



# Agenda

Meeting: **Council**  
Date: **16 October 2019**  
Time: **7.00 pm**  
Place: **Council Chamber - Civic Centre Folkestone**

To: **All Members of the Council**

**YOU ARE HEREBY SUMMONED** to attend a meeting of the Council on the date and at the time and place shown above. The meeting will be open to the press and public.

Anyone who wishes to have information on any matter arising on the Agenda which is not fully covered in these papers is requested to give notice prior to the meeting to the Chairman or appropriate officer.

This meeting will be webcast live to the council's website at <https://folkestone-hythe.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>. Although unlikely, no guarantee can be made that Members of the public in attendance will not appear in the webcast footage. It is therefore recommended that anyone with an objection to being filmed does not enter the council chamber.

Head of Paid Service

1. **Apologies for Absence**
2. **Declarations of Interest (Pages 5 - 6)**

Members of the Council should declare any discloseable pecuniary

**Queries about the agenda? Need a different format?**

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Email: [committee@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk](mailto:committee@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk) or download from our  
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interest or any other significant interests in any item/s on this agenda.

**3. Minutes (Pages 7 - 32)**

To receive the minutes of the meeting of the council held on 25 September 2019 and to authorise the Chairman of the Council to sign them as a correct record.

**4. Chairman's Communications**

**5. Petitions**

There are no petitions to be presented.

**6. Questions from the Public**

There are no questions from the public.

**7. Questions from Councillors**

(Questions can be found on [www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk](http://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk) from noon 2 days before the meeting, on Modern.gov, under the agenda for this meeting).

Up to 45 minutes is allowed for questions from councillors.

**8. Announcements of the Leader of the Council**

To receive a report from the Leader of the Council on the business of the cabinet and on matters that the leader considers should be drawn to the council's attention. The leader shall have 10 minutes to make his announcements.

The opposition group will have an opportunity to reply to the leader's remarks. The opposition group leader shall have 5 minutes to respond after which the Leader of the Council will have a right of reply. Any right of reply will be for a maximum duration of 5 minutes.

**9. Opposition Business**

There is no opposition business.

**10. Motions on Notice**

The following motions have been placed on the agenda in the order received; up to 60 minutes shall be allowed for debates on motions on notice:

**1. Councillor McConville, Leader of the Labour Party:**

This Council moves to, under part 5 section 27.2 amend the constitution in regard to part 5 section 6.2. A councillor, who has

proposed a motion which has been referred to a committee or sub-committee, shall be given at least three clear working days' notice of the meeting, at which the motion will be considered, by the Head of Paid Service. If the councillor attends the meeting but is not a member of that committee or sub-committee, s/he shall have an opportunity to explain the motion to the committee or sub-committee.

This should be amended to read "A councillor, who has proposed a motion or Opposition Business".

*As per the constitution, this item was proposed and seconded at the meeting held on 25 September 2019, and is now open for debate.*

**11. Review of polling districts and polling places 2019 (Pages 33 - 54)**

Section 18 of the Representation of the People Act 1983 (as amended by Part 4 of the Electoral Administration Act 2006) places a duty on the Council to conduct a review of polling places and polling districts every four years. The last review was concluded by Folkestone & Hythe District Council (as Shepway District Council) in November 2014. This Report outlines the steps the Council is taking to comply with this duty and seeks approval from Council to approve the recommendations made.

**12. Medium Term Financial Strategy 2020/21 to 2023/24 (Pages 55 - 78)**

The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) is the Council's key financial planning document. It puts the financial perspective on the council's Corporate Plan priorities, expressing the aims and objectives of various plans and strategies in financial terms over the four year period ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024. It covers both revenue and capital for the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account. Also included are the Council's reserves policies. The MTFS is a key element of sound corporate governance and financial management.

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## **Declarations of Interest**

### **Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI)**

Where a Member has a new or registered DPI in a matter under consideration they must disclose that they have an interest and, unless the Monitoring Officer has agreed in advance that the DPI is a 'Sensitive Interest', explain the nature of that interest at the meeting. The Member must withdraw from the meeting at the commencement of the consideration of any matter in which they have declared a DPI and must not participate in any discussion of, or vote taken on, the matter unless they have been granted a dispensation permitting them to do so. If during the consideration of any item a Member becomes aware that they have a DPI in the matter they should declare the interest immediately and, subject to any dispensations, withdraw from the meeting.

### **Other Significant Interest (OSI)**

Where a Member is declaring an OSI they must also disclose the interest and explain the nature of the interest at the meeting. The Member must withdraw from the meeting at the commencement of the consideration of any matter in which they have declared a OSI and must not participate in any discussion of, or vote taken on, the matter unless they have been granted a dispensation to do so or the meeting is one at which members of the public are permitted to speak for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence relating to the matter. In the latter case, the Member may only participate on the same basis as a member of the public and cannot participate in any discussion of, or vote taken on, the matter and must withdraw from the meeting in accordance with the Council's procedure rules.

### **Voluntary Announcement of Other Interests (VAOI)**

Where a Member does not have either a DPI or OSI but is of the opinion that for transparency reasons alone s/he should make an announcement in respect of a matter under consideration, they can make a VAOI. A Member declaring a VAOI may still remain at the meeting and vote on the matter under consideration.

#### **Note to the Code:**

Situations in which a Member may wish to make a VAOI include membership of outside bodies that have made representations on agenda items; where a Member knows a person involved, but does not have a close association with that person; or where an item would affect the well-being of a Member, relative, close associate, employer, etc. but not his/her financial position. It should be emphasised that an effect on the financial position of a Member, relative, close associate, employer, etc OR an application made by a Member, relative, close associate, employer, etc would both probably constitute either an OSI or in some cases a DPI.

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## FOLKESTONE AND HYTHE DISTRICT COUNCIL

### **Minutes for the meeting of the Council held at the Council Chamber - Civic Centre Folkestone on Wednesday, 25 September 2019**

**Present:** Councillors Mrs Ann Berry (Chairman), Danny Brook, Miss Susan Carey, John Collier, Laura Davison, Michelle Dorrell, Gary Fuller, Peter Gane, Clive Goddard, David Godfrey, Anthony Hills, Mrs Jennifer Hollingsbee, Nicola Keen, Jim Martin, Philip Martin (Vice-Chair), Connor McConville, Jackie Meade, Ian Meyers, David Monk, Terence Mullard, Stuart Peall, Tim Prater, Patricia Rolfe, Rebecca Shoob, Georgina Treloar, Douglas Wade, Lesley Whybrow, David Wimble and John Wing

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Ray Field

#### **35. Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Meade made a voluntary declaration in respect of minute number 42 (opposition business), in that she was a contractor who was not currently under IR35.

#### **36. Minutes**

The Chairman advised on an error in the minutes which has been corrected. Under minute number 32, the resolution had been amended with the word 'motion'; being replaced with the word 'business'.

The amended minutes of the meeting held on 24 July 2019 were submitted, approved and signed by the Chairman.

#### **37. Chairman's Communications**

The Chairman made the following announcements:

"Since the last meeting of full Council the Deputy Chairman and I have attended several engagements.

Because of the amount of business on tonight's Agenda I will just highlight a few.

Hythe Venetian Fete Wednesday 21 August - A great event organised by the Hythe Venetian Fete Society. As always, a Wonderful Spectacular.

I have been asked by the Chairman of Hythe Venetian Society, Steven Way, to pass on his thanks to all of the people involved. District Council Officers, Grounds men and Marshalls etc for the great service they provided to help make the event run so smoothly.

Classic Car Rally 26 August - On The Leas. It was a brilliant sunny day, for what is always a great event for the Town, with many travelling great distances to be part of the annual event.

The Folkestone Dover and Hythe Samaritans 4<sup>th</sup> September - We were invited to an open evening of which many of our Councillors attended. After the initial welcome we were taken in small groups for a talk on how the Samaritans work and the many thousands of people who contact them. Whilst there we could see through a glass partition, two volunteers talking on the phone, the privacy of the conversations is absolute and are never divulged. There are always at least two people on duty 24 hours a day doing shifts. They would be pleased to engage with anyone who has a few hours to spare and wishes to volunteer for this very important work.

Installation 9 September of full time Priest at St Peters Church on the Durlocks - After a lengthy Interregnum, a very moving and packed service was held to welcome the new Priest, The Reverend Mark Haldon-Jones with the Bishop and many local priests in attendance.

13 September saw the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Citizens Advice Bureau. This was held in the Boulogne room here at Civic Centre. The CAB was set up the day after WW2 started. Many of the Town's representatives were in attendance. We were given a short talk by: Anne Petrie Chairman of the Board of Trustees, which gave us all a chance to learn more of what CAB can do to help and advise the local community. After which the cake was cut!"

**38. Petitions**

There were no petitions.

**39. Questions from the Public**

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

Proposed by Councillor Prater,  
Seconded by Councillor Whybrow;

That the matter raised by Dr Burrell in question 1 be referred to the Audit and Governance Committee, as per paragraph 8.10 of part 4 of the constitution.

(Voting figures: 13 for, 15 against, 1 abstention).

The motion was LOST.

**40. Questions from Councillors**

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

**41. Announcements of the Leader of the Council**

The Leader made the following announcements:



“Good evening to you all.

You should all have received an invitation from our Chief HR Officer inviting you to join the Folkestone and Hythe Rewards scheme. This scheme not only provides discount opportunities but also gives health and well-being support so if you want to be richer and healthier, I would advise you to take advantage of it.

Talking of well-being, have you tried out any of the outdoor gym equipment that has been recently installed in Radnor Park? It is supposedly for adults to use but seems to have found universal approval.

For your information we are working with KCC and our other districts to formulate a scheme that will give those leaving the Kent care system help with their Council Tax bills. KCC have indicated that exempting care leavers from having to pay until they reach the age of 25 would find favour with them. The scheme would primarily be administered by KCC. We would, of course, have to go through due process to adopt it but I am sure that we would want to support this particularly vulnerable group of young adults.

I was going to talk to you about the purchase of Westenhanger Castle but as it is an item on this evening’s agenda, I will wait until then.

You all should have received an invitation, albeit at short notice, to view tomorrow the new affordable housing in Princess Street, Folkestone. This is another ten homes that have been made available for an affordable rent linked to the local housing allowance for the area and are being let through the Council’s housing list. So now we have provided over 100 Council homes towards our target of 300 within the current plan. I have been told that the cap on the HRA has been raised so I have asked Councillor Godfrey to review the position with a view to increasing our target.

That is all from me this evening”.

The Leader of the Labour group responded and advised he was pleased with the additions to the Council Housing Stock, but felt that 300 houses in ten years was not sufficient for the number of people on the waiting list. In regards to the HRA, this was old news, announced at last years Conservative party conference. He looked forward to working with Councillor Godfrey and officers to build a robust innovative council house building scheme. He welcomed the FHDC rewards scheme, and hoped Councillors would engage with it as much as staff. With regard to the Radnor Park equipment, he stressed the importance of parks and gardens to residents in terms of both physical and mental health. In response to the care scheme, he stated that this should be in place already and it was another symptom of poverty in the district.

The Leader of the Green Group responded and stated that she welcomed the care leaver scheme. She was pleased to accept the invitation from the Leader

to visit the new affordable housing. She supported Councillor McConville's points about the need for more council homes.

Councillor Prater, the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group responded and added that the mention of the FHDC rewards scheme was an odd choice for the leader given the summer events, in relation to East Kent Housing. He also referred to the discount at Ashford's Cineworld, stating that it was not helpful in encouraging visitors to Folkestone's high street.

The Leader in reply stated that opposition responses should be subject to a Code of Conduct. All members were there to work for the people of the district and not to score political points.

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

**RESOLVED:**

That the announcements of the Leader be noted.

**42. Opposition Business**

Councillor Whybrow, on behalf of the Green Group outlined the Opposition business, which asked the Cabinet to adopt the following matters:

1. Approve the Councils for Fair Tax Declaration.
2. Lead by example and demonstrate good practice in our tax conduct, right across our activities.
3. Ensure contractors implement IR35 robustly and pay a fair share of employment taxes.
4. Not use offshore vehicles for the purchase of land and property, especially where this leads to reduced payments of stamp duty.
5. Undertake due diligence to ensure that not-for-profit structures are not being used inappropriately as an artificial device to reduce the payment of tax and business rates.
6. Demand clarity on the ultimate beneficial ownership of suppliers and their consolidated profit & loss position.
7. Promote Fair Tax Mark certification for any business in which we have a significant stake and where corporation tax is due.
8. Support Fair Tax Week events in the area, and celebrate the tax contribution made by responsible businesses who say what they pay with pride.
9. Support calls for urgent reform of EU and UK law to enable local authorities to better penalise poor tax conduct and reward good tax conduct through their procurement policies

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

**RESOLVED:**

That Option (b) (Refer the issue to the Cabinet for their observations before deciding whether to make a decision on the issue) be agreed.

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

FOR: Councillors Mrs Berry, Brook, Miss Carey, Collier, Davison, Dorrell, Fuller, Gane, Goddard, Godfrey, Hills, Mrs Hollingsbee, Keen, J Martin, P Martin, McConville, Meyers, Monk, Mullard, Peall, Prater, Rolfe, Shoob, Treloar, Wade, Whybrow, Wimble, Wing (28).

AGAINST: None (0).

ABSTENTIONS: Councillor Meade (1).

(Voting figures: 28 for, 0 against, 1 abstention).

43. **Motions on Notice**

1. **From Councillor McConville, Leader of the Labour Party**

Councillor McConville set out his motion to amend the constitution in regard to part 4 section 12.6, altering the time limit for debates on Opposition business from 15 minutes to 30 minutes. The motion had been proposed and seconded at the meeting of the Council on 24 July 2019, and was now open for debate.

Proposed by Councillor McConville,  
Seconded by Councillor Monk; and

**RESOLVED:**

That under Part 4, Section 25.2, the time limit set out in part 4 section 12.6 of the constitution be amended from 15 minutes to 30 minutes.

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

FOR: Councillors Mrs Berry, Brook, Miss Carey, Collier, Davison, Dorrell, Fuller, Gane, Goddard, David Godfrey, Hills, Mrs Hollingsbee, Keen, J Martin, P Martin, McConville, Meade, Meyers, Monk, Mullard, Peall, Prater, Rolfe, Shoob, Treloar, Wade, Whybrow, Wimble, Wing (29).

AGAINST: None (0).

ABSTENTIONS: None (0).

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

2. **From Councillor Prater, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Party**

Councillor Prater outlined his motion which proposed that the Audit and Governance Committee be asked to consider the introduction of a Committee system.

Proposed by Councillor Prater,  
Seconded by Councillor J Martin;

That this Council believes that a Committee System is appropriate for its Governance in the future and asks the Audit and Governance Committee to consider the issue at the earliest opportunity. If the Audit and Governance Committee were to endorse this view when it reports to Council, it should suggest an outline committee structure.

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

**RESOLVED:**

That the motion be amended to read:  
“That this Council believes that all Councillors should have the ability to participate fully in decision-making and that a range of governance options are available. This council believes that a cross party working group of all group leaders should be set up to consider the issues of moving to a committee system, or an alternative system, at the earliest opportunity reporting back to council”.

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

**RESOLVED:**

That this Council believes that all Councillors should have the ability to participate fully in decision-making and that a range of governance options are available. This council believes that a cross party working group of all group leaders should be set up to consider the issues of moving to a committee system, or an alternative system, at the earliest opportunity reporting back to council.

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

3. **From Councillor McConville, Leader of the Labour Party**

Councillor McConville outlined his motion which asked for an amendment to part 5, section 6.2 of the constitution, to read "A councillor, who has proposed a motion *or Opposition business*".

Proposed by Councillor McConville,  
Seconded by Councillor Fuller;

"This Council moves to, under part 5 section 27.2 amend the constitution in regard to part 5 section 6.2. A Councillor, who has proposed a motion which has been referred to a committee or sub-committee, shall be given at least three clear working days' notice of the meeting, at which the motion will be considered, by the Head of Paid Service. If the Councillor attends the meeting but is not a member of that committee or sub-committee, s/he shall have an opportunity to explain the motion to the committee or sub-committee.

