

Meeting: **Council**
Date: **29 November 2023**
Time: **7.00 pm**
Place: **Council Chamber - Civic Centre Folkestone**

To: **All Members of the Council**

YOU ARE HEREBY SUMMONED to attend a meeting of the Council on the date and at the time shown above.

Anyone who wishes to have information on any matter arising on the Agenda which is not fully covered in these papers is requested to give notice prior to the meeting to the Chairman or appropriate officer.

This meeting will be webcast live to the council's website at <https://folkestone-hythe.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>.

Please note there will be 37 seats available for members of the public, which will be reserved for those speaking or participating at the meeting. The remaining available seats will be given on a first come, first served basis.



Dr Susan Priest
Chief Executive

1. **Apologies for Absence**
2. **Declarations of Interest (Pages 11 - 12)**

Queries about the agenda? Need a different format?

Contact Jemma West – Tel: 01303 853369
Email: committee@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk or download from our
website
www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk

Members of the Council should declare any discloseable pecuniary interest or any other significant interests in any item/s on this agenda.

3. **Minutes (Pages 13 - 20)**

To receive the minutes of the meeting of the council held on 20 September 2023 and to authorise the Chairman of the Council to sign them as a correct record.

4. **Chair's Communications**

5. **Petitions**

There are no petitions to be presented.

6. **Questions from the Public**

1. **From Mr Jon O'Connor to Councillor M Blakemore, Cabinet Member for Community and Collaboration**

Could an update be provided summarising any work undertaken by FHDC officers and members with Kent County Council over the last three months in order to explore options for repairing and reopening Grace Hill Library?

2. **From Mr Chris Johnson to Councillor J Martin, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Otterpool Park and Planning Policy**

At the September meeting, the Planning and Licensing Committee approved an officer's recommendation to approve the inclusion of two sections of a development's buffer strip into private gardens. Will any safeguards prevent similar adoptions on future developments, such as the Officers' Mess site in Hawkinge, or are they just a paper exercise to be ignored?

3. **From Ms Mary Lawes to Councillor Polly Blakemore, Cabinet Member for Transport**

Elderly and sick residents in permit zones get free permits for their family members who are their carers. This allows family members caring for their family to park free. However, carers from KCC, the NHS and Private Sector care do not get this and are being hit by PCN fines. Could a resident who needs care get a free hard copy permit with their details so it cannot be used elsewhere, allow Carers to use permit but hand it back for next carer?

7. **Questions from Councillors**

(Questions can be found on www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk from noon 2 days before the meeting, on Modern.gov, under the agenda for this meeting).

Up to 45 minutes is allowed for questions from councillors.

8. **Announcements of the Leader of the Council**

To receive a report from the Leader of the Council on the business of the cabinet and on matters that the leader considers should be drawn to the council's attention. The leader shall have 10 minutes to make his announcements.

The opposition groups will have an opportunity to reply to the leader's remarks. The opposition group leaders shall each have 5 minutes to respond after which the Leader of the Council will have a right of reply. Any right of reply will be for a maximum duration of 5 minutes.

9. **Portfolio Holder reports to Council (Pages 21 - 30)**

10. **Opposition Business**

There is no Opposition Business.

11. **Motions on Notice**

The following motions have been placed on the agenda in the order received; up to 60 minutes shall be allowed for debates on motions on notice:

1. **From Councillor Mrs Jenny Hollingsbee, Leader of the Conservative Group**

The Council Notes:

Folkestone and Hythe District Council officially declared a Climate and Ecological Emergency on the 24th of July 2019 acknowledging, inter alia, a pressing need for investment in sustainable low-carbon electricity production so that the UK can meet its legally binding carbon emission reductions targets.

Dungeness has a proud heritage of nuclear energy generation, spanning six decades. Over their lifetime, Dungeness A and B Nuclear Power Stations provided our residents with 264 TWH of clean, safe, and reliable electricity whilst contributing significantly to our local economy and saving around 190 million tonnes of carbon dioxide from entering the atmosphere.

Dungeness A is currently in the advanced stages of decommissioning. In 2021, Dungeness B moved into a de-fuelling phase, signalling an end to power production on the site. During the initial decommissioning stage, the nuclear industry will continue to be the largest employer in Romney Marsh, benefiting approximately one thousand local people in predominantly well-paid and highly skilled jobs.

Small Modular Nuclear Reactors (SMRs) are an advanced technology with a smaller footprint compared to traditional nuclear reactors and have financial, deployment-time, and safety advantages. This exciting technology continues to attract serious investment and has the potential to unlock a new nuclear future for Dungeness.

Dungeness is widely regarded by industry experts as an ideal location for one or more SMRs because it has, among other attributes, available brownfield land, underutilised grid connections, easy access to water, robust flood defences, an existing highly skilled workforce with a culture of nuclear safety, and overwhelming local support for the nuclear industry.

