected in the emerging neighbourhood plan to maximize creekside access for user groups</p>
<p>Housing, development, design and planning</p>	<p>40. Work with representative groups of residents to establish a planning vision for the town to inform future development – this might be a design statement, wider neighbourhood plan or supplementary planning document</p>	<p>FTC, with partners, could explore the merits of and processes involved in shaping development in the wider town, perhaps using the Town Action Plan and Faversham Creek Neighbourhood Plan as a starting point and learning base. Results could be fed into the SBC Local Plan and Core Strategy</p>
	<p>41. Take action to increase the level of engagement with residents on the emerging neighbourhood plan</p>	<p>This is covered in Faversham Creek Recommendation 24</p>
	<p>42. Publicise local opportunities for taking the initiative on planning issues</p>	<p>Alongside community initiatives FTC could play a key role in this area by engaging with SBC in determining expenditure related to Community</p>

Topic area	Recommendations	Possible next steps
		Infrastructure Levy and New Homes Bonus in Faversham
	43. Consult with local people on a list of Assets of Community Value	This is also covered in Allotments and green spaces, Recommendations 1 and 5 and Faversham as a service centre, Recommendation 21
.....		
IT – broadband, wi-fi, cable	44. The Alexander Centre project creating an IT suite for possible further and adult education use should be supported as should schemes in other venues	See Education, employment and skills, Recommendation 15
	45. Early implementation of superfast broadband provision should be capitalised on by publicising it to employers, developers, venue owners and residents	This could be undertaken via the faversham.org website and through networking groups such as FTG and FATA. Business support, Recommendation 6, could also incorporate this in its scope.
	46. Development, with others, of innovative uses of IT that promote Faversham should be explored	FTC could act as co-ordinator in bringing together stakeholders with an interest in this area to explore ideas and processes
	47. Investment in local IT development should be viewed as, and acted on, as an integral part of the wider Faversham investment/employment agenda	This could complement work undertaken under Business support, Recommendation 6
.....		
Leisure	48. Sports providers should be encouraged to promote and advertise their services and facilities more effectively	FTC role could be to continue to support use of the faversham.org website as a key promotional tool for local leisure providers. This could be supported by detailing leisure and sporting opportunities in strategic sites around town, such as public notice boards
.....		
Local health services	49. Opportunities to locate as many primary care services as possible in Faversham should be identified and pursued	FTC to continue to lobby to protect existing health services and provide support to lobby organisations; this could include a councillor sitting as a lay member on the Clinical

Topic area	Recommendations	Possible next steps
		Commissioning Board
	50. Work of entities such as the Friends of Faversham Cottage Hospital should be supported	FTC to continue to add weight to the voices of local groups seeking to safeguard and improve local health services through, eg, raising awareness via the local MP
	51. Liaison by FTC with local health professionals should be improved to enable councillors to better understand issues faced by the health services	<p>There are opportunities for FTC to take a greater role because governing bodies will be required to meet in public and publish minutes of meetings, and HealthWatch England will be set up as a new patient representative organisation to provide patients and the public with a voice at national level with Local HealthWatch groups, replacing patient involvement groups, scrutinising local commissioning</p> <p>FTC could also have a role in telling residents about services offered by the Local Healthwatch (from April 2013) responsible for capturing local views on health and social care</p>
.....		
Older people	52. Provision of sheltered accommodation within easy reach of the town centre should be a planning guideline	FTC could request inclusion of this in the emerging Swale Core Strategy and inclusion in future planning documents, eg future neighbourhood plan or supplementary planning documents
	53. Town centre design should always take the needs of all types of users into account	FTC could promote the proofing for accessibility issues of future work relating to the town centre. FTC, in partnership with local groups, could promote active take-up of accessibility awareness training
	54. Explore, with partners, options for providing a function that coordinates the known local youth resource for volunteering with day-to-day needs of older people, such as assistance with shopping in the town	This links to Young people, Recommendation 76

