

Folkestone & Hythe District and Parish Councils' Joint Committee

Held at:	Remote Meeting
Date	Thursday, 14 March 2024
Present	Councillors, Mike Blakemore, Paul Thomas, Tim Prater, Frank Hobbs, Jane Darling, Anne Beales, Graham Allison and Roger Joyce.
Apologies for Absence	Councillors Anthony Burgess and Terry.
Officers Present:	Jake Hamilton (Committee Services Officer), Ewan Green (Director – Strategy & Resources), Paul Butler (Democratic Services & Elections Manager), Adrian Tofts (Strategy & Policy Manger), James Hammond (Strategy & Policy – Planning Infrastructure Specialist) and Llywelyn Lloyd (Chief Officer – Planning & Building Control).
Others Present:	None.

19. **Appointment of Chair**

Proposed by Councillor Paul Thomas,
Seconded by Councillor Graham Allison; and,

Resolved:

- 1. That Councillor Frank Hobbs be appointed as Chair of the meeting.**

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

20. **Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

21. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 18 January 2024, were submitted, and approved by the Chair.

22. Election Act Changes

Paul Butler, Democratic Services & Elections Manager provided members with a presentation in relation to the changes to be implemented by the Elections Act 2022.

Following the Democratic Services & Elections Managers presentation, members raised the following points:

- As per Postal vote handling / secrecy, members enquired as to who can accept the returned postal votes? – It was confirmed that polling station staff will be able to accept postal votes that are returned to a particular polling station. However, it is for the Returning Officer to consider who will be authorised to accept/handle postal votes when returned to the Civic Centre.
- As per 'Secrecy requirements will be extended to postal and proxy votes,' members asked as to whether agents would be allowed to communicate details in relation to number of postal votes received during the postal vote opening sessions? – It was clarified that agents should not be communicating these details.
- As per Undue influence / intimidation, Members advised that some residents are transported to the polling station for the purpose of casting their vote, will this now be considered as undue influence – The Democratic Services and Elections Manager advised that he believes the transport of an elector to the polling station for the purposes of casting their vote, should be permitted, however, being escorted to a polling booth, and close proximity, could potentially be considered as undue influence. It was concluded that this enquiry could be posed to the Electoral Commission for clarification, if required.
- Will officers be available should members have queries on the lead up to the Election? – It was confirmed that the Election team are located at the Civic Centre Monday to Friday (officer opening hours 10:00hrs – 16:00hrs), and that members can contact officers via phone or email (elections@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk).
- Members enquired as to whether resources were in place for vulnerable residents to access the Voter Authority Certificate (VAC) when needed? – It was explained that electors can apply for a VAC online ([click here](#)) or via paper application (please contact the Elections Office on 01303 853497 for further details).
- Members asked if it was possible for residents to check whether their postal vote had been received by the council? – Yes, once an electors postal vote has been scanned during the postal vote opening sessions, it will update the system as received. At this point if an elector were to contact the elections team they would be able to confirm receipt.

- Following the Boundary Commission review ([click here for details](#)), does the council envisage any problems with administering a parliamentary election if called? – The Democratic Services & Elections Manager briefly explained the amendments to the boundary and confirmed if a parliamentary election were to be called, the acting returning officer for Ashford has instructed the elections team to administer the election as they usually would.

Paul Butler, Democratic Services & Elections Manager, concluded that he welcomes further questions from members to: Elections@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk.

23. **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)**

James Hammond, Strategy & Policy (Planning Infrastructure Specialist) introduced the item, providing members with a presentation.

The item outlined the background to the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), which came into effect in August 2016, it also provided details on the total sums that have been transferred to Town and Parish Councils to date, and high-level guidance on the spend of the neighbourhood allocations by Town and Parish Councils.

Following the Strategy & Policy (Planning Infrastructure Specialists) presentation, members raised the following points:

- Can CIL funding be used for developing affordable housing? – Yes, the Neighbourhood allocation can be used to facilitate affordable housing.
- How is CIL paid? – CIL can be paid in a one-off payment, or by instalments depending on the amount; under £50,000 (one-off payment), £50,000 - £100,000 (two instalments), and over £100,000 (three instalments) – [Click here for the CIL charging schedule](#).
- Is CIL capped based on the number of dwellings within the particular town/parish? – The 15% Neighbourhood allocation must not amount to more than £100 per existing dwelling in the Parish. If there is a Neighbourhood Plan in place, 25% of the CIL receipts for that Town or Parish must be passed to the Parish or Town Council, and the £100 per existing dwelling “cap” does not apply.
- Can members be provided with examples of where CIL has been spent? – Yes, officers can provide examples. It was also mentioned Hythe Town Council has several good examples and would likely be happy to share this information.
- Is CIL automatically transferred to town/parishes or do they need to apply for it? – CIL is paid automatically to town/parishes where a qualifying development is present.
- Could town/parish councils transfer their CIL funding onto Kent County Council (KCC) for highway maintenance within that particular town/parish? – Yes, CIL can be transferred to KCC, however, officers

advised that a highway maintenance projected would not necessarily be the most effective way of spending their CIL allocation and perhaps CIL may be directed towards new infrastructure.

Officers concluded that the council is looking at ways to positively promote were CIL development/spend has occurred, so that residents can see the benefits of CIL.