This should be amended to read "A councillor, who has proposed a motion or Opposition Business".

**As per rule 25.5 of the constitution, it is resolved that this motion stand adjourned, without discussion until the next ordinary meeting of the Council.**

4. **From Councillor McConville, Leader of the Labour Party**

Councillor McConville set out his motion which asked the Council to condemn the purchase of Westenhanger Castle without the specific prior agreement of this Council.

Proposed by Councillor McConville,  
Seconded by Councillor Meade;

That Council condemns the purchase of Westenhanger Castle without the specific prior agreement of this Council.

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

FOR: Councillors Davison, Dorrell, Fuller, Keen, J Martin, McConville, Meade, Prater, Shoob, Treloar, Wade, Whybrow, Wing (13).

AGAINST: Councillors Mrs Berry, Brook, Miss Carey, Collier, Gane, Goddard, Godfrey, Hills, Mrs Hollingsbee, Martin, Meyers, Monk, Mullard, Peall, Rolfe, Wimble (16).

ABSTENTIONS: None (0).

(Voting figures: 13 for, 16 against, 0 abstentions).

The motion was therefore LOST.

44. **Report to Council on a Key Decision made in accordance with the constitution's call-in and urgency rule**

The constitution provides that, when an urgent key decision is made by the Cabinet, for which any delay in implementation, likely to be caused by the call-in process, would seriously prejudice the Council's or public interest, then the 'Call-in Rules of Procedure', Part 6.3, rules 1-6 do not apply. Key decisions, taken as a matter of urgency, must be reported to the next available meeting of the Council, together with the reasons for urgency.

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

**RESOLVED:**

**That report A/19/12 be received and noted.**

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

**Council – 25 September 2019**

**Public questions:**

**1. From Dr Burrell to Councillor Monk, Leader of the Council**

Will the Leader please explain how and why a £1.132m Call-Off contract could rightfully have been awarded to Faithfull & Gould (F&G) and why this was done without the recorded authorisation of the s151 officer or anyone more senior in the council than level K. F&G were appointed lead project management consultant for the Princes Parade development and commenced work 3 months prior to planning consent being granted on 18 July 2019. The Pagabo Framework Agreement, under which F&G were the single pre-nominated consultant, did not provide the opportunity for competitive tendering for either the contract nor the Framework. In all respects this was an irregular commitment from an already insufficient Capital budget that should not have occurred and I ask that this should be explained.

**ANSWER:**

The use of framework agreements by district councils for procurement is commonplace and often recommended for large and complex projects. The use of framework agreements is allowed under UK and EU procurement law and the council's contract standing orders. The benefits of using framework agreements are that they streamline administration, reduce the procurement risk and allow councils access wider economies of scale. Companies listed on framework agreements will have already gone through a competitive process and depending on how the framework is set up, it is possible to make a direct award to a supplier.

With reference to the Princes Parade Project, the business case (C/18/69) reported to cabinet on 13/2/19 set out the procurement strategy for the project. This was covered in sections 2.16 to 2.26 of the cabinet and was further expanded on in Appendix 1 of the report, which set out in detail the frameworks considered for the appointment of the main project consultant and main points for consideration. Several frameworks were considered for the appointment of the project consultancy team and the eventual decision was to use the PAGABO National Framework for Professional Services in Construction and Premises mainly due to the flexibility offered by the agreement and the track record and experience of the companies listed within each professional discipline on the framework, many of whom had good local experience having been involved in the design of the new leisure centre in Dover. This includes the main project consultants Faithful & Gould.

In answer to the question around budget authorisation this is straightforward. The Chief Strategic Projects Officer, as the budget holder and responsible officer for the project has the delegated authority to award contracts for the project. This is position as set out in the Council's contract standing orders and there was no requirement for authorisation by the Council's S151 Officer.

The budget is sufficient to cover the project. I consider therefore that the decision was taken correctly and in accordance with the council's procedures.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

Will you please confirm your recognition of the urgent need to put in place a more rigorous financial control system for Princes Parade and other similar projects being undertaken by this authority?

**ANSWER:**

I have already answered this question. I believe the current procedures are adequate

**2. From Mrs Lawes to Councillor Mrs Hollingsbee, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Communities**

Can the cabinet member explain how and what they are doing to actively reduce the deprivation in the district?

**ANSWER:**

Much work is being done to address deprivation in the District. There are ambitious plans-eg the Otterpool Park Garden Town, Princess Parade, Mountfield Road Industrial Estate, Town centre regeneration projects to improve the area, provide more affordable housing, create more jobs, and ensure residents have opportunity for better chances in life. We are working with the education providers who are keen to improve skills levels and are involved in projects with the LCPG and CSP which are looking at resilience issues in young people and helping to set them up for a better start in life and to raise aspirations. The Folkestone Community Works CLLD programme is all about getting people living in the deprived areas of Folkestone into work through dealing with the barriers they face in getting into employment and thereby helping to improve their quality of life. Health inequalities are also being addressed through a more joined up care system. Local community projects such as the fit and fed hunger project to address hunger amongst children during school holidays is an example of support to deprived communities.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

What are you doing right now to solve the problem and reduce the deprivation, lack of opportunity and jobs for the deprived people of this district?

**ANSWER:**

I have already said that the groups we are working with, and have been for a period of time – the local childrens partnership in particular, the community



safety unit, and the Folkestone works programme is all aimed at deprivation in the East of Folkestone.

**3. From Mr Cooper to Councillor Peall, Cabinet Member for Enforcement, Regulatory Services, Waste & Building control**

As a council tax payer in St Mary's Bay I have noticed that the council is clearly not fulfilling its statutory duties towards the environment. Could you please inform me when I and other residents of the Bay can expect to receive a real, meaningful and proper street sweeping service from you and your council in order to ensure, in accordance with the associated codes of practice and the advertised schedules on the councils website, that the pavements, gutters and alleyways are cleared and swept of all rubbish, leaf matter and other accumulated detritus including weeds, or is the council expecting its tax payers to issue Litter Abatement Orders through the Magistrates Court before it will act.

**ANSWER:**

I have checked, and the service has not received any complaints from you.

The council takes seriously its commitment to Appearance Matters and meeting the national and local standards for street cleansing.

In response to the question I have asked the Waste Team to increase the inspections of St Mary's Bay and to ensure that standards are maintained. The latest round of weed spraying is underway and if problems are identified as suggested by Mr Cooper these will be addressed.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

It's clear that the Council does not have any control over Veolia, would it not be better for the Council to bring the waste service back in house when it is next out to tender?

**ANSWER:**

There is a long track record across the country of outsourced services being far more efficient than those in-house and we have had that discussion, and undertaken the review, and a decision has been made.

**4. From Mr Deane to Councillor Monk, Leader of the Council**

In the light of growing concerns over environmental quality, will the council commit to an air quality monitoring exercise along the Dymchurch Road from the Dymchurch side of the new Aldi store to the traffic lights at the junction of the light railway station? This to be recorded at different periods throughout the day, week and year.

**ANSWER:**

The Council is already committed to monitoring air quality within the district and we currently have 16 monitoring sites, one of which is located along Dymchurch Road approximately 500 yards from the new Aldi site. The monitoring site has been there for a period of 4 years and it has been compliant in meeting the Air Quality objectives and as such, there are no concerns requiring us to increase monitoring sites in this area.

The Environmental Protection Team monitor all 16 sites within the District on a monthly basis which involves the removal of existing Air Quality tubes, erecting new tubes and sending the 16 used ones to a laboratory for assessment. A report is returned each month which would detail any significant changes that could highlight a change in the air quality and the results are shared with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

However, whilst there is no significant impact to air quality within the local area at this time, I can confirm that the Environmental Protection Team will continue to monitor this site accordingly.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

Given the current traffic situation, what is the plan to relieve the residents of west Hythe who already are facing a rat run situation, with foresight for the opening of Otterpool, which this road would be the direct route to the Aldi store?

**ANSWER:**

KCC are the people to talk to about the traffic situation. Whether or not it comes under Otterpool park, those houses will be built in this district come what may, as that is what the government requires.

**5. From Mr Rylands to Councillor Wimble, Cabinet Member for the District Economy**

What is the total expenditure by our Council for the delivery of the Mountfield Rd Phase IV project New Romney, up to the 26th Sept 2019.

**ANSWER:**

Over the past 3 years, the Council has developed proposals for designated employment land at Mountfield Road Industrial Estate, New Romney (Phase 4) to diversify the local economy and create alternative employment to compensate for job losses arising from the de-commissioning of Dungeness A Power Station and programmed closure of Dungeness B in 2028. To date, £65,701.26 has been spent on masterplanning the 6 hectares, planning application fees and related studies, half of which was match funded by Magnox.

**THERE WAS NO SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION.**

**6. From Mr Goode to Councillor Mrs Hollingsbee, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Communities**

Is the council practising social exclusion in its service delivery by abandoning and neglecting the maintenance or replacement of play equipment; and closing children's playgrounds often unexpectedly and without, or at short, notice by only allocating the total sum of £15,000 in this years budget to cover the maintenance and replacement of play equipment for the whole of the district?

**ANSWER**

No. Officers work extremely hard despite budget pressures to provide high quality, high value play areas across the district. This work includes working with Town Councils and Community groups. Unfortunately we do not have the funding available to provide new equipment in every play area across the District. The draft Play Strategy that will be presented to Cabinet later this year outlines how we will provide high quality play areas moving forward. The District Council cannot do this alone and needs the help of Town and Parish Councils along with community groups who may be able to apply for funding that the District Council cannot and take over the management of the smaller play areas leaving the District to fund a smaller number of larger, high quality play areas.

The funding you refer to is correct however this does not include the play areas at two of our Green Flag parks, The Coastal Park and Radnor Park which have separate budgets. It also does not include our management and extensive surveyor time and the two dedicated Maintenance Officers, their vehicle or equipment who work tirelessly to keep the play areas in the best condition possible.

The recent redevelopment of the Radnor Park play area is an example of how local community groups, the District Council, the Town Council and other key stakeholders can come together to create a truly amazing facility. This has been further improved this year with the addition of an inclusive wheel chair swing and an outdoor fitness zone.

Officers are currently working closely with developers Taylor Wimpey to create another similar scale destination play area at Shorncliffe and a community group has been formed at East Cliff to look at improving facilities at this other key site.

Talks are under way with several Town Councils about how they might provide improved play facilities within their local areas.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

Can you give a categoric assurance that children's playgrounds will be adequately maintained, and protected from development in the future?

**ANSWER:**

The answer is no.

**7. From Ms Glen to Councillor Monk, Leader of the Council**

Talk of Compulsory Purchase of the Leas Pavilion has been ongoing for months now, but is this appropriate given that the owners have been attempting to comply with the works requested in the Repairs Notice dated February 2019? May we therefore now have a clear statement as to what actually is the Council's position with regards to the future of the Leas Pavilion?

**ANSWER:**

Following the issuing of the Repairs Notice officers we became aware that there may have been a potential buyer for the site and as a result it was decided to hold off with costly further action until the position was clearer. As the buyer has not materialised, officers are currently considering next steps. Whether this is a CPO or a new buyer, we must try to get the best value for money.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

We were told only days ago by one of the officers in planning that no decisions have been made regarding next steps for the site. What, if anything are you going to do to safeguard the listed building over the coming winter months because it's falling to bits.

**ANSWER:**

Nothing you have said negates my earlier reply. The position is that we as the council want to preserve the Leas pavilion, but without it costing the council a lot of money. The repairs notice will cover any further dilapidation, although a lot of work has already been done to secure the building.

**Full Council – 25 September 2019**  
**Councillor questions:**

**1. From Councillor J Martin to Councillor Monk, Leader of the Council**

During previous Council meetings you have said that the proposed Otterpool Park development will attract "Green Town" status, a term I am unfamiliar with. You also announced at the last Council meeting that Otterpool Park would be Carbon Neutral. I have looked closely at the proposals on the FHDC web site and can find no mention of Green Town Status or any commitment to building a Carbon Neutral development, perhaps you can tell us what Green Town status is and how Otterpool Park will be Carbon Neutral.

**ANSWER:**

Otterpool Park has 'Garden Town' status following submission of a bid to the government's Garden Cities, Towns and Villages programme in June 2016. The government announced in Nov 2016 that the bid had been successful. The bid included letters of support from a wide range of representatives and organisations, including Damian Collins MP, KCC, South East Local Economic Partnership, Shepway Business Advisory Board and the Creative Foundation (now Creative Folkestone). The original guiding principles included in the proposal still form the basis of the plans for the town. Otterpool Park is also a green town in that 50% of the area will be green infrastructure. While green town is not a formal status it is more a description of the character of the place, with a range of green spaces and access to the surrounding countryside.

Regarding carbon neutrality, the draft planning policy for Otterpool Park (relevant extract below) establishes the standard for Otterpool Park and the aspiration for carbon neutrality. While this might not be possible on day one due to the high up front infrastructure cost, it is an aspiration, and discussions are taking place with innovative development companies that are marketing new technologies in energy generation and storage that can be tested here.

*Extract from policy SS8 (1d):*

*The energy strategy shall demonstrate how the development takes a fabric-first approach, makes the maximum use of passive solar gain, as well as energy generation from the latest technologies in and on buildings and structures. All community buildings shall seek to meet zero carbon standards as exemplars, with an aspiration for the development to achieve carbon neutrality;*

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

Myself and Councillor Wade have had our application to the woodlands Trust approved, to receive almost 900 sapling plants to plant in our wards. Can you work with us to find sites and encourage other members to apply to the Woodland Trust to do the same?

**ANSWER:**

I am more than happy to endorse this. We too have been speaking to the Woodlands Trust, and when we do start work on Otterpool Park, we will plant hundreds of trees.

**2. From Councillor Whybrow to Councillor Wimble, Cabinet Member for the District Economy**

Can you please confirm that the planning application for Otterpool Park will not be determined until the Planning Inspector has examined the Core Strategy Review in public and the council has received his/her report?

**ANSWER:**

Based on our current understanding of the progress of the local plan process, the Council will not determine the application for Otterpool Park until it has received the report from the planning Inspector examining the Core Strategy Review.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

Given that the Council has spent so much money on the castle, what would happen if planning permission were to be refused?

**ANSWER:**

That would be a decision to be made by the Council.

**3. From Councillor Rolfe to Councillor Monk, Leader of the Council**

On 1st July 2019, the Church of England launched a Digital Charter that aims to establish guidelines and boundaries for good practice when using electronic and social media. This blueprint for respectful behaviour is, I believe, relevant to every representative of any 'organisation or group' and indeed, every one of us as individuals – and it can be adopted, applied and followed whether we have faith or not. Anti-social behaviour on digital platforms undermines the very fabric of our global society. Issues such as online bullying affect all ages and sectors. Research has also shown that many people – particularly our younger generation, find it difficult to disseminate between what is true, and what is not. Hence this also aspires to combat the ever-increasing problem of 'Fake News' and its negative impacts.

Therefore, my question to you is: In recognition of the leadership role of this authority's members and officers, and the associated moral obligation to set a good example for our local residents, can this District Council consider incorporating a Digital Charter and associated guidelines based on the values contained within the Church of England's blueprint, into its Corporate Plan? This could include, but not necessarily be limited to proactively embracing the key principles outlined in the Charter: <https://www.churchofengland.org/terms-and-conditions/our-social-mediacommunity-> guidelines of truth, respect, honesty, kindness and personal accountability. Essentially advocating that we should all aim to treat others as we, ourselves, would like to be treated and

learn to present opposing views in a reasonable and fair manner without recourse to offensive or intimidating behaviour.

For your information, I believe that our local MP – Damian Collins would support such an initiative.

