



**Folkestone & Hythe District Council**

# **Annual Performance Report**

**A snapshot of our year: 2021/22**



# Leader's Statement

Looking back on the year gives me great pleasure as I reflect on what has been achieved by this council for its residents.

The end of the year enabled us to celebrate one of our greatest achievements when the revised Core Strategy was adopted by council. This looks ahead 15 years and helps us identify a five year land supply to meet housing needs and, most importantly, allocates the land required for the Otterpool Park Garden Town.

It took our officers nearly five years of work and an enormous amount of consultation, as well as 11 days of public examination, to get it approved and the planning inspectors' final report was extremely positive, especially about Otterpool Park.

Work has continued during the year in identifying how brownfield sites can be given new life rather than continuing as unloved eyesores. When no housing developer stepped forward we purchased the former gasworks site in Ship Street, Folkestone. In addition we have been awarded central government funding to make good the land at Biggins Wood in the town.

We have continued to improve our district's housing stock which returned to our management in 2020 and three of our tenants have been working with us on a new development at Highview in Moat Farm Road, Folkestone. They have provided insight on accessibility and assisted the exploration of zero-carbon-in-use initiatives which has been invaluable to our in-house design team.

The Highview project is just one of the ways we have been working as a council to tackle climate

change. At the end of the year the council agreed a district-wide carbon plan and we look forward to hearing ideas about carbon reduction at our new Carbon Innovation Lab. We began rolling out the installation of 94 electric vehicle charging points in our car parks and joined other local authorities in promoting a solar energy purchase scheme providing discounts for our district's residents.

I was delighted to attend the opening of the New Romney Business Centre which has such an exciting future. Along with the five hectares of land in Mountfield Road designated for business use, where we have installed access roads and utilities, we are well on the way to creating a critical mass for business on the Marsh.

We have continued to support our local businesses as they recover from the pandemic and council teams have worked hard to identify new opportunities as well as administer central government grants. It has been top of our agenda to make sure that our high streets are helped to thrive again and we have been listening to views on potential projects for bringing about improvements in Folkestone resulting in the Place Plan for the town.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Monk'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the left and a sharp upward stroke at the end.

**Cllr David Monk - Leader of the Council**

# Your Cabinet Members



**Cllr David Monk**  
Leader of the Council



**Cllr Jennifer Hollingsbee**  
Deputy Leader of the  
Council and Cabinet  
Member for Communities



**Cllr John Collier**  
Cabinet Member for  
Property Management &  
Grounds Maintenance



**Cllr David Godfrey**  
Cabinet Member  
for Housing and Special  
Projects



**Cllr Stuart Peall**  
Cabinet Member for  
Enforcement, Regulatory  
Services, Waste &  
Building Control



**Cllr Lesley Whybrow**  
Cabinet Member for the  
Environment



**Cllr Tim Prater**  
Cabinet Member for  
Revenues, Benefits,  
Anti-Fraud and Corruption



**Cllr David Wimble**  
Cabinet Member for the  
District Economy



**Cllr Ray Field**  
Cabinet Member for  
Transport and  
Digital Transformation

# Your District - An Overview

Our district is situated on Kent's south east coast and covers an area of 140 square miles. It is a place of variety and contrast with a landscape characterised by rolling chalk downland, wooded valleys, wild marshes, and a 26-mile coastline. The district has a population of approximately 113,000 of which 57.5% (32,800) of female residents and 59.1% (33,000) of males are of working age.

Our principal town, Folkestone, is home to just under half the district's population. It is also the area's commercial hub, particularly for creative and digital media - one of the UK's fastest-growing sectors. The Creative Quarter in Folkestone's Old Town is home to a thriving collection of artists' studios and creative businesses and offers artists, retailers and business people the chance to become part of this lively and ever-growing community.

As well as its strong creative focus, the district attracts a variety of innovative small and medium size businesses (SMEs) and is home to strong brand names including Saga, Eurotunnel, Holiday Extras, the Aspinall Foundation and Church & Dwight.

The historic town of Hythe is the district's second centre of population and one of two ancient Cinque Ports in the district. Its central feature is the Royal Military Canal, built for defence against invasion in the Napoleonic wars with France. To the west are the wide open spaces of Romney Marsh, home to New Romney, our second Cinque Port; Lydd, a member of the Confederation of Cinque Ports as a 'limb' of New Romney, and a number of smaller coastal communities. Contrasting with the wild expanse of marshes are the North Downs, a ridge of chalk hills that stretch from Dover to Farnham. The Downs are home to pretty villages, including Elham, Lyminge and Postling, hidden valleys and thriving vineyards.

Although the district is rural and coastal in character, it is very well connected. The M20 offers easy access to London and other major motorway networks, London is under an hour away via High Speed 1 (HS1) from Folkestone and we have unrivalled access to mainland Europe via the Channel Tunnel.