The Council Welcomes:

That the United Kingdom has decarbonised faster than any other G7 country with a 48 per cent reduction in carbon emissions since 1990 and was the first major economy to legislate to achieve net zero by 2050.

The UK Government's Energy Security Strategy and its planned acceleration of nuclear energy to meet up to 25 per cent of our projected energy demand by 2050 and deliver cleaner, cheaper energy and greater energy security.

The leadership of Kent County Council and the Member of Parliament for Folkestone and Hythe, Damian Collins OBE MP, in championing a new nuclear future at Dungeness and for securing a site visit by Andrew Bowie MP, the Minister for Nuclear and Networks, in July of this year.

That conversations continue to take place between private companies, elected representatives, and local and national government officials to deliver one or more SMRs at Dungeness.

The Council Believes:

Romney Marsh is a unique and important part of our district and residents deserve the full backing of Folkestone and Hythe District Council in pursuit of a new nuclear future at Dungeness.

Nuclear energy is a safe, secure, and reliable source of electricity with the lowest lifecycle carbon footprint of any energy source. Therefore, it

should be a fundamental component of the United Kingdom's transition to net zero.

SMRs are a new technology with the potential to kick-start nuclear energy generation at Dungeness once again and deliver well-paid, high-skilled jobs, as well as wider socio-economic benefits to the local area.

The Council Resolves:

1. To confirm in writing our unequivocal support for a new era of nuclear energy production at Dungeness by writing a letter to:
 - Andrew Bowie MP, Minister for Nuclear and Networks
 - Roger Gough, Leader of Kent County Council
 - Damian Collins OBE MP, Member of Parliament for Folkestone and Hythe
 2. That all members of the Cabinet, at every possible opportunity, actively promote Dungeness as a location for new nuclear power generation.
2. **From Councillor Dr Stephen Scoffham, Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Environment and Biodiversity, on behalf of the Green Group**

Council Notes

- The proposals for a UNESCO Global Cross Channel Geopark are now at an advanced stage.
- The Geopark will cover a broad swathe of chalk downland from Dover to Bromley as well as Folkestone and other urban areas outside the district, along with a similar geological region in northern France
- The bid is being prepared jointly by the Kent Downs AONB and the Parc Naturel Regional des Caps et Marais d'Opale who need to demonstrate the action that has already been taken by local Councils, land management organisations, businesses and local communities
- If successful the bid will celebrate the relationship between the underlying geology, people, and natural and cultural heritage: it will help to protect the chalk landscapes in both regions, promote sustainable tourism and bring communities closer together supporting pride of place.

Council believes

UNESCO designation will bring multiple benefits throughout the district, supports both our strategic objects and the adopted AONB Management Plan, and represents a timely response to the current climate change and ecological emergencies.

Council resolves

As far as existing resources allow:

- To support the Kent Downs AONB Unit in promoting the bid, working with other organisations and Local Authorities in Kent
- To raise public awareness about the bid and the benefits it will bring to the local community and natural environment
- To include reference to the Cross Channel Global Geopark in our communications and promotional activities
- To assist the Kent Downs AONB Unit in reaching out to school children, students, and young people to help shape the bid and, if successful, on any projects that follow
- To contribute towards identifying Geosites in the Folkestone-Hythe district
- To further the development of the Cross Channel Global Geopark through the positive deployment of appropriate Council functions, resources, and responsibilities.

3. From Councillor McConville, Leader of the Labour Group

Council Notes:

There are approximately 39 care leavers aged 16-21 and 95 care leavers (aged 16-25) overall, based in the Folkestone and Hythe District or with strong links to the area.

At present young people (aged 16-21) are accommodated by Kent County Council in serviced shared accommodation provided by ClearSprings Ready Homes. Six months prior to the Young Person's 21st birthday, the Council works with KCC to support them into private sector or social housing.

Last month Kent County Council have decided to stop housing care leavers over the age of 19 (Decision notice 23-00083) from April 2024. Care Leavers already over the age of 19 will not be affected by these changes but all Care Leavers and Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children in the future will see their housing needs abandoned by KCC once they turn 19. KCC are making this decision purely to save money, believe this will save them £700,000 annually and will be included in their budget consultation for next year.

Folkestone and Hythe District Council has a duty to provide accommodation for all homeless young people under the age of 21. In future it will have to provide both temporary and permanent accommodation to all care leavers aged 19 until their 21st birthday when requested.

Council Believes:

Folkestone and Hythe District Council will have to house these individuals within un-serviced private sector tenancies, topping up their housing benefit by over £400 a month, based on monthly rent of £650 for shared housing in the district.

The if council had to immediately house all care leavers currently housed by ClearSprings Ready Homes (on behalf of KCC) it could cost our council in excess of £240,000 a year.

