

Folkestone & Hythe District and Parish Councils' Joint Committee

Held at:	Remote Meeting
Date	Thursday, 16 November 2023
Present	Councillors Graham Allison, Anne Beales, Mike Blakemore, Frank Hobbs, Roger Joyce, Tim Prater, Kirsten Terry and Paul Thomas.
Apologies for Absence	Councillor Anthony Burgess.
Officers Present:	Rebecca Chittock (Planning Policy Specialist), Jake Hamilton (Committee Services Officer) and Adrian Tofts (Strategy, Policy & Performance Lead Specialist)
Others Present:	None.

11. **Appointment of Chair**

The Chair alternates between a District Councillor and a Parish/Town Councillor every meeting. The Committee must appoint a Parish/Town Councillor as the Chair of this meeting.

Proposed by Councillor Paul Thomas
Seconded by Councillor Tim Prater; and,

Resolved:

That Councillor Frank Hobbs be appointed as Chair for the Folkestone and Hythe District and Parish Councils Joint Committee held on 14 September 2023.

(As there was no dissent the nomination was approved by affirmation of the meeting).

12. **Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

13. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 September 2023 were submitted, approved, and signed by the Chair.

14. **Planning Reforms and Design Codes**

Adrian Tofts, Strategy, Policy & Performance Lead Specialist introduced the item and provided the committee with a presentation about changes to the planning system arising from the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act, which received Royal Assent on 26 October 2023.

The presentation focused on new local plans and district-wide Design Codes, which are requirements of the new legislation.

Members were asked to note the requirements arising from the Act and comment on implications for Parish and Town Councils.

<https://youtu.be/mC8klgHmV6Q?si=KgFbJXbgK8lCUJSA>

After the presentation, members raised several points, including, engagement with parish and town councils, how any changes would affect conservation areas and neighbourhood plans, will there be any early briefings for those parish/town councils that are already in the process of making plans, and will parish/towns that have plans be expected to review said plans in light of the changes.

Adrian Tofts, Strategy, Policy and Performance Lead Specialist and Rebecca Chittock, Planning Policy Specialist responded to the comments raised by members:

It was explained that the council only has a broad outline of the requirements of the new Act, however, the council does not expect the fundamentals regarding neighbourhood plans to change, as the Government strongly supports neighbourhood planning. As for the designation of conservation areas, this is a district council function, and the council would work with parish and town councils on heritage issues where it has capacity, but it has no dedicated heritage resource so it must be selective in the project it supports. The council is still waiting on more information from government on the upcoming changes, however, the Government has said that secondary legislation and guidance will follow, to allow authorities to begin their new local plans from next year (2024).

As for the design codes, it was advised that from officers' understanding, and the 'path-finder' authorities that have attempted area codes, there would need to be some strategic area-wide requirements and this would allow more local

guidance, such as on building materials and local character, to fit within the overarching framework. The council would need to determine its priorities and framework. In preparing the area-wide code we would look to learn from existing guidance, such as the Sandgate Design Statement. From what we know at present, the Council's area-wide code would set the framework within which more detailed design codes for parishes and towns could sit.

Please see attached presentation.