We think our district is a great place to live, work and visit. It's where the past has made its mark and where a bright new future is unfolding. As the local authority for the district, we have a key role to play in shaping that future.



**The Old High Street, Folkestone**



**Royal Military Canal, Hythe**



**Dungeness, Romney Marsh**

# Your Council - An Overview

There is a three tier local Council system in Kent made up of the county council, 12 district and borough councils, parish and neighbourhood councils, alongside Medway Council operating as a unitary. There are 13 wards in the district currently represented by 30 elected councillors.

Folkestone & Hythe District Council is responsible for the delivery of many different public services. Some of our key priorities include planning for a successful local economy with a diverse range of employment opportunities, delivering excellent value and high performance in service delivery, and working together to support the life of our communities. Services provided include managing development through making decisions on planning applications, household waste collection and recycling, street cleaning, car parks and on-street parking, environmental health, housing and homelessness, managing local parks and open spaces and supporting local culture and leisure activities and facilities.

The Council has won the following awards in 2021/22:



Ranked fourth in the Best Companies 'Not-For-Profit Body's' to work for and 57th in the best companies to work for list in the South East Region in 2021.



Retention of the Customer Service Excellence Award for the eighth year in a row. A further 2 compliance plusses were awarded in 2021 bringing the overall number awarded to 17 demonstrating the highest standards of customer service.



Gold Award winner in the Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) in recognition of the council's work in employing and supporting persons in the armed forces community.



The council's Revenue and Benefits Team were awarded by the Institute of Revenues Rating and Valuation (IRRv) for 'Excellence in Education and Staff Development.'

## **Service Ambition 1**

# **Positive Community Leadership**

**Our priorities over next three years:**

- **Improve physical and mental health & Wellbeing**
- **Safer Communities**
- **Supporting & Empowering our Communities**

# 01 Positive Community Leadership in 2021/22

- The Council in partnership with Kent Coast Volunteering and Kent County Council supported the delivery of the new Folkestone Nepalese Community Centre in Cheriton during the year. The centre is run by the Folkestone Nepalese Community (FNC), a charitable incorporated organisation and includes welfare support office, a meeting room, event and socialising spaces, and an IT room. The council has supported the project through its ward grant scheme and some funding towards core costs. Support and advice was offered throughout, while the Local Area Officers also helped with redecorating the interior of the centre.
- In September 2021, Cabinet members unanimously agreed to the proposed terms of a 150-year lease of the Victorian building at FOLCA on Sandgate Road that has helped with plans for a new health centre with state-of-the-art facilities in the heart of Folkestone to move a step closer. The NHS Kent and Medway Clinical Commissioning Group have supported the principle of plans for a health facility within Folca and subject to various permissions being obtained and consultation taking place, doors could open to patients in late 2024.
- Members at the full council in July 2021 approved an additional £518,000 of funding for the Romney Marsh Coastal Destination project, which will bring forwards over 100 beach chalets, toilets (including a fully-accessible Changing Place toilet), café, concession kiosk and upgraded car parking that will be built at the Coast Drive Car Park by the Council with completion for the project aimed for in November 2022.
- The council successfully bid for funding totalling £90,000 from the government's National Leisure Recovery Fund to provide much needed support to the Marsh Academy Sports Centre in New Romney and Three Hills Sports Park in Folkestone. The National Leisure Recovery Fund, is designed to give the leisure sector the best chance of recovery in the medium to long term, by supporting with the reopening of publicly owned facilities, as well as being used to rebuild their customer base.

- In December 2011, the council became the first district authority in the country to commit to the Armed Forces Covenant - a promise to ensure those who serve or served in the forces - and their families - are treated fairly and not disadvantaged in their daily lives. Ten years on the Council's Chairman (Cllr Phillip Martin) signed a refreshed pledge with Major Peter Houlton-Hart MBE, of The 1st Battalion Royal Gurkha Rifles (RGR), at Westenhanger Castle. In addition to the council's continued commitment to the covenant, it has been recognized during the year with the highest badge of honour for military support from the Ministry of Defence - **the Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award**, which is presented to those that employ and support persons who serve and protect our county
- A total of 61 Pubs, bars, clubs and restaurants across the Folkestone and Hythe district have been encouraged to join the national Pubwatch scheme during the year. The voluntary scheme is designed to promote good practice among licensed venues and aims to achieve safer drinking environments. It connects the venues and encourages communication regarding any customers that cause anti-social behaviour. Monthly meetings are hosted between venue staff and representatives from the council's licensing team and Community Safety Unit, as well as the Folkestone Area Protection Against Crime and Kent Police.
- A nine week public consultation was undertaken with the local business and the public on a refreshed version of the Council's Licensing Policy that will cover the period 2021-26 that will help determine all future licensing applications brought forwards. Changes to the policy included, the establishment of a new Licensing Forum that would meet twice a year with local stakeholders, and a new recommended operating hours for different types of licensed premises. The policy was then successfully adopted at Full Council in November 2021.



