



# Agenda

Meeting: **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**  
Date: **25 April 2023**  
Time: **7.00 pm**  
Place: **Council Chamber - Civic Centre, Folkestone**

To: **All members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

The committee will consider the matters, listed below, at the date, time and place shown above. The meeting will be open to the press and public.

Members of the committee, who wish to have information on any matter arising on the agenda, which is not fully covered in these papers, are 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.

Please note there are 37 seats available for members of the public, which will be reserved for those speaking or participating at the meeting. The remaining available seats will be given on a first come, first served basis.

1. **Apologies for Absence**
2. **Declarations of Interest (Pages 3 - 4)**

Members of the committee should declare any interests which fall under the following categories:

- a) disclosable pecuniary interests (DPI);
- b) other significant interests (OSI);
- c) voluntary announcements of other interests.

3. **Minutes (Pages 5 - 10)**

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Email: [committee@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk](mailto:committee@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk) or download from our  
website: [www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk](http://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)

To consider and approve, as a correct record, the minutes of the meeting held on 14 February 2023.

4. **Minutes of the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Sub Committee (Pages 11 - 12)**

To consider and approve, as a correct record, the minutes of the meeting held on 7 March 2023.

5. **Southern Water Presentation - Storm Water Overflows (Pages 13 - 22)**

This report presents background information to support the committee in consideration of matters that will be covered in a presentation on storm water overflows.

Southern Water representatives John Mealey, Stakeholder Engagement Manager and Jon Yates, Delivery Lead for Clean Rivers and Sea Task Force, will provide the committee with an update on the practical solutions being implemented to reduce the frequency of storm overflows.

6. **Update on the Council's Climate Change and Ecological Emergency Work (Pages 23 - 38)**

This report summarises the council's work on climate change for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. It follows the main points set out in the climate emergency declaration that was unanimously agreed by full Council on 24 July 2019.

7. **Overview and Scrutiny work programme 2023-24 (Pages 39 - 52)**

This report sets out a proposed work programme for Overview and Scrutiny work for the municipal year 2023/24.

8. **Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2022-23 (Pages 53 - 64)**

This report sets out the work that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Finance and Performance Sub-Committee have completed during 2022/23.

## **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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# Minutes

## Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Held at:	Council Chamber - Civic Centre, Folkestone.
Date	Tuesday, 14 February 2023.
Present	Councillors Miss Susan Carey, Peter Gane, Michelle Keutenius (Chairman), Connor McConville, Terence Mullard, Patricia Rolfe, Rebecca Shoob (Vice-Chair) and John Wing.
Apologies for Absence	None.
Officers Present:	Simon Baxter (Chief Officer - Development), Paul Birken (Refugee Resettlement Coordinator), Andy Blaszkowicz (Director of Housing and Operations), James Clapson (Case Officer (Committee)), Ewan Green (Director of Place), Amandeep Khroud (Assistant Director), Jyotsna Leney (Health, Wellbeing and Partnership Senior Specialist), Susan Priest (Chief Executive), Andrew Rush (Chief Officer Place & Regulatory Services), Charlotte Spendley (Director of Corporate Services) and Lucy Vidler (Development Specialist).
Others Present:	Councillor Mrs Jennifer Hollingsbee, Councillor Jim Martin (Folkestone & Hythe District Council), Councillor David Monk (Folkestone & Hythe District Council), Councillor Georgina Treloar (Folkestone & Hythe District Council) and Councillor Lesley Whybrow (Leader of the Green Party).

### 1. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

### 2. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting dated 17 January 2023 were agreed and signed by the Chairman.

### 3. **Minutes of the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Sub Committee**

The minutes of the meeting dated 10 January 2023 were agreed and signed by the Chairman.

#### 4. **Princes Parade - Motion from Council**

Mrs Priest introduced the report, she noted that the request to consider the matter had come from a motion agreed at Full Council on 30 September 2022. The report detailed how the expenditure on the Princes Parade project had reached an estimated £4-5 million in November 2022 and reflected on the lessons learnt from the process. Thanks were offered to the officers involved in preparing the report.

The Chair permitted representations to be made by Councillor J Martin, Councillor Whybrow and Councillor Treloar as Ward Councillors for Hythe.

During these representations the following points were noted:

- The cost of the project would exceed £5 million if the cost of officer's time was included in the calculation.
- There seemed to have been a low appreciation of the risks involved in the project, and it seemed that the project was politically driven onwards despite mounting evidence that it was flawed.
- The site was extremely complex, and it would be very difficult to accurately predict what contaminants were on site. It took ten years for the project team to fully appreciate the cost of mitigating the contaminants on site, and to recognise that the cost of the mitigation would overwhelm the benefits of the projects.
- The motion was brought to Council because it was important to establish if the project could have been stopped at an earlier stage.
- The Cabinet and councillors were not always kept fully apprised of changes to the project specification, its risks, and costs.
- On occasion the Council seemed to ignore the professional advice of the consultants.
- The Committee should make the following recommendations:
  - That Cabinet should receive quarterly updates on all major projects, this should include full disclosure of risks, problems, and budget monitoring.
  - Cabinet agendas should be shorter to allow Members more time to fully consider the items.
  - All Members should be given the opportunity to undertake regular risk training courses.
  - The risk register should be considered by the Audit and Governance Committee on a quarterly basis; with additional background information to provide context to the report.
- If the true cost of the project had been understood at the beginning, then it was unlikely that the project would have gone ahead, and a sports facility could have been built elsewhere.
- There was a sense within the community that communication with residents should have been more timely, open, and transparent.

- The closure of the footbridge and erection of hording was a burden on the residents of Hythe that could potentially have been avoided.
- There was concern that the ecology in the area had possibly suffered unnecessarily.
- Residents should be applauded for exercising their democratic right in taking the matter to a judicial review. The cost of a judicial review should be factored into the project plan for this type of project; it would make up a very small proportion of the overall costs.

Councillor Monk made the following points as Leader of the Council:

- The reflections in the report were good.
- The judicial review caused a significant delay to the project that added to the cost.
- The impact of Covid 19 and the invasion of Ukraine had increased inflation and borrowing costs. Advice was received that the increasing costs could not be absorbed any longer.
- Full Council agreed to pause the project but continue with the planning application as so much work had gone towards it.
- The Council received an offer from a private developer to take over the project. A report would be considered at the Cabinet meeting on 22 February 2023.

The following points were noted as the Committee made their comments:

- The Scrutiny Committee initially looked at three potential sites for a leisure centre, and at the time a site at Martello Lakes was identified as the preferred option.
- It would be good to have more information about the rationale behind the decision in January 2022 to increase the budget by £16million.
- Extensive ground investigations should have been completed at the beginning of the project before the commitment of substantial amounts of money.
- Members should be fully informed of all project developments because they were the custodians of the taxpayers money.
- The development at Princes Parade was intended to create a destination out of the area.
- As time passed the costs of the project increased; time had been the biggest challenge of the project, compounded by the impact of recent rises in inflation and borrowing costs.
- There needed to be regular updates to residents. There were some vocal residents were against the project, but there were also a number of residents who supported it.
- The Council should look to outsource these kinds of projects early on in the process, this may have avoided some of the delays faced by the Council.
- At the outset of all projects, consideration should be given to whether or not the Council would be best placed to deliver the project. The Council was bound by strict procedural rules that could sometimes add bureaucracy and delays.

- Members could be given longer to read agendas when they contained complex matters for consideration.

Proposed by Councillor Keutenius  
Seconded by Councillor Gane, and

RESOLVED:

That the Committee:

- Note the lessons learnt that are detailed in the report;
- Recommend the following:
  1. That Cabinet receive project updates on a quarterly basis, including costs and risk analysis. Cabinet could see the detailed risk register and possibly the medium-term financial strategy.
  2. That risk training should be made available for all Members.
  3. Communication with Members and residents about projects was improved.
  4. The size of Cabinet agendas should be reduced, even if this led to the need for more meetings.
  5. The Audit and Governance Committee should consider a more detailed risk register on a quarterly basis.

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

Councillors Treloar, Whybrow and J Martin left meeting.

5. **Update on the work carried out on the Homes for Ukraine Scheme and current status of the scheme.**

Ms Leney and Mr Birken provided the Committee with a presentation on the work that had taken place over the last year to support Ukrainian refugees within the District. The presentation also detailed the priorities for 2023 and provided information about the Local Authority Housing Fund. For reference the presentation can be viewed in the agenda pack.

After the presentation, the following points were noted:

- Ukrainians looking to enter the rental market may find it difficult to afford the rent, however they could be eligible for housing benefit assistance.
- Congratulations should be offered to Mr Birken for his excellent work over the year.
- The Ukrainian people were very proud and had a strong culture. Most wanted to return to their country as soon as possible however that was too dangerous at the moment.
- Ukrainian school lessons had begun at Sunflower House, this brought Ukrainian children together to work through the Ukrainian curriculum.
- In future, if the housing purchased through the Local Authority Housing Fund to home Ukrainian and Afghan was no longer required, then the properties would become part of the Council's general housing stock.
- There was educational support for those up to 30 years old.



- Kent County Council (KCC) managed the safeguarding function for the District. Refugees were met by KCC officers and Mr Birken within the first few days of arrival, and they were given contact details that could be used anytime of the day or night.

6. **Review of self-contained holiday lets and waste collection for holiday let businesses**

Mr Green provided the Committee with a presentation on holiday lets. There was a motion agreed by Council on 24 November 2021 (Item 46), to review the impact of self-contained holiday lets on the local housing rental market; and a motion agreed by Council on 30 November 2022 (Item 47), to look at waste collection arrangements for self-contained holiday lets including the option of setting up a commercial waste operation. The presentation has been attached to the minutes for reference.

During consideration of the item the following points were noted:

- Holiday lets support tourism, which is a key part of the district economy, and the sector encouraged tourism all year round.
- Commercial waste collection should remain a private sector led service. The Council did not have the capacity to deliver a commercial waste service.
- It was unfair that a house could label itself as a self-contained holiday let and avoid paying council tax, while also receiving business rates relief. Government should change this loophole in the legislation. It appeared that some holiday lets may have used the Council's domestic waste collection service instead of paying for a private waste collection service.
- The cost to small businesses for the removal of waste was very high, the Council should look to offer a cheaper service that would benefit small businesses and generate income.
- KCC would be doing a trial to allow small businesses to dispose of recyclable waste at household waste and recycling centres.
- The impact of holiday lets on the community needed to be monitored, it was a sector that would continue to grow as staycations become more popular.
- All small businesses within the district would be contacted and reminded of their requirement to have commercial waste collection arrangements in place. This would take place following the business rate eligibility change for holiday lets in April 2023.
- The Committee would receive a summary of the outcome of the contact exercise with small businesses.

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# Minutes

## Finance and Performance Scrutiny Sub-Committee

Held at:	Council Chamber - Civic Centre, Folkestone.
Date	Tuesday, 7 March 2023.
Present	Councillors Peter Gane, Connor McConville (Chairman), Patricia Rolfe and Rebecca Shoob.
Apologies for Absence	None.
Officers Present:	James Clapson (Case Officer (Committee)), Gavin Edwards (Performance and Improvement Specialist), Jonathan Hicks (Performance Specialist (Business Insight Manager)), Lydia Morrison (Interim S151 Officer) and Charlotte Spendley (Director of Corporate Services).
Others Present:	Councillor David Monk.

### 1. **Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

### 2. **2022-23 Quarter 3 Performance Report**

Mr Edwards introduced the report that provided an update on the Council's performance for the third quarter of the year covering 1 October 2022 to 31 December 2022. The report enabled the Council to assess progress against the approved key performance indicators arising from the Council's new Corporate Action Plan. Mr Edwards and Mr Hicks then responded to questions from the Sub-Committee.

During consideration of the item the following points were noted:

- Members were concerned that there were still delays in reporting data breaches to the Information Commissioner's Officer.
- For the week commencing 27 February 2023 there were five homeless individuals.
- The potential for falling leaves to impact on the Council's ability to keep the streets free of litter could have been foreseen.
- The Economic Development team should engage with more businesses to get a wider range of input into the policy framework.

