

FOLKESTONE AND HYTHE DISTRICT COUNCIL

**Minutes for the meeting of the Council held at the Council Chamber - Civic Centre Folkestone on Wednesday, 21 June 2023**

**Present:** Councillors Abena Akuffo-Kelly, Mike Blakemore, Polly Blakemore, James Butcher, Bridget Chapman, Tony Cooper, Laura Davison, Gary Fuller, Clive Goddard, David Godfrey, Liz Grant, Rich Holgate, Mrs Jennifer Hollingsbee, Anita Jones, Nicola Keen, Adrian Lockwood, Alan Martin, Elaine Martin, Jim Martin, Connor McConville, Liz McShane, Jackie Meade, Tim Prater, Rebecca Shoob, Jeremy Speakman, Paul Thomas, Belinda Walker and John Wing

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Stephen Scoffham and David Wimble

**14. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest at the meeting.

**15. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 March 2023 were submitted, approved and signed by the Chairman

**16. Chair's Communications**

The Chair gave the following communications:

“In the period since becoming chair, I have attended a number of engagements throughout the district and beyond including my first ever event as chair which was the unveiling of the portrait of the King at the Nepalese community centre. I have also been the guest of the mayors of both Lydd and Dartford and have attended two flag raising events to commemorate our armed forces. I am looking forward to the Armed Forces Day celebrations this weekend and the opening of an art project to observe refugee week.

I stayed true to my word and met with town and parish councillors across the district and have promised to attend their events but also to provide a link between them and the district council ensuring that all parts of this district are represented”.

**17. Petitions**

There were no petitions for consideration.

**18. Questions from the Public**

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

**19. Questions from Councillors**

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

20. **Announcements of the Leader of the Council**

The Leader of the Council made the following announcements:

“Good evening and welcome.

I have been extremely busy meeting all of the senior officers and Directors. I have also held meetings with Roger Gough the leader of KCC and Roger De Haan regarding the Seafront development in Folkestone. I have met with Damian Collins MP, I have had several meetings with Otterpool Park LLP.

I have also had meetings with residents, partners, schools and other stakeholders.

The subject of these meetings can be generally grouped as follows: Finance, Governance, Prince’s Parade, Otterpool, Folca, the levelling up fund, Folkestone Seafront, Romney Marsh and Folkestone Town Centre.

I have been delighted to meet many of the 422 people employed by FHDC and be asked to present the Recognition Awards for Customer Service.

I have attended the Kent Leaders Forum, the Kent and Medway Economic Partnership meeting and a meeting of the East Kent Leaders Forum.

I joined Luke Douglas-Home, known as ‘The Coastal Runner,’ from Folkestone to Hythe on World Ocean Day – as Luke continues his run around the UK’s coastline, collecting litter.

I was delighted to open the Marsh Inspires Careers Fair at the Marsh Academy.

I will be meeting Stagecoach on Friday to discuss the impact of their cuts to bus services in the District.

My diary is currently full with more meetings, visits and discussions with residents, partners and stakeholders in FHDC”.

The Leader of the Labour Group responded to the announcements with the following:

“Congratulations on your appointment, and I look forward to working with you where possible and challenging you where needed. There is not much to say at this point. I’m sure it will get more meaty as the year goes on. In your meeting with stagecoach, just to stress how important those small and seemingly insignificant those routes are some of our vulnerable residents. It would be useful to know exactly what Stagecoach would need to keep these services running in some form. I look forward to some feedback on that in due course”.

The Leader of the Conservative Group also responded to the announcements and made points including the following:

“Congratulations on being elected as Leader and thank you for your report. I was pleased to hear you are having meetings with partners and stakeholders. This is very important, and is how we achieve good results. I am particularly pleased to hear about the Marsh Inspire event. I have a great affection for the Marsh, as I spent 20 years teaching at the Marsh Academy. I look forward to hearing further reports and decisions at your next Leaders announcements”.

The Leader of the Council then responded to the points raised by both Opposition groups, and stated:

“Indeed the last time I attended the Marsh Inspire event I was invited by you. It has grown and was a terrific event today. I also take on board all of Councillor McConville’s points. He shared some good ideas with me earlier, and I will certainly be communicating them in a calm way. We will see what the response is from them”.

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

**RESOLVED:**

That the announcements of the Leader be noted.

(The recommendation was agreed by affirmation of the meeting).

21. **Portfolio Holder reports**

The Portfolio Holder reports had been circulated within the agenda packs and noted by Members.

22. **Opposition Business**

Councillor McConville, on behalf of the Labour Group, outlined his opposition business which asked for consideration be given to establishing a district council grant Committee/Working Group to dispense community funds from 2024/25.

Proposed by Councillor McConville,  
Seconded by Councillor Keen; 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:

To establish a District Council Grant Committee/working group to dispense community funds from 2024/25, ideally sourced from existing budgets.

(The recommendations were agreed by affirmation of the meeting).

23. **Motions on Notice**

Councillor Prater, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Governance outlined his motion which proposed a change to the council's governance structure, to adopt a committee system of governance.

Proposed by Councillor Prater,  
Seconded by Councillor McConville; and

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the Committee System model of governance be adopted by Folkestone and Hythe District Council with effect from the Annual Council meeting in May 2024.
2. That a Constitution Working Group be convened, comprising of the Leader of each constituted Group (or their nominee) plus one Independent. The Working Group is instructed to consider and make recommendations to Full Council on the composition and terms of reference of committees by January 2024.
3. That the Independent Remuneration Panel be instructed to review the Scheme of Members' Allowances in light of the revised model of governance and make recommendations to Full Council by January 2024.
4. That the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Constitution Working Group, redrafts the Council's constitution to fit a committee system of governance and presents the revised constitution to Full Council for adoption by March 2024.
5. That it be noted that the council acknowledges that there will be a cost implication to this proposed change in Governance. A budget is to be made available of up to a maximum of £100k taken from general reserves in agreement with the S151 Officer and the Finance and Governance Portfolio Holder.

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

FOR: Councillors Akuffo-Kelly, M Blakemore, P Blakemore, Butcher, Chapman, Cooper, Davison, Fuller, Godfrey, Grant, Holgate, Jones, Keen, Lockwood, A Martin, E Martin, J Martin, McConville, McShane, Meade, Prater, Shoob, Speakman, Thomas, Walker and Wing (26).

AGAINST: Councillors Goddard and Mrs Hollingsbee (2).

ABSTENTIONS: None (0).

(Voting figures: 26 for, 2 against, 0 abstentions).

24. **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 J Martin,  
Seconded by Councillor Shoob; and

**RESOLVED:**

1. That report A/23/09 be received and noted.

(The recommendations were approved by affirmation of the meeting).

25. **Committee Membership Changes**

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. The report set out the appointments made, under these powers, on the instruction of the Leader of the Green Group.

Proposed by Councillor Jim Martin,  
Seconded by Councillor Mrs Hollingsbee;

**RESOLVED:**

1. That report A/23/10 be received and noted.

(The recommendations were agreed by affirmation of the meeting).

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

**RESOLVED:**

2. That Councillor Wimble be appointed to the vacant seat on the Audit and Governance Committee.

(The recommendations were agreed by affirmation of the meeting).

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

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**RESOLVED:**

3. That Councillor Butcher be elected Vice-Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee for the municipal year 2023/24.

(The recommendations were agreed by affirmation of the meeting).