Topic area	Recommendations	Possible next steps
<p>Parking strategy</p>	<p>55. FTC lobbies SBC for improvements to car parks, particularly Central Car Park</p>	<p>Continue joint work with SBC to upgrade local parking provision</p> <p>Lobbying for various user types to be taken into account in upgrades, eg, addition of child/parent spaces, resurfacing to remove flood risk</p> <p>Encourage SBC to have Faversham’s car parks assessed by the national Park Mark scheme</p> <p>FTC could explore with SBC income levels from parking in Faversham, with a view to increasing spend on local parking facilities</p> <p>Over the longer term FTC could explore viability of installing electric car charging points in strategic locations across the town</p>
	<p>56. Local knowledge is applied more extensively to parking through FTC taking a greater role in steering and operating town parking provision</p>	<p>A joint operational mechanism could be established that provides formally for FTC to input to running of service</p> <p>FTC could engage with private entities with parking space to explore options for pooling resource during peak times</p>
	<p>57. Over the longer-term FTC seeks a formal role in managing car parking in the town</p>	<p>FTC to continue agreed exploration of this and develop a business case for taking on the service. To include learning from town councils who have taken over and run car parks. Could be progressed via the Localism Act’s Community Right to Challenge provision</p>
<p>Safety, antisocial behaviour</p>	<p>58. Regular feeding in to Kent Police by FTC of perceptions of Faversham residents and dissemination of information on this topic to residents</p>	<p>FTC role could be to promote ways that residents can input their views into policing and safety, eg, promoting online chats, online police public meetings and local posters</p>
	<p>59. Explore opportunities, with others, to improve street lighting and other safety solutions in relevant areas of the town</p>	<p>FTC could encourage SBC to have Faversham’s car parks assessed by the national Park Mark scheme (also Parking strategy, Recommendation</p>

Topic area	Recommendations	Possible next steps
		55), include safety as a key design point in the emerging Faversham Creek Neighbourhood Plan and promote take-up of Swale Safe among local businesses
	60. Explore opportunity to extend Swale Safe to include a virtual neighbourhood watch system for residents	FTC could explore opportunities with Swale Safe for that scheme to be expanded, including investigating the value of this from experiences of other towns.
	61. Publicise better the 'channels to action' that residents/visitors can take if witnessing crime or its aftermath	Could include helping the public to know who to call to report an incident (this may stretch beyond the police if it is to report antisocial activity, such as in a playpark, where SBC would be informed)
.....		
Tourism, arts, culture	62. Oversee and monitor delivery of the Tourism Development Framework	FTC to continue to support and monitor Tourism Consultant output against Tourism Development Framework recommendations
	63. Improve communication to residents and visitors	Within the agreed remit of the Tourism Consultant, working with partners, with FTC monitoring progress, as above
	64. Develop and implement plans for Magna Carta	FTC to explore options for how best to capitalise on Magna Carta and other charters with a view to selecting a way forward and investing in this for the benefit of the town, see Governance: tactical and operational, Recommendation 32
	65. Explore opportunities for supporting tourism development within the emerging neighbourhood plan as part of Faversham's wider tourism offer	Within the agreed remit of the tourism consultant, working with partners, with FTC monitoring progress, as above
	66. Take an active stance on promotional activities and product development that showcases local talent and produce	FTC to continue to promote use of local talent and produce. This could include promoting take-up among businesses of schemes

Topic area	Recommendations	Possible next steps
		<p>that celebrate this, eg, VisitKent local Breakfast awards, linking local schools with local visitor experiences, exploring potential to develop new events that tap into Faversham talent such as arts and local food, working with partners to ensure good signage and visitor information</p>
<p>Town centre regeneration</p>	<p>67. Develop with businesses, residents, freeholders and service providers a renewed, shared vision for the town centre and an accompanying action plan</p>	<p>FTC and FTG could bring together key town stakeholders (traders, police, FTC, SBC, landlords, landowners, charities etc) to work on development of a renewed town centre vision. This could provide a platform to underpin many recommendations in this report.</p> <p>Funding via a Business Improvement District might be explored</p>
	<p>68. Support the improved pedestrian environment provided by traffic-free streets on market days (Tuesdays, Fridays and Saturdays)</p>	<p>FTC to continue to support trial pedestrianisation of the town centre and look to expand this further</p>
	<p>69. FTC to continue its support of town centre vitality, including public realm improvements</p>	<p>FTC to continue to support town businesses and target new businesses for the town centre and use of empty shops via 'Meanwhile Use' and pop-up shops</p>
<p>Transport</p>	<p>70. A more strategic, integrated approach to Faversham transport needs is taken based on data recording pedestrian and traffic movements around the town, peak pressure points and future needs</p>	<p>FTC could press for a town-wide review of transport needs across its various forms that would inform future transport upgrades and the priorities of maintenance programmes</p>
	<p>71. Greater emphasis in future transport planning is placed on the ease and safety of pedestrian and cyclist movement in and around the town, with recognition of a need to create a comprehensive local cycle path network</p>	<p>Press for the needs for the creation of a cycle network to be included within review work recommended above</p>