- It was good that the program to install electric charging points in car parks was almost complete.
- The clearance of fly tipping within a day of reporting was very good.
- The low-cost home ownership target was expected to be met by the end of the year.
- It would be good if the Council aimed to determine all planning applications within the statutory period; however, a KPI must be attainable, and the time taken to determine an application was not always within the Council's control.
- Currently recycling rates included garden waste when they were reported. It would be more meaningful to report the rates without garden waste, as this figure would not be influenced by changes in seasonal garden waste collections.
- The Council used bed and breakfast accommodation to help house rough sleepers temporarily. Currently there were five households in B&B accommodation.
- Members offered thanks for the report, the inclusion of background information provided context and answered many of the questions that would have been raised at the Sub-Committee meeting.

Proposed by Councillor McConville  
Seconded by Councillor Gane; and

**RESOLVED:**

That the Sub-Committee note report C/22/96 and the performance information for 2022-23 quarter three in appendix 1.

That the Sub-Committee recommend Cabinet requests a briefing note to give assurance that improvements are taking place regarding the reporting of data breaches. The briefing note should detail the type of training offered, which departments would receive the training, and whether the training would be given by an internal or external provider.

(Voting figures: 4 for, 0 against, 0 abstentions).

This Report will be made public on 17 April 2023

Report Number **OS/22/13**

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**To:** Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
**Date:** 25 April 2023  
**Status:** Non-Key decision  
**Responsible Officer:** Ewan Green, Director of Place

**SUBJECT:** SOUTHERN WATER PRESENTATION - STORM WATER OVERFLOWS

**SUMMARY:**

This report presents background information to support the committee in consideration of matters that will be covered in a presentation on storm water overflows.

**REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The matter has been referred to this committee in response to a Motion from Councillor Whybrow at the Council meeting of 28 September 2022.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. To receive and note report OS/22/13.
2. To consider the report and presentation from Southern Water.
3. To make recommendations to the Council as appropriate.

## 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 At the Council meeting of 28 September 2022 the following Motion was put forward by Cllr Whybrow:

“ From Councillor Whybrow (Green Group)

Residents are deeply concerned about water quality and the impact of regular wastewater discharge, which includes untreated sewage, into our local rivers and seas and the impact on wildlife and on human health.

Releasing sewage into our seas and rivers is no longer an emergency-only situation occurring as a result of severe storms, but an everyday occurrence even in ‘normal’ rainfall, and that we are in a situation of cumulative overload on the sewage and wastewater system.

According to the Rivers Trust in 2021 there were 20 spills in our district over a period of 164 hours.

Whilst there are long term commitments, there are no plans in place which will address the immediate unacceptable situation either locally by Southern Water or by national government.

Both the local and national planning policy requires a robust approach to both water quality and pollution and a recent legal opinion from the Environmental Law Firm confirms the need to consider cumulative impact. Yet planning consultation documents show that it has not been the practice of council planners to ask Water Companies to report on cumulative impact i.e. whether or not development may lead to any potential increase in ‘emergency’ discharge into rivers and seas.

- 1.2 Following debate Council agreed the following actions:

1. Recognise this Council’s obligation to protect its rivers and seas, including from the cumulative impacts of pollution.
2. That Southern Water be invited to attend a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in order to find practical ways to address the issue, and that the matter be referred to an appropriate working group, whether that be a new group or existing one.
3. Seek to better understand the cumulative impact of wastewater discharge including untreated sewage on our local rivers, wildlife and the health of our residents.

4. To take a lead on addressing this issue, working constructively with other agencies.
5. Ask Southern Water, from this date onwards, in its planning consultation responses for major development, to clarify which treatment works will be managing the sewage; whether it has the information available to assess the impact on the number or duration of sewage discharges into local rivers or seas, and if it does have this information to share it (noting that this can only be requested not required).
6. Request that planning officers, from now onwards, include in all reports relating to major development a specific section on the impact on watercourses including the potential for the development to affect sewage outflow into watercourses (i.e. cumulative impact), or to flag if this information is not fully available, so that this information (or the lack of it) is clearly and transparently set out”.

Further details of the item can accessed via:

<https://service.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=122&MId=5142&Ver=4>

- 1.3 In response to action 2. above, representatives from Southern Water have agreed to attend this meeting to provide Members with a presentation on solutions being implemented to reduce the frequency of storm water overflows and wastewater discharges.
- 1.4 Southern Water describe storm water overflows as operating when during heavy rain, local sewer networks can struggle to cope with the amount of water entering pipes and storage tanks. When they fill up, they use pressure relief valves built into the network – known as storm overflows – to stop homes and businesses from flooding. These overflows release excess water through outfalls into rivers and the sea. Storm overflows are part of the design of the sewers and are regulated by the Environment Agency. They are used in areas where the sewers were built to carry both wastewater from homes and businesses, and rainwater from roofs, gardens and roads.

Further background can be found in the Appendix or via the following link:

<https://www.southernwater.co.uk/our-performance/storm-overflows/what-are-storm-overflows>

## **2. SCOPE OF THE SCRUTINY REVIEW**

- 2.1 The use of storm water overflows and combined storm water sewage releases have predominantly impacted on the Folkestone and Hythe coastal areas and are a source of real concern for the Council, Town and Parish Councils and residents across the district. This is in addition to ongoing concerns related to water quality and the state of the current wastewater infrastructure across the district and wider East Kent area. Key

amongst concerns is the increasing frequency of such storm water releases, the potential public and environmental impact these may have and ensuring that there is no damage to our district's reputation as a high-quality coastal destination for residents, visitors and businesses.

2.2 It is suggested that the scope of the scrutiny review includes the following:

- What is the scale of the issue affecting Folkestone & Hythe district (e.g. how often are storm water overflows typically used?).
- What assurances can be given that storm water overflows are safe and leave no lasting impact for residents or the environment?
- Has Southern Water recorded any data on economic or environmental impacts of storm water overflow usage?
- What plans in the short, medium and long terms are in place to improve infrastructure in order to negate the use of storm water overflows?
- Ineffectiveness of communication about storm water events (and bathing water quality issues generally) is a concern raised by the Council, Town and Parish Councils and residents - what can be done to improve communication?

### **3. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES**

3.1 There are no direct risk management implications to note.

### **4. LEGAL/FINANCIAL AND OTHER POLICY MATTERS**

#### **4.1 Legal Officer's Comments (NM)**

There are no direct legal implications to note.

#### **4.2 Finance Officer's Comments (RH)**

There are no direct finance implications to note.

#### **4.3 Diversities and Equalities Implications (GE)**

There are no direct diversity and equality implications to note.

#### **4.4 Climate Change Implications (EG)**

There are no direct climate change implications to note.

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



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

Ewan Green, Director of Place

Telephone: 07783 659864

Email: [ewan.green@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk](mailto:ewan.green@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)

The following background documents have been relied upon in the preparation of this report: None

### **Appendix - Southern Water Storm Water Overflow FAQ's**

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# Storm overflows

What they are, why they happen, how they affect bathing water and what we're doing about them.



from Southern Water

## How big is Southern Water's wastewater network?

We operate 367 wastewater treatment sites, more than 3,000 pumping stations and a network of almost 40,000km of sewers.

## We pay for our wastewater to be treated as part of our water/wastewater bill, why aren't you doing just that?

Every day we treat nearly 1,400 million litres of wastewater, to some of the highest regulatory standards in the world. 95% of all wastewater is returned to the environment safely, maintaining river levels and providing a stable ecological environment for aquatic life. 5% is released, usually during heavy or prolonged rainfall and is diluted storm water. We are working hard to reduce that figure.

## Why don't you start investing to improve your assets and stop paying your shareholders instead?

We are, we're investing £2bn between 2020 and 2025, with most going to improving our environmental performance and our assets. We haven't paid our shareholders any dividends since 2017. Instead, all profits are being invested back in the business.

## What is a combined sewer?

This is a system that contains both foul water from homes or businesses and rainwater runoff, treated together at a wastewater treatment site. Foul water from homes or businesses includes water from toilets, sinks and washing machines. Rainwater runoff comes from roofs, driveways and roads. There are over 100,000km of combined sewers still in existence in the UK, which is around a quarter of the entire sewer network.

## What are storm overflows?

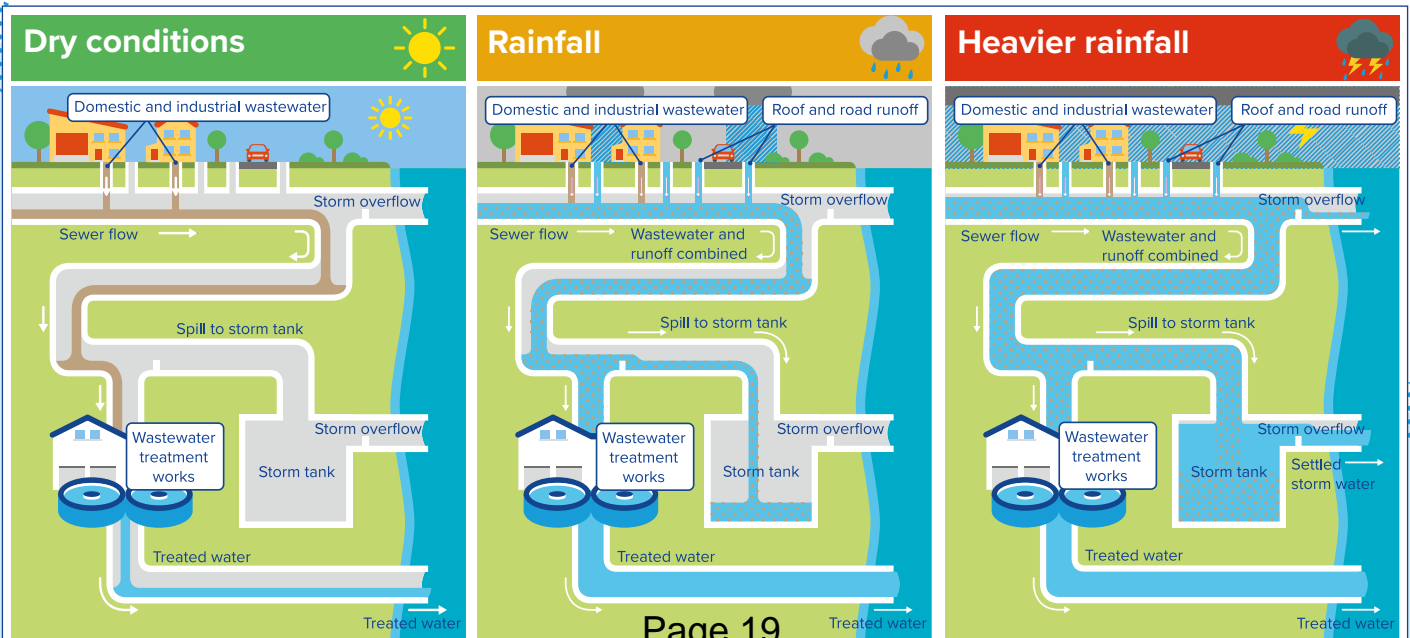
During heavy rain, local sewer networks can struggle to cope with the amount of water entering pipes and storage tanks. When they fill up, we use storm overflows to stop homes, businesses and roads from flooding. These overflows release excess water through outfalls into rivers and the sea. Storm overflows are part of the network's design and are regulated by the Environment Agency. They are used in areas

## Did you know?

The UK sewer network is largely derived from the Victorians, as are many networks across the world. This is therefore a global challenge.



## How sewers are impacted by different types of weather



where the sewers were built to carry both foul water from homes and businesses, and rainwater from roofs, driveways and roads.

### How many storm overflows are there?

There are around 15,000 storm overflows in England and approximately 1,000 in our region. How often they operate and release to the environment varies widely, ranging from infrequent (less than 10 spills per annum) to frequent (greater than 100 spills per annum).