**ANSWER:**

Officers are currently updating a social media policy for Councillors. We support the values of the charter Councillor Rolfe has highlighted and will look to work up something similar in due course. We will review whether this will be incorporated into the Corporate Plan.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

Linked to this, can this District Council also endorse the Government's drive to persuade social media providers of digital platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to accept that they are 'Producers' and as such should be held accountable for published content in clearly defined circumstances? This would help to ensure that these providers police their networks and have in place the necessary safeguards to protect the vulnerable. To that end would it be possible for you to send a letter on behalf of this Council evidencing such support to the Minister of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport – the Rt Hon Nicky Morgan MP and copy our MP into this due to his role as Chairman of the Select Committee for DCMS? I strongly believe this to be a 'Community Safety' issue that is worth pursuing.

**ANSWER:**

Whilst I agree with the sentiment, I will check the procedure before writing a letter on behalf of the Council.

**4. From Councillor Mrs Carey to Councillor Monk, Leader of the Council**

Can the Leader of the Council advise me what arrangements will be made for public access to Westenhanger Castle in my North Downs West Ward now that it is in the ownership of this council?

**ANSWER:**

Ensuring future public access to the castle is an important reason for the council acquiring Westenhanger Castle. The next step is to prepare a 30 year plan that will set out the future programme of work on the castle and the new castle park. The medieval barns have great potential for future community use, following a programme of restoration. In the short term the current lease arrangements with the events manager Idyllic Events allows the council access at certain times, so opportunities for the public to view the castle can be included in the forward plan. The council is in discussion with Idyllic about arranging an initial public open afternoon later this year.

**THERE WAS NO SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION.**

**5. From Councillor Treloar to Councillor Monk, Leader of the Council**

Given this council's decision to build on and desecrate a key heritage asset in our area – the Royal Military Canal, which is a scheduled monument – how does it propose to manage with sensitivity and respect its new acquisition, the heritage-listed Westenhanger Castle?

**ANSWER:**

We are not planning to build on the Canal, we are planning to build on Princes Parade. Westenhanger Castle is a Scheduled Ancient Monument and Listed Building due to its historic importance, therefore the castle is protected from detrimental change by rigorous planning controls. However it also needs to have a long term sustainable future and there is a strong case (supported by statutory agencies) that this could best be achieved by bringing it into public ownership as a community asset within the wider Otterpool Park project. The council is preparing a 30 year plan for the castle setting out short, medium and long term investment ration, and scoping future public access and future uses that can bring an income to allow the castle to be self-sustaining.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

Prior to the purchase of the castle, did you undertake a risk assessment, and when can we expect to see this document?

**ANSWER:**

I will provide a comprehensive response in writing after the meeting.

**6. From Councillor Dorrell to Councillor Monk, Leader of the Council**

What is the council doing, in order to prepare for a change of Government within the next 6 months?

**ANSWER:**

Nothing.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

In light of the news that the Prime Minister acted unlawfully, would it not be wise to think about this?

**ANSWER:**

Parliament has to call for an election, but there are no signs of this happening at present.

**7. From Councillor Davison to Councillor Monk, Leader of the Council**



Will you make a statement on the Yellowhammer papers in relation to the impact on our district?

**ANSWER:**

The “Yellowhammer papers” gave the worst case scenario planning assumptions. Our council has participated fully in Brexit planning, working through the Kent Resilience Forum. Our priority is to minimise any potential impact and disruption in the delivery of council services and to ensure that our communities are prepared.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

The use of foodbanks has raised by 85% in our community since last year. There is an extreme fear around what would happen in the event of a no deal Brexit. What emergency procedures has the council got in dealing with this issue, and will you publish the business continuity plan for each council partner, as previously promised to my colleague.

**ANSWER:**

I will provide a structured answer after the meeting.

**8. From Councillor McConville to Councillor Monk, Leader of the Council**

Now that it would be illegal for there to be a no deal Brexit what are the conditions surrounding any unspent monies allocated for preparing for this purpose?

**ANSWER:**

There are no conditions on any unspent monies. The central government funding provided for Brexit was paid under section 31 arrangements whereby there are no conditions on how that it spent. Clearly the government has provided this to help support any disruption which Brexit, in whatever form, may cause and we will ensure the funds are spent appropriately.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

How much money is left in the tin?

**ANSWER:**

I will provide a comprehensive answer after the meeting.

**9. From Councillor Meade to Councillor Peall, Cabinet Member for Enforcement, Regulatory Services, Waste & Building control**

Given the increase in fly tipping, especially in East Folkestone ward which I believe are as a direct result of charges being initiated at the Recycling Centres, would District Council as a condition of the negotiation for the waste contract for the area, be prepared to ask for a monthly larger item pick up from

areas or indeed as happens in the London a free disposal service of three larger items such as fridges, dishwashers etc per year as I feel this would help reduce flytipping in the area.

**ANSWER:**

The council provides a bulky waste collection service across the district and plans to continue to offer this service in the next contract. This service is charged to the household requesting the service.

As previously discussed, this council objected to the applying charges at the KCC Household Waste Recycling Centres. It is however worth clarifying that these charges apply to the disposal of materials like ceramics, plasterboard and hard core. The HWRCs still collect domestic fridges and dishwashers disposed by residents at no charge.

Cllr Meade is correct that some London Authorities do offer a limited free collection service for bulky items but most do not. In some cases, authorities have taken the decision to charge as the result of the experience of running a free service.

A free service would be costly even if limited by the number of collections allowed per household. A free service would unfairly compete against legitimate waste carriers and the collection services offered by charities. It could also risk increased fly tipping where some residents think that they simply need to leave items on the kerbside for it to be collected. Furthermore, authorities with free services can find that this can attract fly tipping from outside the district.

A similar scheme was trialled in Dover Road, and saw people from outside of the area using the service.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

If people from outside of the district were seen using the service, why were these people not charged to allow for a free service to be offered to residents?

**ANSWER:**

Where we can identify such people, we will prosecute, but this would not allow us to offer a free service.

**10. From Councillor Davison to Councillor Godfrey, Cabinet Member for Housing, Transport and Special Projects**

In her most recent performance report the Chief Executive of East Kent Housing referred to getting out positive stories to help 'tackle the stigma of social housing'. Does the leader of the council agree there should be NO stigma attached to social housing and that rather it is this council and East Kent Housing which should be absolutely ashamed at the way our tenants have been let down?

**ANSWER:**

There is no stigma.

Our tenants have been let down recently by EKH management failings and this Council has acted swiftly from the moment we became aware that assurance was not in place. All of our tenants and leaseholders have been contacted and updated on the situation and we will continue to keep them informed. Next month this Council will be taking decisions on the future of our housing management services as the service to our tenants is a priority for this council."

The council recognises the important role that social housing plays and has shown its clear commitment by undertaking to provide 300 additional Council homes over the next 3/5 years. To date, the council has delivered 100 additional homes through its new build and acquisition programme, including homes for affordable rent and shared ownership, with further homes in the pipeline.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

Do you agree that the shambles that is East Kent Housing is a disgrace, and that the Chief Executive of East Kent Housing should 'consider her position'?

**ANSWER:**

It is not for me to comment on individual officers. A decision on the future of the organisation is to be made in due course.

**11. From Councillor McConville to Councillor Monk, Leader of the Council**

Due to this council voting to ensure all of its buildings and operations will be carbon zero by 2030 can you outline your plan for this process in relation to Westenhanger Castle?

**ANSWER:**

Consideration of achieving zero carbon will need to be taken into account in the castle 30 year plan, and as part of the wider council strategy for its building stock.

**THERE WAS NO SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION.**

**12. From Councillor Meade to Councillor Peall, Cabinet Member for Enforcement, Regulatory Services, Waste & Building control**

What are District Council doing regarding those thoughtless dog owners who do not pick up after their dogs, thereby putting residents health at risk. I have not seen a single enforcement officer locally and the pavements in my ward can be a death trap for slips and mess in the dark hours ?

**ANSWER:**

The Environmental Protection Team deal with many areas of enforcement such as unauthorised encampments, stray dogs, fly-tipping, fly-posting and enforcing the dog related public safety protection orders (e.g. dogs off leads). When they get the opportunity they do carry out general patrols which includes patrolling in East Folkestone. There patrols are further supplemented by the work of the Areas Officers.

The Enforcement Team undertakes a number of other anti-dog fouling initiatives including: -

### **Targeted Patrols**

In addition to general patrolling carry out targeted patrols of 'hot spot' and areas covered by the Dog Orders. The Officers will arrange for early and late patrols, to look at typical times that dogs may be taken for walks, taking into consideration the weather and seasonal changes. These can also be linked to other enforcement issues if they are in the same area, such as litter or fly-tipping.

### **Pop up events**

Educational work carried out throughout the district where Enforcement Officers highlight responsible dog ownership, collect intelligence-led information from the public to use for special operations and patrols, free advice given and leaflets on all enforcement areas, as well as free gifts for those who complete a survey around responsible dog ownership.

### **Special events**

In the autumn of last year, Enforcement Officers carried out a plain clothes operation to issue "thank you's" to responsible dog owners who picked up after their dogs and disposed of the waste correctly. This was communicated via social media to promote a positive attitude to responsible dog ownership and entered into a prize draw. This was carried out in all 13 wards where officers were patrolling in plain clothes and during each visit, no owners were found to be allowing their dogs to foul and walk away from it. This is due to be repeated again next month.

### **SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

Could we ask Veolia to step up the cleaning of the pavements in the area?

### **ANSWER:**

Please report such issues via the website. If lots of reports are received, then Veolia would be asked to go out and sort this problem out.

### **13. From Councillor Davison to Councillor Wimble, Cabinet Member for the District Economy**

Is it right that political decisions about how to spend £2.2 million pounds of the Future High Street Fund rest solely in the hands of the leader of the council and one Corporate Director?

### **ANSWER:**

The Leader is establishing a cross party Folkestone Town Centre subgroup of council members and the intention is that this group will be consulted on with respect to major proposals for spending the £2.2 million allocation of the Folkestone & Hythe High Street Fund to Folkestone Town Centre initiatives. However, the final decisions will be taken by the Leader and the Corporate Director for Place and Commercial.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

Do you agree that with the loss of Thomas Cook and Debenhams, we are at crisis point in our High Street, and that we should give the public a forum to contribute their ideas and concerns, such as the Town Centre Working Group which has recently been formed?

**ANSWER:**

I will provide a response in due course.

**14. From Councillor Meade to Councillor Hollingsbee, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Communities**

Will this council be making any changes to its SWEP policy before the winter?

**ANSWER**

Having regard to the question you have posed at a council meeting, I can confirm that we in Housing Options have no changes proposed to the SWEP cold weather provisions for the forthcoming winter, a provision that we agreed last year will be triggered if the temperature falls below freezing for the whole of a single night, as opposed to the previous three consecutive nights of freezing and below.

We will therefore retain the ongoing provision that we have with the Salvation Army Folkestone, supported by our own Lifeline out of hours service, Sanctuary Supported Living - Homeless Outreach, the Porchlight Housing Helpline supported by Kent County Council and the Rainbow Centre who are again running the Crisis Winter Shelter in conjunction with local churches, and our focus remains upon rehousing people that are rough sleeping in the district, at least in part using our Rough Sleeper Initiative and Private Rented Sector Access Funds, being grant monies provided by central government.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

Those figures need to be looked at closely. Would you join us for the Big Sleep-out on Friday?

**ANSWER:**

On the numbers, it is a snapshot from last night, which is carried out on a monthly basis.

I do have the sleepout in my diary, but unfortunately, I cannot make Friday night.

**15. From Councillor McConville to Councillor Wimble, Cabinet Member for the District Economy**

What, if any, part of the £2.2 million for the Future High Street Fund for Folkestone has already been spent and for what purpose?

**ANSWER:**

None of the £2.2 million of the Folkestone & Hythe District High Streets Fund has yet been spent.

**THERE WAS NO SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION.**

**16. From Councillor Davison to Councillor Peall, Cabinet Member for Enforcement, Regulatory Services, Waste & Building control**

Can you give an update on the re-tendering process for the waste and recycling contracts with particular reference to recycling schemes for multi-occupational flats and buildings. Does he agree that everyone should have the ability to recycle from home and will this be included in the new contract?

**ANSWER:**

Firstly I will give an update on the waste, recycling and street cleansing tender. The new contract will start in January 2021. The tender specification is currently being prepared with the intention to start a competitive dialogue process with potential bidders in December, with final tenders submitted and evaluated by Easter next year.

The waste and recycling contract itself does not define or restrict the ability of households to participate in the recycling scheme. This ability is often defined by the practical matters of access, availability of storage areas at a location and complexities of ownership.

However, I agree that more needs to be done in relation to flats. The district has enjoyed a steady increase in recycling levels in past few years including hitting 50% monthly recycling rate several times this year. Across Kent less than 1% of all refuse now goes to landfill. In the new contract we will be continuing the existing recycling scheme as it well understood locally and it meets the national criteria for materials collected.

Despite this progress, it will be difficult to meet future national targets without greater participation from flats. This can only be done by new multi-occupational properties designing in space and access for recycling at a planning stage and engagement with local social housing providers and our own housing stock. The Waste Team has previously met with landlords to work on promoting recycling and will be starting a project next year working with social housing providers.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

This is very close to the hearts of our residents, would you be happy to meet with residents to discuss this further?

**ANSWER:**

I am always keen to meet with the public about anything within my portfolio.

**17. From Councillor Davison to Councillor Monk, Leader of the Council**

What due diligence was undertaken in regards to members of your new cabinet, before offering them cabinet positions?

**ANSWER:**

This is a matter for me as Leader of the Council and not a matter for you. I would just add that you shouldn't necessarily believe all that you read.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

Is it acceptable for a Councillor on Cabinet to not comply with a basic requirement of submission of election expenses, following the recent elections?

**ANSWER:**

This is not the right forum for this to be raised. If you provide the evidence of this to the Returning Officer, it can be followed up.

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This Report will be made public on 8 October 2019



Report Number **A/09/14**

**To:** Council  
**Date:** 16 October 2019  
**Status:** Non-Key Decision  
**Responsible Officer:** Paul Butler – Democratic Services Manager  
**Cabinet Member:** Councillor David Monk, Leader of the Council

**SUBJECT:** REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES 2019

**SUMMARY:** Section 18 of the Representation of the People Act 1983 (as amended by Part 4 of the Electoral Administration Act 2006) places a duty on the Council to conduct a review of polling places and polling districts every four years. The last review was concluded by Folkestone & Hythe District Council (as Shepway District Council) in November 2014. This Report outlines the steps the Council is taking to comply with this duty and seeks approval from Council to approve the recommendations made.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. To receive and note report A/09/14.
2. To approve the proposals listed in this report as the Polling Districts, Polling Places and Stations for the next four years, or until an ad-hoc review triggered by the Council in the interim.
3. To adopt the proposals as outlined in Appendix 2, with the implementation to coincide with the revision of the register on 01 December 2019.
4. To note that in response to a recommendation received at Audit & Governance, the consideration on the use of public houses will be a part of any future polling reviews.

