

FOLKESTONE AND HYTHE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes for the meeting of the Council held at the Council Chamber - Civic Centre Folkestone on Wednesday, 24 November 2021

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

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Gary Fuller and Connor McConville

39. Declarations of Interest

Councillors Gane, Rolfe and Mullard declared DPI's in respect of the agenda items relating to the General Fund Medium Term Capital Programme, and the Medium Term Financial Strategy, as they were Directors of Oportunitas, but had received a dispensation. Councillor Rolfe also declared a personal interest in the agenda items in respect of her role as a member of New Romney Town Council.

Councillors Shoob and Mrs Hollingsbee declared DPI's in respect of the agenda items relating to the General Fund Medium Term Capital Programme, and the Medium Term Financial Strategy, as they were Directors of Otterpool LLP.

40. Minutes

A Member raised concerns about the factual correctness of the supplementary response to Councillor question one, shown in Schedule 2, appended to the minutes of the meeting held on 29 September 2021.

It was agreed that the matter be considered further, and reported back at the next ordinary meeting of the Council.

41. Chairman's Communications

The Chairman gave the following communications:

"Since our previous Council meeting on 29 September, I have continued to visit local businesses to see how they are progressing.

Events I have attended on behalf of the council included:

- 7 October – Eagle Heights wildlife foundation to support Sevenoaks District Council.
- 8 October – Rochester Cathedral I attended the Annual Justices Service for the county of Kent.
- 12 October – visit to Italia in Tenterden.
- 13 October – Sevenoaks Charity Event.

- 22 October – Big Cats Sanctuary visit on invitation from Sevenoaks District Council, where I was able to feed a big cat by hand.
- 30 October – Civic Wardens Turkish Night in support of Folkestone Town Mayor’s charities.
- 4 November – Visited the Bricklayers, Chipstead to support Sevenoaks District Council.
- 5 November – Annual Civic Service at All Saints Church, Maidstone.
- 11 November – Machine Gun Corps Memorial Service at the Military Cemetery in Cheriton Road, Folkestone.
- 14 November – Folkestone’s Annual Remembrance Sunday march and Memorial Service.
- 23 November – Maidstone distillery visit courtesy of Maidstone Mayor.

42. **Petitions**

The Lead Petitioner, Bridie Hill presented her Petition, which asked the council to withdraw its recently published regeneration proposal for East Cliff and instead work with the community to improve the existing play area and support the bowls club and existing sports facilities.

Proposed by Councillor Keutenius,
Seconded by Councillor Keen;

That the petition be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their observations.

(Voting figures: 12 for, 15 against, 0 abstentions).

The motion was therefore LOST.

Proposed by Councillor Collier,
Seconded by Councillor Monk; and

RESOLVED:

That the petition be referred to the Cabinet, as Trustees of the Folkestone Parks and Pleasure Grounds Charity, after the conclusion of the public consultation, for their consideration.

(Voting figures: 15 for, 8 against, 4 abstentions).

43. **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.

44. **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.

45. **Announcements of the Leader of the Council**

The Leader gave the following announcements:

“Thank you Chairman, good evening to you all.

In survey after survey, the people of this district select the appearance of the district as one of their top priorities. As you know, our grounds maintenance team does a wonderful job in satisfying that priority and once again they have had recognition of this as Kingsnorth Gardens has been awarded a Green Flag, which is our fourth, Radnor Park, the Lower Leas Park, and Hythe Canal being the other three. Congratulations to them all.

Councillor Mrs Jenny Hollingsbee has been out and about, she and two of our officers have been holding equality and diversity sessions at the Turner Free School and the Folkestone academy. She also went to the Honorary Artillery HQ to receive on behalf of the council the Armed Forces Covenant “Gold” award, and here is the certificate to prove it (the Leader held up the certificate). We are very proud to have achieved the level of commitment to the Covenant that this award recognises. Well done.

Oportunitas has had a great boost taking possession of 18 apartments at RVH site earlier this month. They are built to an extremely high standard as those of you who took the tour of them will know. I am pleased to report that fifteen of the eighteen have already been let.

As this is the last Full Council meeting before Christmas, I wish all of you and our officers a very Happy Christmas and a healthy New Year”.

Councillor Keutenius, on behalf of the opposition, thanked the Leader for his announcements, and stated that she would like to start by wishing all staff, officers and Councillors a safe and Happy Christmas and New Year. A time we can take stock of how lucky we are in our country, and take a moment to think of those across the world less fortunate.

She also welcomed yet another award, for the tireless work of our grounds maintenance staff and teams. She also recognised the work of the many local young people from the Beacon School and Folkestone College, who have played a part in the transformation of Kingsnorth Gardens. The students are continuing the project by creating a Japanese style space for relaxation and reflection. She asked Members to visit Kingsnorth Gardens to see it progressing.

She stated that while the district has 4 of these green flag parks, (5 if you count the KCC run Brockhill Country Park) there is more to do. The KPI for this objective has been met, but she was hopeful this would increase in the next review, perhaps to extend to Romney Marsh, where there are none of this standard.

She commended the work of Councillor Mrs Hollingsbee and the team promoting such an important subject, and stated that she hoped this work continues, not just in the community but in our own houses, of our officers and Councillors, to value and recognise equality and diversity in all our people, so we might live together with a sense of togetherness and community. She also offered congratulations on the well-deserved Armed Forces Covenant Gold Award.

She stated that Oportunitas is a curious entity in that it provides housing in the district, but does so at market value which preclude many residents. It is important that as many homes as possible are under the council's control rather than unknown developers and landlords. She added that it would be nice to see the wheels turn faster on council housing, Highview School being one of those, as there are many people waiting.