### Where do storm overflows release?

They release into rivers and the sea. To see the location of our coastal outfalls, please visit [Beachbuoy](#).

### How do I know when there has been any storm release activity?

We show all our coastal releases on [Beachbuoy](#), our near real-time storm overflow activity tool. Beachbuoy also informs the user if a release affects bathing waters, taking into consideration the location of the outfall, duration of the release and the tidal conditions at the time. It's worth noting that releases shown on Beachbuoy can occur several days after rainfall, due to the amount of time taken for the water to pass through our network and arrive at the final treatment works.

### Where can I find data on historical storm overflows?

We publish our [flow and spills](#) data annually. You can also view recent release data on [Beachbuoy](#). You'll also see where the outfall pipes are which impact each bathing water.

### What is the difference between a 'storm' and an 'emergency' overflow?

A storm overflow is permitted by the regulator and occurs when the system becomes overwhelmed with excess water. In rare incidences, an emergency overflow is triggered when there has been a technical fault or a blockage in the system. Both storm and emergency coastal overflows are shown on [Beachbuoy](#).

### Are you dumping raw sewage?

Most storm releases are heavily diluted wastewater – up to 95% is rainwater. Storm overflows are not manually operated, they work automatically to release excess water, for example after heavy rain has filled the sewers. These releases are permitted by law and we report all spills to the Environment Agency. Our industry is heavily regulated by the Environment Agency, which sets the permits on storm overflows.



▲ [Beachbuoy](#), our near real-time storm overflow activity tool

### What are the Govt. targets on reducing storm overflows?

Defra published their [Storm Overflows Discharge Reduction Plan](#) in September 2022, which sets targets for the water industry to eliminate storm overflows by 2050 (except for unusual heavy rainfall). We welcome this plan and are already leading the way with some of the targets outlined. For example, we are already hitting the average number of spills per outfall per year, that other water companies are aiming to achieve by 2025. We're therefore confident that we'll not only meet Govt. targets, but that we'll likely exceed them.

### What would happen if storm overflows were banned today?

During heavy or prolonged rainfall, the network would become overwhelmed in several areas – or catchments as we call them – with nowhere for the wastewater to go, but back up into people's homes and onto roads. This would cause major flooding and pollution for the community.

### What are you doing to reduce storm overflows?

We are taking several steps to significantly reduce storm overflows by 2030. We recently [wrote to Ofwat's CEO, David Black](#), to explain our plans, set up a dedicated [Storm Overflow Task Force](#), and started work on each of our [Pathfinder](#) project areas. We also have an [Infiltration Reduction Plan](#).

### How can we prevent storm overflows?

Preventing water from entering the combined sewer system during heavy rainfall, is the most sustainable and cost-effective way to reduce storm overflows going forwards.

There are currently three main ways to reduce storm overflows:

**flow of rainwater)** – for example using rainwater harvesting, permeable paving, green roofs, soakaways (including tree pits), rain gardens (swales) and planters.

**2. Optimisation of existing infrastructure** – adjusting connected systems and interfaces, using different mechanical and electrical equipment (e.g. pumps), making improvements in pumping station and storm tank use and control, and using smart network control with increased digitalisation.

**3. Building bigger infrastructure (building larger pipes, pumping stations, etc)** – this includes wetland treatment (for groundwater), sewer lining/sealing (groundwater), as well as building larger sewers, storm tanks and treatment works.

### Do bathing waters in the UK and across Southern Water’s region, meet regulatory standards?

Before privatisation, only 28% of bathing waters in the UK met the minimum public health standards. Today, 99% of UK bathing waters achieve minimum standards. 80 of the 84 bathing waters in our area are recognised by the Environment Agency as either good or excellent, and none are considered poor.

### Do storm releases impact water quality?

Although storm releases are heavily diluted, they can impact water quality. The impact of a storm release can vary based on the location of the release, the amount released, how long it was released for, and the tides when discharged. Each outfall/permit is designed to consider the dilution factor, sensitivity, and amenity of the watercourse. We alert local authorities when there is a release.

### Can you close a beach if there has been a release?

This decision is for the local authority. They manage the beach and are responsible for public health. We can advise when there has been a release as we have installed alarms and sensors to alert us; these have been installed on 98% of our storm overflow sites but will be on 100% by 2025. A release rarely results in a beach closure due to the locations of our outfalls, the length of time they’re used, and the amount discharged.

### Is Southern Water responsible for bathing water quality?

We are a key custodian of water quality, but there are several factors that all impact water quality, these include storm releases, agricultural run-off, animal waste and marine activity. We recognise that we must play our part in protecting rivers and seas and be catalysts for change.

### Why don’t you stop new developments connecting to your network?

We have no statutory rights to prevent new connections on our network. We can only make recommendations to local authority planning teams.

### Are combined sewers still being built?

Modern systems have one pipe for foul and one for surface water. The surface water pipe releases rainwater back to the environment. Separate sewer systems have been built in the UK since the 1960s – before this, the sewers were combined. We have no legal powers to prevent new connections being made to existing combined sewers.

## What we do to prepare when we know a storm is coming

**When we know that heavy rain is forecast, we immediately begin a series of checks and actions across our wastewater sites, including:**



**Site-specific checks** – This includes a review of site action plans and permit conditions, which means checking screens are working, our storage tanks are empty, etc.



**Logistics** – We order in additional tankers so we’re prepared for flooding incidents or pollution risks.



**Manpower** – We make sure that our high-risk sites are manned 24/7, and we also place additional people on call across the teams (for tasks such as maintenance).



**Power supplies** – Additional standby generators are checked on site, particularly when lightning or high winds are forecast.



**Intensive care** – Sites that are considered to be high risk are added to an intensive care list, which means they have additional checks and specific plans in place, if things go wrong.

# How we're tackling storm overflows

We have set up a Storm Overflows Task Force to take action and help us to reduce the use of storm overflows in our area.

- The task force is a dedicated team that is central to Southern Water's drive towards significantly reducing the use of storm overflows by 2030, and manage catchment flow.
- The establishment of the task force indicates Southern Water's commitment to ambitious targets and is a highly important workstream within the business.
- The task force is responsible for delivering five pathfinder projects over the next two years. The task force will seek to establish strong partnerships to ensure their success.
- In parallel, we will build and deliver a regional plan to reduce storm releases between now and 2030.

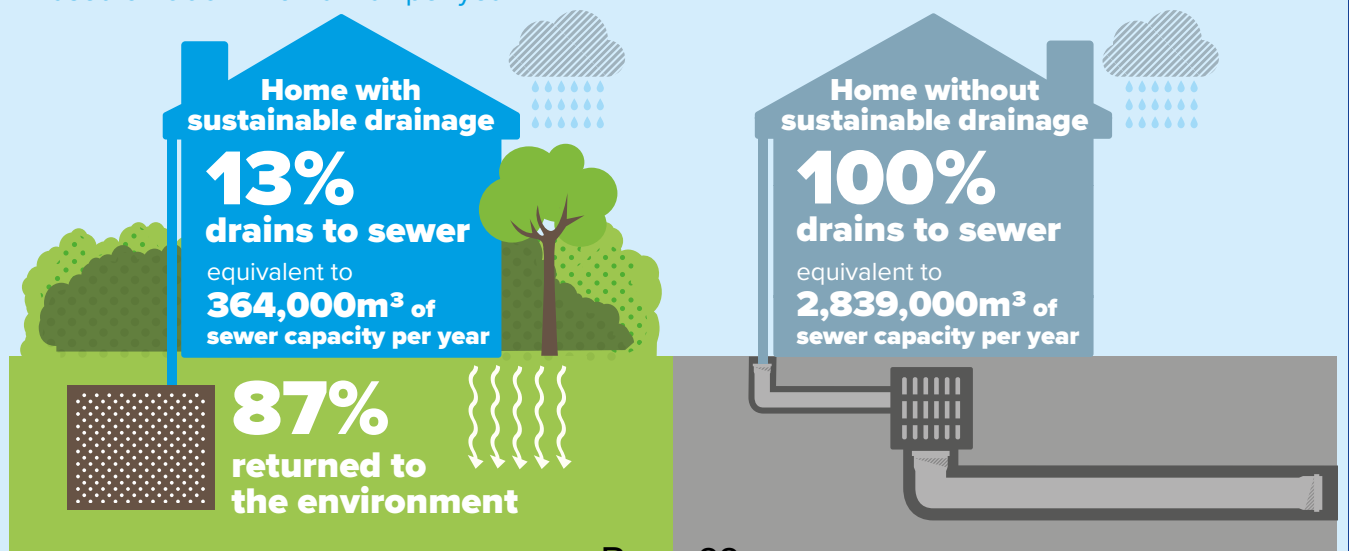
There are many ways to slow the flow of rainwater into sewers



We've selected pathfinder projects that pose complex challenges, have a high volume of storm overflow spills or require an innovative approach to tackle local wastewater treatment issues. Our work on the pathfinder projects will also validate our general approach to reducing storm overflows across our region.

## Water run-off for a development of 10,000 homes:

Based on 900mm of rainfall per year



# Agenda Item 6

This Report will be made public on 17 April 2023



Report Number **OS/22/12**

**To:** Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
**Date:** 25 April 2023  
**Status:** Non-key decision  
**Responsible Officer:** Olu Fatokun, Low Carbon Senior Specialist  
Adrian Tofts, Strategy, Policy & Performance Lead Specialist  
**Cabinet Member:** Councillor Lesley Whybrow

**SUBJECT:** UPDATE ON COUNCIL'S CLIMATE CHANGE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCY WORK

**SUMMARY:**

This report summarises the council's work on climate change for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. It follows the main points set out in the climate emergency declaration that was unanimously agreed by full Council on 24 July 2019.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. To receive and note report OS/22/12.

## 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Council declared a climate change and ecological emergency on 24 July 2019. The text of the declaration can be viewed here: [\(Public Pack\)Minutes Document for Council, 24/07/2019 19:00 \(folkestone-hythe.gov.uk\)](#)  
Progress on the points of the declaration is discussed in the sections below.

## 2. FOLKESTONE & HYTHE DISTRICT COUNCIL ESTATE AND OPERATIONS

- 2.1. The declaration called for the council to commit to reducing carbon emissions from its estate and operations to zero net carbon by 2030.
- 2.2. **Initial work** - The starting point for this work was to decide which elements of the council's operations and estate were within scope, using guidance in the Greenhouse Gas Protocol, and then calculate the council's carbon emissions at a base date. (The Greenhouse Gas Protocol is a global framework to measure and manage greenhouse gas emissions from private and public sector organisations and supply chains, and to calculate the benefits of mitigation actions.) Buildings and facilities were included where the council had direct control over the building and its energy use. Buildings and facilities were excluded where the energy supplier and use of energy was under the control of another party (such as a tenant in a self-contained council home).
- 2.3. LASER Energy, a company wholly owned by Kent County Council, was commissioned to carry out a study to establish the baseline for emissions from the council's estate and operations. Work on the study involved an extensive audit of invoices and meter readings for electricity and gas use for the different buildings and facilities within the council's control, as well as records for water usage, use of fuels and business mileage claimed by council officers.
- 2.4. At the base year of 2018/19 emissions from the council's estate and operations were calculated at 1,536 tCO<sub>2</sub>e (tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent) a year. The largest proportion of the emissions (58 per cent) arose from gas usage; this was largely due to heating for the Hythe swimming pool and the communal parts of sheltered/semi-sheltered housing blocks managed and controlled by the council. 26 per cent of emissions arose from electricity usage from council buildings, housing blocks, car parks and other assets. The remaining 16 per cent ('other' emissions) came from fuel use for transport and equipment, water use and the 'grey fleet' (employees' own cars that they use for work). Within this category, transport was the largest element, with some 11 per cent of total emissions arising from transport; the study highlighted the contribution of council-owned vehicles, particularly those fuelled from the central tank. There were smaller contributions from the 'grey fleet' which represented around 2 per cent of the overall total.
- 2.5. The Low Carbon Senior Specialist has undertaken a significant amount of work to assess how the council's emissions have changed since the base date. Rather than continuing to rely on consultancy services to calculate the



annual carbon footprint, the Specialist has developed a spreadsheet that allows raw data on energy and fuel use to be entered and, by formulae, converted directly to carbon emissions equivalent using the most up-to-date conversion factors.