## 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Local authorities are responsible for dividing their constituency into polling districts for UK Parliamentary elections. Polling districts, polling places and polling stations are kept under review to maintain electorate balance and the suitability of venue choices. There is a duty on the Council of the local authority to conduct a review at least once every four years. The compulsory review period started on 01 October 2018 and will end on 31 January 2020.
- 1.2 The last review concluded in November 2014, with the current set up of polling districts and stations proposed as final recommendations. The current review started on Wednesday 01 July 2019 and will conclude at the revision of the Electoral Register on Sunday 01 December 2019.
- 1.3 The length of the review process is not prescribed under legislation, provided that all points in the review schedule are covered and a suitable consultation period is planned to allow sufficient time for anyone wishing to submit their comments on matters are able to.
- 1.4 There are currently 62 polling districts, 54 polling places and 58 polling stations across the Folkestone & Hythe Parliamentary constituency.
- 1.5 In line with the Council's constitution, the responsibility of this review is with the Audit and Governance Committee. A presentation by the Democratic Services Manager on Tuesday 30 July 2019 outlined the details of this review and the importance of keeping to the regulations set by the Representation of the People Act 1983 and Electoral Administration Act 2006.
- 1.6 This review concentrates on the following elements of a parliamentary constituency:
  - 1.6.1 Polling district

A polling district is a geographical area created by the sub-division of a constituency, ward or division into smaller parts. The "administrative" boundary lines of a polling district can be changed, however the governed lines that form Parish, District and County wards/divisions can't be changed as part of this review.
  - 1.6.2 Polling place

A polling place is a building or geographical area in which a polling station is located. It is good practice to specify where a polling place is, as a building instead of an area to ensure there is a clear indication to electors within and outside of a polling district.
  - 1.6.3 Polling station

A polling station is the room or area within the polling place where voting takes place. Polling stations are chosen by the Returning Officer for each election, and not by the Council.

## 2. CONSULTATION

- 2.1 The consultation for this review began at the publishing of the review notice on Wednesday 03 July 2019. A notice was placed on the Parish, Town and District notice boards and on the website which was shared via Facebook and Twitter. A press release was also published to newspapers to invite representations.
- 2.2 In addition to a notice, a total of 46 organisations and charities from the area were contacted directly to seek their views on the current set up of our polling places/stations. The following were also contacted:
- Damian Collins MP
  - Kent County councillors for the Folkestone & Hythe area
  - District and Parish/Town councillors
  - All Parish and Town councils and meetings
  - All political parties that took part in the last local election
  - Susan Priest, the (Acting) Returning Officer for the Parliamentary constituency of Folkestone & Hythe area
- 2.3 The Acting Returning Officer's representation, which included various proposals based on pre-requisite work carried out by the elections team, was published on Wednesday 24 July 2019 on the website and was also available to view at the Civic Centre. Anyone could make comment on this representation up until 04 September 2019.
- 2.4 General representations from the public, and those people, organisations and charities personally invited had until Wednesday 14 August 2019 to submit their views to the Democratic Services Manager. The representations and comments that were received in time can be found in Appendix 3 of this report.

## 3. REVIEW SCHEDULE

- 3.1 Legislation sets a specific review schedule that must be adhered to, I am happy to confirm that Folkestone & Hythe DC have conducted this review within these obligations.
- 3.2 The review timetable, against the guidelines set by legislation is below for your information:

Notice of Review published & start of consultation	Wednesday 03 July 2019
Acting Returning Officer's representation published	Wednesday 24 July 2019
Submission of Representation deadline	Wednesday 14 August 2019
Submission of Comments on ARO statement deadline	Wednesday 04 September 2019
Proposals submitted to Audit & Governance Committee	Wednesday 18 September 2019
Recommendations reported to Full Council	Wednesday 16 October 2019
Revised Electoral Register published with changes	Sunday 01 December 2019

## 5. REVIEW

- 4.1 A total of 18 representations and 3 comments on the Acting Returning Officer's representation were received during the consultation period. Each representation was used to consider any changes that could be introduced for future elections. Officers will comment on each representation at the meeting.
- 4.2 In addition to the representations and comments, information collected at polling stations during the full local elections and European Parliamentary elections was utilised to form a better understanding of how staff and visiting electors perceive the current venue choices.
- 4.3 Statistical data and information was collected as part of this review to establish the potential for an increase or decrease in electorate over the next 4 years. The Electoral Commission guidance recommends that a manageable number of electors allocated to a polling station is capped at 2,500.
- 4.4 All polling districts boundary lines were considered (where possible) to understand where amendments may have been made to the lineage to group electors differently to balance out numbers and avoid breaching the 2,500 recommended by the Electoral Commission.
- 4.5 Using the current list of polling places, polling stations and any contributory information known to the elections team. A check of the historic availability of each premises has been considered going forward, likewise some information received on certain polling stations has been considered when sourcing potential replacements or alternative venues.
- 4.6 This review has resulted in proposals that affect the following polling districts:

CH2	Cheriton West
CH3	
EF1-3	East Folkestone
FC1-4	Folkestone Central
HY1	Hythe East
NR2	New Romney Town
NDE6 & NDE10	Swingfield and Acrise
NDW9	Lyminge
WDM8	Lydd

## 6. RISKS/CONTROLS

- 4.1 In light of the fact that there are minimal proposals as part of this review, there are no significant risks identified.

## 7. LEGAL/FINANCIAL AND OTHER CONTROLS/POLICY MATTERS

### **7.1 Legal Officer's Comments (AK)**

The legal issues have been dealt with in the Report.

### **7.2 Finance Officer's Comments (CS)**

The author of this report has confirmed to finance that any financial implications arising from this report can be contained within existing budgets.

### **7.3 Diversities and Equalities Implications (PR)**

The outcome and recommendations of a review of polling districts and polling places are specifically designed to ensure that all voters are able to exercise their right to vote and, in particular, where voters chose to vote in person at polling stations, that these are accessible to all regardless of disability.

## **8. CONTACT OFFICERS AND BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Councillors with any questions arising out of this report should contact the following officer prior to the meeting:

Paul Butler  
Democratic Services Manager  
Telephone: 01303 853497  
Email: paul.butler@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk

The following background documents have been relied upon in the preparation of this report:

- The Representation of the People Act 1983
- The Electoral Administration Act 2006
- Electoral Commission Guidance – Review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations

### **Appendices:**

Appendix 1: Notice of Review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations – dated 01 July 2019

Appendix 2: Polling district and polling stations proposals

Appendix 3: Representations and comments received (including officer notes)

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# NOTICE OF REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS, POLLING PLACES AND POLLING STATIONS



Notice is hereby given that Folkestone & Hythe District Council is conducting a review of the polling districts, polling places and polling stations that fall in the Folkestone & Hythe Parliamentary constituency.

In accordance with The Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places (Parliamentary Elections) Regulations 2006, the Acting Returning Officer will be invited to make a statement on the existing arrangements and any proposals made. In addition, we are seeking feedback from electors, political representatives, town and parish councils, community organisations and political parties from within the District area. Representations should include views and opinions on:

- the proposals regarding the structure of our current polling districts;
- current polling places;
- the accessibility of our current polling stations;
- alternative venues to use as polling stations; and
- Acting Returning Officers comments and/or proposals.

Any representations must be received in writing by **14 August 2019**. Comments are also welcomed on the Acting Returning Officer's statement and must be submitted by **04 September 2019**.

If you wish to make representation or comment, please send your correspondences as follows:

**By post:** Democratic Services Manager  
Folkestone & Hythe District Council  
Civic Centre, Castle Hill Avenue, Folkestone, CT20 2QY

**By email:** [elections@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk](mailto:elections@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)

We would also like to welcome the views of any person or body with expertise in access for persons with any type of disability.

A timetable, and other documents relating to this review can be inspected at the Council offices at the below address, or online at [www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/elections/polling-review](http://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/elections/polling-review).

Decisions relating to the review will be made in November and the review will conclude on Sunday 01 December 2019.

**Folkestone & Hythe District Council**  
**Civic Centre**  
**Castle Hill Avenue**  
**Folkestone**  
**CT20 2QY**

**Dated: Wednesday 03 July 2019**

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## **POLLING DISTRICTS, POLLING PLACES AND POLLING STATIONS REVIEW 2019**



### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

This document contains the final proposals for the polling districts, polling places and polling stations in the Folkestone & Hythe District Council area.

Please note the following points before reading this document:

- Electoral Commission guidance recommends a maximum polling station electorate of 2,500.
- The enclosed maps relate to the polling districts that have had an administrative change only.
- The electorate figures in this report have been reduced by 20% to accommodate the average amount of postal voters in an area. Postal voters do not attend a polling station to vote.
- Any polling district, polling place or station not mentioned in this document does not have a recommendation for change, therefore current polling arrangements used at previous elections will remain in place.
- Identified housing developments carry an average of 2 electors per household, this has been considered for future electorate calculations.
- Natural population growth is set at 1.07% in line with the national average for areas without large housing developments.

Paul Butler  
Democratic Services Manager

Initial Draft: 15 August 2019  
Revised: 05 September 2019

Ward: Cheriton West ward of Folkestone Town Council, Cheriton District ward

Polling districts: CH2, CH3

Polling district	Current electorate	Potential electorate (over next 4 years)	Current polling place	Proposal
CH2	2265	2619	Tower Theatre North Road Cheriton, CT20 3HL	Change the current polling place to: 1 <sup>st</sup> Cheriton Scout Hut Hawkins Road / Firs Lane Cheriton, CT19 4JA
<p><b>Comments:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The exponential growth in electorate will be caused by natural progression and the housing development plans in the area.</li> <li>The Scout Hut is central to this densely populated area of Cheriton, with suitable access from two roads and ample parking on firs lane or in the Range car park. The new location can also facilitate a double polling station if required based on the potential growth of electorate in the area.</li> </ul>				

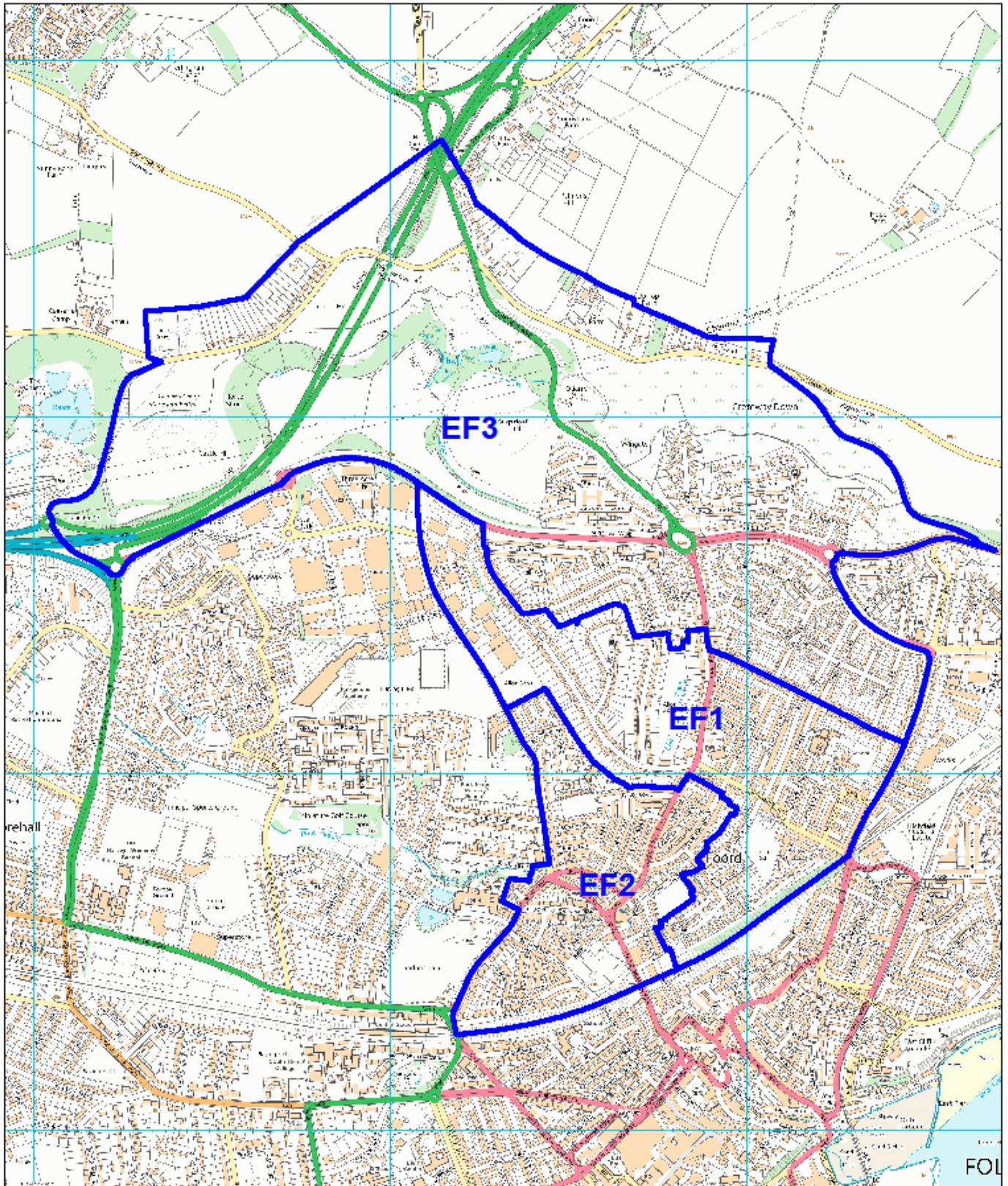
Polling district	Current electorate	Potential electorate (over next 4 years)	Current polling place	Proposal
CH3	2616	2738	All Souls Church Hall Somerset Road Cheriton, CT19 4NW	To introduce two polling stations at this polling place (double polling station).
<p><b>Comments:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This long standing venue choice has adequate space to accommodate a double station for the large electorate of this area.</li> <li>Large housing developments in this area will have an implication on the electorate size over the next 4 years.</li> </ul>				

**Ward:** East Folkestone ward of Folkestone Town Council, East Folkestone District ward

**Polling districts:** EF1, EF2, EF3

<b>Polling districts</b>	<b>Current electorate</b>	<b>Potential electorate (over next 4 years)</b>	<b>Current polling places</b>	<b>Proposal</b>
EF1 EF2 EF3	2158 1802 2878	2251 1880 3003	Salvation Army, 75-79 Canterbury Rd St Johns Church Hall, St Johns Church Rd Wood Avenue Library, Wood Avenue	To keep the current polling places, however balance the electorate against Electoral Commission guidance to avoid oversaturation at Wood Avenue Library
<b>Comments:</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Move the administrative boundary lines that make up this ward. By moving the lines slightly the approximate electorate figures allow for any natural increase in electorate over the next 4 years: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ EF1 2275 (with potential growth to 2373 over the next 4 years)</li> <li>▪ EF2 2215 (with potential growth to 2311 over the next 4 years)</li> <li>▪ EF3 2346 (with potential growth to 2448 over the next 4 years)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• A map on the following page shows the new boundary lines for each of the polling districts EF1, EF2 and EF3.</li> </ul>				

# Proposed Boundary Changes - EF1, EF2 & EF3

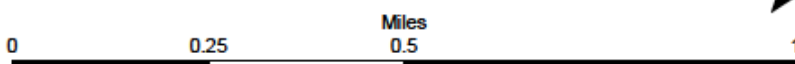


Drawn date:  
17 Jul 2019

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Brian Harper

Drawing ref:  
2237/DSMPB

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**Ward:** Folkestone Central ward of Folkestone Town Council, Folkestone Central District ward