Opening of the new Nepalese Community Centre in Cheriton



Council's Chairman (Cllr Phillip Martin) signing a refreshed covenant pledge with Major Peter Houlton-Hart MBE, of The 1st Battalion Royal Gurkha Rifles (RGR)



Meeting of the National Pub Watch Scheme in the district with officers from the council's Licensing team and Community Safety Unit

# 01 Positive Community Leadership in 2021/22

- The council agreed to provide over £83,000 to organisations who have supported vulnerable residents during the pandemic. Funding comes from the government's Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) with council's Cabinet members agreeing to support a range of community programmes and initiatives including:
  - **Shepway Sports Trust's Active Sports programme** – Supporting the continuation of its free, weekly physical and social activities with an emphasis on those from low-income households.
  - **The Folkestone Leas Lift Lockout Community Project** – To run a series of workshops for disadvantaged adults and young people around the design and construction of escape rooms. This will build on skills such as literacy, IT and puzzle solving, as well as helping with social confidence after isolation.
  - **Age UK Hythe & Lyminge Winter Grants scheme** to enable continued assistance of elderly, vulnerable or isolating people in the area.
  - **Citizens Advice Bureau's COVID Recovery Support** to enable the continuation of support for families and individuals experiencing hardship.
  - **The Rainbow Centre's Healthy Food Support programme** to provide an extra 120 food parcels to struggling families, as well as more fuel top-ups, sleeping bags and mobile phones to those in temporary accommodation.
- The council's application for a stopping up and diversion order at Princes Parade was granted in January 2022 following a public inquiry overseen by an independent inspector held between October and November 2021. The project that will bring forwards a brand new leisure centre, promenade and infrastructure improvements as well as new homes has also been approved as part of the Council's Medium Term Capital programme in February 2022. Work has begun on site during the year to prepare for construction with the removal of vegetation and the safe relocation of wildlife. Construction work is due to be completed in early 2024.
- Lifeline365, an emergency scheme run by the Council to help those on their own and those who are vulnerable has again been recognised for providing the highest standards of customer service by retaining its Telecare Services Association (TSA) accreditation for the 12<sup>th</sup> year running. The service has a range of alarms and detectors connecting users to a live chat service with the control room in case of emergency and is operated for residents across the district as well those living in other areas of Kent every day and night of the year.
- The Council successfully retained its Customer Service Excellence (CSE) accreditation during the year. The accreditation is a Government standard developed to offer a practical tool for driving customer-focused change within organisations. The independent assessor was so impressed by the Council's ongoing commitment to customer service he awarded a further 2 compliance pluses as part of his latest inspection bringing the overall number awarded to 17. This is the highest number of compliance pluses we have been awarded and is great recognition for the services we provide.
- A total of 190 individual ward grants totalling over £89,000 were awarded during the year to benefit local charities and community groups across the district including, The Bayle Residents Association, CARM (Caring All Together Romney Marsh), Folkestone Festivals, Hythe Civic Society, Strange Cargo Sunflower House, Sandgate Scouts and the Romney Marsh Community Hub.
- The council's welfare team have awarded 378 financial support payments for people struggling to pay their council tax and provided them and many others referred to the team with general welfare assistance to improve their lives. In addition to this everyday work, over £221k household support fund has been distributed to help people pay for food, winter clothing and bedding between January and March.



**Code of Practice  
Accredited Organisation**

Lifeline 365 been recognised for providing the highest standards of customer service by retaining its TSA accreditation for the 12<sup>th</sup> year running.



The Council successfully retained its Customer Service Excellence (CSE) accreditation during the year following re- inspection and scored the highest number of compliance pluses since it started participating in the accreditation in 2013.



# 01 Positive Community Leadership in 2021/22

- The council's safeguarding policy was reviewed and updated in autumn 2021. The revised policy took into account feedback from the Kent and Medway Safeguarding Adults Board and Kent Safeguarding Children Multi-agency Partnership safeguarding audits, and included additional emphasis on areas such as Modern Day Slavery, Domestic Abuse, Mental Health, Hoarding, and Prevent. Additionally, work has been undertaken to increase the pool of designated officers, including a focus on recruiting male staff to the role, to ensure a better spread of knowledge across different areas of the council – the council now has around 20 designated officers.
- The District Food Network (DFN) was established in Spring 2021, as a result of work between hubs, foodbanks, and other groups, with the aim of gaining a better understanding of need across the district and to enable everyone to know who is delivering what food services to which groups of service users. The DFN is focussed on food poverty and reducing food waste. The group is run with oversight from the council. Recent initiatives have included producing a document setting out all food resources (food banks, low cost meals, etc.) within the district and available on the council's website; winning a bid for funding to set up a community fridge to provide free fresh food to those in need, with the aim to introduce further fridges in other parts of the district over time.