2.6. The results of this analysis are as follows:

- Carbon emissions for 2019/20 were 1,649 tCO<sub>2</sub>e. This showed an increase of 113.95 tCO<sub>2</sub>e when compared to that of the baseline year 2018/19.
- Carbon emissions for 2020/21 were 1,483 tCO<sub>2</sub>e. This showed a decrease in emissions of 165.78 tCO<sub>2</sub>e compared to 2019/20 and 51.72 tCO<sub>2</sub>e when compared with the baseline year 2018/19.

2.7. Work is progressing to calculate a figure for the 2021/22 monitoring year. It is difficult in the above, however, to identify a general trend or the impact of specific corporate decisions on emissions, as the middle and later years were affected by the three national lockdowns that were imposed from March 2020 in response to the coronavirus pandemic, as well as the changed working practices that emerged from the crisis.

2.8. **2021 Carbon Action Plan** - From the LASER work officers drafted a Carbon Action Plan to tackle the council's carbon emissions. The Carbon Action Plan included 33 high-level actions covering six areas: behaviour change; energy; transport; water; procurement; and biodiversity and greenspaces. Actions were categorised as immediate, short-term or medium-term. Some actions were exploratory, recognising that detailed feasibility and viability assessments would be needed to determine their cost and quantify the extent of the carbon reduction and other effects, such as impact on service provision. The Carbon Action Plan was adopted by Cabinet on 24 February 2021 (report C/20/76).

2.9. Since the Carbon Action Plan was adopted the majority of the immediate and short-term actions have been completed or are substantially complete, including: climate change training for staff and members; the introduction of a Climate Change Champions staff scheme; reducing the use of plastics, printing and paper waste; the introduction of sustainable travel incentives, including a salary sacrifice scheme for electric vehicles; the installation of electric vehicle charging points in council car parks; converting council-controlled street lighting to LED (phase one is complete and phase two is being implemented); reducing the use of peat in grounds maintenance operations; introducing climate change implications to committee reports; expanding opportunities for flexible working; introducing sustainable procurement policies; increasing biodiversity on council-owned land; and reviewing the Green Infrastructure Strategy. Some actions are dependent on other changes, such as the review of local plan policies, which will depend on government reform of the planning system.

2.10. **Carbon Action Plan Update** - Despite progress since 2021, it has become clear that a review of the Carbon Action Plan is needed. Officers have asked for more detail about the implementation of actions identified for their service areas. Since 2021 there have also been changes including: the extension of

remote working practices introduced during the pandemic; the energy crisis and inflation affecting council resources and the relative costs and benefits of carbon reduction measures; and the acquisition and divestment of buildings in the council's portfolio.

- 2.11. Consultants Carbon Descent were therefore commissioned in September 2022 to:
- Review the 2021 Carbon Action Plan and quantify the anticipated impacts of the high-level actions (stage 1).
  - Develop a Carbon Reduction Plan which will set out measures to reach the net zero target and identify any additional actions which may be needed (stage 2).
  - If necessary, provide ongoing support to implement the actions (stage 3).
- 2.12. Stage 1 of the work, assessing the 2021 plan and quantifying its impacts, is nearing completion. The carbon impact of some fuels (gas, petrol and diesel) is unlikely to change significantly, and future emissions from these sources can be predicted with reasonable certainty. However, part of the council's carbon impact is attributable to the energy it takes from the national grid and there are differing projections of how fast grid-supplied energy will decarbonise.
- 2.13. Nevertheless, the focus of the work remains on reducing energy use across the council's estate and operations, and, where possible, introducing green energy generation as a lower carbon alternative to electricity and gas, for example, through exploring the potential for solar energy generation. In many cases, the generation of zero carbon electricity will have additional benefits including increased resilience, lower overall operating costs and a demonstrable commitment to a net zero future.
- 2.14. As noted in paragraph 2.4, the largest share of the council's carbon emissions arises from the use of gas, including at the Hythe swimming pool and civic centre, as well as the sheltered housing schemes where it is important to maintain warm and healthy spaces. Best practice is to develop a 'decarbonisation plan' tailored to each building, considering the building's fabric and daily operations, and identify an integrated approach with measures and technologies to deliver a net zero building in operation. This is being piloted for the Folca building and if successful the approach could be extended to other buildings (paragraph 7.10).
- 2.15. Initial findings from stage 1 of the Carbon Action Plan review are that, under both pessimistic and optimistic scenarios for decarbonising the electricity grid, the council could get close to net zero carbon by 2030, but only if all the actions in the 2021 Carbon Action Plan are fully implemented; many of these actions were exploratory, identifying the need for further investigation and costings. Some actions rely on improvements in the availability of new technology and increases in its output (such as the availability and range of electric vehicles and the capabilities of battery-powered horticultural equipment). While the council has been very successful in accessing government funding (see section 7 below), measures to decarbonise the

council's estate and operation are likely to be extremely expensive and with many other competing priorities the council will have difficult decisions to make about where it focuses its resources.

- 2.16. Stage 2 of the work will provide indicative costs and payback times for these actions and will also identify what additional measures could be implemented to get to net zero; this will be crucial in informing the council's decisions about where it focuses its limited resources.

### **3. GENERAL POLICY AND OTHER DECISIONS**

- 3.1 The declaration called for decisions across the organisation to be taken in line with a shift to zero carbon by 2030. An outline of progress on key initiatives is given below.
- 3.2 **Corporate Plan** – The Corporate Plan 2021-30 'Creating Tomorrow Together' was developed alongside the Carbon Action Plan and was also adopted in February 2021. The Corporate Plan sets out 'A thriving environment' as one of its four service ambitions, and states that, by 2030, *"Across the district, we will ensure excellent accessible open spaces for all. We will have invested in green infrastructure to enhance our superb natural environment and the council itself will generate net zero carbon emissions."* The Corporate Plan identifies priorities including: ensure an excellent environment for everyone; grow the circular economy and reduce waste; and increase our resilience to climate change.
- 3.3 The Corporate Plan also identifies 'Greener Folkestone & Hythe' as one of six guiding principles running through all council activities, and pledges that *"We will embrace becoming a 'green exemplar' council, embedding measures to reduce our carbon footprint, enabling active travel and enhancing the natural environment."*
- 3.4 **Corporate Action Plan 2021-2024** – The themes of the Corporate Plan are carried through into high-level actions in the Corporate Action Plan, which was adopted in October 2021. These include to: develop a district-wide climate plan; progress walking and cycling schemes; undertake a pilot scheme to phase out the use of pesticides; introduce electric vehicle charging points to district car parks; minimise waste and usage for our estate; improve recycling rates; and reduce, rethink, reuse and recycle.
- 3.5 **Procurement policy** – The council has introduced a sustainability section into tenders as a trial. The section is designed to be simple to complete, quantified, aligned with government guidelines and suitable for local small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to use. The resulting contract includes a sustainability section to measure the carbon performance against the commitments made in the tender. This pilot aligns with the wider initiatives of Kent County Council's Procurement Committee and the Energy and Low Emissions Strategy (ELES) and is the first in the county to be implemented. The next step is to develop a county-wide scoring framework to evaluate the sustainability responses in the tender and in the performance of contracts.

- 3.6 **Member and officer training** – Officers arranged for an expert to provide training for all Members and officers. The training, ‘An Introduction to Tackling the Climate Emergency’, was given by Malcolm Powers MSc and arranged through the Local Government Information Unit (LGIU). A general invitation was sent to Members and a second event was provided for officers. In addition, a mandatory course, ‘Environmental Awareness’, has been set up through the council’s new e-learning supplier. At the time of writing 354 staff have completed the course.
- 3.7 **Planning decisions** – The climate emergency declaration included reference to the council’s approach to planning decisions. At the time the declaration was made, the council’s two development plans were already significantly advanced: the Places and Policies Local Plan (PPLP) was at public examination and the Core Strategy Review (CSR) was soon to be submitted to the Secretary of State.
- 3.8 The PPLP sets out the energy hierarchy as a sequence for reducing carbon emissions, starting with reducing the need for energy by making changes to the design and fabric of a building (‘fabric first’), then using energy more efficiently within the building, before using energy from renewable or low carbon technologies and finally ensuring that any fossil fuels that are required are used as efficiently as possible. This aspiration is supported by the CSR which aims to minimise carbon emissions by reducing emissions from new buildings. Policy SS3: Place-Shaping and Sustainable Settlements Strategy states that proposals should be designed to contribute to local place-shaping and sustainable development *“through appropriate sustainable construction measures, including water efficiency and a proportion of energy from renewable/low carbon sources on new-build development”*.
- 3.9 Other local plan policies seek to: enhance the district’s biodiversity and its green infrastructure (PPLP policy NE2, CSR policy CSD4); protect and enhance its water and coastal environment (PPLP policies NE8 and NE9, CSR policy CSD5); promote sustainable development (PPLP policy CC2); improve health and wellbeing (PPLP policy HW2); support active lifestyles as part of new developments (PPLP policy HW3); and promote active travel (PPLP policy HW4, CSR policy SS3).
- 3.10 Under the planning reforms being introduced through the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Bill currently before Parliament, the council will have to produce a new local plan within a 30-month timescale; the government will also introduce new national development management policies. At the time of writing, it is not clear whether local authorities will have scope to push for environmental policies that exceed national standards under the new system (Cabinet, 22 February 2023, C/22/85).
- 3.11 At the time of writing, outline proposals for a new garden town at Otterpool Park had received a resolution to grant planning permission, subject to conditions and a Section 106 legal agreement(s) (planning application reference Y19/0257/FH). Approximately 50 per cent of the site will be green space and will secure a net gain in biodiversity of at least 10 per cent, with a target of a 20 per cent increase, with a range of habitat types and a network of corridors to support the movement of species. The proposals will allow for

the deployment of a range of technologies to address greenhouse gas emissions as the town is built out over successive phases. The outline proposals set a target for emissions reduction that exceeds national standards set out in the Interim Future Homes Standards for new homes, ensuring a 45 per cent reduction in carbon emissions against current Building Regulations. Non-domestic buildings above a threshold of 500 square metres will achieve a minimum BREEAM rating of Excellent. Monitoring arrangements will be built into the detail of phases as they come forward for approval. A district heat network is a potential option for the denser parts of the town centre, and this will need to be investigated before detailed proposals for these parts come forward.

- 3.12 **Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy** – The council is developing a Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy for the district (Cabinet, 20 October 2022, C/22/47). Consultants Blackwood Bayne have undertaken a comprehensive evidence-gathering exercise to map the district’s network of green and blue infrastructure (its natural habitats, farmland, managed open spaces and water environments). Key findings include that: the district supports many rare species, such as Turtle Doves and chalk grassland orchids; tree cover is generally lower than the Kent average, but this can be explained by the open landscape character of the Romney Marsh; some habitats, particularly the fragmented wetland habitats of the Romney Marsh are particularly vulnerable to climate change. The draft strategy identifies fifteen strategic priorities, including the need to: protect and enhance core sites and improve links to create a network of corridors and spaces; mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change; support active travel through improving and creating new cycling and walking routes; support people in taking exercise and engaging with nature for their physical and mental health; and protect water resources and incorporate sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) into new developments.
- 3.13 The draft Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy was published for public consultation from late 2022 to early 2023 and officers are reviewing the consultation comments and considering how the strategy should be amended.
- 3.14 **Local Nature Recovery Strategies** - Following the passing of the 2021 Environment Act, the government is bringing into force requirements for the creation of Local Nature Recovery Strategies. These strategies will support efforts to recover nature across England, help local authorities incorporate nature recovery objectives, support the delivery of biodiversity net gain as part of new developments and help deliver national environmental targets. The ‘responsible authority’ for Kent and Medway will be Kent County Council. The county council is starting to scope out this work, and national guidance has recently been published (*Local nature recovery strategy statutory guidance – What a local nature recovery strategy should contain*, DEFRA, 23 March 2023). The government has said it will provide training and further information to the responsible authorities to help them fulfil their duties. As the requirements are clarified, the district council will have the opportunity to work closely with the county council to ensure that the Local Nature Recovery Strategy reflects the opportunities and priorities identified in the district’s Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy.