She once again wished for a safe and inclusive festive period for everyone, and looked forward to a new year of progress, respect and good health for us all.

The Leader then thanked Councillor Keutenius for her positive response, and added that Oportunitas also helped create a revenue income, which was needed to provide our services and employ officers who were working on supplying more council homes.

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

RESOLVED:

That the announcements of the Leader be noted.

(Voting figures: 27 for, 0 against, 0 abstentions).

46. Opposition Business

The Deputy Leader of the Labour Group, Councillor Keutenius, set out the Opposition Business which related to the lack of regulation around Airbnb and self-contained holiday lets, and rising rental costs.

Proposed by Councillor Keutenius,
Seconded by Councillor J Martin; and

RESOLVED:

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

- That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee review the current situation with regards to self-contained holiday lets (advertised on Airbnb and other such websites) This review should contain but is not limited to:
 - The current numbers of entire properties that are registered as businesses for the purpose of holiday lets within the district.
 - The affect that these houses being used in this purpose has on the need for housing by local residents.
 - If the rising rental market within the district is being partially affected by the existence of these self-contained holiday lets.
 - The details of grants awarded to these businesses in terms of Covid business relief.
 - The financial burden on the council created by these businesses in terms of council services, waste collection etc.
 - What methods the council has in its power to regulate these properties: Change of use within planning, business registration, licensing etc.

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

*A member was not present in the chamber at the point this vote was taken.

47. Motions on Notice

The Leader of the Green group, Councillor Treloar, introduced her motion, which related to allow members to attend council meetings remotely.

A debate took place, and with the agreement of the proposer and seconder, the motion was expanded to include officers, and the word “mandate” was amended to “ask”. Councillor Treloar was then invited to sum up the motion.

Proposed by Councillor Treloar,
Seconded by Councillor Wade; and

RESOLVED:

- That this Council asks the Leader to write to the Secretary of State to call for parity across the UK and enable Councillors and officers in England to meet and vote online as they see fit.
- That should the legal framework provide for remote meetings, this Council moves to investigate the feasibility of hosting hybrid meetings in one room, such as the Council Chamber.

(Voting figures: 27 for, 0 against, 0 abstention).

48. **Refresh of the Council's Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Safeguarding Policy**

The District Council is part of the statutory safeguarding role within the wider public sector, with responsibilities to children, young people and vulnerable adults. The children, young people and vulnerable adults safeguarding policy has been updated and is attached at Appendix 1. Council are advised that the safeguarding policy is refreshed every two years and that the changes made to the 2019 policy include new legislation and changes to practice that are incorporated in the 2021 policy.

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

RESOLVED:

1. **That report A/21/17 be received and noted**
2. **That the refreshed Folkestone & Hythe District Council Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Safeguarding Policy and recommend to Full Council be endorsed for approval.**

(Voting: *26 for; 0 against; 0 abstentions)

* A Member was not present in the chamber at the time of the vote.

49. **Licensing Policy Statement 2021-2026**

The Licensing Authority is required to review and publish a Licensing Policy Statement for every successive five year period. A new draft policy statement was prepared following a detailed process of review and consultation and reported to Planning & Licensing Committee on 11 November 2021. The committee have agreed for the new draft policy to be presented to Full Council for approval.

Proposed by Councillor Peall;
Seconded by Councillor Wimble; and

RESOLVED:

1. **That report A/21/21 be received and noted.**
2. **That the final draft Licensing Policy Statement for the period 2021 to 2026 be approved.**

(Voting: * 26 for; 0 against; 0 abstentions).

* A Member was not present in the chamber at the time of the vote.

50. **Update to the General Fund Medium Term Capital Programme**

The report sought approval to update the budget for the General Fund Medium Term Capital Programme for decisions due to be taken by Cabinet earlier today regarding the District Owned Street Lighting and Biggins Wood Development schemes. The report also updates the General Fund Medium Term Capital Programme for works to the Connect 38 building in Ashford which were originally agreed by Cabinet on 26 May 2021.

A Member proposed an amendment to the recommendations, which was accepted by the proposer and seconder, and is reflected below.

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

RESOLVED:

- 1. That report A/21/19 be received and noted.**

(Voting figures: 27 for, 0 against, 0 abstentions).

- 2. That the General Fund Medium Term Capital Programme be updated for the Cat A works to the Connect 38 building.**

(Voting figures: 23 for, 4 against, 0 abstentions).

- 3. That the overall budget for the Biggins Wood Development be increased by £158,000 and to provide a further contingency budget of £250k to meet any further costs associated with remediating and servicing the site from the Business Rates Growth Fund held in the Economic Development Reserve.**

(Voting figures: 21 for, 1 against, 5 abstentions).

- 4. That a capital budget of £745,000 be approved to be included in the MTCP for the works to council owned street lighting assets to enable them to be transferred to Kent County Council. This is to be funded from the Climate Change Reserve (£408,335) and the Capital Receipts Reserve (£336,665).**

(Voting figures: 27 for, 0 against, 0 abstentions).

51. **Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022/23 to 2025/26**

The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) is the Council's key financial planning document. It puts the financial perspective on the council's Corporate Plan priorities, expressing the aims and objectives of various plans and strategies in financial terms over the four year period ending 31st March 2026. It

covers both revenue and capital for the General Fund. Also included are the Council's reserves policies. The MTFS is a key element of sound corporate governance and financial management.

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

RESOLVED:

- 1. That Report C/21/20 be received and noted.**
- 2. That the Medium Term Financial Strategy, as appended to the report, be adopted by Full Council.**

(Voting: 22 for; 1 against; 4 abstentions).