



Minutes

Folkestone & Hythe District and Parish Councils' Joint Committee

Held at:	Remote Meeting
Date	Thursday, 15 July 2021
Present	Councillors Graham Allison, Michael Boor, Laszlo Dudas, Frank Hobbs, Mrs Jennifer Hollingsbee, Terence Mullard and Paul Thomas
Apologies for Absence	Councillors Neil Matthews
Officers Present:	Andy Blaszkowicz (Director of Housing and Operations), Kate Clark (Case Officer - Committee Services), Alastair Clifford (Operations Lead Specialist), Gavin Edwards (Performance and Improvement Specialist) and John Holman (Assistant Director of Housing)
Others Present:	None

1. **Appointment of chairman**

Proposed by Councillor Mrs Jenny Hollingsbee
Seconded by Councillor Paul Thomas

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Frank Hobbs be appointed Chairman for the meeting.

2. **Chairman's Welcome and Introduction**

The Chairman introduced and welcomed new members to the meeting, who were appointed at KALC's last meeting.

3. **Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

4. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2021 were agreed. Councillor Frank Hobbs signature will be added confirming approval.

5. Grounds Maintenance Presentation

A presentation was given to members which is attached to these minutes.

Some members raised individual concerns about grass cutting and weed killing in specific areas, the Operations Lead Specialist advised members were welcome to email directly about these.

Royal Military Canal had suffered from two invasive species this year, one being Floating Pennywort. Members were advised that the Environmental Agency had been contacted as both species are proving prolific this year. There is a three man team working on the canal everyday, however it is proving difficult to clear. Weevils are to be introduced from August 2021.

Officers remarked that this year had been particularly challenging for the Grounds Maintenance team, however improvements had been seen within the district. Although some verges are left to encourage bees and other insects, members were reminded that some verges are KCC assets and in that respect may only receive and be paid for six cuts per year by the District Council.

Councillor Boor asked if advice could be given to Lympne Parish Council about their playing field. The Operations Lead Specialist advised Councillor Boor is welcome to email directly for further information.

Members thanked officers for the presentation and recognised the hard work of the GM team.

6. The Council Housing Landlord Service

The Assistant Director for Housing gave a presentation on the services and performance of Council Housing Landlord service since 1 October 2020. The slides included all aspects of the service which most importantly feeds into 'Our Vision'. The presentation is attached to these minutes.

(Councillor Mrs Jenny Hollingsbee left the meeting and did not return).

Members raised the following points:

- Government guidelines over the Grenfell Tower fire. Impacts within Folkestone & Hythe District? There are no high rises within the district, although it was mentioned that there is a high proportion of sheltered housing schemes for vulnerable tenants.
- Abandoned properties – Empty Homes Scheme. FHDC work with KCC on an initiative called 'No Use Empty'. Initially attempts are made to liaise with the Landlord of the empty property and loans are available to help with renovations. The next step would be to involve the Private Sector Housing team who can take action with an improvement notice

and then subsequent planning enforcement if required. Members asked for statistics to be provided on empty homes within the district.

- A need for more social housing in villages to encourage young people to stay in the area? New builds encouraged and the possibility of housing associations choosing to build in a particular area.
- Social housing at the Otterpool Park development? 23% affordable allocation across the proposed development with a third of this into council stock. This will be a good contribution to the ambitious target of 1000 council builds over 10 years from 2025-2035.
- Aim to mix social housing and private ownership housing which would reduce the stigma around social housing as well as promoting social cohesion.
- Would revenue funding and capital receipts cover required maintenance work? Additional capital allowance/borrowing available, however once the stock condition survey is finalised, a clearer picture would be available.
- Would there be a need for help, ie housing association to manage stock? The Assistant Director stated that there would be no need, although the council housing service had been delivered through the ALMO, now back in-house means improved control.
- Retrofitting to meet the Carbon Neutral agenda . Nationally this had it had been calculated that it would cost approximately £35K to retrofit a three bedroomed house. Over the whole stock FHDC a figure of £68M was an indication of possible spend.
- Carbon Neutrality. Looking at ground source/air source heat pumps; effective insulation; sedum roofing; looking at news way of building/construction. As part of this agenda, Government grants may become available and considering future technology to ensure efficiency and minimum costs. Decarbonisation of the National Grid will also play a part.