- 3.15 **Net zero toolkit** - The council is preparing a net zero toolkit to provide advice to those looking to deliver net zero carbon homes. Architects Levitt Bernstein and sustainability specialists Elementa and Etude have been commissioned to prepare a practical, easy-to-follow guide for new build and retrofit projects. The guide will be available for private developers, particularly smaller firms which are unlikely to have in-house specialists to call on, and for homeowners for their own self-build or retrofit projects. The toolkit will cover a range of steps from pre-planning through to construction.
- 3.16 **Encouraging biodiversity and reducing pesticides** - The grounds maintenance team has undertaken measures to improve the district's biodiversity. 95 per cent of in-house green waste is mulched and composted at the Hawkinge depot to reduce the need to buy compost. The mulch also cuts down the amount of water or pesticide needed around newly planted shrubs by creating a protective barrier. A local compost unit has been installed at East Cliff and other units are being looked at for other locations.
- 3.17 The grounds maintenance team has worked with the Bumblebee and Butterfly and Moths trusts and staff have volunteered their own time to plant habitat that supports pollinators; for example, seasonal bedding has been selected with bright colours, large, single flower heads of various shapes and attractive perfumes to attract pollinators. To cut down on waste, seasonal bedding is grown in reusable trays which are sent back to the grower after use.
- 3.18 Sedum matting was trialled on the coastal park depot roof and the success of this trial has led to the use of sedum matting on the refurbished beach huts along Folkestone's Marine Walk. The roofing forms a thick matt of plants which thrive in dry conditions and provides an excellent micro-climate for insects.
- 3.19 The grounds maintenance team has experimented with different mowing regimes to test what can be done to increase biodiversity. Where cutting has been reduced to encourage pollinators, 'Bee Friendly' signs have been installed to explain the new approach. Working with the highway authority Kent County Council, trial sites have been identified where cutting of roadside verges will be reduced. The team has also identified council-owned sites where this method is likely to be beneficial.
- 3.20 The grounds maintenance team has also drastically reduced the use of chemicals in parks, gardens and play areas owned by the council. For the period 2015 to 2021, pesticide and herbicide use fell by 80 per cent, from a peak of 75 litres to just 14.5 litres. The team has kept the use of pesticides and herbicides to a minimum for several years and, following a motion agreed by full council in 2019, efforts have been made to find effective alternative methods; however, there are some situations where chemicals will still be needed, such as to treat highly invasive weeds like Japanese knotweed and giant hogweed. Officers continue to experiment with new technology and explore best practice to further reduce the use of pesticide and herbicides. No pesticide is used on football pitches or in the council's play areas.

- 3.21 **Climate Change Champions** – To embed climate change considerations in the day-to-day work of the council, the Low Carbon Senior Specialist has set up a Climate Change Champions Group of volunteer staff from teams across the organisation to explore ways to improve the council’s energy efficiency and environmental practices. The champions group meets every quarter.
- 3.22 The volunteers have developed an environmental year calendar to encourage teams to take part in an activity with the main aim of impacting positively on the environment. For this financial year, the group will seek to establish key performance indicators for measuring its impact. At the next meeting, a guest speaker from the Bumblebee Conservation Trust will talk about the trust’s ‘Bee Connected’ project; Bee Connected is a three-year landscape restoration project based on the South Kent and East Sussex coast, with a focus on rare species of bumblebees. Bee Connected aims to work with farmers, landowners, councils and local community groups to improve bumblebee-friendly habitat, by increasing the abundance, diversity and the length of the flowering season, allowing rare species to thrive.

#### **4. COUNCIL REPORTS**

- 4.1. The declaration called for all council reports, where appropriate, to include a climate impact statement.
- 4.2. It was decided to focus this assessment on reports to Cabinet and full Council; this was to reflect the fact that some committees are advisory rather than decision-making, and others, such as Planning and Licensing Committee, are required to follow existing national and local policies.
- 4.3. Officers looked at examples of how other local authorities use climate assessments. A template was drawn up of key considerations, including impacts on greenhouse gas emissions, waste, water consumption, pollution, resilience to the effects of climate change, and conservation and wildlife. The intention was to create a broad picture of the climate change impacts of a proposal, rather than a quantitative assessment of the tonnes of carbon emissions of different options. It was also recognised that some decisions may be high-level in nature and lead to more detailed proposals which may be subject to separate decision-making processes (such as through the planning process).
- 4.4. Rather than submitting their reports to a specialist officer for assessment, report authors are encouraged to review their own work for climate change impacts and include a statement at the end of their reports; the intention is to embed climate change considerations into officers’ thinking, rather than leaving the assessment to the end of the process when key decisions have already been made. Training has been provided to authors on how to assess their reports.
- 4.5. The climate impact statement has now been in operation for around 18 months. Officers will review the approach and seek views from officers and Members on how it operates and how it influences Members’ decision-making. If necessary, it can then be amended to reflect the comments.

## 5. STRATEGY FOR CARBON NEUTRAL DISTRICT AND CARBON ACTION PLAN

- 5.1. The declaration called for a strategy to be prepared for the council to play a leadership role in promoting partnerships for a carbon neutral 2030 commitment throughout the district. The declaration added that the council should create a Carbon Action Plan.
- 5.2. As noted (paragraph 2.4), the council's emissions at the base year 2018/19 amounted to 1,536 tCO<sub>2</sub>e (tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent). Data published by the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS)<sup>1</sup> for 2019 (the most recent published data) show that emissions arising from buildings, transport and activities across the Folkestone & Hythe district amounted to 385,100 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>. Emissions from the council's estate and operations therefore only amount to around 0.4 per cent of the district total, and so collaborative working across the district will be essential to meet the net zero target.
- 5.3. **Carbon Innovation Lab** - A proposal was put to Cabinet on 23 March 2022 (C/21/94) for the council to establish a 'Carbon Innovation Lab' (CI-Lab), an informal and inclusive group of representatives from the community, business, special interest groups and academics. The CI-Lab is intended to be a forum to promote a collaborative dialogue, to influence change and exchange ideas, to agree priorities and encourage local actions. This approach builds on a similar group that has been successfully operated for around two years at the London Borough of Hounslow and is now delivering its own carbon reduction actions alongside and supporting the borough's own plans.
- 5.4. The members of the Carbon Innovation Lab, who attend on a voluntary basis, have shared experience of their own projects and a support network is beginning to develop. It is hoped that the council will also be able to provide guidance and support to projects that will serve as pilots for the district, including directing groups to likely sources of funding.
- 5.5. **District-wide Carbon Plan** - The CI-Lab has now met five times, and ideas from the group are being used to draft a carbon plan for the district. When ready in draft, the plan will be taken to Cabinet for approval for wider public consultation. Officers are also looking at using the expertise of Canterbury City Council to survey a representative sample of Folkestone & Hythe residents to understand their knowledge of climate change matters and their willingness to take measures to address the problem. (A similar survey was undertaken to inform the priorities in the Corporate Plan.)
- 5.6. **Folkestone & Hythe Sustainable Futures Forum** – It is anticipated that the projects emerging from the CI-Lab and across the district could be delivered through a new initiative, the Folkestone & Hythe Sustainable Futures Forum. The first project to be developed is a 'TEDx-style' talk and video initiative, culminating in an in-person event at the Burlington Hotel on 29 April 2023. The event will bring together businesses, community groups and individuals

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<sup>1</sup> Now the Department for Energy Security & Net Zero (DESNZ)



to deliver talks on projects or ideas illustrating the inspiring initiatives happening across the district.

## **6. ESTABLISH A CROSS-PARTY WORKING GROUP**

- 6.1. The declaration called for the council to establish a cross-party working group to monitor progress and report back on the Carbon Action Plan.
- 6.2. The Climate and Ecological Emergency Working Group was set up in late 2019 and has met 18 times from October 2019 to the present.<sup>2</sup> The Working Group is chaired by the Portfolio Holder for the Environment, and its current members are drawn from all political parties.
- 6.3. The cross-party group has guided work on the council's Carbon Action Plan and early work on the district-wide Carbon Plan. The group has reviewed council-led projects including: the installation of electric vehicle charging points in car parks; LED street lighting; grounds maintenance measures to promote biodiversity and reduce the use of pesticides; the provision of cycling infrastructure; the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy; the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment; the Green Business Grant Scheme; the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund; and the housing service's approach to carbon reduction.
- 6.4. There have been presentations from external bodies, including Kent County Council on its Climate Adaption Plan and on the work of the county's Sustainable Business Team, as well as a presentation by the White Cliffs and Romney Marsh Countryside Partnership on the partnership's work managing wild spaces. The Working Group has provided comments on consultations, including from government on the draft England Tree Strategy and from water companies on draft Water Resources Management Plans. As part of a school project, children from Seabrook Church of England Primary School wrote to the council expressing their concerns about the state of the environment and the class were invited to present their ideas to the Working Group in June 2021.
- 6.5. Regular update reports on the Carbon Action Plan have been taken to the Working Group. As highlighted, reports on different projects have also been taken to Cabinet regularly as the projects have progressed to key stages. A summary report outlining progress against the Carbon Action Plan and the other initiatives outlined in this report will be taken to full Council in due course.

## **7. POWERS, RESOURCES AND FUNDING**

- 7.1. The declaration called for the council to use its influence to call on the government to provide powers, resources and help to achieve the aims of the declaration.

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<sup>2</sup> Links to agendas and minutes can be accessed here: <https://service.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListMeetings.aspx?CommitteeId=491>

- 7.2. The council has responded to consultation from government and other organisations on climate change matters, applied for funding and worked with other organisations to deliver change.
- 7.3. **Consultations** - The council has provided comments on government consultations relating to climate change through the Working Group and Cabinet; recently comments have been provided on proposed changes to national planning policy, including implications for climate change policy (Cabinet, 22 February 2023, C/22/85).
- 7.4. Where staff resources have allowed, the council has applied for funding for climate change initiatives and has worked with other organisations on joint projects.
- 7.5. **Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Wave 1** – The Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) is for local authorities, providers of social housing and charities that own social housing to bid for funding from government to install energy efficiency upgrades in their housing stock that is currently below an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) C rating.
- 7.6. In 2022 the council was successful in securing £2m of Government funding from SHDF (Wave 1), supported by £1m of council funds. The award was one of the largest in England for any district or borough council and one of only two awards in Kent (Cabinet, 26 April 2022, C/21/107 and Cabinet, 23 November 2022, C/22/59).
- 7.7. Work is underway on retrofitting 125 of the council's poorest performing social homes to bring them up to Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) Band C rating using this funding, ready for low carbon heating. It is estimated that in total these measures will yield savings of 254 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions or 919,000 kWh heating energy a year. Ross House in Folkestone was chosen as a demonstrator project for the first 16 homes, and work is now progressing on the remaining 109 homes.
- 7.8. In addition to achieving an energy efficiency standard of Band C, the other key performance indicators and outcomes include: a demonstrable and quantified reduction in the energy required to heat each home to a comfortable standard; the appropriate ventilation measures to reduce condensation and mould; and, following the works, the sharing of knowledge and support with the tenant and government. The council has been invited to participate in government research into the effective delivery of the funded measures. Throughout this work the council has identified and introduced local SMEs which deliver cost-effective services to the lead contractors.
- 7.9. **Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Wave 2** - The council put in a larger bid for Wave 2 of the SHDF, that could secure improvements to a further 300 social homes over a two-year period (Cabinet, 23 November 2022, C/22/59). At the time of writing, the Department for Energy Security & Net Zero (DESNZ), had just announced that the council had been successful in securing £2.6m of government funding as part of Wave 2.1. The government has offered £778m to 107 projects for Wave 2.1. Folkestone & Hythe's successful award is one of four in Kent, the other successful authorities being

Ashford Borough Council, Dartford Borough Council and Thanet District Council.