The council's Community Safety Unit (CSU) has worked on following community initiatives with Folkestone & Hythe Community Safety Partnership (CSP) during the year, including:

- **Halloween events:** A number of pop up events were operated across the district during the October half term to engage with the local residents in the community. Preparing for Halloween and raise awareness of the potential anti social behaviour (ASB) that can take place and the impact on people. During the event flyers & posters were given to those who may be vulnerable to support NO trick or treating. We also gave LED lights and glow sticks to give to young people and a flyer about keeping young people safe and information about local youth services.
- **Adult Safeguarding Awareness Group:** An event was held in November 2021 within Bouverie Shopping Centre on Folkestone. The theme for the week was '**Creating Safer Cultures**' and will seek to inform the public to spot the signs of abuse - "**noticing is**

**not nosiness**" and then providing them with information on what they can do. The CSP also highlighted areas such as domestic abuse, trading standards, scams, hate crime, adult abuse, mental health, substance use, physical health, neglect and self-neglect.

- **Anti-Spiking Campaign:** Beer mats have been designed by the CSU specifically to raise awareness and also prevent unattended drinks being "spiked" (having substances added to them without the drinker being aware) by having relevant safety information printed on them & having a straw hole so the drink can stay covered. The CSU, Licensing and Kent Police attended over 20 night-time venues during the evening on Saturday 27 November 2021 and distributed hundreds of 'spiking prevention' beer mats along with safety advice and information to those running the venues as well as their patrons.
- **Safety in the Night Time Economy:** A training event held at the end of November 2021 at The Chambers venue in Folkestone. The training addressed managing harassment in the night-time economy and the joint roles of venues, taxis and door staff in safeguarding those at risk or vulnerable and raise awareness.
- **Operation Sunshine:** The new multi-agency operation launched in January 2022 involves community safety partners coming together monthly to approach a number of community safety issues. Together they will undertake environmental audits, attend anti-social behaviour hot-spot areas and engage with the public and businesses regarding both safety and environmental issues.
- **Violence against Women and Girls campaign:** In support of International Women's Day, the Community Safety Partnership coordinated a number of community engagements at Bouverie Place shopping centre to engage with those finishing work and young people after school. Over 50 people engaged with the stand and partners and Safety devices such as whistles and personal alarms were handed out. Kent Self Defence gave personal safety advice.



Spiking prevention beer mats distributed to licensed venues to raise awareness of spiking their customers.



Multi Agency partners attending Operation Sunshine, a monthly meeting to address community safety issues.



Multi Agency partners hosting a stand in Bouverie Place to raise awareness of violence against women.

## **Service Ambition 2**

# **A Thriving Environment**

**Our priorities over next three years:**

- **Ensure an excellent environment for everyone**
- **Grown the circular economy & reduce waste**
- **Increase our resilience to climate change**

## 02 A Thriving Environment in 2021/22

- In response to declaring a climate and ecological emergency back in 2019, the council has committed to making its own estate and operations net zero by 2030 as well as play a leadership role in helping the community, public and businesses achieve the same goal. In March 2022, the council's cabinet approved proposals for a district wide carbon action plan that sets out five key pillars to encourage, engage and empower local communities, key partner organisations, businesses and residents to achieve the net-zero target. The council, as part of the plan will also establish and run a Carbon Innovation Lab (CI-Lab), an informal ideas exchange focused on carbon reduction and working with invited representatives from key stakeholder groups from the community, business, special interest groups and academics in order to guide the work of the plan. When drafted, a public consultation will take place on the plan with the final version returning for adoption by the council's cabinet towards the end of 2022.
- During the year, the first of the district's 94 new charging points for electric vehicles were successfully installed by Connected Kerb. In total 18 new charging points in 5 car parks are now operational in the district for residents and visitors to use offering a mixture of fast 7Kwh, 22kw and rapid 50Kwh charging, depending on the location. The Council has partnered with Kent County Council and five other local authorities for the roll out, which will see one of the largest networks of consistent charging points. A further 15 sites across the district are planned for installation by 31<sup>st</sup> May 2022 and 6 more by the end of 2022.
- Kingsnorth Gardens was successfully awarded Green Flag Status for the very first time during year becoming the fourth green space within the district to receive the prestigious award. The gardens located in Folkestone joins the Royal Military Canal, Lower Leas Coastal Park and Radnor Park - all of which maintained their Green Flag status for 2021/22 due to their management by the council's excellent Grounds Maintenance team. The award

is given to green spaces which boast the highest possible environmental standards, are beautifully maintained and have excellent visitor facilities.