Members thanked officers for the presentation and useful update to the council housing service.

7. **Any Other Business**

The Chairman was disappointed to note that only six parishes were represented at the last Planning Forum. He advised it was a very interesting and informative meeting and well worth attending. It was noted the next planning forum is provisionally planned for the end of October. Further details will be provided to all parishes.

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Grounds Maintenance

The Team

- 1 lead specialist
- 3 senior specialists
- 3 supervisors
- 2 tractor drivers
- 29 senior gardeners and gardeners
- 2 toilet cleaners
- 1.3 pump crew
- 2 workshop fitters
- 1 estates officer (Otterpool Park)
- 4 arborists

- Up to 24 seasonal staff
- 2 business support officers
- 1 burials officer
- Depots – Oxenden Road, Hawkinge, New Romney, Twiss Road, Kingsnorth & East Cliff

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Operations

Parks & Open Spaces fortnightly cuts

Highways 3-4 week cuts*

Rural Routes 3-4 week cuts*

Royal Military Canal management plan

The Coastal Park management plan

The Marsh 3-4 week cuts*

Tractor Drivers support for other teams (grass cutting/watering)

Cemeteries 3-4 week cuts + burials

Pumps preventative and reactive maintenance

Workshop preventative and reactive maintenance

Otterpool Park managed for ecology and development

Sports managed appropriately for sports conditions

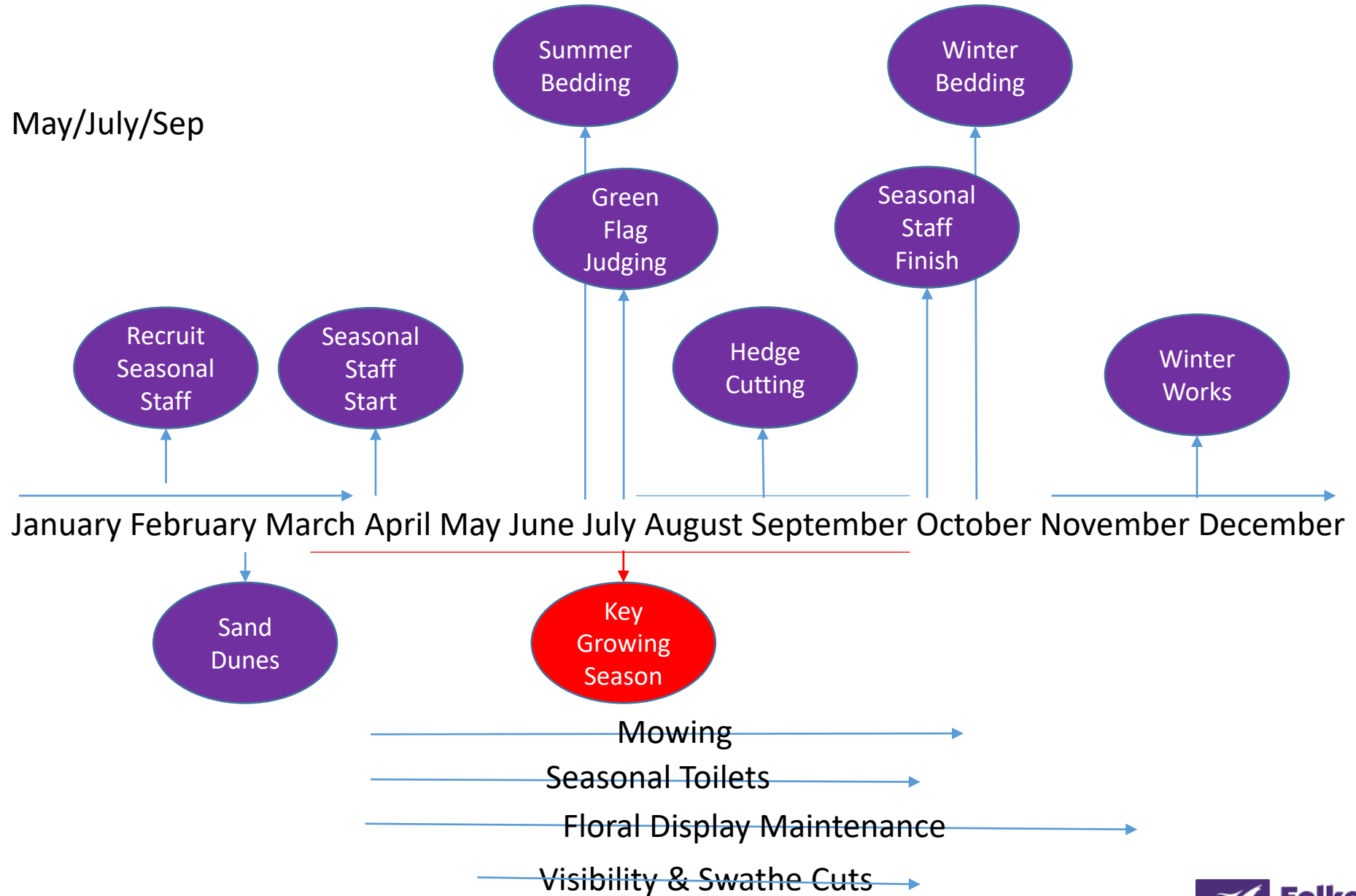
Toilet Cleaning

Tree Team preventative and reactive maintenance

Housing 3-4 week cuts

Kingsnorth Gardens management plan

Park Keeping litter picking, bin emptying



Green Flag Parks

<https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/community/park-information>

- The Lower Leas Coastal Park
- Royal Military Canal
- Radnor Park
- **Kingsnorth Gardens**

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“The Green Flag Award scheme recognises and rewards well managed parks and green spaces, setting the benchmark standard for the management of recreational outdoor spaces across the United Kingdom and around the world.”



Contracts

- FHDC maintains open space on behalf of KCC, Hythe Town Council and FTC.
- FHDC has no control over the KCC, FTC and HTC contracts.
- KCC pay FHDC to undertake verge cutting for a 35 weeks period
This equated to a cut every 5.8 weeks. FHDC subsidises KCC cuts (up to 12) to preserve the appearance of the District.

