

## Council

Held at:	Council Chamber - Civic Centre Folkestone
Date	Wednesday, 26 July 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, Alan Martin, Elaine Martin, Jim Martin, Connor McConville, Liz McShane, Jackie Meade, Tim Prater, Stephen Scoffham, Rebecca Shoob, Jeremy Speakman, Paul Thomas, Belinda Walker, David Wimble and John Wing
Apologies for Absence	Councillor Adrian Lockwood
Officers Present:	Amandeep Khroud (Assistant Director), Susan Priest (Chief Executive) and Jemma West (Democratic Services Senior Specialist)

### 26. **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Fuller made a voluntary declaration in respect of Minute No 34 (Opposition Business) in that he lived in a HRA owned property.

### 27. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 June 2023 were submitted, approved and signed by the Chair.

### 28. **Chair's Communications**

The Chair made the following communications:

“Canada day, Armed forces day and Battle of Britain Memorial celebrations provided me with an opportunity to commemorate both the past and present service personnel of this district and beyond. At each service it was my great honour to lay a wreath on behalf of our district.

I attended a charity event in Peene, the civic Church services for both Hythe and Folkestone Mayor's. Welcomed Princess Anne to the district and met the tall ships and it's crew of both British and French children in Boulogne at the end of their voyage from Folkestone Harbour. It was wonderful to see the joy and jubilation of the children, parents and guardians after being reunited. Joy is truly international and nobody could distinguish between the nationalities when they arrived. I'm sure the children who took part will remember the skills they gained and the friends they made for the rest of their lives.

My focus is representing the whole district to the best of my ability and making the role of chair as transparent and as inclusive as possible. Thus instead of having one consort I am inviting local charities and charitable organisations to attend with me as a means of signposting their work and services but also allowing them to network with people who may be able to advance their aims. I would also like to extend the invitation to councillors of any political group. Please feel free to invite me to events local to you and come with me to share the history, traditions and delights of your towns and villages.

Finally I now have an Instagram and Twitter @FstoneHytheChr account where I share all of my engagements. You can use that to see what events I've attended and which causes I've been celebrating and supporting. Please direct message or post about any events you'll like me to attend along with contact details and I'll send your details on to my PA to confirm my attendance. If it's important to the people of our Town or village then is important to me".

29. **Petitions**

There were no petitions.

30. **Questions from the Public**

There were no questions from members of the public.

31. **Questions from Councillors**

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

32. **Announcements of the Leader of the Council**

The Leader made the following announcements:

"I have been very busy since my last update. I have had many meetings with representatives of Government, Kent County Council, Parish Councils and local stakeholders groups. I have held many meetings with Otterpool Park LLP.

I joined many other runners in the regular, weekly Park Run on the fantastic Folkestone Lees, which must rate as the Park Run with the most far reaching views in the Country.

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I attended the flag raising ceremony at the Civic Centre on Monday the 19th June. On Saturday the 24th June, I was proud and honoured to be invited by the Mayor of Hythe to join her in the celebration of the incredible men and women of our Armed Services during Armed Forces Day. I was equally please to attend the Armed Forces Day celebration on Sunday the 25th June, with the Mayor of Folkestone.

Following their announcement of cuts to local bus services I convened a meeting with Stagecoach to discuss. I can report a positive response and discussions continue. The Stagecoach Managing Director will be considering my further views and coming back to me.

I attended the Local Government Association Conference to learn what other local Councils are doing to overcome very similar problems to those we have in Folkestone and Hythe.

I have visited Dungeness Power station twice to join the discussions regarding the government's competition to find sites for 10 Small Modular Reactors.

I attended the Tall Ships Event at Folkestone Harbour. I have attended two meetings of the Kent Leaders Forum and also the meeting of the East Kent Leaders.

Finally, I have an appeal. This I hope will be an inclusive Council, and we all know that the problems of our district are often complex and multilayered. I therefore have a plea or a call for ideas, from individual Councillors to make propositions, suggestions or proposals that can advance our objective in making the district the best place to live or visit. I want to cut across political boundaries and ask members from all parties to make your suggestions to the relevant Portfolio holders, so they can be properly discussed with officers and I'm sure the resulting improvements, however small, will benefit everyone in the district".

