

Folkestone Town Council

MINUTES of the Full Council Meeting held at the Town Hall, Folkestone on Thursday, 22 January 2026 at 7.00 p.m.

TOWN COUNCILLORS PRESENT:

Councillors Lucy McGirr, Abena Akuffo-Kelly, Christine Dickinson, Nicola Keen, Kieran Leigh, Adrian Lockwood, Jane Darling, Connor McConville, Liz McShane (7:16pm), Laura Davison, Peter Gane, Tim Prater, Jackie Meade, John Renshaw, Belinda Walker, Roger West.

APOLOGIES:

Councillors Bridget Chapman and Charles Bain Smith.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Toni Brenchley (Town Clerk)
Karen Palmer (Finance Officer/Deputy Town Clerk)
Jennifer Griffin (Administration Officer)
Ian Bishop (Town Sergeant)

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC:

9

No questions were received.

2193. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Bridget Chapman, Charles Bain Smith and a partial Apology from Councillor Liz McShane.

RESOLVED: To accept the apologies from Councillors Bridget Chapman, Charles Bain Smith and a partial Apology from Councillor Liz McShane.

Proposed: Councillor Nicola Keen
Seconded: Councillor Belinda Walker
Voting: F: 15, Ag: 0, Ab: 0

2194. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following Councillors declared an interest as District Councillors in Item 2206 – Councillors Laura Davison, Tim Prater, Nicola Keen, Belinda Walker, Abena Akuffo-Kelly, Jackie Meade.

Councillor Connor McConville declared an interest in Item 2206, both as a District Councillor and as Cabinet Member for Assets and Local Government Reorganisation.

Councillor Tim Prater declared an interest as a KCC Councillor in Item 2210.

Councillor Jackie Meade declared an interest as a past KCC Councillor in Item 2210.

2195. MINUTES

Council was asked to receive and authorise the Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on 13 November 2025 and to ask the Town Mayor to sign them as a correct record.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on 13 November 2025 be received and signed with the following amendment to Item 2190 - “Councillors expressed disappointment at the absence of reports from other KCC Councillors.”

Proposed: Councillor Kieran Leigh

Seconded: Councillor Nicola Keen

Voting: F: 15, Ag: 0, Ab: 0

2196. MAYOR’S COMMUNICATIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Town Mayor gave a brief overview of activities in relation to the Mayoralty since the last Full Council Meeting.

2197. MINUTES OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

Council was asked to receive Minutes of the Planning Committee Meetings held on the 6 November 2025 and 4 December 2025.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Planning Committee Meetings of 6 November 2025 and 4 December 2025 be received.

Proposed: Councillor Christine Dickinson

Seconded: Councillor John Renshaw

Voting: F: 15, Ag: 0, Ab: 0

2198. MINUTES OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Council was asked to receive the Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee Meeting held on the 23 October 2025.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee Meeting of 23 October 2025 be received.

Proposed: Councillor Connor McConville

Seconded: Councillor Jackie Meade

Voting: F: 15, Ag: 0, Ab: 0

2199. MATTERS AND RESOLUTIONS FROM COMMITTEES

Councillors noted the resolutions.

- i) **Finance and General Purposes Committee**
Noted

2200. OUTSIDE BODIES

i) Following the resignation of one FTC representative on the John Bowley & Sherwood Almshouses Charity, Councillors were asked to put forward a replacement representative for a four-year term.

PROPOSAL: That Councillor Nicola Keen be elected as the FTC representative on the John Bowley & Sherwood Almshouses Charity for a four year term.

Proposed: Councillor Peter Gane

Seconded: Councillor Jackie Meade

Voting: F: 6, Ag: 0, Ab: 1

This Motion was lost.

RESOLVED: That Councillor Lucy McGirr be elected as the FTC representative on the John Bowley & Sherwood Almshouses Charity for a four year term.

Proposed: Councillor Jane Darling

Seconded: Councillor Laura Davison

Voting: F: 8, Ag: 0, Ab: 1

ii) The Council received verbal reports from Councillors as Council representatives on the following outside bodies:

Councillor Jane Darling gave a Report on Kent Association of Local Councils.