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Nature Reserves

- The Folkestone Warren (SSSI) has been managed by the White Cliffs Countryside Partnership since 1989.



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- Greatstone Dunes, Greatstone Beach & The Warren Country Park (SSSI, RAMSAR, SAC) have been managed by the Romney Marsh Countryside Partnership since 2006.



Green Waste and Composting

- 95% of in - house produced green waste is processed (mulched and composted) in FHDC Hawkinge depot.
- In place since 2010, this reduces our need to buy compost or mulch from external companies, reducing transport and waste costs.
- It reduces the need to water newly planted shrubs or bushes by providing a protective barrier.
- The use of mulch reduces the use of pesticides used to stop weeds competing with the new plants.
- In the last year localised composting units have been installed in key areas such as East Cliff and Kingsnorth Gardens. This reduces the need to move the green waste to Hawkinge to be composted.



Biodiversity

There are many locations within the FHDC with a high biodiversity rating.

- **The Royal Military Canal** has been managed to increase the species count for the last 15 years. A biological survey will be carried out this season to show the results of this management programme. The GM teams have been closely working with the BumbleBee and Butterfly and Moths Trusts and spent many volunteering hours planting moths, butterfly and bumble bee friendly habitat.
- **The Warren and East Cliff**, a nature reserve, is rich in biodiversity too, however detailed findings are held by White Cliffs Countryside project.
- **The Coastal Park** has its own wildlife zone, meadow and bee border.



Peat

- The GM department never use raw peat, when purchasing potted plants and other nursery stock including bedding plants, nurseries are asked to supply a certificate stating peat sustainability.
- 60% of summer 2020 bedding plants have been purchased in peat free growing media.
- Tree stock purchased from our preferred supplier has been peat free since autumn 2012.
- Aim to be 100% peat free by 2025.

Seasonal Bedding

- All seasonal bedding is grown in reusable trays, that are sent back to the supplier for reuse.
- All perennial seasonal plants are replanted in various herbaceous borders across the district.