- The Council teamed up with Kent County Council for Solar Together Kent, a group-buying initiative for solar panels and battery storage. The scheme has been rolled out county-wide following its success across the country in the past few years. Over 1,600 letters were sent out homes across the District encouraging free registration to the scheme to get a personal recommendation for their home, based on their registration details. This includes costs and specifications of their system.
- To show appreciation for Her Majesty's 70 years' service, the Council will planting an avenue of trees as part of The Queen's Green Canopy (QGC). The 12 commemorative London Planes will be at Cheriton Recreation Ground with a plaque marking the dedication placed opposite the existing Golden Jubilee plaque at the park entrance (the recreation ground was dedicated to the Queen's Golden Jubilee).The council will also encourage individuals and community groups to join in the nationwide QGC, which is run in partnership with The Woodland Trust - by buying individual trees, to apply for free trees and for aftercare advice.
- The council's 2021 air quality monitoring report found no incidences of high levels of nitrogen dioxide gas detected at monitoring sites during 2020. The report, which has been accepted by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, means that the district is meeting the government's air quality objectives and the council, as the local authority, is not required to declare any Air Quality Management Areas.



Cllr Susan Carey and Cllr Jim Martin with new EV charging points installed in Hythe.



Raising the Green flag in Kingsnorth Gardens. The fourth green space in the district to receive the prestigious award.

## 02 A Thriving Environment in 2021/22

- Work has been undertaken during the year with industry experts including Etude, Levitt Bernstein, Elementa Consulting, and The Passivhaus Trust on a new toolkit that will provide a step-by-step guidance on embedding 'green by design' into projects as well as advice on how to improve biodiversity, reduce transport emissions by encouraging walking and cycling, and measures to reduce how much water we use. The toolkit, which is being match-funded by a grant from Homes England, will draw from innovations being developed in the district, such as the new garden town Otterpool Park and Highview, a zero-carbon-in-use development of 30 homes, which have been designed by the council's in-house team.
- The Environmental Protection team have invested in eight wildlife cameras which have been deployed at various hot spots within the district to assist with catching incidents of fly-tipping, littering and dog fouling. Signage has also been increased in these areas to help highlight the issue and provide education in terms of the offence. This has been extremely beneficial and resulted in a notably significant decrease in the number of offences witnessed. The cameras deployed have assisted with the issue of Fixed Penalty notices including:
  - Charlotte Street – an FPN was issued for £300 for fly-tipping a toilet and bathroom renovation waste.
  - Running Waters, New Romney – Relating to several urinating offences and littering offences resulting in £100 FPNs being issued as well as smoking in commercial vehicles and littering from the taxi.
  - Napier Barracks to educate the residents in terms of managing litter correctly.
- During the year, the Dover Road area of Folkestone has presented considerable waste issues with rubbish being left in three key areas, Charlotte Street, Queen Street Alley and Harvey Street. Environmental Protection Officers have worked extremely hard in this area conducting daily patrols and engaging with a large number of local residents who have supported the officers' mission of improving the area, a

notable example is from a Charlotte Street garage business which has supported one of our cameras being installed on their premises and have provided information regarding waste being dumped in the area. Officers have also issued stickers for all communal bins stating that they should not be used for household domestic waste and to not leave items outside the bins as well as worked with residents, businesses and landlords to improve the way they store their waste and tackle the overflowing bin situation.

- In November 2021, Environmental Enforcement Officers joined those from Kent Police and the Environment Agency for Operation Assist to tackle rogue traders who undertake fly tipping in the district. Areas where waste was either left or collected by unlicensed operators were covered, including builders' yards, DIY stores and Highfield and Park Farm industrial estates, along with other parts of Folkestone, Cheriton and Hawkinge. Officers were also on the lookout for vehicles of interest and while seven were stopped, they all had the correct paperwork and no further action was taken. During the patrols, a large amount of fly-tipped waste (including household waste and furniture) was spotted at the junction of Harbour Way/Radnor Bridge Road in Folkestone, and a fixed penalty notice (FPN) was issued to the owner. FPNs were also issued to an individual who dropped litter and another was issued for a failure to display a no smoking sign in a commercial vehicle.
- A total 76 community environmental volunteer events have been supported by council's Local Area Officer Team during the year. The team have worked with a variety of local community groups and organisations including, The Hythe Environmental Group, 99 Squadron Air Cadets, 1st Cheriton Scouts, Elham and Lyminge Parish Councils, Stowting Wombles as well as local schools and youth organisations. Events undertaken in the year have included, stream cleans, area clean ups and litter picks with 950 attendees helping to collect over 1,500 bags of litter to help keep the district clean and tidy.