Councillor Roger West gave a brief update on John Bowley & Sherwood Almshouses Charity.

Councillor Adrian Lockwood gave a brief update on the Etaples/Folkestone Twinning Association.

Councillor Belinda Walker gave a brief update on the Cinque Ports.

Councillors Roger West and Lucy McGirr gave a brief update on the Folkestone Municipal Charity.

Councillor Peter Gane gave a brief update on Folke About Town.

Councillor Abena Akuffo-Kelly gave an update on the Nepalese/Folkestone Twinning Association.

Councillor Belinda Walker gave an update on the Folkestone Community Forum

2201. KENT COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S UPDATES

KCC Councillors were invited to provide updates. An update was received from Councillor Tim Prater, Member for Cheriton, Sandgate & Hythe East.

Councillor Liz McShane arrived at 7:16pm

2202. FOLKESTONE TOWN COUNCIL BUDGET AND PRECEPT 2026/27

To review **Report C/26/408** which concludes the budget making process for the Town Council's precept requirements for 2026/27. The proposed budget is £1,140,370 and precept to be decided.

RESOLVED: To defer this item until the end of the Meeting.

Proposed: Councillor Connor McConville

Seconded: Councillor Abena Akuffo-Kelly

Voting: F: 16, Ag: 0, Ab: 0

2203. SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS 2026-27

Council was asked to consider a proposal to merge the Community Services Committee with the Climate and Environment Committee to form a single committee. The purpose of the merger to streamline governance, reduce duplication of work, and better integrate community-focused and environmental initiatives.

RESOLVED: To merge the Community Services Committee with the Climate and Environment Committee, holding 6 Meetings a year. The Terms of Reference for the amalgamated Committee to include strategic long-term planning for Climate Change.

Proposed: Councillor Peter Gane
Seconded: Councillor Laura Davison
Voting: F: 15, Ag: 1, Ab: 0

RESOLVED: An updated Schedule of Meetings, reflecting these changes, alongside the new Term of Reference be brought to the Full Council Meeting in March.

Proposed: Councillor Peter Gane
Seconded: Councillor Lucy McGirr
Voting: F: 16, Ag: 0, Ab: 0

2204. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Council was asked to adopt the following policies:

- Risk Management Policy
- IT Policy

RESOLVED:

i) **To adopt the Risk Management Policy.**

Proposed: Councillor Roger West
Seconded: Councillor Belinda Walker
Voting: F: 16, Ag: 0, Ab: 0

ii) **To defer voting on the IT Policy until the Full Council Meeting in March, in order for the Town Clerk to make the requested amendments to the Policy.**

Proposed: Councillor Abena Akuffo-Kelly
Seconded: Councillor Jackie Meade
Voting: F: 16, Ag: 0, Ab: 0

2205. CCTV UPGRADE

Report C/26/407 outlined the need for replacement of existing CCTV cameras in the Coastal Park that failed a recent performance review and extension of the CCTV system to Bouverie Park. Council was asked to consider the recommendations.

RESOLVED:

1) **Receive and note Report C/26/407.**

- 2) Approve the replacement of the Coastal Park Cameras.
- 3) Approve the extension of the current CCTV system to cover the new Bouverie Park.
- 4) To accept funds from F&HDC Community Safety Partnership (CSP) in the sum of £5,000 towards the costs of CCTV maintenance, uplift and repairs.
- 5) To accept funds from Folkestone A Brighter Future (FABF) in the sum of £5,954.68 for CCTV provision that fall within the project scope.

Proposed: Councillor Connor McConville

Seconded: Councillor Laura Davison

Voting: F: 16, Ag: 0, Ab: 0

2206. LGR/POTENTIAL ASSET TRANSFER

Report C/26/406 provided an update on discussions with Folkestone & Hythe District Council regarding the potential transfer of assets. Addressing four key areas: the Folkestone Parks & Pleasure Grounds Charity, public toilets, play area freehold transfers, and the Tanlade Charity. Council was asked to consider the recommendations.