Sedum Roofs

- Sedum matting has been trialled at the Coastal Park on the new operational depot roof. Its benefits include;
- Provision of important microclimate for insects.
- Reduction of the surface run off.
- Significant reduction of heat and the need for air conditioning & provision of insulation in winter (known as green roof insulation).
- Improvement of air quality due to the filtering mechanism of the plants and substrate.
- Installation is very simple - the sedums are grown into felt matting and form a thick blanket of plants that can be rolled out like grass turf on pre-prepared flat roof.
- Watering requirements are extremely low – sedums thrive in dry soils and hate being waterlogged.
- Using Sedum Roofing on the tiered beach chalet roofs as part of the refurbishment program.



Waste management in parks and open spaces

- Our main park are popular spots for family picnics and gatherings.
- Visitors are encouraged to either take their litter home or to use the tin & plastic recycling points and general waste points.
- Big Belly compactor bins (solar powered) - installed 2 years ago. All bins are connected to the selected smart phones and send notifications informing the park keepers it is time they are emptied resulting in less emptying trips.
- So far 190,444 litres of litter have been collected from Big Belly bins (62,573 liters in July).
- 3 double compounds (general waste & recyclables) have been installed to tackle excessive waste in the coastal park.



Tree Stock

- FHDC has 3873 individual trees found within its parks and open spaces.
- There are a further 22201 trees contained within groups and woodlands such as those on the Leas Escarpment and the Royal Military Canal.
- In 2019 GM planted in excess of 1000 new trees.
- Volunteer planting on the Canal (420 tree sapling supplied by the Woodlands Trust will be planted last year)
- Future planting - it is our intention to reduce the number of trees planted in our parks and open spaces over the coming years in order to ensure their establishment.
- We have limited resource available for the watering and aftercare of our newly planted trees and as a result we often end up losing trees due to drought.
- In order to overcome this issue, we will be planting between thirty to forty trees so that we can ensure all of them receive appropriate aftercare and hopefully end up with net gain over the next ten years or so.



Grass Cutting Reductions

- FHDC cut approximately 2million linear metres of grass every 3-4 weeks.
- Plan BEE – working with KCC to support pollinators, we helped identify as part of the original trail 70km on the Marsh to be moved to a reduced mowing regime. Hugely successful this now being moved elsewhere.
- Bee Orchids have been located in sections of urban grass cutting. Grass cutting of this area was ceased immediately and KCC Highways removed this section from the UG maintenance agreement.
- Further 4 sites identified on Folkestone this year with KCC and FTC to be moved to reduced program. A site list to review this winter has been sent through for Hythe
- FHDC's own sites are being reviewed, now being managed, such as wild flow Radnor Park, The RMC etc.

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Equipment

- GM has invested in electric equipment where appropriate;
 - 1 long reach hedge cutter
 - 7 hedge cutter
 - 4 drills
 - 5 chainsaws
 - 2 pole saws



The 5 year capital investment plan is due to be rewritten this year, this will ensure environmentally friendly options are adequately investigated.

Any questions?

Joint Parishes Meeting

15 July 2021

Areas to discuss

- How we got here (brief history)
- East Kent Homes (super) ALMO
- Regulator of Social Housing
- Voluntary Undertaking
- New Housing Service
 - Size
 - Turn over
 - Staffing
- How the service works
- Tenants
- Performance
- Look forward

Our vision:

to create a truly excellent service - one that is digitally enabled, easy to do business with, and where tenants (customers) are at the heart of everything we do

History

- EKH - ALMO 17,000 homes, FHDC, DDC, TDC CCC
- Regulatory Notice served September 2019:
 - FHDC has breached the Home Standard;
 - Potential for serious detriment to FHDC tenants, specifically:
 - Fire Safety
 - Lift Safety
 - Water Safety (Legionella)
 - Gas safety
- Voluntary undertaking to address issues

Regulatory Notice September 2019

Registered Provider

Folkestone & Hythe District Council (Folkestone & Hythe DC)
[00CH]

Regulatory Finding

The regulator has concluded that:

- a) Folkestone & Hythe DC has breached the Home standard; and
- b) As a consequence of this breach, there was the potential for serious detriment to Folkestone & Hythe DC tenants.