- 7.10. **Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund** – The Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund (PSDF) is managed by Salix Finance Limited on behalf of the DESNZ. The fund supports the capital costs of decarbonising public buildings, using the ‘decarbonisation plan’ methodology that sets out the measures required to deliver a net zero building in operation. Folca 2 (the part of the complex facing onto Sandgate Road) has been selected as the basis of a bid to the PSDF. At the time of writing, the energy management consultancy CO2 Target has been appointed to develop a decarbonisation plan for the building, in readiness for the next bidding window of the PSDF (to be announced by DESNZ). If successful in a bid for Folca, this approach could be expanded to other buildings, such as the council’s sheltered housing buildings, and the fund could be used to make a major impact on carbon emissions from the council’s estate.
- 7.11. **Solar Together Kent** – In late 2021 Folkestone & Hythe joined with the county council and Kent district and borough councils in a group-buying scheme to secure discounts on the installation of solar panels and battery storage for domestic and community buildings. The scheme was administered for the local authorities by Kent County Council and run by the company iChoosr. For Solar Together schemes, residents express their initial interest and an auction is then held with potential installers. Depending on the quotes they receive, and the results of site surveys, homeowners and community groups can then go ahead with installation or withdraw from the scheme.
- 7.12. Interest in the 2022 Solar Together Kent scheme has been high, and despite some supply chain problems affecting the availability of panels and batteries, installations continued throughout 2022 and early 2023. At the time of writing, 1,351 installations have been completed across Kent, with 133 installations in Folkestone & Hythe district. With a typical home solar panel installation providing savings of around 0.74 to 0.94 tonnes of carbon emissions a year<sup>3</sup>, this phase of Solar Together Kent could yield carbon savings of around 100 to 125 tonnes a year for the district, or around 1,000 to 1,250 tonnes a year in total across the Kent and Medway area.
- 7.13. The Kent authorities have committed to a further phase of Solar Together Kent for 2023. With interest still expected to be high, it is proposed to spread the publicity and sign-up over two phases to manage demand. At the time of writing, 2,615 people across the county had registered interest in the new phase of Solar Together Kent, with 211 people registering in Folkestone & Hythe district.
- 7.14. **Climate Change Reserve** - The council has a specific earmarked reserve for utilisation in achievement of its carbon neutral goals and policies. This reserve currently stands at £4.2m and was approved by full council on 22 February 2023 as part of the General Fund Budget setting process. There are a number of drawdowns planned from this reserve in 2023/24 and these

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<sup>3</sup> Energy Savings Trust: <https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/renewable-energy/electricity/solar-panels>

are summarised as below. After allowing for these drawdowns (£310k) a balance of £3.89m reserve is anticipated at 31 March 2023.

Planned 2023/24 draws on Climate change reserve

EV Charging points	£40k
Green Business Grants	£200k
Specialist advice costs	<u>£70k</u>
TOTAL	<u>£310k</u>

- 7.15. **Green Business Grant Scheme** – The district council introduced a Green Business Grant Scheme to help smaller businesses to become more energy efficient (Cabinet, 10 February 2022, C/21/80). Grants of up to £10,000 are available to support businesses (up to £25,000 in exceptional circumstances). The scheme will run until 31 March 2024 or until the fund is exhausted.
- 7.16. At the time of writing, 16 applications have been made to the grant scheme. Two applications have been approved, to the value of just over £30,000. Four applications, totalling almost £60,000, will be considered by the decision panel in April. An additional six applications are currently going through the application process, are being discussed with officers or officers are awaiting more information on the applications. (Two applications were withdrawn by the applicants and two were found not to meet the scheme criteria.) Applications have come a wide range of organisations including a sports trust, community interest company, hotel, financial business, events venue and arts organisation.
- 7.17. **Climate change network** – The district council is an active member of the climate change network, an officer group managed by Kent County Council, which includes the Kent district and borough councils. Folkstone & Hythe has led on the development of green procurement policies within the network and is now piloting the sustainability sections within the tender and contracting process (see paragraph 3.5). The council is also active in the transport group, promoting active travel initiatives to develop walking and cycling routes. The network is exploring the concept of energy planning to identify where grid capacity would allow the development of district heating schemes, electric heating or solar photovoltaic energy for local communities or industrial estates. The network is also valuable in identifying likely sources of funding, such as government and charity funds and social value investors, ranging from small sources to multi-million-pound funds.
- 7.18. **UK100 Network** – The council has joined the UK100 network to share knowledge and resources (Cabinet, 20 October 2022, C/22/51). UK100 is “a network of highly ambitious local government leaders, which seeks to devise and implement plans for the transition to clean energy that are ambitious, cost effective and take the public and business with them”.

- 7.19. UK100 lists 102 authorities as members, including large metropolitan authorities, London boroughs, county councils, unitary authorities and lower tier authorities. UK100 undertakes research and publishes findings on topics including transport, homes and buildings, energy, waste reduction and the circular economy, green finance and clean air. It also works with government ministers and civil servants to influence national policy.
- 7.20. The network provides learning opportunities on topics including decarbonising homes and buildings, decarbonising transport, financing the transition to net zero, nature and climate adaptation and clean energy. The network also offers a 'Knowledge Hub' to allow authorities to share their experience and learning.

## **8. CONCLUSIONS**

- 8.1. The council has achieved a significant amount in the few years since the climate emergency declaration was made. Climate change considerations have become widely embedded in council policy and practice, and progress has been made in addressing emissions from the council's estate and operations. In parallel, the council has added its influence to existing networks and has reached out to local groups, pioneering some innovative schemes, such as the Sustainable Futures Forum.
- 8.2. These achievements have been realised with a very small staff resource - the council only has one officer working full-time on climate change initiatives, and supplements this resource with consultancy expertise for technical work on the social housing and public sector decarbonisation initiatives (paragraphs 7.5-7.10). Additional focus has come from officers across the council (particularly in the housing, grounds maintenance, estates and assets, transport, procurement and economic development teams) who have contributed significantly and widely through embedding various activities addressing the net zero commitment while also delivering their day-to-day work.
- 8.3. Nevertheless, significant work remains to reach the net zero target for the council's estate and operations and the wider district.
- 8.4. For the council, the detailed measures to achieve net zero emissions need to be costed and balanced against other demands on the council, at a time of high inflation and energy costs and reducing resources.
- 8.5. For the wider district, the council can play a leadership role in pulling resources together and facilitating partnership working; however, the journey to net zero will be extremely challenging and will require actions outside the direct control of the council. The council stands willing to work with local communities, key partner organisations, businesses and the public to deliver collective reductions in carbon emissions. There are huge challenges with the concerns of residents and businesses understandably focused on the cost-of-living crisis, high energy costs and maintaining firms' profitability during these times of economic uncertainty.

## **9. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES**

9.1 A summary of the perceived risks follows:

Perceived risk	Seriousness	Likelihood	Preventative action
The council fails to achieve its ambitions for carbon reduction.	High	Medium	An action plan has previously been prepared and this is now being revised and updated. Public involvement and monitoring through CI Lab. Member monitoring through dedicated working group.

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

### 10.1. Legal Officer's Comments (NM)

There are no legal implications arising directly from this report. Some of the projects required to deliver the actions may have legal implications but these will be considered on a project-by-project basis.

10.2. **Finance Officer's Comments (RH)** – There are no financial implication resulting from this report.

10.3. **Diversities and Equalities Implications (AT)** – There are no diversities and equalities implications arising directly from this report.

## 11. CONTACT OFFICERS AND BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

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

Olu Fatokun, Low Carbon Senior Specialist  
Telephone: 07950 880543  
Email: [olu.fatokun@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk](mailto:olu.fatokun@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)

Adrian Tofts, Strategy, Policy & Performance Lead Specialist  
Telephone: 01303 853438  
Email: [adrian.tofts@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk](mailto:adrian.tofts@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)

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

None

# Agenda Item 7

This Report will be made public on 17 April 2023



Report Number **OS/22/11**

**To:** Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
**Date:** 25 April 2023  
**Status:** Non executive decision  
**Responsible Officer:** Susan Priest, Chief Executive

**SUBJECT:** OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME  
23-24

**SUMMARY:** This report sets out a proposed work programme for Overview and Scrutiny work for the municipal year 23/24.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. To receive and note report OS/22/11.
2. To adopt and implement the Scrutiny work programme, set out in paragraph 1.3 of the report, for the municipal year 23/24.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 During the winter of 2023, suggestions for Scrutiny topics were sought from various sources, with the criteria that only issues which affected residents across the whole district would be considered.

In addition, the following topics would not be considered:

- Individual service complaints.
- Topics outside of the remit of the council, where the council has no powers or influence.
- Issues where Scrutiny has considered in the last 12 months.
- Areas relating to quasi-judicial functions, ie Planning and Licensing.

The final list of topics included Member and officer suggestions, community concerns, policies which were due for renewal, and topics rolled over from the previous year's Scrutiny work plan.

1.2 These suggestions were then circulated to Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, who were invited to score each item from 1-5 (5 highest, 1 lowest), based on each of the following criteria:

- High general public concern,
- Critical to council priorities and plans,
- High financial value,
- Risks in successful delivery.

1.3 Somewhat disappointingly, only four of the eight current OSC Members provided scores for this exercise. Based on the scores received, the nine highest scoring items were selected for the Scrutiny workplan. Nine items would make up the main workplan, with an additional four in 'reserve' for the Committee. These 'reserve' items will allow for some flexibility in the workplan, in the event that the Committee is required to consider other urgent matters.

The selections are shown in the table below.

Item No	Topic	High general public concern	Critical to council priorities and plans	High Financial value	Risks in Successful delivery	Total score
1	HRA Business Plan	16	20	19	17	72
2	Review of Corporate Plan	17	20	16	19	72
3	Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)	15	20	17	19	71
4	Levelling Up Fund delivery	18	19	16	18	71



5	Medium Term Financial Strategy - 2022/23-2025/26	12	18	19	20	69
6	Civic Centre relocation	16	17	17	18	68
7	Carbon Action Plan	17	17	14	16	64
8	Budget Strategy	15	18	14	16	63
9	Environment Act 2021 – Implications on Waste Collections	16	17	15	15	63
<b>The items below will be held in reserve</b>						
10	Development of Design Codes	13	16	14	17	60
11	Parking Strategy (Folkestone Town Centre and Harbour areas)	19	12	15	14	60
12	Customer Access Strategy	15	18	13	12	58
<b>The items below are statutory items and items referred from Council:</b>						
13	PREVENT & Safeguarding (statutory item)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
14	Otterpool Park LLP Business Plan	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
15	Removal of hoardings at Princes Parade (Petition presented to Council on 22 February 2023)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
16	Princes Parade to be abandoned and the site re-wilded (Petition presented to Council on 29 March 2023)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
17	Establish an FHDC Youth Council (Opposition Business presented to Council 29 March 2023)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

1.4 In addition to the items selected, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has a statutory requirement to act as the Council's Crime and Disorder

Committee and to meet for that purpose at least once a year. This item will also form part of the Committee's work programme.

- 1.5 There are also three items of business which have been added to the Scrutiny work plan as a result of work referred from Full Council. Both items will also form part of the Committee's work programme.
- 1.6 The work plan is drawn up on the basis that the Committee would consider two to three items per meeting, although there must be flexibility in the programme, to allow for any urgent items to be considered.
- 1.7 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to endorse the Scrutiny Workplan, prior to its consideration and endorsement at the Annual meeting of the Council on 24 May 2023.

## **2. LEGAL/FINANCIAL AND OTHER CONTROLS/POLICY MATTERS**

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

It is important for Overview and Scrutiny Committee to establish and agree a work programme. This will enable the Overview and Scrutiny committee to fulfil its constitutional and legal function.

### **2.2 Finance Officer's Comments (RH)**

There are no financial implications to this report.