Councillor McConville, Leader of the Labour group responded to the communications and stated the following:

"I'm very happy to engage with you on that last point, hopefully we can all work together to do what is needed. Obviously you have been very busy, it's good that you are earning your pennies! While your meetings are very important, there is a lot more going on in our town, and I thought I'd share a couple of fantastic things that are going on that you might have missed due to pressing engagements. The fantastic Charivari, which this council supports year on year. Probably the best community engagement for the district, in terms of its noise and it's colour. There were more people than I've seen at the event in the last 6 or 7 years, easily, maybe even 10,000, the streets were full. On Sunday we had another fantastic community day on the Leas, filmed by the BBC, so hopefully everyone will look forward to seeing this on the television later this year/early next year, the great work that local community people do in putting these events together. Just last night the fantastic Turner Schools students put on an art exhibition. It's clear we have some really good emerging talent coming up in the district.

There has also been a number of consultation events. I think it's great that we as a council do whatever we can to try and continue to facilitate and allow residents to engage in the many proposals either by us or our partners that are impacting the district".

Councillor Mrs Hollingsbee, Leader of the Conservative Group also responded and stated:

"I'd like to welcome your last point in terms of members taking part and offering suggestions, and I'm sure my small group will be willing to do that. I was delighted that the toilets in the country park have now been opened which was a project started by the previous administration. I also like to say in terms of the Tall Ships Project, this is close to my heart and a very important project for the district. I echo the Chair's comments. Of course, you have been very busy, as have many of us, and it's great to hear that you are again meeting a number of stakeholders and partners. I think that is important for this district."

The Leader then responded to the comments of both opposition group leaders and stated "I have nothing to add, except that I'm sure with the experience and expertise in this room, we can come together to make small incremental improvements or large significant improvements. If we all work together, the synergy we have will be extraordinary".

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

**RESOLVED:**

That the Leaders announcements be noted.

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

**33. Portfolio Holder reports to Council**

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

**34. Opposition Business**

Councillor McConville, Leader of the Labour Group, outlined his opposition business which asked for consideration of a council owned service for maintenance and compliance of council owned homes.

Proposed by Councillor McConville,  
Seconded by Councillor Godfrey; and

**RESOLVED:**

That Option (b) (Refer the issue to the Cabinet or relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as the case may be, for their observations before deciding whether to make a decision on the issue) be applied to the business below:

- To consider as an option, the delivery of maintenance and compliance for council owned housing, as a council owned service. As opposed to the awarding of an outsourced contract.
- That any such paper which looks to tender for a new contract includes this option in both its planning and decision making.

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

### 35. **Motions on Notice**

Councillor Chapman, Labour Group, outlined her motion which sought approval on various actions relating to the Elections Act.

Proposed by Councillor Chapman,  
Seconded by Councillor McConville; and

#### **RESOLVED:**

- That the Leader of the Council write to the Minister of State at the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities requesting that the franchise for local elections in England and Northern Ireland be extended to all qualifying foreign nationals in line with eligibility criteria in Scotland and Wales. This would ensure a UK-wide and fair approach so that all our residents, who are also our council taxpayers, are enfranchised.
- That this council work collaboratively with other local authorities and voluntary sector organisations to develop a strategy of communications about voter eligibility following the Elections Act.
- Ensure council officers in Democratic Services have a strategy in place to ensure that the implementation of the Elections Act, including the removal of some EU citizens from the register, does not wrongfully remove eligible voters from the register.

(Voting figures: 24 for, 0 against, 5 abstentions).

### 36. **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. This report sets out the appointments made, under these powers, on the instruction of the Leader of the Conservative Group.

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

**RESOLVED:**

**That report A/23/11 be received and noted.**

(Voting figures: 29 for, 0 against, 0 abstentions).

**37. Urgent item of business - Extension of term of office of Independent member of the Audit and Governance Committee**

In December 2019, Full Council agreed to the recommendations of the Audit and Governance Committee to appoint an Independent member to the Audit and Governance Committee. It had been envisaged the appointment would run until May 2023. However, due to the pandemic, the recruitment exercise was delayed, and an appointment was not made until November 2020. On 20 July, the Audit and Governance Committee considered Aug/23/02 and made a recommendation to Full Council that Andy Vanburen's term be extended until November 2024.

Proposed by Councillor Wimble,  
Seconded by Councillor McShane; and

**RESOLVED:**

- 1. That report A/23/12 be received and noted.**
- 2. That the appointment of Andy Vanburen be extended to November 2024.**

(Voting figures: 29 for, 0 against, 0 abstentions).