

FOLKESTONE AND HYTHE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes for the meeting of the Council held at the Council Chamber - Civic Centre Folkestone on Wednesday, 29 September 2021

Present: Councillors Mrs Ann Berry, Miss Susan Carey, John Collier, Laura Davison, Ray Field, Gary Fuller, Peter Gane, Clive Goddard, David Godfrey, Anthony Hills (Vice-Chair), Mrs Jennifer Hollingsbee, Nicola Keen, Jim Martin, Philip Martin (Chairman), Connor McConville, Jackie Meade, Ian Meyers, David Monk, Terence Mullard, Stuart Peall, Tim Prater, Rebecca Shoob, Douglas Wade, Lesley Whybrow, David Wimble and John Wing

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Michelle Keutenius, Patricia Rolfe and Georgina Treloar

25. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest at the meeting.

26. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meetings held on 21 July 2021 were submitted, approved, and signed by the Chairman.

27. **Chairman's Communications**

The Chairman gave the following communications:

“Since our previous council meeting on 21 July, I have continued to visit local businesses to see how they are recovering following the lifting of most of the COVID-19 restrictions. It was evident that there still exists a certain nervousness amongst the public getting out, mixing with people, and being out to support the local economy. However, there were encouraging signs of optimism about business returning to pre-COVID levels but this would take some time.

Events I have attended on behalf of the council included:

- A visit to Brooklands, Sandwich on 20 August, by invitation of Councillors Paul and Mrs Sue Graeme.
- Raising Royal Ensign on Navy Day on 3 September.
- Arlington Castle on 3 September.
- Tenterden Annual Town Service on 5 September.
- Visit to Chatham Dockyard on 7 September.
- Visit to Ashford Mayor’s post COVID “Getting back together ceremony” on 14 September.
- Margate caves tour courtesy of the Town’s Mayor on 17 September.

My Vice-Chairman Councillor Tony Hills was able to attend the New Romney Mayor’s event on 19 September, and I would like to thank him for standing in, as I had other commitments.

I hope to be in a position to organise a fund raising event of our own early next year, when we will be inviting dignitaries from the neighbouring towns”.

28. **Petitions**

There were no petitions to be presented.

29. **Questions from the Public**

The questions asked, including supplementary questions (if any), and the answers given are set out in Schedule 1, appended to these minutes.

30. **Questions from Councillors**

The questions asked, including supplementary questions (if any), and the answers given are set out in Schedule 2, appended to these minutes.

31. **Announcements of the Leader of the Council**

The Leader gave the following announcements:

“Thank you Chairman, and good evening to you all.

I would like to start by highlighting the tremendously good service this council delivers to its customers.

As you know, to assess our interaction with our customers and partners, we engaged the Centre for Assessment to assess our performance in these areas under the ‘Customer Service Excellence’ certification scheme.

From the start, we were found to be compliant on all 250 of the basic parameters and year on year have continued to win Compliance Plus awards. These awards are given for exceptional and innovative delivery with strong emphasis on engagement inside and outside of the council.

I am very pleased to announce that after the recent follow up assessment we have gained another two awards, bringing our total to a magnificent 17.

What is particularly gratifying is that we have done this despite the COVID 19 pandemic. Indeed, the assessor remarked that unlike a lot of other councils that he assesses, we have not allowed it to majorly disrupt our service delivery and had this to say:

“Given the times we are in, I think this is remarkable that you have been able, not only to sustain what you have been doing, but to improve on it, and I think the whole staff team should be really proud of this”. A sentiment which I whole heartedly echo.

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To keep the Compliance Plus awards require us to continue to raise the bar and next year we will be reassessed so you can see that the scheme is a strong driver for continuous improvement.

When I say the council, I am talking about both members as well as officers because without the cooperation across the whole piece, we would not win these awards.

Finally I would like to praise Karen Everett who flawlessly arranges for the assessor to see the evidence of our performance, to meet our partners and get an oversight of our projects. Thank you Karen.

On to other matters, I have been contemplating what simple things I can do to help combat climate change. Which led me to reflect that when I was young, before the days of central heating, if I was feeling cold at home, I would put on another jumper or cardigan. Well I have now started to do that again, the result being that so far this year, I have not had to put any form of heating on and if I continue to do so will not need to turn the thermostat up as high as I have been doing. I have read that if we were all to do the same it would save around 300kg of CO2 being produced for every degree we turn the thermostat down as well as saving money on the fuel bill. There ends my public service announcement.

To finish on another piece of good news, you should have all received an email this afternoon informing you that we are in advanced talks with the NHS Kent and Medway Clinical Commissioning Group about commissioning a new health centre in a section of Folca. The Cabinet has agreed to a 150 year lease, the next step is for approval of a business case and then for planning permission to be sought. If all goes well, the first patients should be seen in the new facility in late 2024, or early 2025".

Councillor McConville, on behalf of the opposition, thanked the Leader for his announcements, and he also commended the work of officers in customer services, and the officers who helped facilitate this. It was nice to receive accolades and awards, however, delivering the best service for residents should always been the main driver. He stated that he looked forward to the council receiving the awards next year. He then stated that while he could live in a house without heating, not many people shared his resilience against the cold. Sadly, some families in the district would not have such a choice on the level of heating they could have, and would have to choose between buying food, paying the rent, or having the heating on. It was important to appreciate that some people struggled, and the council should do everything in its power to promote the greener options and address fuel poverty, using both council resources and petitioning central government to do more for residents. He stated that there was no doubt that a new health centre was needed, and he was pleased to see this progressing. He added that he hoped a normal access to GPs would be resumed, as many people were struggling with this at the moment. He looked forward to the business case coming forward, and hoped world class facilities could be delivered for residents.