### **2.3 Diversities and Equalities Implications (GE)**

There are no equalities implications directly arising from this report.

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

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

Jemma West – Committee Services Specialist  
Telephone: 01303 853369  
Email: [Jemma.west@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk](mailto:Jemma.west@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)

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

None.

## **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 – scores for all items.  
Appendix 2 - summary of each item

<b>Appendix 1 - list of all scores</b>					
<b>Item</b>	<b>High general public concern</b>	<b>Critical to council priorities and plans</b>	<b>High financial value</b>	<b>Risks in successful delivery</b>	<b>Total score</b>
<b>Rolled forward from previous work plan</b>					
HRA Business Plan	16	20	19	17	72
<b>Suggestions from Officers</b>					
Customer Access Strategy	15	18	13	12	58
Discretionary Rate Relief Policy	9	12	11	12	44
Write-off policy	12	14	14	9	49
Donated Memorial Bench Policy	16	6	7	8	37
Food Safety Enforcement Policy	17	14	9	9	49
Budget Strategy	15	18	14	16	63
Medium Term Financial Strategy -2022/23-2025/26	12	18	19	20	69
Carbon Action Plan	17	17	14	16	64
Environment Act 2021 – Implications on Waste Collections	16	17	15	15	63
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)	15	20	17	19	71
Finalisation and review of Folkestone Community Works (ERDF / ESF) Programme	10	11	12	13	46
Development of Design Codes	13	16	14	17	60
Review of Corporate Plan	17	20	16	19	72
End of programme review – High Streets Fund	13	13	18	12	56
Approach to summertime environmental patrols	16	12	10	11	49
Building Control - service delivery options	14	13	11	12	50
Securing appropriate future for Dungeness site: new nuclear technologies	13	12	14	17	56
Civic Centre relocation	16	17	17	18	68

Score 1-5  
5 Highest  
1 Lowest

Levelling Up Fund delivery	18	19	16	18	71
Coastal Engineering (how we work with environment agency/drainage board) and our involvement in coastal protection	14	13	11	13	51
Parking Strategy (Folkestone Town Centre and Harbour areas)	19	12	15	14	60
<b>Suggestions from Members</b>					
Member involvement in the prioritisation of projects to be funded by CIL	This item has also been put forward by officers. To score the item, please do so on that line.				
<b>Suggestions from the public and parish councils</b>					
Accessibility – disabled access for visitors and residents to Greatstone beach and other beaches across the district	18	12	9	10	49
Dog fouling across the district	20	11	9	9	49
Reliability of buses	18	6	7	8	39
Highways – action taken to address potholes	20	9	7	6	42
Improvements to empty shop fronts (in Hythe)	12	9	13	7	41
Seagull protected bins	15	10	9	7	41
Safety of public footpaths	18	11	8	9	46
Lack of protected cycle lanes (Cheriton High Street)	10	10	6	7	33
Parking enforcement approach (Car parks)	18	11	13	9	51
Council's use of New Homes Bonus grant	11	12	15	9	47
<b>Standing items</b>					
PREVENT & Safeguarding (statutory item)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Otterpool Park LLP Business Plan	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>Items added by Council</b>					
Removal of hoardings at Princes Parade (Petition presented to Council on 22 February 2023)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Princes Parade to be abandoned and the site re-wilded (Petition presented to Council on 29 March 2023)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Establish an FHDC Youth Council (Opposition Business presented to Council 29 March 2023)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

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## APPENDIX 2 – summary of each item

Topic	Summary description	Indicative date
<b>Rolled over from previous work plan</b>		
HRA Business Plan	The council is required to produce a comprehensive Business Plan for its housing stock. This item would provide an overview of the council's updated Housing Revenue Account Business Plan for the next 30 years.	June 2023
<b>Suggestions from Officers</b>		
Customer Access Strategy	The Customer Access Strategy sets out the council's relationship with customers and how it interacts with them. The current strategy was agreed in 2020 and is due for a refresh in 2023.	Sep/Nov 2023
Discretionary Rate Relief Policy	Councils have the power to grant discretionary rate relief to organisations that meet certain criteria. The policy is due to be refreshed in December 2023.	Sep/Nov 2023
Write-off policy	This policy defines the reasons why the Council chooses to write-off unrecovered debts. The policy is due to be refreshed in December 2023.	Sept/Nov 2023
Donated Memorial Bench Policy	This policy covers the management and donation of all memorial benches on FHDC assets across the district. It is due for renewal in January 2024.	Sept/Nov 2023
Food Safety Enforcement Policy	This policy was last reviewed in 2019. The FSA are still in the process of developing a new delivery model for regulating food hygiene and safety. They have indicated that the new implementation date will be sometime in 2024/25. It is planned that a review will be undertaken by 30/07/2023 to cover the interim period between now and when the new delivery model is implemented.	June 2023
Budget Strategy	The Budget Strategy sets out the guidelines for preparing the 2024/25 Budget. It supports delivery of the Corporate Plan and aligns with the direction and objectives of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).	Nov 23

Medium Term Financial Strategy -2022/23-2025/26	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 the various plans and strategies in financial terms over the four year period ending 31st March 2028. It covers both revenue, and revenue implications for capital spend, for the General Fund. Also included are the Council's reserves policies. The MTFS is a key element of sound corporate governance and financial management.	Nov 23
Carbon Action Plan	The Carbon Action Plan (CAP) is currently being reviewed by Carbon Descent, a consultancy commissioned by F&HDC to review the current Carbon Action Plan, quantify the tonnes of carbon equivalent (tCO <sub>2</sub> ) and identify if additional measures are required to reach net zero target.	Nov 2023
Environment Act 2021 – Implications on Waste Collections	This item will consider potential implications for operations contract and financial matters. The Environment Act introduces new powers for the Secretary of State to implement changes to how local authorities collect their recycling and general waste. It also introduces new schemes like Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) and Deposit Return Schemes (DRS) that are likely to impact on tonnages and the type of materials collected from households. Operational and financial implications are expected.	Nov 2023
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)	<i>This item was also put forward by a parish council and an elected member.</i>  To consider the way in which CIL monies are allocated, giving assurances that appropriate community input is sought for decisions determining use of CIL, and increasing community confidence in how decisions are made.	Jan 23
Finalisation and review of Folkestone Community Works (ERDF / ESF) Programme	The Folkestone Community Works Programme is investing ESIF (European Structural and Investment Funds) with match funding into central and east Folkestone with the aim to enhance the local economy. The programme has funded projects that seek to enhance opportunities for local residents and grow the local businesses sector. The programme started in January 2018 and was set to run until the end December 2022 but the deadline was extended to 30th June	June 23



	2023 by the Managing Authorities (DWP & DLUHC) in recognition of the impact of COVID.	
Design Codes	Local authorities are required to produce design codes as part of the Government's planning reforms. Design codes will be produced alongside new style local plans and will need to be consulted on at key stages of their development. This will be a significant additional burden on local authorities. Design codes will set out the general design principles and standards that development proposals should follow in the area, building on policies in the development plan. They are intended to communicate requirements in a visual way and should be informed by national guidance in the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code.	Feb 24
Review of Corporate Plan	The council's Corporate Plan, Creating Tomorrow Together 2021-2030, reflects the Council's priorities and aspirations for the District. It was implemented in 2020 and is due for review in 2024.	Jan 24
End of programme review – High Streets Fund	The High Streets Fund programme was approved and adopted by Cabinet in 2019 to support the delivery of regeneration projects within the district. The programme has now ended.	Jun/Sep 23
Approach to summer time environmental patrols	During the pandemic the council increased its level of environmental weekend patrols during the summer season. Patrols mainly focused on the coastal hotspots and covered a range of duties. In addition, the council also increased the level of evening inspections of licensed premises carried out by the Licensing Team. The staff resourcing and additional costs of working were funded from Covid support grants (e.g. COMF) provided by central government. With this funding now ending the council is reviewing the purpose of these patrols and the level of ongoing coverage.	June 23
Building Control - service delivery options	Officers are undertaking a review of the Building Control Service and will need member input on delivery model changes and in meeting F&H requirements for the new Building Safety Act.	June/Sep 23

Securing appropriate future for Dungeness site: new nuclear technologies.	AMR and SMR have increased the commercial interest and widened the scope for potential future uses of the Dungeness site. There could be role for the OSC in scrutinising proposals for the site and ensuring these maximise local economic opportunities while protecting the unique environment.	Sep 23
Civic Centre relocation	To consider proposals for the future relocation of the civic offices.	Nov 23
Levelling Up Fund delivery	To consider progress against delivery of the Levelling Up Fund project Folkestone - A Brighter Future, following the successful bid which was reported to Cabinet in February 2023.	January 2024
Coastal Engineering works (how we work with environment agency/drainage board) our involvement in coastal protection	An insight into Coastal Engineering works that the Council manages working with strategic partners to protect the District from flooding. How the work is funded and the type of work that is undertaken.	Sep/Nov 23
Parking Strategy	The emerging Parking Strategy considers current and future parking requirements in Folkestone Town Centre and Harbour areas.	Sep 23
<b>Suggestions from Members</b>		
Member involvement in the prioritisation of projects to be funded by CIL	The CIL has been put forward as a suggestion from officers, and this suggestion would be absorbed into the officer suggestion if scored within the top 12 items.	n/a
<b>Suggestions from the public and town/parish councils</b>		
Accessibility – disabled access for visitors and residents to Greatstone beach and other beaches in the district	A member of the public raised concerns about the lack of disabled access to Greatstone beach and asked that the council flatten out the hill that prevents access and make an entrance of some stable material that the disabled can walk/wheel on to reach the beach.	Jan 23

Dog fouling across the district	Consideration to be given to improved signage and enforcement action to ensure dog walkers pick up after their dogs, and more messages on social media to alert people of consequences if caught.	
Reliability of Buses	A member of the public raised concerns about the reliability of buses, particularly the number 17 bus, which when cancelled at night time leaves teenagers and those without a car completely stranded and isolated. KCC and Stagecoach would need to be consulted in order to review this matter.	Apr 23
Highways – potholes	A member of the public raised concerns about the number of potholes, and the potential damage to vehicles. KCC would need to be consulted in order to review this matter.	Apr 23
Improvements to empty shop fronts (Hythe)	A member of the public made a suggestion relating to improving empty shop fronts on Hythe High Street, similar to the art displayed in the 'Light Shop' in Folkestone. People would enjoy the atmosphere of Hythe more and would therefore shop in the local shops more, thus bringing in more profit and enabling Hythe to be more prosperous.	Jan 23
Seagull protected bins	A member of the public suggested that seagull proof bins be installed in towns, to stop the litter and mess.	Jun 23
Safety of public footpaths	A member of the public raised concerns about dangerous footpaths – particularly in darkness, where no street light reaches the footpaths because of the dense tree cover. Also damage to footpaths by overgrown tree roots. KCC would need to be consulted in order to review this matter.	Sep 23
Cycle lanes in the district	A member of the public raised concerns about the lack of protected cycle paths, particularly on Cheriton High Street.  In addition, the district council officers are proactively seeking to maximise the opportunity for walking and cycling investment, and have secured a number of funding streams to improve the walking and cycling networks, as well as technical resource from the DfT to assist in the collation of baseline data and the drafting of a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), and an update on this	Nov 23

	work could be given by officers if this topic is selected. KCC would also need to be consulted in order to review this matter.	
Parking enforcement approach (car parks)	A parish/town council raised this issue in order to consider the number of times action has been taken in terms of anti-social parking, and what impact this has had.	Apr 23
Council's use of New Homes Bonus grant	Two parish/town councils raised this matter, specifically in relation to consultation with town and parish councils. FHDC officers could provide some background on the policy in respect of the governments approach, and how the money is used.	Apr 23
<b>Standing items</b>		
<b>PREVENT &amp; Safeguarding (statutory item)</b>	In accordance with the Crime and Disorder (Overview and Scrutiny) Regulations 2009, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is required to act as the Crime and Disorder Committee on at least one occasion per year, where they will receive a presentation giving an update on PREVENT and safeguarding matters.	31 October 2023
Otterpool Park LLP Business Plan	The Otterpool LLP Business Plan is updated annually and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will scrutinise the updated Business Plan prior to its consideration at Cabinet.	November 23 / January 24
<b>Items added by Council</b>		
Removal of hoardings at Princes Parade (Petition presented to Council on 22 February 2023)	A petition with 325 signatures was presented to Council on 22 February 2023 asking that the hoardings around the Princes Parade site be removed. It was agreed that the Petition be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their observations before deciding whether to examine the issues raised by the petition.	June 23

# Agenda Item 8

This report will be made public  
on 17 April 2023



Report number

## OS/22/10

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**To:** Overview & Scrutiny Committee  
**Date:** 25 April 2023  
**Status:** Non-executive decision  
**Responsible Officer:** Amandeep Khroud, Assistant Director – Governance,  
Law and Regulatory Services

**Subject:** Annual report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2022/23

**SUMMARY:** This report sets out the work that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Finance and Performance Sub-Committee have completed during 2022/2023.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. To receive and note report OS/22/10.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This report sets out the work that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee have completed during the municipal year 2022/23.