Officer waste search in Charlotte Street



Caught in the Act: Footage of fly tipping taking place



Environmental Enforcement Officers and Kent Police undertaking checks as part of Op Assist

## **Service Ambition 3**

# **A Vibrant Economy**

**Our priorities over next three years:**

- **Reinvigorate the high streets**
- **Support a vibrant & diverse business community**
- **Help people access jobs & opportunity**
- **Grow the skills we need for the future**

## 03 A Vibrant Economy in 2021/22

- In September 2021, the council approved the Folkestone Place Plan, an ambitious plan to create a sustainable and vibrant future for Folkestone town centre. Work has since commenced with a consultant team led by 'We Made That' to design and develop priority projects set out in the Place Plan, which will include engagement with partners, stakeholders and the local community on the detail of the projects which may be part of an application for the government's Levelling Up funding. A total of six priority projects are to be the focus of the work:
  - The Folkestone Central rail station arrival and town centre connections
  - The gateway into the town centre and Bouverie Square
  - The public realm of Sandgate Road and the town centre,
  - The area surrounding the new skate park F51 and Payers Park
  - Bringing forward the Harbour Line
  - Reconfiguring of Tram Road and improving Sunny Sands.
- Bouverie House Business Centre situated next to Folkestone bus station was officially reopened in August 2021 following the building being vacant for more than a decade thanks to the support of the Folkestone Community Works programme. A six-figure sum of investment, including a £420,000 Folkestone Community Works grant, part-funded by the European Structural and Investment Funds 2014-20 and managed by the Council has been spent on refitting the building sustainably. The new business centre will provide over 6,000 sq ft of office space within 21 self-contained units, meeting rooms, an informal breakout area, virtual offices and co-working space - all of which are available for rental on short, flexible terms.
- The new £2 million New Romney Business Hub at Mountfield Road was officially opened at the beginning of December 2021 that will bring a range of new business and job opportunities to the Romney Marsh. The Council and East Kent Spatial Development Company (EKSDC) equally contributed to the development by each funding £735,000. The Nuclear Decommissioning Authority's (NDA) socio-economic programme met £500,000 of the cost and provided a further £205,238 for an adviser to be based at the centre for the next four years to support local businesses. The hub consists of 14 rooms that have been designed to provide flexible workspace for small businesses to grow, including new companies and those who might be operating online from home. The first two businesses are due to move in from April 2023 onwards.
- The Council created nine new roles within the organisation as part of the government funded 'Kickstart Scheme' to support those aged from 16 to 24 and who are on Universal Credit, the chance to apply for high-quality jobs which will build their confidence and skills in the workplace. The nine jobs created are administrative assistant (five positions in different departments), trainee gardener (three positions), and assistant caretaker. All roles are paid, working 25 hours per week for a six-month fixed term.
- The Romney Marsh Partnership (RMP) appointed to a new senior specialist role funded and supported by Folkestone & Hythe District Council, the NDA/Magnox socio-economic scheme and Kent County Council for the next three years to maintain the momentum of the important work of the RMP to bring forward new economic regeneration projects in the area, including support for the communities around Dungeness to look for opportunities to mitigate the closure of Dungeness A Power Station.



Folkestone Place Plan



Cllr David Monk at the opening of the Bouverie House Business Centre in Folkestone



Cllr Patricia Rolfe and Cllr David Wimble opening the Romney Marsh Business Hub

## 03 A Vibrant Economy in 2021/22

- A new Folkestone & Hythe Green Business Grant Scheme has been agreed by cabinet during the year. The scheme will provide a maximum of 40% of the investment normally up to £10,000, but can be up to £25,000 in exceptional circumstances and will be for all businesses in the district who want to invest in more energy-efficient equipment and machinery which improves their carbon footprint. Grants will also be available to businesses in the low-carbon and environmental goods and services sector (LCEGS) in the district - or those wishing to locate here - who are looking to develop new products or services to help others reduce their carbon footprint. The scheme will launch at the beginning of the 2022/23 financial year and run until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.
- A new seasonal market called 'A Kentish Spring Market' featuring live music and local traders was launched in Guildhall Street in Folkestone town centre at the end of March 2022. The artisan market featured a range of food and craft products from up to 15 local producers and makers as well as street food options. The market was operated by the organisers of the popular local Vegan Vibes market, on behalf of the council which is accessing the government's Welcome Back Fund to deliver the event. The fund provides councils across England with a share of £56m from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) to support the safe return to high streets and helps to build back better from the pandemic. Live music performances were also provided from local musicians as part of Programme being managed by businesses, Seaview Studio and The Chambers, under the Folkestone Music Town initiative.
- The Folkestone Community Works programme has continued to fund free business advice for local businesses and potential entrepreneurs situated in central and east Folkestone and this will continue until March 2023. During the year, the funded project Enterprising Opportunities delivered by Social Kent Enterprise Kent worked with over 40 businesses and entrepreneurs helping them to manage the impact of COVID