This motion believes that the proposed change represents an erosion of the safety net for our most vulnerable young people and turns the social care clock back by two decades. It calls on the Leader of the Council to write immediately to KCC Leader, Roger Gough asking him to reconsider this decision.

His letter should highlight the following:

- A significant disruption and distress which may be caused by having to house vulnerable care leavers in temporary accommodation outside of the district and where additional KCC floating support and access to education may not be accessible before a homeless decision can be made.
- Lack of high-quality supported housing available for this group via nomination agreements which will see us have to house our most vulnerable in un-serviced shared private accommodation not exclusively used by care leavers.
- The likelihood of tenancy breakdown is high, within this group of young people, with considerable impacts on them, our housing officers and the community.
- Substantial safeguarding risk which will be caused by placing this vulnerable group in the general housing stock. Risks include them being subject to financial cuckooing, County Lines, sexual exploitation and intimidation.
- Social cost of removing tenancy related support at 19 to the healthcare and justice system.
- The financial liability that this decision places on districts, far in excess of the amount saved

His letter could also highlight the lack of consultation given to local authorities by KCC about the change and request immediate data on the number of care leavers under 18 in this district and across the County, and turnover of tenancies held by 19-21 year old care leavers in order to predict and plan for the transition period.

Council resolves:

- a) Ask the Leader of the Council to write to Kent County Council asking for an immediate suspension of Decision 23-00083.
- b) Refer the item to the Overview and Scrutiny committee and cabinet to allow members, working with officers, to find a suitable path forward in service provision from April 2024.

4. From Councillor Davison, Deputy Leader of the Labour Group

This council notes:

The important and transformative work that has been done on Community Wealth Building by organisations such as the New Economics Foundation and the Centre for Local Economic Strategies.

That this work has been put into practice in authorities such as Preston where it has been extremely successful.

That a study in the Lancet (published April 1, 2023) that evaluated the impact of Community Wealth Building in Preston showed a reduction in the prescribing of antidepressants as well as in the prevalence of depression. The local population also experienced an improvement in life satisfaction (9%), as well as an increase in median wages (11%).

That the 'Preston Model' is often used to describe Community Wealth Building.

That Progressive Procurement is one of the keystones of Community Wealth Building.

That Procurement can range from the materials needed for new roads or buildings to a cleaning contract.

That as district authority we are bound by a set of rules to ensure that the procurement of goods and services is open, fair and transparent ensuring that the district gets good quality at a competitive price.

This council believes:

That we can make our procurement more progressive by looking at how the procurement process can be made simpler for potential suppliers to bid for opportunities and also how the procurement of goods and services can benefit local communities.

That we can encourage more businesses to engage with us in procurement by breaking bigger contracts down into smaller ones for example; or by making the process to bid for contracts as simple as we can (within the rules and regulations that we have to observe).

That when procuring goods and services it is also important to look at more than just the financial cost. We should also look at what additional value, or benefit, we can get from what we are buying.

For example, the construction of new buildings and developments can benefit local companies through them supplying materials and labour, and communities through employment opportunities either during construction or afterwards in the new businesses which move into these new developments.

This council resolves:

To refer to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to review the council's procurement plan, with specific reference to section 5 in the action plan, Local Suppliers and SME participation, which is to be reviewed quarterly.

To explore further Progressive Procurement practises which are designed to encourage more local businesses to engage with our procurement process.

That a reviewed policy should highlight not only the financial cost of projects, but also the economic benefits of localised procurement and investing capital within our own district. As well as ensuring value for money, not only for our community but also in partnership with them.

That any revised policy be decided by committee after May 2024.

12. **Report to Council on decisions made in accordance with the constitution's call-in and urgency rule (Pages 31 - 34)**

The constitution provides that, when an urgent decision is made by the Cabinet or Cabinet Member, for which any delay in implementation, likely to be caused by the call-in process, would seriously prejudice the Council's or public interest, then the 'Call-in Rules of Procedure', Part 6.3, rules 1-6 do not apply. Decisions, taken as a matter of urgency, must be reported to the next available meeting of the Council, together with the reasons for urgency.

13. **Extension of term of independent persons under the Localism Act 2011 (Pages 35 - 38)**

This report sets out the Audit and Governance Committee recommendations on the extension of the appointment of Chris Harman, David Carter and Ken London as the Independent Members under s28(7) of the Localism Act 2011.

14. **Committee Membership Changes (Pages 39 - 40)**

Under the Folkestone and Hythe District Council Constitution, Part 8.1 'Delegation to Officers', paragraph 3.18, the Head of Paid Service is authorised to make appointments to committees or sub-committees at the request of the relevant political group leader. This report sets out the appointments made, under these powers, on the instruction of the Leader of the Green Group.