**Polling districts:** FC1, FC2, FC3, FC4

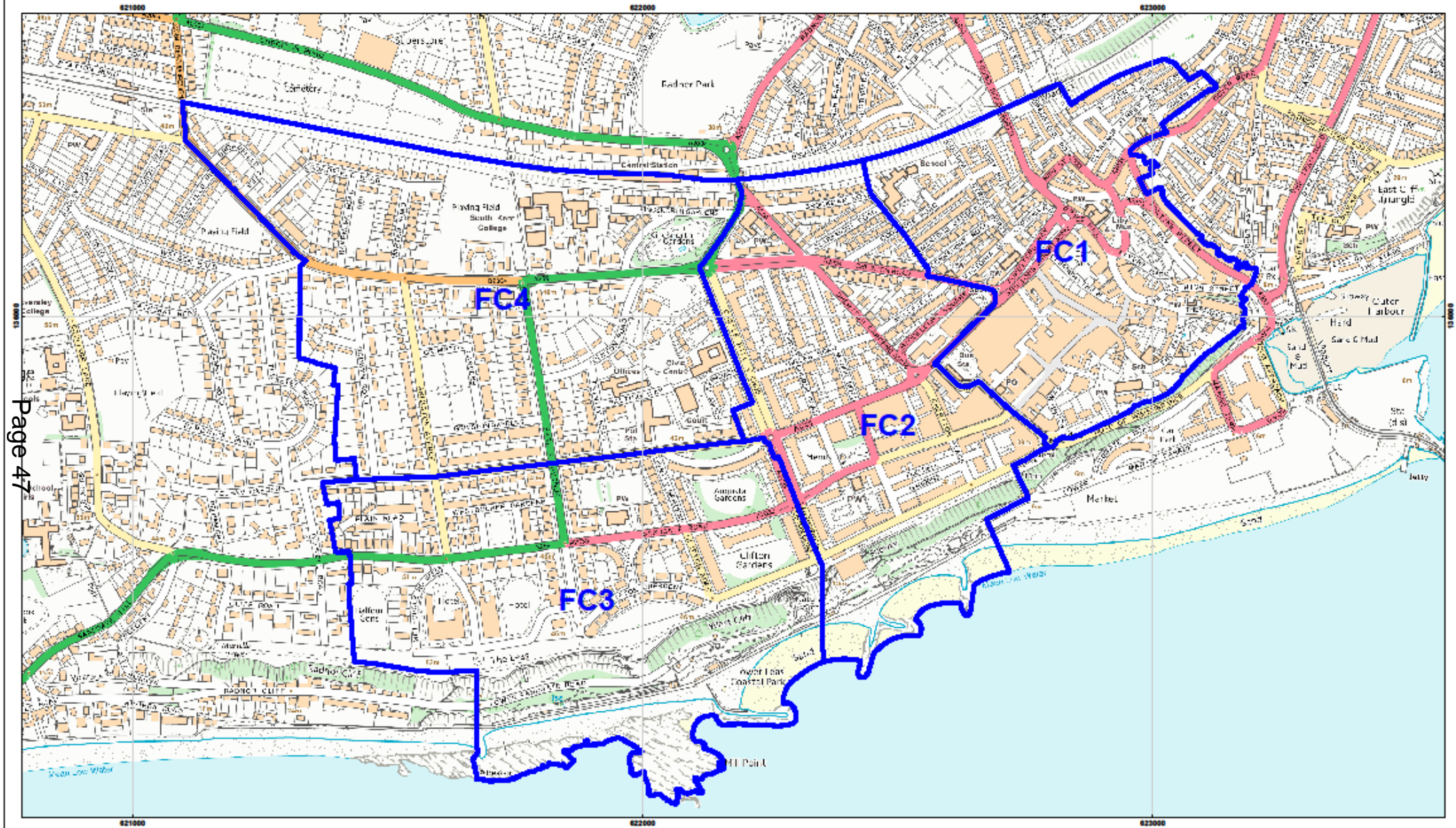
<b>Polling district</b>	<b>Current electorate</b>	<b>Potential electorate (over next 4 years)</b>	<b>Current polling place</b>	<b>Proposal</b>
FC1	2604	2717	Folkestone Town Hall, Guildhall St.	In order to balance the electorate against Electoral Commission guidance, the administrative boundary lines of this ward should be moved. The current polling places remain.
FC2	1502	1567	South Kent Community Church	
FC3	1453	1516	Holy Trinity Church Hall	
FC4	983	1025	Wards Hotel, 39 Earls Avenue	

**Comments:**

- Move the administrative boundary lines that make up this ward. By moving the lines slightly the approximate electorate figures allow for any natural increase in electorate over the next 4 years:
  - FC1 1931 (with potential growth to 2014 over the next 4 years)
  - FC2 1655 (with potential growth to 1726 over the next 4 years)
  - FC3 1552 (with potential growth to 1619 over the next 4 years)
  - FC4 1403 (with potential growth to 1464 over the next 4 years)
- A map on the following page shows the new boundary lines for each of the polling districts FC1, FC2, FC3 and FC4.



# Proposed Boundary Changes - FC1, FC2, FC3 & FC4.



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Drawn date:  
18 Jul 2019

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Brian Harper

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2135/DSM/PB

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**Ward:** Hythe East ward of Hythe Town Council, Hythe District ward

**Polling districts:** HY1

Polling district	Current electorate	Potential electorate (over next 4 years)	Current polling place	Proposal
HY1	1523	1589	Seabrook Church Hall 141 Seabrook Road Hythe, CT21 5RB	Change the polling place permanently to: New Fountain Pub 171 Seabrook Road Hythe, CT21 5RT
<p><b>Comments:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We have been informed that Seabrook Church Hall is permanently closed and now up for auction.</li> <li>Successful elector and polling station staff feedback coupled with the proximity of this location to the old venue is a suitable replacement.</li> </ul>				

**Ward:** New Romney Town ward of New Romney Town Council, New Romney District ward

**Polling district:** NR2

Polling district	Current electorate	Potential electorate (over next 4 years)	Current polling place	Proposal
NR2	2433	2530	New Romney Bowls Club Sussex Road New Romney, TN28 8HL	Change the polling place permanently to: South Kent Methodist Church Hall High Street New Romney, TN28 8AH
<p><b>Comments:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proportionate elector and polling station staff feedback has led to a change of polling station in the New Romney Town area.</li> <li>Alternative venues were suggested, one being the proposed venue noted above.</li> <li>The venue is on the high street, has an entry ramp and a path leading to it, answering the requests of the local electorate.</li> </ul>				



**Wards:** Swingfield Parish Council and Acrise parish meeting, North Downs East District ward

**Polling districts:** NDE6, NDE10

<b>Polling district</b>	<b>Current electorate</b>	<b>Potential electorate (over next 4 years)</b>	<b>Current polling place</b>	<b>Proposal</b>
NDE6 NDE10	89 655	92 683	Black Horse Inn, Densole	Change the polling place permanently to: The Scout Hut, Reindene Woods CT18 7BB
<b>Comments:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The location of both these premises is on a busy road, however the Black Horse Inn is on a blind bend where electors have to contend with two other roads opposite when entering/leaving the location by car.</li><li>• The additional signage that was placed on the road ahead of the Scout Hut made drivers aware of the venue entrance.</li><li>• The Scout Hut provides value for money for the electorate.</li></ul>				

**Wards:** Lyminge ward of Lyminge Parish Council, North Downs West District ward

**Polling districts:** NDW9

<b>Polling district</b>	<b>Current electorate</b>	<b>Potential electorate (over next 4 years)</b>	<b>Current polling place</b>	<b>Proposal</b>
NDW9	1410	1501	Lyminge Village Hall	Change the polling place permanently to: 1 <sup>st</sup> Lyminge Scout Hut, Woodland Road, Lyminge CT18 8EW
<b>Comments:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Moving to this location avoids the requirement of shutting down a busy pre-school at the Village Hall.</li></ul>				

- The venue is wheelchair accessible, has a kitchen facility for staff as well as toilets and ample space for the polling station.

**Wards:** Lydd Town Council and Walland & Denge Marsh District ward

**Polling districts:** WDM2

Polling district	Current electorate	Potential electorate (over next 4 years)	Current polling place	Proposal
WDM2	918	982	Dungeness Lifeboat Station	Change the polling place permanently to: Heysham Hall Taylor Road Romney Marsh TN29 9PA
<b>Comments:</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Following elector feedback we have procured this change of venue for Lydd electors.</li> <li>• The location has disabled access, parking, is close to the main road and is also on a bus route.</li> </ul>				

Representation		Officer Comments
Polling District	Polling Place / Station	
All	All	We wish to make no comments regarding the review
CH4	St Andrews Methodist Church Hall, Cheriton	My polling station has always been in this hall. It is just up the road from me - there's no bus service, but it is within walking distance or there's a car park and it wasn't full. I walked in, was immediately given a card, voted and was out within two minutes.
FC1	n/a	If you are considering different venues, please consider the use of the Parish Church Hall (41 Guildhall Street North) a Our Lady Help of Christians, as a future Polling Station. It is central to the town and could easily provide a service to 2500+ voters
HY1/2	New Fountation Pub, Seabrook (in place of Seabrook Church Hall for 02/05/19 and 23/05/19)	I appreciate that you had to find an alternative polling station in a hurry and that The Fountain was probably the only option but I don't think a pub is really an appropriate polling station as some people might feel uncomfortable entering a pub eg some muslims
NDE1	Cricket Club, Hawkinge	The use of this site for the polling station is fine. There is parking for those that cannot walk there. There are no steps to negotiate so safe for less mobile residents too.
NR2	New Romney Bowls Club, New Romney	Observations This is a difficult polling station to get to if you don't have your own or access to transport ie car. It is not on a bus route It is some distance from the Town centre The gravel from the entrance to the door makes it very difficult for those with mobility aids to cross. Mobility scooters struggled as well as those with walking frames and sticks. The access to the Club does not allow for wheelchairs. The doors are not wide enough If my memory serves me correctly there is still a step at the door for those with walking aids to conquer.
WDM8	Brenzett Village Hall	The members of Brenzett Parish Council feel that Brenzett Village Hall is the most suitable place for the Polling Station in Brenzett as it is central, well known, fully accessible for everyone and has plenty of parking.
HR1	Hythe Football Club, Hythe	Our local polling station used to be at the Light Railway Station and is now at the Football Ground. The football ground is much more difficult to get to for many people. Could it come back to a more central position?
FC1	Town Hall, Folkestone	Very convenient
RM1	Burmarsh Church Hall	Burmarsh Parish Council noted this review by F&HDC at its meeting on 9 <sup>th</sup> July and agreed to express satisfaction with current arrangements.
NDE9/10	Scout Hut / Black Horse Inn	The scout hut on the A260 was not suitable on grounds of health and safety as it was access from the busy A260. Suggest that the proprietors of the Black Horse Public House be contacted.
HY1/3 & HR1	Age UK, Hythe / Hythe Town Football Club / New Fountain Pub	Age UK Hythe & Lyminge be relocated to either Burton Hall of the Library Foyer.Museum because of the logistics of using an elderly working/eating environment. Hythe Town Football Club be relocated to the Light Railway Hall due to the distance that voters need to travel. The Fountain PH be relocated to the new Indian Restaurant next to the Seapoint garage as a more appropriate venue.
WDM2	Dungeness Lifeboat Station, Dungeness	Dungeness and Lydd on Sea The current Polling Station at Dungeness Lifeboat Station is not easily accessible, and we propose that Heysham Hall, Taylor Road, Lydd-on-Sea is used as a Polling Station. The Polling Station at Dungeness is not on a bus route, is hard for disabled people to access especially in adverse weather conditions. It is too far away for voters to meaningfully take part in elections because of its location. It also lacks street lighting and is dark. Voters particularly those who are vulnerable do not feel safe going to and from. Voters are also deterred from participating on account of feeling they would hinder the launch of the lifeboat or any similar emergency. Voters feel disenfranchised at the location of the polling station and feel that it is not in a suitable location and do not bother. Moving the polling station to Heysham Hall would encourage voters to participate in elections, feel they were part of the democratic process and the council would have representatives who truly reflected the views and wishes of the electorate. Heysham Hall is close to a bus route and has plenty of safe on street parking.

Officer Comments
No comment
Thank you for the feedback and an insight in to how easy it was for your to cast your vote.
Thank you, we will keep this in mind for the future use of our polling places/stations.
Thank you. The New Fountain Pub was procured very quickly for the Local elections and then European Election as well. It is in a suitable location for this polling district and very close to where the original polling place was (Seabrook Church Hall). It is good value for money and has received excellent feedback from electors and polling staff alike. The booking agent is very helpful and can accommodate our needs at short notice, as proved recently at the two elections in May. As part of the consultation, various ethnicity groups have been contacted regarding our current polling places and also the proposals. We have not receive any feedback to say that they would not attend a pub to cast their vote.
Thank you for this feedback.
Thank you for taking the time to provide these observations to us. We have relocated this polling place to New Romney Methodist Church Hall.
Thank you for your comment.
Thank you. The Light Railway were contacted and have said that they can not accommodate a polling station for us. The Football Ground will remain the same for this present time because it is as central to the properties withing the polling district boundary lines.
Many thanks for this feedback.
Thank you for your comment.
Thank you for your comment. The A260 is a busy road, however the Black Horse is on the same busy road on a blind corner with two adjoining roads opposite to consider when leaving the premises by car. We will look at ensuring the road is equipped with extra signs for this polling place in the future, the same signage that worked well for the European Elections in May 2019.
Historically, the Black Horse Inn has been shut for a considerable amount of time which would not have allowed us to rent it come an election. For longevity and value for money, the Scout Hut was sourced as an alternative venue supporting the community project and providing us with reassurance that a venue can be rented.
Thinking ahead, if voter ID requirements are introduced to voting in the near future there will not be sufficient room in the Black Horse Inn to cater for what is needed.
Many thanks for your comments.
Age UK - On assessment, we have deemed the library entrance inappropriate. It is too small to accommodate the size of the electorate in this area and would inconvenience those wanting to go in to the library.
Railway Hall - The Light Railway can not accommodate a polling station for us. To avoid inconveniencing the electorate with a new polling place, the Football Ground is central to the polling district boundary lines and will remain the same for this present time.
New Fountain Pub - As mentioned previously The New Fountain Pub was procured very quickly for the Local elections and then European Election as well. It is in a suitable location for this polling district and very close to where the original polling place was (Seabrook Church Hall). It is good value for money and has received excellent feedback from electors and polling staff alike. The booking agent is very helpful and can accommodate our needs at short notice, as proved recently at the two elections in May. The newly opened Indian restaurant has been closed for quite some time. This uncertainty must be considered when procuring venues as polling places. If this restaurant were to temporarily close to accomodate us as a polling place, the electorate would need to pay for their loss of trade. This amount will be more than that of the cost to rent half of The New Fountain Pub.
Many thanks for your valuable feedback and suggestion, we have relocated this polling place to Heysham Hall, Taylor Road. It has disabled access, facilities for staff and electorate and is central to the polling district and bus routes.