- as well as realise their potential. A new funded project call Open Doors Step Up lead by Screen South started and it aims to support young adults to explore career pathways into film making and associated creative sections, and to provide advice to local community film makers.
- The Folkestone Community Works SME Business Grant Scheme has continued to offer 50% grants towards the cost of new equipment to support growth and innovation, leading to the investment of over £126,000 into the local business base. The grant scheme will remain open in 2022/23 with an additional £100,000 of funding allocated to the scheme.
  - In response to the coronavirus pandemic, the council was required to administer on behalf of the government, both mandatory business grants for local businesses registered for business rates and discretionary grants for other businesses in the district that were directly affected. The council distributed funding efficiently and quickly, earning praise from the local business community. Between November 2020 and March 2022, the council was awarded £4,099,370 for discretionary business grants (known as the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) scheme) and 2,122 grant payments were successfully distributed to 356 businesses across the district over this period.
  - £25,000 of funding from the government's Welcome Back Fund was used during the year for making numerous public realm improvements in Folkestone town centre, for the benefit of both visitors and residents. These included repairs to paving in Guildhall Street and Sandgate Road, installation of a large wood planter on Guildhall Street, improvements in the Market Square area off Rendezvous Street including repoint and repair of the paved area, and installation of a handrail to allow safer navigation of the steps. Also included was the large raised beds that run between the parking areas near the Clifton Hotel, with repairs to the stone work and removal of vegetation. An anti-weed membrane was installed for low maintenance in future.



Funding from Folkestone Community Works is supporting the 'Open Doors' Project run by Screen South (image credit - Screen South)



'A Kentish Spring Market' hosted in Folkestone that accessed funding support from the 'Welcome Back Fund'.



Repointing of the pavement and new handrails installed off Rendezvous Street, Folkestone as part of public realm improvements funded by the 'Welcome Back Fund' during the year.

## **Service Ambition 4**

# **Quality Homes and Infrastructure**

**Our priorities over next three years:**

- **Improve outcomes & support for homeless people**
- **Deliver sustainable, affordable housing**
- **Deliver a safe, accountable housing service**
- **Digital inclusion & connectivity**
- **Deliver a sustainable new development at Otterpool Park**



# 04 Quality Homes and Infrastructure in 2021/22

- The council's Core Strategy Review (CSR) setting out a guide to future development required within the district over the next 15 year period to 2037 was given the seal of approval by government inspectors during the year. The CSR was then successfully adopted by members of Cabinet and then Full Council at the end of March 2022 following a previously extensive process of consultation over several years, as well as a public examination before two independent planning inspectors.
- In parallel with the Core Strategy Review, the council prepared the Places & Policies Local Plan, which sets out proposals for development on small and medium-sized sites throughout the district. The Places & Policies Local Plan was found 'sound' by the planning Inspector and was adopted by the council in September 2020. With the adoption of the Core Strategy Review by full Council on 30 March 2022, the council has completed two major district-wide development plans within 18 months. The Planning Inspectorate's record shows that no other local authority in England has adopted two local plans of this type within such a short time period or has come close to this achievement.
- In August 2021, a breach of Consumer Standards notice, issued by the government's Regulator of Social Housing was lifted reflecting the hugely successful turnaround in the performance of the council's landlord housing service. The notice was originally issued in September 2019 when the arms-length management organisation, East Kent Housing, was running F&HDC's service along with those of Canterbury, Dover and Thanet councils due to non-follow up of safety compliance actions. Since October 2020, the landlord service was brought back into the council and a new team created who have worked quickly to successfully bring about major improvements in the service for tenants within the district.
- The council's planning committee voted in favour of building 30 homes on the site of the former Highview school in Moat Farm Road. The 24 houses and six flats have been designed by the council's in-house team, supported by a team of

consultants. All homes will be affordable, with most at affordable rent and some homes as shared ownership. When complete, they will be as near as possible to zero carbon in use. This will be achieved by the low-energy design and other initiatives. These include high levels of insulation, mechanical ventilation with heat recovery systems, solar panels, air-source heat pumps (instead of gas boilers), and they will be designed to accept battery power storage (which links with the panels) in the future. Completion of the scheme is estimated for January 2024.

- The first phase of the Royal Victoria Hospital in Folkestone reopened its doors again during the year- this time to provide more new homes in the district. The Victorian building, which has stood empty since the last ward closed in 2006 was converted into 18 high quality apartments and made available for market rent via Oportunitas Ltd, the council's housing and regeneration company that aims to provide a benchmark for good practice in the private rental sector. The first phase of the development is now fully occupied and the company's attention is now focused on the delivery of phase two of the development, a new block being built on the site to provide a further 19 apartments for market rent that is anticipated for completion in late 2022.
- During the year, the council purchased the former gas works site at Ship Street as part of the strategic regeneration of Folkestone and the wider district. Work has begun on developing a detailed design brief for the site which has sat derelict for over 60 years with the idea of a mixed-use, housing-led development which could include a sustainable mix of energy efficient homes with courtyard gardens, space for small shops and cafés, and public creative and cultural space. Residents were given the opportunity to attend a public engagement event hosted at the Quarterhouse in Folkestone in March 2022 to understand more about the proposals and to ask questions. Once site investigations and design work have concluded in autumn 2022, a submission for planning permission for the site is anticipated for spring 2023.



