

Folkestone & Hythe District and Parish Councils' Joint Committee

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

1. **Appointment of chairman**

Proposed by Councillor Mrs Jenny Hollingsbee
Seconded by Councillor Paul Thomas

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Frank Hobbs be appointed Chairman for the meeting.

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

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

3. **Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

4. **Minutes**

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

5. Grounds Maintenance Presentation

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

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

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

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

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

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

6. The Council Housing Landlord Service

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

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

Members raised the following points:

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

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

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

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

7. **Any Other Business**

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