NR2	New Romney Bowls Club, New Romney	This location has many negatives for many voters. The road to the club is not the safest with no pavement and a difficult road junction to cross. When you get to the bowling club the entrance is across a gravel parking lot which is not very easy for the less sure footed or those in wheelchairs or using walkers. Finally it is not a very central location within the ward so some voters have a much longer journey than others and therefore require the use of cars	Thank you for your comments. We have relocated this polling place to New Romney Methodist Church Hall which is on the High Street, has a ramp at the entrance and a path and street lighting on approach.
NR2	New Romney Bowls Club, New Romney	The Bowls Club does have very good parking arrangements but there should be better defined arrangements for disabled parking. The road outside the Bowls Club does not have a defined footpath or streetlighting.	Thank you. We have relocated this polling place to New Romney Methodist Church.
NR2	New Romney Bowls Club, New Romney	New Romney Town Council Response to F.H.D.C. Polling Station Review This response is on behalf of New Romney Town council, it was produced by a working party of four members, representing both Town and Coastal wards, delegated by New Romney Town Council to submit a joint response to the F.H.D.C. Review on polling stations. One of the councillors is disabled and experienced firsthand the problems associated with using The Bowls Club as a voting station. We believe that there are no problems with the Varne Boat Club, the Coastal Ward voting station. So the following observations are purely in respect to the use of the Bowls Club as a voting station in the Town Ward. We believe the following are negatives with respect to the use of the Bowls Club as a polling station. • Electors could not get to the polling station due to its location, away from the town centre and the most densely populated areas. • There is no pavement in the road leading to the station and the condition of the road is not safe for those walking. • The road is unlit and there is therefore a greater risk as it gets dark. • On arrival voters are meet by a large gravelled car park which has to be crossed to get to the entrance and it is therefore a problem for the less able. • The entrance door was narrow leading to access issues for those in wheelchairs and those needing walking aides. Although there was a ramp there was still a door step to be negotiated. We believe location is key to the democratic process of encouraging a higher voter engagement and turn out, and would therefore suggest there are several better locations for a polling station: 1. The Scout Hut 2. The Methodist Church room 3. The Old School House 4. The March Academy/Leisure centre. These meet the 4 key needs required for a polling station. • Central location • Safe accessibility • Transport access public/private/foot •	Thank you for this detailed response. We have relocated this polling place to New Romney Methodist Church Hall. The Scout Hut is unavailable on Thursday's and feedback from residents in the area on an ad-hoc visit preferred the Methodist Church Hall as an alternative.
BR1	Grace Taylor Hall, Lucy Avenue	Broadmead ward continues to expand, with new developments such as Scholar's Village having recently been built off Park Farm Road. The existing Polling Station of Grace Taylor Hall is far too small to cope with major elections or referenda where turnout can be considerably higher than 60% and often struggles for space or is forced to have large queues due to lack of space of additional polling booths. The simple alternative would be to use the Folkestone Academy secondary school located immediately opposite which has ample space for a larger polling station and better parking facilities for those that require it or who have mobility issues.	Thank you for taking the time to write this response.  Grace Taylor Hall - The electorate number for this polling station meets the EC requirement, therefore at this time it is not necessary to move the polling place. The alternative venue you have suggested is a valid option should the time come for a bigger venue. Where possible, closing schools is not preferable because electors are affected and may need to commit to childcare arrangements at late notice especially if there is a snap election called. In 2014 the school was used however there was some difficulty in procuring it because of the inconveniences, so the polling place reverted back to Grace Taylor Hall.
FC1/2	Town Hall, Guildhall Street South Kent Community Church, Castle Hill Avenue	Folkestone Central ward Polling District FC1 requires voters to have to navigate busy roads including Forester's Way, if they live in the area immediately to the east of Foresters Way or south of Grace Hill. It is proposed that the FC1 polling district be split so that all electors living north of Cheriton Road, Foresters Way, Grace Hill (one side) and Dover Road vote at the Catholic Hall at Our Lady Help of Christians on Guildhall Street which also has access from Cheriton Road and was used for many years previously, whilst the remainder continue to vote at Folkestone Town Hall along with the addition of those electors in FC2 south of Bouverie Road West.	Town Hall - The Town Hall has always received good feedback from electors and staff. There has been no cause for concern raised with this polling place and a need for it to be moved. We take on board the difficulties in terrain with this particular area, however it is an infrastructure that can not be remedied by moving a polling place or introducing a new polling district. There will always be an incline for the electors that live in this area. As mentioned, if electors were not satisfied with the use of this venue or polling station set up, the elections team will have been made aware of this through elector feedback in 2015 when this polling place was introduced and the most recent evaluations that took place in May this year.
NDE3	Hawkinge Community Centre, Heron Forstal Avenue	North Downs East ward currently forces electors in NDE3 to cross Spitfire Way to vote at Hawkinge Community Centre, outside of the Polling District, which is used for other Polling Districts in North Downs East. It would be much more convenient, safer and more accessible for voters in NDE3 to vote at nearby Churchill School in the Polling District.	Hawkinge Community Centre - This venue is a suitable location for the residents of NDE3, we have had no comments from electors about this venue choice for the whole of the several years it has been combined. As stated earlier, closing a school at the cost of parents childcare is not preferable especially if we have not received any electorate feedback about the Community Centre being unsuitable in the first instance.
NR2	New Romney Bowls Club, Sussex Road	In New Romney ward, the recent change to the Bowls Club for electors in NR2 means that the location is considerably less accessible than the previous location of the Scout Hut which is the preferred option for the majority of local people that we have spoken with regarding the change. It is therefore requested that the change is made to revert back to the Scout Hut.	New Romney Bowls Club - This polling place has been relocated to the New Romney Methodist Church Hall in response to your feedback.

FC1 - 4	<p>Town Hall, Folkestone</p> <p>South Kent Community Church, Castle Hill Avenue</p> <p>Holy Trinity Church Hall, Sandgate Road</p> <p>Wards Hotel, Earls Avenue/Grimston Gardens</p>	<p>Here is our submission to the polling stations review. We have concentrated on Folkestone Central ward as councillors representing it. The current arrangement of polling stations is failing voters. For example people living in FC1 in the Brockman road area have to walk all the way to the town hall to vote when they live right by or much closer to the FC2 polling station. And people living in FC1 in the Phoenix Court (Clarence road) area have a longish walk over a difficult terrain, uphill, for those with mobility issues but who still want to exercise their right to vote in person at the town hall. The proposals from the Returning Officer to move people at the Brockman road end of FC1 into FC2 are sensible in this regard. However they cause their own issues which will be addressed shortly. By contrast currently in FC3 and FC4 you have two polling stations very close together meaning only a short, flat walk for people living in this part of the ward to either Wards hotel or Holy Trinity church.</p> <p>Our proposal is to create a 5th polling district for Central ward to cater better for people living in the Phoenix court (Clarence road) area. This will increase voter participation and demonstrate that the council cares about residents in this area who have been neglected for far too long. The area would fit this model neatly as a self contained part of the ward off Dover road - spanning Clarence road to Queens street.</p> <p>Our proposal is to create the 5th polling district (FC5) polling station at St Augustines church on Dover road which has an accessible downstairs room or at Sunflower house on Foord road. Both are closer and more accessible for these residents than the town hall.</p> <p>Coming back to the issue of the boundary change proposed by the Returning Officer between FC1 and FC2; this is sensible as far as FC1 goes. However it creates a problem for FC2. If you live in Kingsnorth Gardens for example you will no longer be able to vote at the church at the end of your road but have to go all the way to Wards hotel which is practically on the edge of the polling district. This will mean a loss of participation. Our proposal to address this is to close Wards hotel as a polling station and move it to Folkestone College which is more central. As Wards currently doubles as the polling station for Sandgate this would need to be addressed also and could be moved to the Holy Trinity polling station (FC3).</p>	<p>Many thanks for your detailed response on the Folkestone Central area. Creating a fifth polling station in this area was investigated to ascertain the benefits of how this proposal could work. As discussed in the above representation, the terrain of this polling area has an incline in the majority of roads present. By creating a 5th polling place to accompany this change will not mitigate these issues for voters, it will increase the cost of voting through additional rental charges and staffing; and also increase our carbon footprint from additional paperwork and sundries that are mandatory under electoral regulations. At the evaluation stage of this review electors were asked about the suitability of the current polling station portfolio. No negative feedback about distance or placement was received from the electorate to suggest this arrangement needs changing. Likewise, as mentioned previously the Town Hall and current polling district boundary has been used since 2015 without negative feedback.</p> <p>I understand the reasons for the comment regarding the changes to FC1/2 lines. For the last 4 years residents on Earls Avenue that have lived opposite the polling place have had to vote at another. The result of this change of lineage means that they will now have the opportunity to go across the road to vote. In densely populated areas, there will always be an unfortunate impact on electors regarding the placement of polling places and boundary lines, because there is no one size that fits or satisfies all. As a result the electors at Kingsnorth Gardens are allocated to a different polling place that is not across the road. Electoral Commission guidance states that we must ensure a polling place is situated in a polling district with an accessible polling station (a room) to allow electors to cast their vote. The movement of this boundary line does not deny this for electors. The movement of the boundary line is in keeping with this guidance whilst adhering to the limitations of the number of electors that should be assigned to a polling place.</p> <p>The current arrangements for the polling places of FC1/2 will not be changed as part of this review. The disruption of closing these current venues not only affects this polling district area but that of a neighbouring area also. This will inconvenience a larger proportion of electors that have not expressed a desire for anything to change with the current set up. As mentioned earlier, the arrangements for the densely populated areas of our district will always remain subjective. By moving to Folkestone College, you lessen the proximity between that of Wards Hotel and Trinity Church agreed, however that arrangement is equidistant to the proposal of the locations of Folkestone College and the Reformed Church.</p>
NDW9	<p>Lyminge Village Hall, Woodland Road</p>	<p>Lyminge Village Hall is currently used as the area's polling station but this does cause an issue for many residents as the Pre-School has to close for the day and residents have to find alternative childcare arrangements or take annual leave. Whilst the Pre-School have expressed a view that they do not want to upset long-standing residents who are used to this venue, the Lyminge Village Hall Management Committee feel that it is unfortunate for the residents left with childcare issues as a result, and would like to take this opportunity, along with the council, to see if an alternative option can be explored.</p> <p>As such, we would like to invite the review panel to consider whether Lyminge Scout Hut, of which the parish council are the landlords, could be used as an alternative. The Scout Hut is on the same ground as the Village Hall so the accessibility and car parking is the same. There are toilets but no kitchen in the building. It is fully accessible for disabled users or users with additional needs.</p>	<p>Thank you for your feedback. The Scout Hut is a suitable venue and after investigation was appointed as the alternative venue for NDW9 electors.</p>
EF1-3	<p>Wood Avenue Library, Folkestone</p> <p>Salvation Army, Folkestone</p> <p>St John's Church Hall, Folkestone</p>	<p>I wish to place on record my objections to the Acting Returning Officer's proposals for East Folkestone ward.</p> <p>The proposals are merely for numbers purposes and do not take into account the ease of voting for electors in the ward that currently exist. I would propose that the polling stations remain as they were and that EF3 is split into two new Polling Districts and that Wood Avenue Polling Station in made into a double polling station as there is more than enough room at the venue.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment.</p> <p>To clarify, the polling places/stations for this area are not changing.</p> <p>The distance between the polling stations is minimal and the movement of the administrative boundary lines is a minimal concession for the electorate of this area as well. By introducing a split and double polling station you are resolving the issue that pertains to one polling district (EF3). By moving the administrative lines for all it provides longevity in the electorate balance and reduces the number in EF1 which could breach the Electoral Commission guidance figure if the boundary lines were to remain the same.</p> <p>If polling district EF3 increases in electorate size after the administrative boundary move, the only option from that point on will be to introduce a split and a double polling station at Wood Avenue.</p>
NR2	<p>New Romney Bowls Club, New Romney</p>	<p>The current arrangements for voting at the Bowls Club in Sussex Road New Romney is not easily accessible and we support the alternative location at the Methodist Church High Street New Romney. The Bowls Club is located down a lane with no public footpath and inadequate lighting. The location is not widely known to many of the electorate and it is too far away for voters to meaningfully take part in elections. The Methodist Church is well known locally and is near a bus route on the High Street. There is plenty of parking nearby in a public car park and some on road parking nearby.</p>	<p>Many thanks for your comments. The New Romney Methodist Church Hall has been procured for future polling activities.</p>

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This Report will be made public on 8 October 2019



Report Number **A/19/13**

**To:** Council  
**Date:** 16 October 2019  
**Status:** Key Decision  
**Corporate Director:** Tim Madden, Customers, Support and Specialist Services

**SUBJECT:** Medium Term Financial Strategy 2020/21 to 2023/24

**SUMMARY:** The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) is the Council's key financial planning document. It puts the financial perspective on the council's Corporate Plan priorities, expressing the aims and objectives of various plans and strategies in financial terms over the four year period ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024. It covers both revenue and capital for the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account. Also included are the Council's reserves policies. The MTFS is a key element of sound corporate governance and financial management.

#### **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION:**

Council is asked to agree the recommendations set out below because:-

- (a) The MTFS is the council's key financial planning document.
- (b) The strategy defines the financial resources needed to deliver the council's corporate objectives and priorities and covers the financial implications of other key strategies.
- (c) The council needs to be able to carry out an early assessment of the financial implications of its approved policies and strategies and also external financial pressures facing the authority to ensure that it has robust budgeting and remains financially viable.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**Council is asked:**

1. To receive and note Report A/19/13.
2. To recommend that the Medium Term Financial Strategy, as appended to this report, is adopted.

## **1. THE MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (MTFS)**

- 1.1 The MTFS is the council's key financial planning tool and underpins the strategic approach to financial planning. It is a live document which needs to be periodically reviewed to reflect changing priorities and objectives. As the MTFS outlines the financial resources necessary to deliver strategic priorities, it should not be viewed in isolation but as part of the wider corporate process.
- 1.2 The council last reviewed the MTFS at its meeting of 31 October 2018. The attached MTFS has updated the document agreed at that point based on the work completed to date in preparation of the 2020/21 budget. The detailed budget strategy, which sets out the detailed preparation for the 2020/21 budget, will be presented to Cabinet at its meeting of 13th November 2019. The MTFS provides the medium term view of the financial position of the Council.
- 1.3 The attached document reflects a summarized version of the key financial elements facing the Council. It covers key areas of the council's finances and in particular updates the financial projections which are of importance at this stage of the process and links to the new corporate plan. The intention is, once the 2020/21 budget is completed, to refresh this document and to present the full version to Cabinet and Council which will take into account the final budget of the Council which will be agreed in February 2020.
- 1.4 As in recent years, local authority financial management is set against a background of uncertainty and the MTFS is subject to influence outside the authority's control. Nationally, there is continued uncertainty around the terms of any "Brexit" agreement and the growing importance of the recognition of the Climate Emergency at both a local and national level. The government has recently announced a 1 year spending review which, to a large extent, preserves the existing status quo as it has postponed the Fair Funding Review (FFR) until April 2021. This review includes key changes include the future funding arrangements for Business Rates, the end of the Revenue Support Grant and any structural or devolution proposals which will affect councils in different areas according to local circumstances. These will have a significant impact upon the financial profiling of the Council. The impact of decisions arising from Council policy could also affect the MTFS and therefore further iterations of the MTFS will reflect the financial implications of those decisions taken.
- 1.5 The current strategy has been developed in the context of this period of uncertainty. As such, assumptions have had to be made with regard to future income streams and assessments of future government grant. Although these are very much best estimates, they are taken in the context of the current economic climate and the uncertainties identified above. As such, a difficult but realistic forecast of income trends has been incorporated into this MTFS model.
- 1.6 There is long term pressure upon the finances of the Council and broadly the financial projection is in line with that in previous years. The key change is the Fair Funding Review (see above) which looks to make significant changes from April 2021 to Council funding nationally. This gives a level of uncertainty when looking at future projections and developing the underpinning assumptions for the financial forecast



- 1.7 The current MTFS forecasts a cumulative funding gap of £4.007 million over the lifetime of this MTFS. This is based on the assumption of a 2% annual council tax increase for the period of the MTFS. These will be subject to Political decisions at the appropriate time. The table below also shows the annual deficit over the period of the MTFS.

	2020/21 £000	2021/22 £000	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000
Deficit	357	1,198	743	1,707

- 1.8 The position set out above is in advance of the budget strategy which will be presented to Cabinet at its meeting of the 13<sup>th</sup> November. That will address the detailed measures to consider the deficit for 2020/21 in terms of identifying savings but also any known cost pressures. In light of the increasing pressures facing the council, all budget considerations will also look at the impact in future years and the sustainability of any options.
- 1.9 The MTFS covers the key aspects of the Council's future plans to address the projected deficit and also to place the Council on a sustainable and secure footing for the future. This includes the impact of the Council's current transformation programme, its use of flexible capital receipts to support that programme, the future approach to investment in the district to generate commercial income and the key drivers associated with the future position. This is an overarching view and detail will be found in subsequent reports to Cabinet and Council.
- 1.10 The MTFS is included at Annex A to this report and sets out the financial forecast for the Council.

## 2. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 2.1 A summary of the perceived risks follows:

Perceived risk	Seriousness	Likelihood	Preventative action
The Council does not remain up to date up to date with changes in legislation and other developments.	High	Low	Financial Services are keeping abreast of finance changes.  Assistant Directors and Chief Officers to keep up to date with / communicate changes to their areas of work.
Assumptions may be inaccurate	High	Medium	Budget monitoring process is up to date and a close eye is being kept on financial

			developments nationally. Assumptions are constantly reviewed and amended in light of information received.
Local Government Finance Settlement is worse than anticipated.	High	Medium	Realistic assumptions have already been included and any new information is being assessed as to its likely impact. This is subject to ongoing review especially given the changes in future funding arrangements.
MTFS becomes out of date	High	Low	This is reviewed annually through the budget process.
Significant financial shocks worsen the current position of the council	High	Medium	There is ongoing monitoring of the overall financial position and climate and by adopting the MTFS a longer term time horizon is maintained to anticipate and respond to uncertain events.