The regulator will work with Folkestone & Hythe DC as it seeks to remedy this breach and will continue to consider what further action should be taken, including whether to exercise any of its powers.

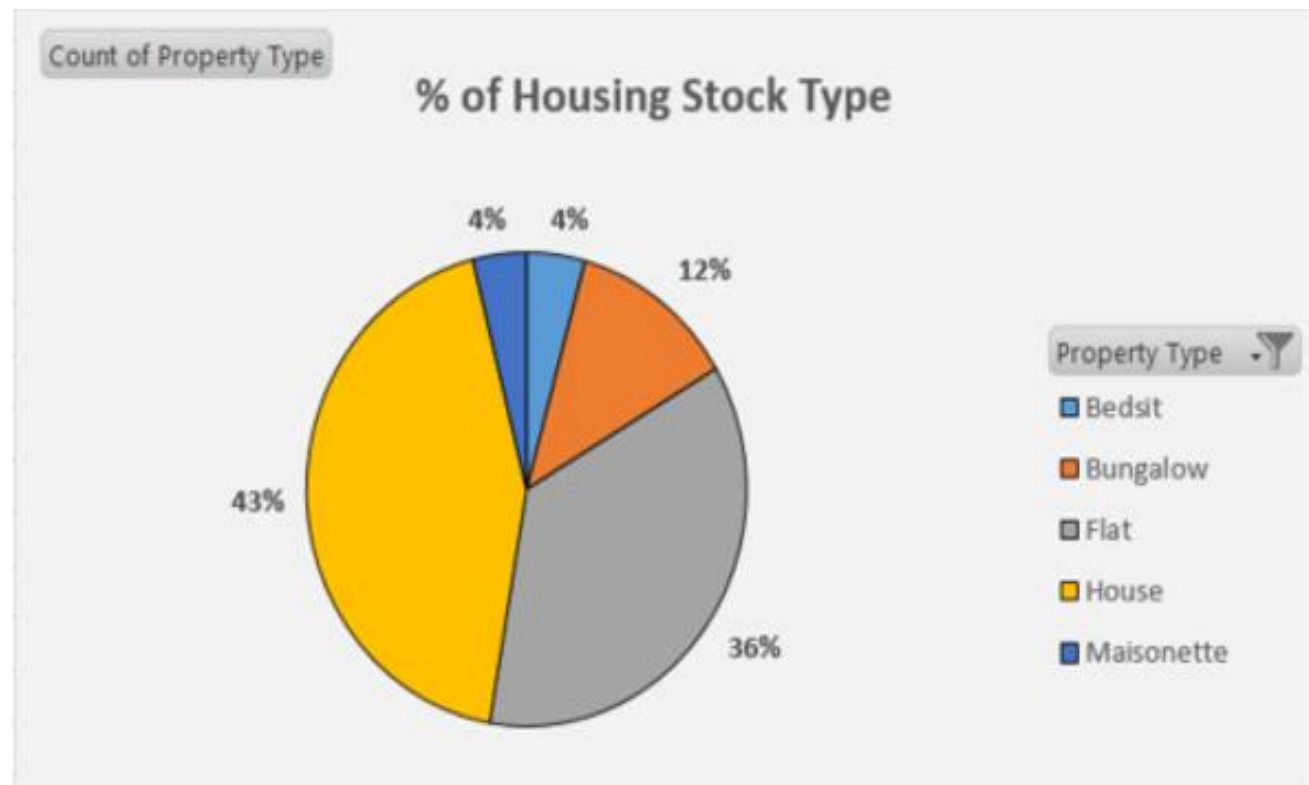
The Case

As a local authority, Folkestone & Hythe DC is required to comply with the consumer standards. Folkestone & Hythe DC's landlord services, including repairs and maintenance and statutory compliance are provided by its arms-length management organisation, East Kent Housing (EKH). The regulator has received information from third parties and through a self-referral made by the council to the regulator which demonstrates that Folkestone & Hythe DC, through EKH, has failed to meet statutory health and safety requirements across a range of areas namely gas safety, fire safety, electrical safety, water safety and lift safety.

