

## **Folkestone & Hythe District and Parish Councils' Joint Committee**

Held at:	Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Folkestone
Date	Thursday, 16 January 2020
Present	Councillors Graham Allison, Laszlo Dudas, Frank Hobbs, Mrs Jennifer Hollingsbee, Neil Matthews and Martin Sweeney
Apologies for Absence	Councillors Emily Arnold-Newing, Terence Mullard and Paul Thomas
Officers Present:	Paul Butler (Elections Manager), Kate Clark (Committee Services Officer), Gavin Edwards (Policy and Improvements Officer), Katharine Harvey (Chief Economic Development Officer), Cheryl Ireland (Lead Accountant) and Charlotte Spendley (Director of Corporate Services), Karen Weller (Environmental Health Team Leader)

Others Present:

**13. Appointment of chairman**

Councillor Mrs Jenny Hollingsbee was appointed Chairman for the meeting.

**14. Declarations of interest**

Councillor Martin Sweeney declared an interest in respect of agenda item 8 as his wife owns a shop in New Romney high street.

**15. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting dated 19 September 2019 were submitted, approved and signed by the Chairman.

**16. Budget Strategy and Draft General Fund Budget 2020/21**

Report FH/19/01 set out the Council's Draft General Fund Budget for 2020/21 as well as summarising the overall Budget Strategy for the same period. The report outlined the proposals being consulted upon.

In accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1992 full Council will consider and agree the budget and council tax for the coming financial year 2020/21, this meeting will be held on 19 February 2020. Both the draft budget and the budget strategy will build into the final position which is also affected by the Local Government Finance Settlement.

Miss Cheryl Ireland, Lead Accountant, presented the report to members.

Mrs Charlotte Spendley, Director of Corporate Services, advised members that a public consultation is currently running on budget proposals and comments are welcomed. The Budget Consultation Questionnaire can be found on the Council's website. Contact details for Mrs Spendley will be circulated to members if they wish to contact her directly.

Members resolved to receive and note report FH/19/01.

#### 17. **Highlights of the work carried out to reduce dog fouling offences**

Mrs Karen Weller, Environmental Health Team Leader, gave a briefing on the work carried out in reducing dog fouling as well as highlighting other work carried out by the Environmental Enforcement officers.

Members noted the following:

- Three officers make up the team, one senior and two enforcement officers, there is a possibility of extra recruitment shortly.
- Pop-up events, these are carried out during the year, 6 in total. These serve to educate and inform residents as well as discuss any issues around dog and owner behaviour. The health aspects of dog fouling not being cleared are also explained
- Seasonal patrols are made early morning and late evenings to track offenders. Enforcement and prosecution can only happen if an officer witnesses a dog fouling, an owner ignoring it and walking away
- Repeat offenders can be reported online and Mrs Weller was keen to ask for any help Parish Councils can give. CCTV can be another method of enforcement however, the offender needs to be recognised in the footage.
- For information dog fouling prosecutions remain low although dogs off leads/banned area offences are higher with 7 confirmed offences already in 2020.
- If an offender is caught a Fixed Penalty Notice will be issued, if payment is not received then the case is taken to prosecution. The name of the offender will be publicised thereafter. If the FPN is paid within the correct timescales then details are publicised excluding personal details.

Mrs Weller was keen to point out that a positive approach to dog fouling is important, in this respect residents are thanked for picking up after their dogs

and congratulated on keeping the area clean and tidy.

Turning to other enforcement activities, members were advised that the officers also deal with flytipping, flyposting, smoking in commercial vehicles, black sacks on pavements, waste bins out too early and ensuring correct signage is displayed.

Members were reminded that information on a wide range of environmental issues are on the Council's website, problems or offences can be reported online.

## 18. **Parish By-Elections**

Mr Paul Butler, Democratic Services & Elections Lead Specialist, gave a presentation on Parish By-Elections. The presentation is attached to these minutes.

A by-election will usually be triggered by a parish council vacancy as well as being dependent on a contested status. An uncontested election is a situation when the amount of valid nominations received does not reach or exceed the amount of vacant seats.

Mr Butler went through the legislative timescales, staffing, polling day and count and recharge costs to Parish Councils. He explained that a by-election is planned based on a 100% turnout.

Savings can be made for example, no printing or distribution of polling cards, minimum van rental costs and lowering staffing levels. This, of course, has to be balanced against transparency to our residents and the satisfaction of the Returning Officer, who has a personal liability to complete any election successfully.

Parish Council members were keen to keep by-election costs as low as possible, however, Mr Butler did explain that the processes are set by legislation and interpreted by guidance from the Electoral Commission, costs are set by the Kent Scale of Fees schedule which is reviewed annually by the Kent Chief Executives and passed through Council. He is aware that electoral legislation is outdated and there is a plan for an electoral law review to be undertaken by the Electoral Commission which would incorporate a review of filling casual vacancies. The date of this review is not set and will be carried out independently with little or no involvement of the Elections team at Folkestone & Hythe District Council.

Costs and timescales were discussed further, the committee has asked if information with regard to costs could be circulated, Mr Butler to action this request.

19. **High Street Fund Initiative**

Dr Katharine Harvey, Chief Economic Development Officer, gave a presentation on the High Street Fund Initiative. The presentation is attached to these minutes.

Dr Harvey explained the benefits and process for named towns within the district with a £3M fund available. A mixture of applications had been received with an emphasis on promoting towns. High Streets need to adapt for the future which could mean attracting services other than just retail.

Points mentioned:

- Promotion and encouragement from Folkestone and Hythe towns to visit smaller towns.
- Possibility of information boards in areas such as Lyminge, Sellindge and Postling.
- Promotion of other areas, ie seafronts in the district.

Dr Harvey welcomed applications, however did say that projects need to be appropriate for the area. The Council are very pro-active and resources are available.

It was confirmed the start date was 1 October 2019 and steady progress has been made receiving and processing applications, the closing date is fairly open ended although a maximum of three years or until funding is exhausted.

The Chairman, with the agreement from members thanked all officers for attending and providing informative and interesting information to all agenda items. She pointed out that committee members are welcome to suggest items for future meetings, although this is also covered in the bi-monthly KALC meetings.