### 3. LEGAL/FINANCIAL AND OTHER CONTROLS/POLICY MATTERS

#### 3.1 Legal Officer's Comments (AK)

There are no legal implications arising out of this report.

#### 3.2 Finance Officer's Comments (TM)

There are no direct financial consequences arising from this report. However the strategy will influence the management of the council's resources ensuring that the focus is on the objectives and targets outlined in the corporate plan.

### 3.3 **Diversity and Equalities Implications (TM)**

There are no diversity and equality implications arising from this document. When the budget for 2020/21 is prepared, an Equalities Impact Assessment will be completed.

## 4. **CONTACT OFFICERS AND BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Councilors with any questions arising out of this report should contact the following officer prior to the meeting

*Tim Madden, Corporate Director, Customers, Support and Specialist Services*

*Tel: 01303 853371 E-mail: tim.madden@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk*

The following background documents have been relied upon in the preparation of this report:

No background documents have been used.

### **Appendices:**

Medium Term Financial Strategy 2020/21 – 2023/24

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# MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

## 2020/21 TO 2023/24

(Version produced in September 2019)

## **MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY**

### **Introduction**

This document sets out the key challenges and approach of the Council in relation to Folkestone and Hythe District Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy ('MTFS') for the next four years. The MTFS provides an integrated view of the whole of the council's finances and it also maps out the objectives to be secured, policies to be applied and risks to be managed over the period.

Since the introduction of austerity in 2010, local government has taken a disproportionately large share of the reductions in public expenditure as part of efforts to balance the nation's finances. During the financial year 2020/21, the Council will again receive no Revenue Support Grant. The current national political uncertainty surrounding the shape of Brexit and its continuing priority in the government's agenda suggests it is reasonable to assume the approach adopted by local authorities since 2010 will need to continue for the foreseeable future.

The original planning intention from government had been to undertake a 3 year Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) during 2019 to inform the 2020/21 budget and to implement the Fair Funding Review. The current national uncertainties have led to this being replaced by a 1 year CSR and a delay in significant financial reform to 2021/22. The result has been to a large extent a continuation of the funding status quo although at the time of writing a number of areas are due to go out to consultation. These include the future of New Homes Bonus and the limit needed for a council tax referendum. It is expected the significant reform will now follow from a longer term CSR due in 2020.

In response to this financial challenge, local government has innovated, streamlined services and increased productivity. The Government's plans to devolve more responsibilities to local government through the localisation of business rates which are now intended to take effect from April 2021 although detail as to whether there will be additional responsibilities are not yet clear. The devolution of business rates is intended to be fiscally neutral but the details of how this will work are currently being developed alongside the Fair Funding Review. This will bring both risks and opportunities for the council and will be implemented for the 2021/22 financial year.

The MTFS is the a critical document in setting out the council's approach to establishing a strong financial base to enable the council's policies and priorities to be delivered whilst ensuring the council's finances are sustainable. Within the document are some key issues which will need to be tackled. The annual budget setting process will set out the detailed actions required to meet these but will in all cases be consistent with the direction and objectives of the MTFS.

### **Folkestone and Hythe Council - the Current Position**

Folkestone and Hythe Council covers an area of 140 square miles and has a population of just over 100,000 people with approximately 48,200 dwellings in the district. The council has responsibility for a wide range of services including waste collection, planning, environmental enforcement, housing and homelessness, parking

and grounds maintenance. In 2019/20 it planned to spend approximately £17.4 million per annum net revenue expenditure on services.

## **The Council's Aspirations**

The vision and strategic objectives of the council are laid out in the Corporate Plan 2017 to 2020 and are shown below:

### **The vision for Folkestone and Hythe:**

#### **Investing for the next generation – delivering more of what matters**

As a council, to help achieve the vision for the district, our strategic objectives are:

- More Homes – Provide and enable the right amount, type and range of housing
- More Jobs – Work with businesses to provide jobs in a vibrant local economy
- Appearance Matters – Provide an attractive and clean environment
- Health Matters – Keep our communities healthy and safe
- Achieving stability – Achieve financial stability through a commercial and collaborative approach
- Delivering Excellence – Deliver excellent customer service through the commitment of staff and members

The council will have a particular emphasis on supporting the growth and sustainability of the economy to increase prosperity, to increase the number of houses in a sustainable manner over the longer term and on improving our effectiveness and efficiency through service design and digital delivery. By focusing on these key priorities, the council will be able to direct resources to achieving its key strategic objectives and to ensure sustainability in its activities.

As part of further strengthening the council's corporate position going forward, in June 2018, the Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Review Team undertook a review of the council's organisational leadership and governance; financial plans; capacity to deliver; and, focus on commercialisation, highlighting both areas of strength and areas for development in the years ahead.

The Council will continue to deliver a range of major projects and initiatives focusing on putting the community and our customers first, whilst ensuring our financial stability, including a Council-wide transformation programme alongside realising development

projects at sites including Biggins Wood, Princes Parade and ultimately, Otterpool Park – a garden town for the future.

### **Strategic Financial Objectives**

The MTFS covers all areas of the council spending and is underpinned by the strategic financial objectives as set out below:

- To maintain a balanced Budget such that expenditure matches income from Council Tax, fees and charges, and government and other grants and to maintain that position.
- To maximise the council's income by setting fees and charges, where it has the discretion and need to do so, at a level to ensure at least full cost recovery, promptly raising all monies due and minimising the levels of arrears and debt write offs.
- To ensure a long term sustainable view is taken of any investments and the appropriate risk analysis is provided in considering those.
- To set a rate for Council Tax which maximises income necessary for the council to deliver its strategic objectives but ensures that government referendum limits are not exceeded. The percentage increase will be reviewed annually.
- To ensure resources are aligned with the council's strategic vision and corporate priorities.
- To consider and take advantage of commercial opportunities as they arise to achieve a commercial return
- To maintain an adequate and prudent level of reserves.

The council faces a number of difficult decisions if it is to achieve its corporate priorities. Effective prioritisation and management of resources therefore continues to remain significant for the coming years.

Supporting the production of the delivery of sound financial planning for the Council are several Council wide documents and programmes including:

- The Corporate Plan 2017 - 20 the key objectives of which are set out above
- The Economic Development Strategy 2015 - 2020
- 
- The Medium Term Financial Strategy
- The HRA Business Plan
- The Council's Capital Strategy and Investment Strategy
- The investment in longer term strategic developments to secure the financial future of the council
- The development of the garden town at Otterpool Park with a long term financial benefit for the council and establishing sustainable communities for the future



- A sustainable and prudent reserves policy to underpin the financial resilience of the council
- The implementation of the Transformation programme, together with the Council's transformation partners, lease, to develop new operating model and deliver efficiencies whilst improving the customer experience

The range of documents and approaches provides the overall strategy of the council in delivering its future agenda and as a combination they are owned by the council as a whole. This MTFs brings together the financial strands of that approach in the context of the current financial climate.

## **Budget Process**

The MTFs represents an overarching view of the finances of the organisation. It is the document that takes a longer medium term look at the financial environment the Council is operating in and looks to anticipate future demands and pressures so the Council can take longer term decisions over its financial sustainability. In addition to this, there are a number of key documents which contribute to the overall financial health of the organisation. These are:

- The budget strategy. This is produced on an annual basis and sets out the strategy for setting and managing the budget for the following financial year. It is here the detailed decisions on expenditure are taken.
- The detailed revenue estimates. These are the operational detail for the following year's budget and form the basis of the following years budget monitoring and management.
- The capital programme. Which sets out the Council's capital expenditure plans over the medium term. This also informs the revenue budget of the costs and implications of any proposed developments.
- The Housing Revenue Account. This sets out the annual capital and revenue budget for the Council's housing stock and links to the 30 year business plan.
- The treasury management and investment strategy. This sets out the approach to managing the cash available to the Council and how to maximise its value to the Council. It also sets out the Council's investments and plans to achieve future returns over the longer term.
- Fees and Charges. This sets out a corporate view of the fees and charges which are levied by the Council for consideration each year.

Together these reports lead to the final council tax setting report and the agreement of the budget for the following year.

## **Financial Pressures and Projections**

The Council is part of the local government sector which has been one of the areas hardest hit by central government's deficit reduction plan. The spending review 2015 confirmed a transition away from direct central government grant and for Folkestone and Hythe the grant has consistently reduced from £4.901 million in 2013/14 to nil in

2020/21 and beyond. This is in line with the government’s intention to see more money raised locally to provide local services.

The government is currently undertaking a major review of the funding of local authorities known as the Fair Funding Review. This is a major change in the structure of local government finance which was originally intended to take effect from 2020/21. However, the one year spending review (CSR) previously referred to has delayed the implementation of this until 2021/22. Key elements of this include local business rates retention at 75%, a revised allocation of resources and new arrangements to replace the New Homes Bonus to reward those Councils which support home building. The detail behind much of this review, and therefore the impact upon Folkestone and Hythe, is unclear and does mean that the forecasts from 2021/22 onwards have a level of uncertainty which will need to be monitored as those details become available.

Acknowledging the future uncertainty, the forecasts set out below have recognised the current service levels plus any known and agreed variations. They are based on a continuation of those service levels and reasonable assumptions in relation to pay and price inflation and other known pressures. The forecast is based on a mid-range scenario and will need to be updated in line with government announcements and as new information becomes available. The current forecast is set out at Table 1 below:

Table 1 – Medium Term Financial Forecast

Financial Forecast	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Cumulative Deficit	357	1,198	743	1,707

The table identifies the ongoing pressure the Council is facing. A more detailed presentation is attached at Appendix 1. Some of the underlying assumptions drivers are set out in the paragraphs below:

### **Council Tax**

The Council Tax is one of the key funding streams for the council and accounts for approximately two thirds of the Council’s income. Although this is a significant funding source, it is subject to restrictions by central government. The Localism Act included a requirement to hold a local referendum if any Council Tax increase is deemed ‘excessive’ and this level is currently set at 3% by central government. However, as part of the spending review consultation, this limit is proposed to reduce to 2%. Final details will be confirmed when the Local Government Finance Settlement is announced.

The MTFFS has assumed an ongoing Council Tax increase of 2% per annum however this will be subject to a Political decision on an annual basis dependant on circumstances in that time.

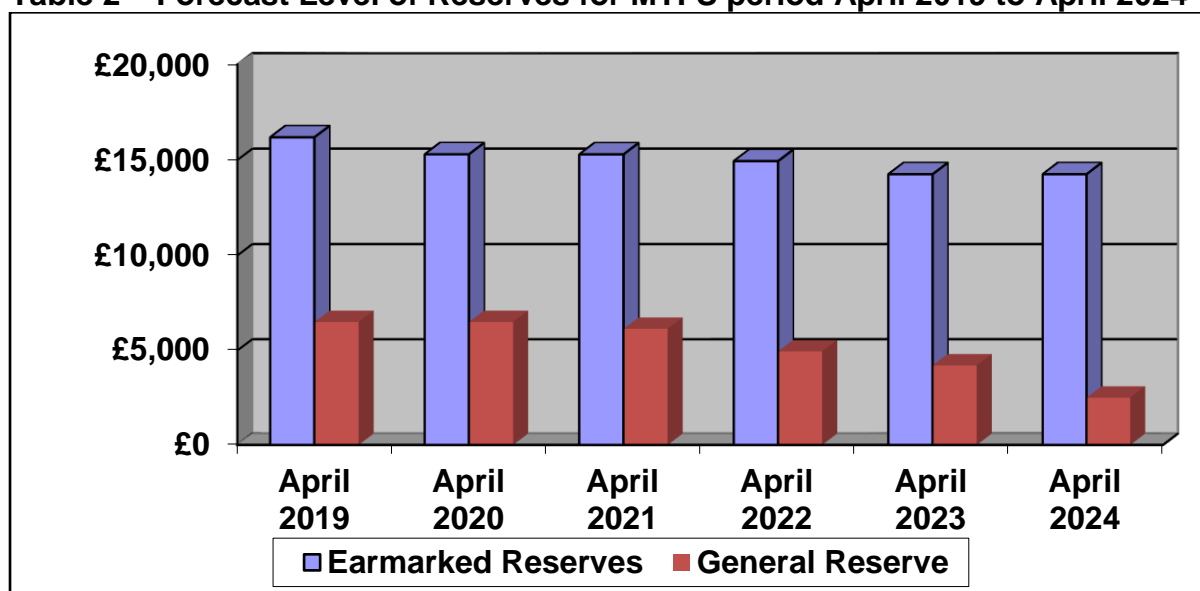
## Use of Reserves

The council has a level of reserves which provides it with some protection against the difficult economic times. The level of reserves currently held by Folkestone and Hythe gives it a secure financial base however it is important to have an appropriate balance between supporting the financial position of the Council and planning the delivery of services. The Council has identified specific uses for much of the reserves including setting aside sums to support the planning process for Otterpool Park and the use of reserves will be focussed on specific priorities.

**Appendix 2** to this report sets out the council's overall reserves policy and the context in which decisions are made as to the appropriate level of reserves.

The council's prudent approach to reserves means that a number of investments have been made using reserves to support initiatives such as Oportunitas and the Empty Homes programme. Table 2 below shows the forecast level of reserves for the period of this strategy.

**Table 2 – Forecast Level of Reserves for MTF period April 2019 to April 2024**



## New Homes Bonus (NHB)

The New Homes Bonus was introduced in 2011/12 and has become an important funding source for councils. It is designed by Central Government to incentivise new house building. Local authorities are rewarded with a financial bonus, equal to the national average Council Tax on each additional property built and paid for the following six years after the occupation as a non-ring fenced grant. This bonus is currently split in two tier areas 80% to the District Council and 20% to the County Council and includes where properties which have been empty for more than six months are brought back into use. There is also an enhancement for affordable homes.

The future of the New Homes Bonus was reviewed for the 2017/18 financial year with the length of time it is paid reduced from 6 years to 5 years (for the 2017/18 award)

and to 4 years from 2018/19 onwards. A “baseline” of 0.4% growth was also established before any bonus was paid. These funds were used to support those authorities with adult social care responsibilities.

The government has set out its intention to end New Homes Bonus from the Fair Funding Review in 2021. The intention is to replace this mechanism with a different means of incentivising and rewarding housing growth. The detail of this is unclear and poses a risk to the future funding of the Council. At present, Folkestone and Hythe utilises a proportion of its existing New Homes Bonus to support services with the remaining amounts being set aside within a reserve to fund the additional cost of services over future years. This reserve will deplete by 2022/23 if the current arrangements come to an end with no compensating alternative.

### **Business Rates (Non Domestic Rates)**

From 2013, the government introduced a scheme through which local authorities would be able to retain a proportion of any business rates growth above a set baseline. The purpose was to give local authorities a financial incentive to encourage and foster economic growth within their area and to work collaboratively with other authorities and business organisations to achieve that growth. Whilst this scheme has been broadly welcomed by local authorities, there are concerns over the potential volatility of this income stream with the level of appeals and that even a small variation in the overall revenue generated can carry a significant financial impact. The government is currently undertaking a review of how business rates operate and has stated its intentions to achieve 75% localisation of business rates from 2021.

With regard to the MTFs, the Council has welcomed the emphasis on economic growth but has been cautious about building this into the base budget. Part of this is due to the impact of appeals and the volatility of the income which makes it more complex to forecast. Where possible, any surpluses have been placed within a reserve until there is a degree of certainty before they can be used which may well not be until the following financial year. This is prudent management to manage the natural fluctuations of the business cycle.