The Leader then replied that the business case would be considered by the commissioning group, in order for them to release the funds for the building to take place.

Proposed by Councillor Monk,
Seconded by Councillor Mrs Hollingsbee; and

RESOLVED:

That the announcements of the Leader be noted.

(Voting figures: 26 for, 0 against, 0 abstentions).

32. Opposition Business

The Leader of the Labour Group, Councillor McConville, set out his Opposition Business which related to the provision of support for fuel expenses.

Proposed by Councillor McConville,
Seconded by Councillor Davison; and

RESOLVED:

That Option (b) (refer the issue to the Cabinet or the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, for their observations before deciding whether to make a decision on the issue) be agreed for the business below.

- To highlight, via the website, the services available to residents to assist with fuel expenses, including but not limited to: Winter Fuel Payment, Cold Weather Payment, Warm Home Discount Scheme, grants from suppliers trusts or funds.
- To bring forward a report that addresses the need for an amount of funding, relative to last year, that addresses the level of support required by our residents to stay warm and fed this winter.
- This report should consider, but not limited to, the following:
 - Potential sources for external funding
 - Additional streams of internal funding
 - Framework for distribution of funds
 - Monitoring and evaluation of delivery.

(Voting figures: 26 for, 0 against, 0 abstentions).

33. Motions on Notice

The Leader of the Green group, Councillor Whybrow, introduced her motion, which related to vegetation clearing at Princes Parade.

A debate took place, and then Councillor Whybrow was invited to sum up the motion.

Proposed by Councillor Whybrow,
Seconded by Councillor Prater;

That the vegetation will not be cleared from Princes Parade until the result of the public inquiry into the stopping up of the road is declared and planning permission for the surface water drainage works has been granted.

In accordance with the council procedure rule 17.5, five members present demanded a recorded vote.

FOR: Councillors Davison, Fuller, Gane, Keen, J Martin, McConville, Meade, Prater, Shoob, Wade, Whybrow and Wing (12).

AGAINST: Councillors Mrs Berry, Miss Carey, Collier, Field, Goddard, Godfrey, Hills, Mrs Hollingsbee, P Martin, Meyers, Monk, Mullard, Peall and Wimble (14).

ABSTENTIONS: None (0).

(Voting figures: 12 for, 14 against, 0 abstentions).

The motion was therefore **LOST**.

34. Folkestone and Hythe Community Safety Partnership (CSP) Plan 2021-24

The District Council had a statutory duty to address Crime and Disorder and as a responsible authority participate in the activity of the Folkestone and Hythe Community Safety Partnership (CSP). The CSP is required to produce a CSP plan following a strategic assessment of crime trends and issues facing the District. The annual strategic assessment (SA) document is a restricted document but the CSP plan is a public facing document that sets out the work of the partnership, identified priorities and actions to focus on. This report presents the new three year (2021-24) partnership plan (reviewed annually) to Council for approval.

Proposed by Councillor Mrs Hollingsbee,
Seconded by Councillor Monk; and

RESOLVED:

- 1. That report C/21/12 be received and noted.**
- 2. That the new 3 year CSP Plan 2021-24 be approved.**

(Voting figures: 26 for, 0 against, 0 abstentions).

35. Accelerating Delivery of the council's Corporate Plan - use of reserves

The report recommended the use of Reserves in to the current budget framework to accelerate delivery of the council's corporate plan specifically relating to: (1) regeneration and housing activities and; (2) those relating to the council's climate change activities.

Proposed by Councillor Monk,
Seconded by Councillor Mrs Hollingsbee; and

RESOLVED:

- 3. That report A/21/16 be received and noted.**
- 4. That the recommendations to Cabinet, set out in report C/21/32 (included as appendix 1) be noted.**
- 5. That the use of Reserves & Capacity Fund for the purposes outlined in report C/21/32, be agreed for inclusion within the current budget framework.**

(Voting figures: 26 for, 0 against, 0 abstentions).

36. Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) - Policy

The report sets out the Council's policy on the use of directed surveillance and covert human intelligence sources under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000.

Proposed by Councillor Monk,
Seconded by Councillor Mrs Hollingsbee; and

RESOLVED:

- 1. That report A/21/15 be received and noted.**
- 2. That the RIPA policy and procedure in appendix 1 to the report be approved.**

(Voting figures: 26 for, 0 against, 0 abstentions).

37. Pay Policy - salary and severance packages

The report sets out director salaries and a severance package to Council, as required by the Pay Policy Statement.

It was proposed by Councillor McConville and seconded by Councillor Monk that an additional third recommendation be considered (as shown below). This was agreed, and formed part of the final resolution.

Proposed by Councillor Monk,
Seconded by Councillor Mrs Hollingsbee; and

RESOLVED:

- 6. That report A/21/13 be received and noted**

7. **That the salaries and a severance package, set out respectively in paragraphs 2.3 and 2.5 – 2.6 of the report, be noted.**
8. **That the Personnel Committee be asked to consider the possibility of ensuring any staff employed at Grade L or above requires the approval of Full Council.**

(Voting figures: 26 for, 0 against, 0 abstentions).

38. Amendment of delegation arrangements by the Leader of the Council

Under the Council's constitution the Leader of the Council decides on the delegation of cabinet functions. The Leader may amend the delegations at any time by giving written notice to the Head of the Paid Service. Where such a notice is received the Head of the Paid Service must submit a report on the amendments to the next ordinary meeting of the Council. The report sets out the amendments made by the Leader.

Proposed by Councillor Monk,
Seconded by Councillor Godfrey; and

RECOMMENDATIONS:

9. **That report A/21/14 be received and noted.**

(Voting figures: 26 for, 0 against, 0 abstentions).