Established the new Housing Landlord Service 1 October 2020

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- Manages all aspect of housing
- Council housing 3400 homes - now in house
- Private sector
- Temporary accommodation
- Rough sleeping
- Strategic housing
- 98 staff
- Income from rent £16m
- Revenue Spend £9.9m
- Capital Spend £15.8m
- Carry out 7400 repairs annually
- Let 197 homes annually



Housing Areas

How the service works

- Operate neighbourhood management
- Housing officer - all housing issues
- Surveyor - all repairs
- Issues reported to central call point
- Major works across the district
- Compliance H&S across the district
- New build across the district
- Sheltered schemes individual manager
- All work carried out by contractors
- Published service standards
- Published the major works programme
- Published estate walk about programme
- Published our performance



Focus since October 2020

- Recruiting & building the team
- Improving tenant safety
- Improving performance
- Improve data integrity & reporting
- Working with the Regulator to move out of regulation
- Transfer the computer system
- New ways of working
- New policies
- Building tenant and council confidence in the new service
- Embedding the housing service within the Council
- Delivering the capital programme
- Procure stock survey
- Understanding tenant perception
- All under Covid, remote working



2020 STAR Survey Results

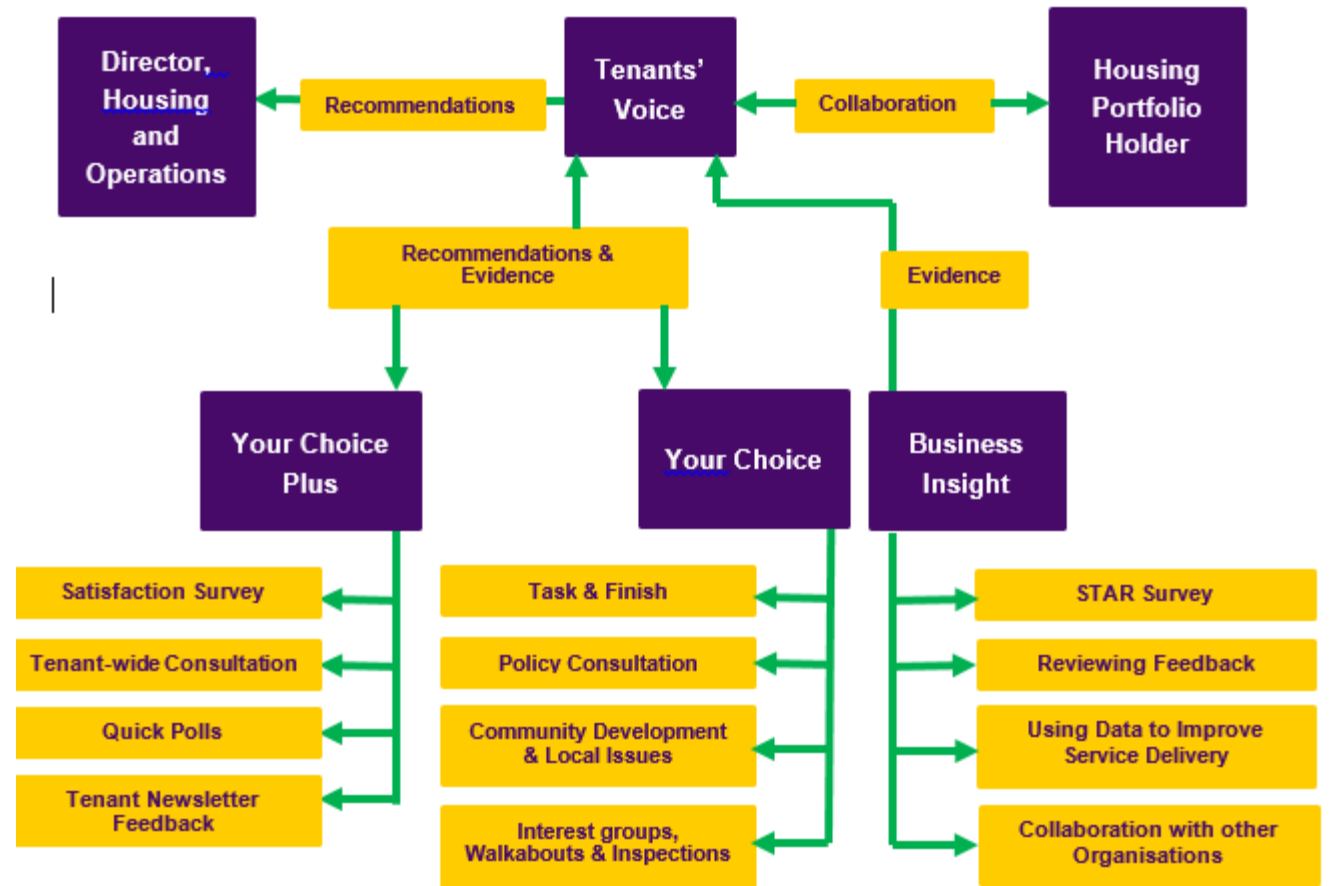
Folkestone and Hythe District Council

December 2020



Tenants

- Hearing the tenants voice - Grenfell
- Strategic Board
- Number of tenant groups
- Purpose - hold the landlord to account
 - Scrutinising performance
 - What we do
 - How we do it
 - Links into the Council



Performance

- Performance is good
- Reported to:
 - Members
 - Tenants
 - Published on line
 - Monitored weekly
 - Reported monthly

Housing KPI Report

Version: 1
Date: 11/06/2021



This report contains all the housing KPIs for HMT, Members and the Website, and is an extract from the service area reporting in the monthly performance booklet.

Month-on-month performance is shown against the cumulative year-to-date position. **Traffic Light Icon** indicates whether we are on target for the month; **Perf. Trend Arrow** indicates direction of performance from previous month

Key:

- On target
- With 5% of target
- Performance improving
- Performance is the same
- Off target
- No target (data only)
