

## **Update Report for Parishes, from Christopher Hesse, Kent County Councillor for Elham Valley, 6 September 2025**

### **Local Government Reorganisation**

Kent's Leaders from the district councils and KCC met on 3 September 2025 to determine which of seven options for the future structure of local government in Kent should go forward for detailed appraisal by consultants KPMG. The districts selected an option involving three unitary authorities and one with four unitaries to be appraised. KCC's option was not favoured by the districts. KCC will now commit to undertaking a detailed business case for its favoured model, which it believes will compare well against the other two options. The KCC option involves the creation of one Unitary Council ('Kent Council') that includes three Area Assemblies. In addition, there would be Parish, Town or Community Councils at local level. With this option, there would be no need for a Strategic Mayoral Authority. Hence, this proposal would be less expensive, easier to establish and have a mix of local and strategic capability compared to the other options. It would also have only two tiers, rather than the three tiers being put forward by districts.

Submissions from Kent are due to be made to government by 28 November. KCC is keen to consult widely on the proposals. Every one of Kent's district council Leaders stated or voted that they did not wish the joint consultation to ask whether the public and stakeholders believe there is a need for major restructure of local government in Kent; whether cost should be a major consideration in any restructure, and whether Kent residents would be prepared to pay more in Council Tax due to reorganisation. These questions will be asked by KCC as a core part of its consultation.

### **Road Repairs**

KCC has earmarked £67 million for new road repairs, including carrying out a record number of pothole repairs. Recent road repairs and resurfacing works in Elham Valley have included Spitfire Way, Hawkinge, the High Street in Etchinghill, and a section of Stone Street (B2086) near Petham.

### **KCC Budget Consultation**

Please do take part in the consultation regarding the KCC budget for 2026/27. Currently, it looks as though KCC will have to find a further £50 million in savings and income in that year to balance the books. The public is being asked where savings should be made and which services should be protected. The consultation ends on 29 September 2025.

### **Home to School Transport for Special Needs Children**

New software is being implemented to simplify journey planning and make savings where possible.

### **Women and Girls Safety Partnership**

KCC is establishing a new working relationship with the organisation with a number of initiatives being planned to make our streets safer for women and girls in Kent.

**Savings**

KCC has announced more than £40 million of new savings from its future spend, in addition to £45 million of revenue savings achieved to date in 2025/26 and debt reduction of £16 million, following the difficult financial position that the new Reform administration inherited from the outgoing administration at County Hall.

**Property and Land Disposals**

KCC has a legal duty to dispose of any land and property that is surplus to its needs. KCC is stepping up its disposals work in order to strengthen its reserves.

**Small Member Community Grants**

Small grants in the region of £250 to £500 are available for community events and activities. Voluntary sector and not-for-profit organisations who wish to explore whether they could receive a grant should contact Christopher Hesse on [Christopher.Hesse@kent.gov.uk](mailto:Christopher.Hesse@kent.gov.uk)

**District Councillor Report** – jennyhollingsbee@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk

**Folkestone – A Brighter Future** - As you probably know Bouverie Square is returning to its former use as a garden square and a new linear bus station is being created. The current Folkestone bus station will close on Saturday 20 September. To minimise service disruption temporary bus stops will operate from 21 September while this work is completed. Stagecoach has created a diagram displaying the positions of these new temporary stops and the routes using them. You can view this diagram and find out more about bus services on the dedicated page on the Stagecoach website.

**Stelling Minnis Windmill** – the Windmill’s restoration is nearing the end of its 2 year refurbishment and is included in the Folkestone and Hythe Heritage Open Day festivals. The Windmill will be open as usual on Sunday 21 September from 12:00 noon until 17:00 as part of the Heritage Open Day festival. There will be the usual cream teas and tours around the Windmill and subject to weather a few classic cars! For further information visit [Stelling Minnis Windmill - Celebrating recent major refurbishment and almost 50 Years of being open to the public!](#)

### **Local Government Re-organisation –**

At a recent meeting the fourteen Kent Leaders, or their nominated representatives, met virtually to agree which two LGR models should be worked up to full business cases by November. Following extensive analysis of the seven potential models that had been short-listed from the long-list of ten, two models were agreed by consensus to progress:

- The 3 unitary authority model – which puts F&H district in the East cluster with Canterbury, Thanet, Dover and Ashford (known as the 3a model); and
- A 4 unitary authority model – which puts F&H district with Ashford and Swale (known as the 4b model).

Other models of different configurations were proposed and discussed but did not have support from the majority to progress through the collaborative workstream co-ordinated by KPMG. However, Medway and Kent Councils, (at their own expense) have decided to put forward their own specific models for analysis.

### **Annual Canvass**

Residents will be receiving an email or a paper form to check that their details on the electoral register are up to date, following the

launch of the canvass for 2025. Those required to respond will receive email and telephone reminders or a house call in October and November from an electoral canvasser.