Topic area	Recommendations	Possible next steps
	72. Maintenance, repair and cleaning of footpaths is enhanced and pedestrian signage further improved	<p>Could lobby KCC to undertake local footpath and signage audit, eg, with existing groups such as Swale Footpaths Group, to flag priorities for KCC development and maintenance</p> <p>Promote more visibly to local people the facility on KCC website to report footpath issues, using the faversham.org website</p>
	73. FTC should engage vigorously with SBC, KCC and the Department of Transport to seek restoration of the capacity and speed of Faversham commuting services for Victoria and Cannon Street	Independently of the refranchising process develop business case for reinstating the service through engagement with local rail users, local business and the local MP. Develop programme to lobby ministers, officials and train company, including parliamentary debate
.....		
Young people (up to 18 years old)	74. FTC to explore the potential to establish a town youth council	FTC could work with local secondary schools to arrange selection of youth councillors. A 'youth town council' could be awarded an annual grant then manage its own finances. It could make awards to local young people's organisations and organise its own projects and activities. Youth councillors could sit in on FTC committees.
	75. FTC to revitalise the Youth Working Party	The Youth Working Party could be extended to include members of the youth council to ensure youth representation
	76. Look at ways to create a more formalised volunteer bureau (this could be extended to older people with leisure time available for community work)	This could tap into a desire among locals of all ages to have a more formalised volunteer bureau. FTC could take a lead role in seeking to set up and promote such a function
	77. Communicate activities for young people in a more co-ordinated way	Could be undertaken as part of FTC's proposed governance review
	78. Explore opportunities for greater provision of facilities and activities, where possible integrating venues and delivery agents	Could be an activity undertaken by the youth council

Methodology

Faversham 2020 was launched at the end of April 2012 with a public event held at the Alexander Centre. More than 250 people attended to learn about the project and give views about Faversham using a set of topics: Economy, Transport and Access, Environment, and Social and Community. Views and ideas were 'posted on the wall' for all to see and add to.

This event opened a period of engagement that lasted until August and which included:

- ❖ Regular updates and weekly articles in the three local newspapers (paper and online) – *Faversham News* (circa 3,000 weekly sales), *Faversham Times* and *ThisIsKent* – to inform people about progress on the project
- ❖ A dedicated website about Faversham 2020 with regular updates and a chance to feed into views online – the number of hits to the page were as follows: April, 428; May, 337; June, 401; July, 280; August, 219; September, 247.
- ❖ A Faversham 2020 Facebook page (29 followers) and primary twitter account (194 followers), supported by the main Faversham twitter account (446 followers)
- ❖ A mailing list of residents expressing an interest in being be updated (220 names)
- ❖ Visits to two primary and the two secondary schools, including sessions with children from different year groups
- ❖ Market stalls held on a Tuesday and a Saturday, with 132 people surveyed on what they like most about the town, what they least like and what should be improved or prioritised in the future
- ❖ A questionnaire undertaken by FTG during the Travel Through Time Weekend – 125 responses
- ❖ Meeting parish councils – Graveney, Oare, Norton, Teynham – in the area surrounding Faversham
- ❖ Individual, tailored correspondence sent to 237 organisations, service providers and associations across the town
- ❖ Meeting individual organisations across Faversham – church groups, FTG and individual businesses, Faversham Society, Citizens Advice Bureau, Jubilee Centre, West Faversham Community Centre, Kent Libraries service, Bysing Wood and St Mary's Children's Centres, AgeUK drop-in centre, Creek Consortium, Creek Trust, Shepherd Neame, local farming community, residents of the Almshouses.
- ❖ Ensuring engagement with residents representing different demographics, including attendees at Sure Start Children's Centres, AgeUK drop-in centre, Almshouses residents, FTG, Faversham West Community Centre
- ❖ Individual letters and emails to 100 organisations across the town and hinterland to tell them about the work and encourage them to get involved.

All feedback received was saved, no matter how small or large. While not all ideas might be actionable in the first instance, there may come a time when they can be.

A list of organisations approached and details of feedback received can be viewed at www.faversham.org/community/faversham-2020.aspx. It is estimated that through the various engagement mechanisms, more than 3,000 people have been either reached by the work directly or through representative organisations.



Faversham 2020 Steering Group

In parallel with the period of engagement, a steering group was established comprising councillors and individuals with an interest in taking part in the project. The role of the group was to act as a sounding board to discuss emerging feedback so that it could be used to inform the development of an updated vision statement and list of priorities. The steering group met monthly and played a valuable role in helping to understand the data, resulting in a proposed renewed vision for the town and also a list of topic areas beneath which recommendations for the town were grouped. Overall, 27 local people took part in the steering group process.

Given the timescales, the size of Faversham and its surrounding area and resource considerations, it is clear not everyone may have had the chance to have a say on future priorities for the town. For this reason, and because circumstances change, it is suggested Faversham 2020 is not an end point, rather it is the start of a dialogue with and among people that captures emerging viewpoints.



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2001 vision statement

The existing FTC vision statement for Faversham dates from 2001 and is expressed in the following terms:

- ❖ A market town growing naturally
- ❖ Providing a comprehensive centre of services for Faversham and its surrounding villages
- ❖ Developing the economy to provide a greater proportion of high-value employment
- ❖ Providing the services and facilities to enable the town to become a centre of niche tourism for the town and countryside
- ❖ Generating a concentration of speciality shops



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