The Council is also part of the successful Kent and Medway Business Rates Pool which is able to retain 100% of business rates for 2018/19 only. This is of financial benefit to the Council but the Council has set this benefit aside in reserves for future use pending future clarification as to future arrangements.

The role of business rates in the funding of the Council will be affected by the Fair Funding Review which will be introduced from April 2021. The full impact of this will only become clear during 2020/21 as proposals are developed. This adds a further element of uncertainty to the projected position and suggests caution is needed in any future projections.

### **Climate Emergency**

At its meeting of 24 July 2019, the Council approved a motion recognising that there is a climate emergency. The full motion can be found here:

<http://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/g4581/Public%20minutes%2024th-Jul-2019%2019.00%20Council.pdf?T=11>

As a result of this, the Council has agreed to commit to a number of activities which will reduce its carbon footprint and which will move towards a carbon neutral district. The financial implications of adopting the motion are not as yet sufficiently developed to include within the MTFs. As the budget cycle progresses, it is to be expected the financial impact of this will become clearer and can be incorporated into the financial plans of the council.

### **Future Strategies**

The current forecast means that there will need to be significant work undertaken to address the forecast deficit. Set out below are some of the key areas to be developed through the 2020/21 budget strategy and beyond to address those financial challenges.

**Transformation:** The Council has undertaken a major review of its operations and is working to radically change how the Council operates and its relationship with its customers. This is based on a complete review of its operation and involves a significant investment in technology. The programme was approved at Council on the 28th February 2018 and is expected to produce ongoing savings for the Council. To date £600,000 per annum has been identified. There are 2 more phases of the programme remaining however the aim is to implement continuous service improvement philosophy to maintain the development of the Council.

**Strategic Investments:** The Council is looking to take advantage of its position with a number of developments to produce financial returns whilst at the same time supporting the delivery of housing and regenerating parts of the district. The largest development is that of the proposed new town at Otterpool Park and options are being explored to generate future revenue and capital streams. A full financial model is currently being developed by PWC to look at the long term potential returns from the development. Other areas include the developments at Varne, the Bigginwood site which are expected to produce financial returns for the Council in the long run. The Council has invested in the Connect 38 office block in Ashford to produce an immediate financial return to support the finances of the Council. The proposed development at Princes Parade will, if approved, also generate a revenue benefit due to the replacement of the current ageing leisure facility.

**Commercial Opportunities:** The Council will seek to take advantage of commercial opportunities wherever possible to cover costs and to review our fees and charges in order to maximise benefit in line with corporate objectives.

A **financial review** of previous years' out turn and our base budget to ensure maximum value is obtained from those resources already allocated – effectively to ensure financial discipline and good housekeeping are maintained. This is a fundamental annual review of our current operations in order to maximise the use of our current resources.

Using **reserves** in a sustainable and prudent manner to support the council's strategies and priorities. These are informed by the reserves strategies at Appendix 2 and it is recognised that these can only be used on a "one off" basis. However, they can play an important part in supporting initiatives or investments which can produce benefits in the future.

Using opportunities as they arise including government initiatives or incentives. In particular, the Council will seek to participate in the Business Rates Pooling scheme to maximise the financial benefit from this area. It also will seek to utilise Flexible Capital Receipts where possible to fund the transformation programme and to take pressure off the revenue account. All these are managed on an ongoing basis.

To maintain the council's financial standing it is important that it continues its proactive approach to financial planning and ensures that the savings plans are deliverable and that any investments are focussed on the financial health of the authority.

### **Housing Revenue Account**

The council has a separate account, the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) which supports local authority housing throughout the district. The HRA is now required to produce a 30 year business plan which demonstrates the affordability and sustainability of the management and investment in the council's housing stock. This full plan was reviewed and updated by the council's Cabinet at its meeting of 13 March 2019 for the period 2019 – 2049. This report can be found at the following link.

<http://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/s29834/Cabinet%20HRA%20BPlan%20Report%2013%20March%202019.pdf>

At the time of writing this strategy, there is a consultation and review into the future of East Kent Housing, the Council's shared ALMO with 3 other local authorities. Depending on the outcome of this review, the business plan will need to be reviewed to take into account any recommendations of this review.

### **Medium Term Capital Programme**

The Medium Term Capital Programme sets out how capital resources are used to achieve the council's vision and corporate priorities. Funding for capital projects is limited and where possible external funding is used to supplement the programme. The council has an affordable Capital Programme and this is assessed against business cases taking into account future resources to support projects. A strategy has been adopted which will look to utilise capital receipts to support investments for the council. Demand for financing potential new projects continues to outweigh the funding available and developments such as Princes Parade and Otterpool Park will need to be prioritised as part of the programme.

The main strategic objectives of the Capital Programme, which provide the underlying principles for financial planning, can be summarised as follows:

- To maintain a five year rolling Capital Programme which remains within the approved affordable, sustainable and prudential limits.
- To ensure capital resources are aligned with the council's strategic vision and corporate priorities by ensuring all schemes are prioritised according to the council's prioritisation methodology.
- Prudential Borrowing to be undertaken to support the councils priorities where there is a business case for it to do so and there are sufficient monies to meet in full the implications of capital expenditure, both borrowing and running costs.
- To maximise available resources by actively seeking external funding to support council priorities and disposing of surplus assets.
- To use internal resources alongside external resources where appropriate to support the capital programme and minimise any borrowing costs.

The council forecasts its capital programme over a 5 year period and the latest position is set out in the report to council on the 20<sup>th</sup> February 2019. This can be found at:

<http://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=122&MIId=4475>

## **Risks and Sensitivities**

In considering the future projections, it is recognised that there are unknowns which could impact upon the existing forecasts. The MTFS should be seen not as a static document but rather one that is constantly evolving as the environment around it changes. Some of the key risks and sensitivities which need to be monitored are mentioned below.

- Economic conditions. The impact of the economic cycle will need to be considered particularly in relation to business growth, inflationary pressures and interest rate movements. The impact of changes and any impact on public finances will need to be fully evaluated on the financial model.
- Impact of "Brexit". Whilst the government has underwritten EU funding agreed prior to the 2016 Autumn Statement, the impact of the UK's departure from the EU is one that is unclear and may impact both politically and economically.
- Government Finance Legislation. There are key pieces of government legislation which will impact upon the future financial position of the council. In particular the impact of the localisation of business rates and any additional responsibilities will need to be fully evaluated as well as the government's current Fair Funding Review of local government finance which is due to be introduced in 2021.
- Other Government Legislation. There are a significant number of political initiatives particularly in relation to localisation and the role of local government.

These will need to be assessed for their relevance to Folkestone and Hythe and the impact on future finances.

- Buoyancy of income streams. These will be sensitive to changes in consumer confidence and the economy so will need to be closely monitored.

## **Conclusion**

The MTFs represents the collation of the key financial documents which looks to forecast the likely financial position the council will be facing over the next 4 years. It is the critical financial planning tool for the council and will provide the overall steer for the ongoing discussions throughout the annual budget cycles in dealing with the current economic climate.



## Appendix 1 - MTFS Forecast

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
	£	£	£	£	£
Heads of Service					
CD Strategy	616,140	594,140	594,140	594,140	594,140
Governance, Law and Regulation	5,107,600	5,222,600	6,372,600	6,357,600	6,497,600
Human Resources	597,040	597,040	597,040	597,040	597,040
Finance, customers and support services	6,358,120	6,332,120	6,332,120	6,332,120	6,332,120
Strategy, performance and comms	2,141,020	2,031,020	2,031,020	2,031,020	2,031,020
Strategic Development	925,840	447,545	447,545	447,545	447,545
Economic Development	588,040	328,040	328,040	328,040	328,040
Planning	915,200	675,200	675,200	675,200	675,200
Enviromental and corporate assets	2,544,140	2,123,140	1,663,140	1,064,140	281,140
Changes not attributed to services	0	145,550	294,739	447,657	604,399
Recharges to non GF accounts	-1,980,500	-1,900,500	-1,850,500	-1,800,500	-1,750,500
Unallocated net employee costs	-340,000	311,260	659,545	1,042,103	1,701,901
<b>Head of Service net expenditure</b>	<b>17,472,640</b>	<b>16,907,155</b>	<b>18,144,629</b>	<b>18,116,106</b>	<b>18,339,644</b>
Internal drainage board levies	461,830	471,067	480,488	490,098	499,900
Interest payable and similar charges	431,000	431,000	431,000	431,000	431,000
Interest and investment income	-848,000	-776,000	-776,000	-776,000	-776,000
New Homes Bonus grant	-1,542,740	-1,195,675	-830,167	-493,272	0
Other non-service related grants	-1,815,160	-1,815,608	-1,851,920	-1,888,959	-1,926,738
	14,159,570	14,021,939	15,598,030	15,878,973	16,567,806
Net transfers to/from reserves	-889,754	-5,625	-351,703	-687,098	0
Minimum revenue provision adjust.	373,370	373,370	373,370	373,370	373,370
Financing of fixed assets	138,000	138,000	138,000	138,000	138,000
	13,781,186	14,527,684	15,757,697	15,703,245	17,079,176
Transfer to/from Collection Fund	0	0	0	0	0
Net business rates income	-3,495,939	-3,576,117	-3,647,639	-3,720,592	-3,795,004
	10,285,247	10,951,567	12,110,057	11,982,653	13,284,172
Council Tax Requirement	-10,285,247	-10,593,891	-10,911,723	-11,239,100	-11,576,311
Surplus/deficit to General Reserve	0	357,676	1,198,334	743,553	1,707,861

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## **Appendix 2 – Reserves Policy**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The establishment, monitoring and review of the levels of reserves and balances are an important element of the council's financial management systems and financial standing.

The Chief Finance Officer (S151 Officer) is required by law to formally report to the Council his/her opinion on the adequacy of the council's reserves. Irrespective of this, a well-managed authority is clear about the reserves it needs now and in the future to support its service aspirations, whilst at the same time delivering value for money within a climate of significant resource pressure and economic/social risk.

This policy does not cover non-distributable reserves required to support financial accounting transactions e.g. the Revaluation Reserve, Capital Adjustment Account and Pension Reserve. (Non-distributable reserves are those that cannot be used for revenue or capital purposes.)

Reserves can be held for four reasons:

- A working balance to help cushion the impact of uneven cash flows and avoid unnecessary temporary borrowing.
- A contingency to cushion the impact of unexpected events or emergencies.
- A means of building up funds to meet known or predicted liabilities.
- A means of setting aside sums for future identified uses and / or investments

Such reserves are generally referred to as earmarked reserves.

### **WHAT ARE RESERVES?**

There is no clear definition of reserves even though reference is made to reserves in legislation. The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) states "amounts set aside for purposes falling outside the definition of provisions should be considered as reserves." Provisions are required for any liabilities of uncertain timing or amount that have been incurred.

Generally there are two types of reserves, those that are available to meet revenue or in some cases capital expenditure (Usable) and those that are not available to finance revenue or capital expenditure (Unusable). Useable reserves result from events that have allowed monies to be set aside, surpluses or decisions causing anticipated expenditure to have been postponed or cancelled. They can be spent or earmarked at the discretion of the council.

The council must manage its reserves in accordance with its strategic longer term planning process.

## **LEVEL OF RESERVES**

As mentioned above the council's reserves can be regarded as general and earmarked reserves. In addition, the council maintains a Usable Capital Receipt reserve.

As part of its MTFS, the council also adopts some fundamental principles as to how reserves are used:

- The reserves must only be used to fund one off expenditure.
- Any recurring item may only be funded from reserves if plans are in place to replenish the reserve within 12 months.
- Any unplanned revenue income receipt should be put in reserves pending any future decisions as to its use.
- Reserves should be maintained at a sustainable level to ensure an adequate working balance is maintained.
- Reserves may be used as part of a planned process to balance the budget in order to avoid short term responses which may not be in the best interests of the council.

The council has prudently built up its reserves in recent years to be able to provide for its priorities when required. The level of reserves has, in recent years, reduced in line with planned activities such as investments in Oportunitas and Otterpool and their use for other investment or in lieu of borrowing. This strategy means that reserves are currently at an adequate rather than excessive level however it is recognised this use is of a one off nature to secure future income streams for the council.

The use of reserves is a critical part of the council's budget strategy and the level of reserves is kept under ongoing review. Any future calls on the reserves are considered by looking at the whole position and ensuring minimum reserve levels are adhered to. It is vital that the future needs of the authority such as through the VET reserve are continually refreshed and updated and that earmarked reserves are applied appropriately.

## **ASSESSING THE ADEQUACY OF RESERVES**

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) state that the Institute 'does not accept a case for introducing a statutory minimum level of reserves, even in exceptional circumstances'. It does however confirm that authorities should make their own judgment on such matters, taking into account all relevant local circumstances on the advice of their Chief Finance Officer.

The Local Government Act 2003 requires the Chief Finance Officer to formally report on the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves.

To arrive at assessing the adequacy of reserves a number of issues need to be addressed:

- What are the strategic, operational and financial risks facing the authority?
- Does the authority comply with the requirements to ensure that there is an adequate system of internal control?
- Are the key financial assumptions in formulating the council's budget robust and reasonable?
- Does the council have adequate financial management and cash flow arrangements?

In addition there are a number of questions an authority can ask to demonstrate that it is managing its affairs satisfactorily, such as:

- What is the track record of the council in its budgetary and financial management?
- What is the council's record regarding Council Tax collection?
- What is the council's capacity to manage in-year budgetary pressures?
- What is the strength of the council's financial reporting?
- What are the procedures to deal with under and over spends during and at the year end?
- In the case of earmarked reserves, will there be expected calls on the reserves that prompted the setting up of the reserves in the first place?

Finally, there is a need to look at the assumptions made in setting the budget, not just for the coming year but also under the MTFS.

The budgetary assumptions cover:

- Inflation and interest rate projections.
- Estimate and timings of capital receipts.
- Treatment of planned efficiency savings.
- Financial risks involved in major funding arrangements.

The assessment of the adequacy of the reserves and the robustness of the estimates are contained within the Chief Finance Officers report to council as part of the budget setting process based upon Section 25 of the Local Government Act of 2003.

### **Allocation of Reserves**

There are to be no withdrawals from reserves, unless of a one-off nature, or if they are part of a planned usage which will lead to the elimination of any deficit and the setting of a balanced budget. It is not normal practice to withdraw from the General Fund Reserve to balance the annual budget, unless plans are in place to provide for an ongoing balanced budget.

## Budget Assumptions

These are set out in detail within the Budget Strategy and a sensitivity analysis has been undertaken regarding the financial forecasts for the next five years. The council is responsible for a number of demand led budgets which are difficult to control.

The council has identified its strategic financial risks and has carried out an assessment of that risk. Based on this analysis, the following levels are considered appropriate:

## Required Levels of Reserves

	Minimum Level £m
General Fund	2.5
Housing Revenue Account	2.0
Capital Receipts	0.5

The minimum level of the General Reserve balance has been arrived at after assessing the strategic financial risks faced by the council.

The table above shows that a minimum General Reserve balance of £2.5 million should be maintained until the 2023/24 financial year. This level will be monitored and should be addressed as savings proposals are developed and implemented over the term of this plan. The HRA minimum balance has been set at £2.0 million as part of the preparation of the HRA business plan.

## OPPORTUNITY COST OF HOLDING RESERVES

Having set minimum levels, the opportunity cost of holding reserves needs to be considered. All balances are used to either reduce temporary borrowing or are invested subject to other cash flows. Therefore in measuring any opportunity cost of holding these reserves, consideration needs to be taken of the interest saving. The opportunity cost of holding the reserves is therefore a judgment whether the 'worth' of expenditure foregone is more than the income generated. Given the current economic climate it is a balanced judgement as to whether to invest / spend reserves or to hold these. As part of the MTFs and budget setting, an assessment of the adequacy of reserves and the associated risks will be made annually.

## REPORTING FRAMEWORK

The level of reserves is continually monitored and a full review is undertaken each year.