- Performance worsening
- Data is missing.

Key Performance Scorecard:

Landlord Compliance	Result	Target	RAG
Percentage of properties with a valid LGSR	100%	100%	
Percentage of blocks with a valid Fire Risk Assessment	100%	100%	
Percentage of blocks with a valid Legionella Risk Assessment	100%	100%	
Percentage blocks with valid (in date) Electrical Certificate (EICR)	97.93%	100%	
Percentage of domestic properties with a valid (in date) EICR	54.54%	100% (May 2022)	
Percentage of properties Asbestos compliant (Communal)	100%	100%	
Passenger lift services completed on communal properties	100%	100%	
Repairs and Maintenance	Result	Target	RAG
Percentage of all responsive repairs completed on time	98.22%	98%	
Percentage of repair appointment kept	96.74%	98%	
Percentage of capital programme spent	16.66%	95%	

Housing Operations	Result	Target	RAG
Average re-let time all properties excluding MW	30.68	23 days	
Total current tenant arrears as % of projected income	2.14%	2.3%	
Strategic Housing	Result	Target	RAG
Number of Homelessness Approaches	133	-	
Approaches closed as 'homelessness prevented'	2.26%	4%	
Average number of rough sleepers in the period	3.5	6	
Satisfaction	Result	Target	RAG
Satisfaction with most recent repair	(92.11%)	98%	
Satisfaction with ASB case handling	-	New	New
Satisfaction with complaints handling	-	New	New

Forward look - all linked to the vision

- Move out of regulation
- Stock Survey -100%
- Asset management strategy
 - Intelligence about the stock
- New Housing Business Plan
- New computer system
- Increased fire protection work
- Net zero carbon agenda - Retrofit - £68m
 - No gas boilers after 2025 (new build)
- Increased investment in the housing stock
- New contracts to maintain and improve homes
- Deliver more homes
 - Modern building methods
- Digital agenda
- Lots to do

[1].

Our vision:

to create a truly excellent service - one that is digitally enabled, easy to do business with, and where tenants (customers) are at the heart of everything we do

Web site links to information referred to in this presentation.

Tenancy Standards

<https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/council-tenancy/standards>

Neighbourhood inspections

<https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/neighbourhood-inspections>

Performance

<https://folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/housing-service-performance>

Questions?

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