Artist Impression of new low energy homes at the former Highview school site.



Cllr David Monk and Cllr Patricia Rolfe opening the newly converted Royal Victoria Hospital building into high quality apartments



Artist Impression of the Ship Street site.

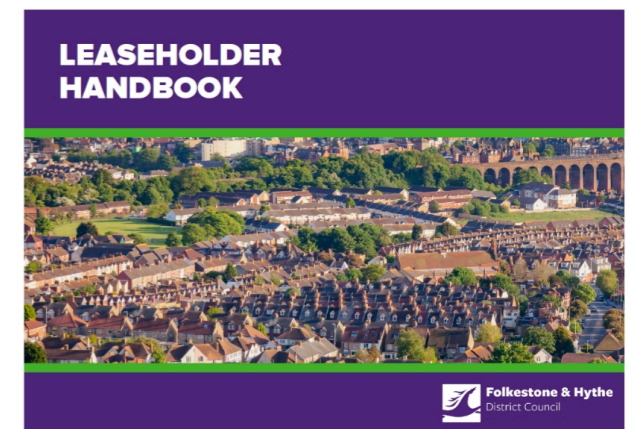
# 04 Quality Homes and Infrastructure in 2021/22

- The council was successful in its bid made under the first wave of the government's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) resulting in £2 million being awarded that will support work on improving the energy efficiency of over 100 council managed homes within the district over the next 12 months and in doing so, the council will look to use local contractors for the insulation work where possible.
- A £1.15 million share of the Brownfield Land Release Fund (BLRF) from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities has been awarded to the council to support the delivery of over 70 new homes at Bigginswood in Folkestone. The funding will enable remediation work to begin on the former brickworks site and involve working with ecologists to clear the 10 acre site and prepare it for the development.
- A total of 5 private sector homes within the district have been identified by the Council's Housing Options team during the year to accommodate five families from Afghanistan as part of the Afghanistan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP). The council has worked with partner agencies to provide ongoing support to the families as they begin their new lives in the UK. The support for resettling these families have come from a £5 million fund set up by Government to assist councils across the country to support households' to access accommodation.
- A total of 4 properties for supported accommodation to help people with a history of rough sleeping were provided during the year as part of the government's Rough Sleeping Initiative and the council's Homeless Prevention Strategy. The properties all located in Folkestone have been obtained under the Next Steps Accommodation Programme with grant support from Homes England and the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. Occupants moving into these properties are receiving intensive support from a dedicated team at Porchlight who are working to ensure that the new tenants are able to retain their accommodation and move on to long-term settled accommodation in the future.

- The Council's Housing team have created new Leasehold, Shared Ownership and Right to Buy guides during the year and their inclusion on the council website has given residents access to more information than was available previously. The creation of digital guides has also added a new level of convenience for residents as they are now able to access the information independently whenever and wherever they require it, thus empowering them to know and understand more about their homes and neighbourhoods. The guides have also decreased the services environmental impact as printing and sending the documents is now the exception, reserved for those who need it rather than the default option
- When the landlord service was brought back in-house, this coincided with the publication of the government's 'Charter for Social Housing Residents White Paper', and it became a top priority to ensure that tenants have a genuine say about how the service is run. Working closely with tenants, a Tenant Engagement Strategy 'Hearing our Tenants' Voice 2021-2024' was developed, which sets out ways of improving access, supporting tenant engagement culture and valuing diversity and inclusion. In October 2021, a high level Strategic Tenants Advisory Panel was formed and led by a group of tenants from across all areas of the district, diverse backgrounds and have a wealth of skills. Tenants participating in the panel are provided with technical training hosted by both the council and external specialists. The panel has developed a diverse range of views, experience and connections to the wider community that has enabled key messages to be fed back to tenants and communicated both ways, relationships built, strengthened and developed. The advisory panel since its establishment has already directly influenced changes to several policies, agreed changes to parts of the service, and they will continue to work in partnership with us on service improvement, to challenge and hold to account performance across the whole housing service.



Artist Impression of the Bigginswood site in Folkestone



New housing guides introduced during the year to help tenants understand more about their homes.

Register for **'My Account'** - The easy way to access Council information:

- Pay your council tax and view your previous council tax bills
- Find your bin collection day
- See planning applications within a 500m radius of your registered property
- Report missed bins and dog fouling
- View a history of your council tax reductions and housing benefits
- View details of your local councillors..... and more!

To register and go find out more information about 'My Account' please visit: [www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/myaccountinfo](http://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/myaccountinfo)

It's clear, simple and fast and is also available on your tablet and mobile.

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