## **2. WORK OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AND FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 22/23.**

- 2.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Finance and Performance Scrutiny Sub-Committee have considered a number of topics in the municipal year 22/23 which are set out in the Annual Report (Appendix 1 of this report)

## **3. LEGAL AND FINANCE COMMENTS**

### **3.1 Legal officer's comments**

There are no legal comments.

### **3.2 Finance officer's comments**

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

### **3.3 Diversities and equalities implications**

There are no diversity or equality implications arising directly from this report.

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

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

Jemma West Committee Services Specialist  
Telephone: 01303 853369  
E-mail: [jemma.west@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk](mailto:jemma.west@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)

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

None

Appendix 1 – Annual report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2022/23

# Annual report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2022–23

Folkestone & Hythe District Council



## Foreword by Overview & Scrutiny Chair Cllr Michelle Keutenius

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) performs an essential function for Folkestone & Hythe District Council (F&HDC). It helps to improve public policies and services by encouraging open, transparent, and accountable decision making, scrutinising proposals and decisions on matters of importance to the district.

Over the course of the year, OSC has focused on numerous policies, strategies, updates and plans. It has also scrutinised topics at the request of full council.

Recently OSC conducted a review of self-contained holiday lets and waste collection for holiday lets. After hearing from officers, OSC made comments and recommendations about how the council should deal with the matter.

On 7 February 2023, following a request from full council, OSC conducted a review into the circumstances surrounding traffic disruption experienced within the district. There was a focus on the first weekend of the school summer holidays, between 22 and 24 July 2022, when significant disruption was felt. The meeting was well attended by a number of relevant organisations, including representatives from local business, the Department for Transport, National Highways and senior officers from neighbouring councils and the emergency services.

Following a motion unanimously supported by full council, OSC held a dedicated Cost of Living Summit on 20 September 2022. More than 100 people from 60 different organisations were invited. During the event there were presentations from Andrew Hatcher, F&HDC's Revenues and Benefits Lead Specialist, Jon Wilson, Chief Executive

at Romney Marsh Community Hub and Sue Day, District Manager at Citizens Advice. The summit provided a dedicated opportunity for many local organisations to come together and discuss the challenges ahead as winter approached. This summit generated a number of action points that were taken forward by the council and partner organisations to help support local residents. As a result, support was more co-ordinated and given a higher profile, and in turn this helped to improve the reach and penetration of support offered across the district.

During the 2022/23 year OSC also received a detailed presentation regarding the Carbon Reduction Approach for the council's housing stock. OSC heard how the council had a programme of improvements that aimed to improve the housing stock to a minimum energy performance certificate rating of C by 2030, with the ambition to be net zero by 2050.

OSC has also scrutinised vital topics such as community safety, safeguarding, and conducted the Folkestone & Hythe Community Safety Partnership Annual Review.

This committee is a way for councillors to come together and ensure we are working in the best way possible for everyone in the district. OSC is not able to cover everything that is important to our residents, but I would encourage residents to take the opportunity to submit suggested topics for the committee to consider.

### **Councillor Michelle Keutenius**

*Chairman of the Folkestone and Hythe  
Overview and Scrutiny Committee*





# Overview and Scrutiny Committee

F&HDC decisions are largely made by the council leader and cabinet under a scheme of delegation set out in the council's constitution. The OSC is made up of non-cabinet members and its membership is politically balanced, drawing on the input from all parties that make up the council. Members scrutinise and review the council's decisions, considers how it makes policy to shape the resulting policy framework, examines how the council performs against key targets and indicators in deploying its budget, and investigates specific issues affecting the district.

The committee can:

- Question cabinet's decisions
- Make its own recommendations to Cabinet
- Ask the cabinet and other decision-makers to reconsider decisions
- Refer a decision to the Full Council (known as a call-in)

Call-in usually refers to key decisions, i.e. those with a significant impact on finance or local communities, it is a powerful tool in supporting local democracy.

O&S has met nine times during the 2022/23 year and considered 26 items. A summary is given below:

## 26 April 2022

- OSC agreed its annual report for 2021-22
- A work programme was agreed for 2022-23
- Income and Debt Management Policy – the committee provided feedback on the policy proposal, shaping it, before it went to cabinet for adoption
- Dog Control Public Spaces Protection Order – the committee considered the proposals and provided comments that were included in the consultation process, shaping the ultimate outcome of the Order
- Anti-Social Behaviour Public Spaces Protection Order – the committee received an update on the proposals and provided comments that were included in the consultation process, shaping the ultimate outcome of the Order
- Housing Repairs and Maintenance Policy and Rechargeable Repairs Policy – OSC reviewed the policies and made recommendations to cabinet which influenced the final policy framework

## 31 May 2022

- Otterpool Park Stewardship – the committee received an update on the emerging strategy to provide long term stewardship at Otterpool Park. The committee gave considerable input and requested that the item be bought back for consideration when further information became available
- Levelling Up Fund – the presentation included an overview of the Levelling Up Fund proposal, a summary of the priority projects in the Folkestone Place Plan, a report on engagement with stakeholders, and the selection of projects to be included in the F&HDC submission. OSC’s support was critical in council decision-making on the matter and the ultimate outcome was a successful award of around £20m funds made from DLUCH
- UK Shared Prosperity Fund – following a presentation, OSC highlighted a number of areas for consideration to ensure that the fund was allocated appropriately to maximise the impact of the available funds

## 13 July 2022

### EXTRAORDINARY MEETING

- Call-in of decision number 22/015; High Street Fund – following OSC’s scrutiny of how grants were awarded, it agreed that the proposed improvements to the process should be immediately implemented and that these should apply to all council grant programmes.

## 6 September 2022

- Cost of Living Summit – OSC agreed the arrangements for a Cost of Living Summit. The successful summit took place on 20 September 2022 drawing on a wide range of local partners
- Ship Street, development of the design brief – OSC received an update on the strategy to provide housing- led regeneration of the former gas works site. The committee strongly supported the proposals and emphasised that the buildings needed to be future-proofed in terms of energy performance and quality
- Otterpool Park Stewardship - the presentation built upon the themes and issues considered at the meeting in May 2022, and detailed the development of a bespoke stewardship vehicle
- Draft Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) update – OSC considered the work carried out to update the SCI and offered suggestions on how to engage most effectively with groups and residents across the district

## 26 October 2023

## EXTRAORDINARY MEETING

- Safeguarding Update – OSC received an update on the council’s important safeguarding activity since the committee approved the safeguarding policy in November 2021
- Folkestone & Hythe Community Safety Partnership Annual Review – each year the OSC acts as the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel, its aim is to ensure that the partnership is working effectively and extensive discussion took place with a wide range of partners to review activities of the past 12 months. Recommendations were made that shaped the work and actions of the Partnership

## 8 November 2023

- Otterpool Park LLP Business Plan 2023-24 – during consideration of the strategic business plan, OSC looked back at the progress achieved to date, and its future priorities. It provided opportunity for Members to scrutinise those activities and proposed plans
- Medium Term Financial Strategy – OSC considered the strategy and offered suggestions on how to encourage public engagement during the budget consultation on this important financial document
- Cost of Living Summit – OSC reviewed the event and offered suggestions about how to implement some of the actions arising from it
- Petition concerning closure of the footpath south of Seaview Bridge, Hythe – OSC thoroughly reviewed the circumstances that brought about the petition. They agreed that the path should be closed when works commenced

## 17 January 2023

- Assistance for parish and town Councils with moving on illegal encampments – OSC had a detailed presentation on the matter and how illegal encampments are dealt with. Members suggested that an information sheet be produced outlining the processes and support available to parish and town councils from F&HDC to aid communication
- Housing - OSC received a detailed presentation that proposed the strategic priorities and themes for the Housing Revenue Account 30-year Business Plan and Housing Carbon Reduction Approach. Members agreed with the priorities and supported efforts to reduce the carbon emissions arising from the council’s housing stock while improving energy efficiency

- Operation Brock, Holiday Traffic Disruption – more than 15 organisations attended a detailed review of the significant disruption and scrutinised the various actions taken by a wide number of organisations. OSC’s comments from the review were submitted to the county-wide Operation Fennel review to convey, in strongest possible terms, the extent of and local impacts arising from the disruption

**14 February 2023**

- Princes Parade (motion from full council) – OSC noted the lessons learnt arising from the delivery of large complex capital schemes and made a number of recommendations in relation to the type of reports considered by cabinet and the Audit and Governance Committee, communication with councillors, expertise of resources, and risk training
- Homes for Ukraine Scheme update – OSC received a detailed presentation about the work that had taken place over the year and the priorities for 2023 to support those from Ukraine residing in the district
- Review of self-contained holiday lets and waste collection for holiday let businesses – (referred from full council) – OSC scrutinised the matter and asked for an update once the relevant small businesses in the district had been contacted to remind them about the requirement to have a commercial waste collection arrangement in place

## Finance and Performance Scrutiny Sub-Committee

This sub-committee of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was created in October 2020 to scrutinise the council's performance against key performance indicators (KPIs) and financial monitoring data against the budget. It makes recommendations to the main committee, where appropriate, which is also reported to Cabinet in support of their decision-making.

The sub-committee comprises five councillors who are drawn from the OSC membership, currently there is one vacant position.

### Review of the year from Chairman, Cllr Connor McConville

The sub-committee has met six times during the year and considered 17 items. The sub-committee gives councillors the time to consider and analyse often sizable financial and performance-based reports and provides the opportunity to ask probing questions.

Just like OSC, the sub-committee does not exist to make decisions, instead it holds the council to account with regards to its budget process and overall performance. I believe that the work of the sub-committee has proven beneficial to council operations this year.

I would like to thank those councillors who have sat on the sub-committee this year and all the officers who have provided insight and information through well-written reports and attendance at meetings.

#### 14 June 2022

- Annual Performance Report 2021/22 and Draft KPIs 2022/23
- General Fund Capital Programme Outturn 2021/22
- Housing Revenue Account Revenue and Capital Financial Outturn 2021/22
- General Fund Revenue 2021/22 Provisional Outturn

#### 11 October 2022

- Quarter 1 Performance Report 2022/23
- General Fund Revenue Budget Monitoring - 2nd Quarter 2022/23
- General Fund Capital Programme Budget Monitoring 2022/23
- Housing Revenue Account Budget Monitoring Quarter 2

## **6 December 2022**

- 2022-23 Quarter 2 Performance Report
- Budget Strategy 2023/24

## **10 January 2023**

- General Fund Capital Budget Monitoring 2022/23
- Quarter 3 22/23 General Fund Revenue Budget Monitoring
- Quarter 3 22/23 Housing Revenue Account Budget Monitoring
- General Fund Revenue Detailed Draft Budget 2023/24
- Housing Revenue Account Draft Budget 2023/24
- Update to the General Fund Medium Term Capital Programme to 2027/28

## **7 March 2023**

- 2022-23 Quarter 3 Performance Report



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