RESOLVED:

- 1) Receive and note report C/26/406
- 2) Prepare to engage with F&HDC on the framework for transferring stand-alone toilets and review financial implications once data is provided.
- 3) Prepare to engage with F&HDC if the transfer of the Freeholds to FTC is deemed feasible.
- 4) Continue to express interest in remaining open spaces.
- 5) To accept the transfer of the Tanlade Charity and associated building.

Proposed: Councillor Tim Prater

Seconded: Councillor Nicola Keen

Voting: F: 15, Ag: 0, Ab: 1

2207. CIL CONSULTATION

Feedback from the public consultation inviting residents, community groups and local businesses to share their views on how Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding should be allocated, was presented for Council's consideration.

RESOLVED: To move discussions on how Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding should be allocated to the Community Services and Climate & Environment Committees.

Proposed: Councillor Lucy McGirr

Seconded: Councillor Connor McConville

Voting: F: 16, Ag: 0, Ab: 0

2208. COMMONWEALTH FLAGS

Report C/26/405 outlined the rationale, benefits, and practical considerations for flying the Commonwealth Flag. Council was asked to consider the recommendations.

RESOLVED:

- 1) To receive and note report C/26/405**
- 2) To approve the raising of the Commonwealth Flag in the Garden of Remembrance on Commonwealth Day each year, subject to F&HDC approval.**
- 3) Council to consider the cost and practicality of installing the flags of the Commonwealth across the street using the existing overhead wire infrastructure for a suitable period for the Commonwealth Games.**

Proposed: Councillor Peter Gane

Seconded: Councillor Lucy McGirr

Voting: F: 13, Ag: 0, Ab: 3

2209. SOUTHERN WAY PLAY PARK

Following a resolution at the F&GP Meeting on 1 September 2022, the final Heads of Terms agreed with Southern Water were presented for Council to consider approving.

RESOLVED: To approve the signing of the final Heads of Terms agreed with Southern Water.

Proposed: Councillor Connor McConville

Seconded: Councillor Jackie Meade

Voting: F: 16, Ag: 0, Ab: 0

2210. GRACE HIL LIBRARY

On 13 January 2026, Kent County Council endorsed the decision to exit the Grace Hill building and progress market disposal in-line with adopted policy

and provide the library and registration facility for the foreseeable future at 14 Sandgate Road in Folkestone town centre. Councillors were invited to consider the matter and provide their views.

Councillors moved a vote of thanks to those members of the community who have worked so hard for Grace Hill Library, with particular mention of the "Save Our Library" campaign.

RESOLVED: This Council notes with regret that Kent County Council's GET Cabinet Committee of 13 January endorsed the proposed decision to progress with open market disposal of the Grace Hill building.

This Council considers that the Grace Hill building was a gift to Folkestone and should be retained as a community building.

This Council remains strongly supportive of the bid submitted by Creative Folkestone working with One Folkestone and other community groups. The bid proposed a partnership with Kent County Council alongside community partners which would secure funds to regenerate the building, develop its community, creative and educational functions, secure its long-term future and take a long-term lease on the building.

This council notes Kent County Council claim they are seeking to auction the building to remove their exposure to ongoing costs of retaining the building.

This Council further notes the considerable risk that if the building goes to auction and is sold to an unknown third party, the ability to bring the building back to community use will be lost.

This Council understands that there are costs and risks associated with maintaining the Grace Hill building and in owning a Grade 2 listed building. We also understand that Grace Hill is a hugely important community asset in Folkestone and believe we should attempt to secure its long-term ownership by and for our community.

This Council resolves that we will make an offer to Kent County Council to buy the freehold of the building. This offer will be made prior to the building going to auction and will require KCC removing the building from auction. This Council understands it would become responsible for ongoing building costs from the point of purchase.

In view of the known condition of the building, the liability and risk this Council will face, this Council resolves to offer a peppercorn sum for the freehold of the building and site. Council delegates the Town Clerk

to proceed, in consultation with the Chairs of F&GP and Community Services Committees. Any final agreement will be laid before Full Council before signing.

This Council further resolves that if our purchase is agreed, we will:

- seek to reduce the running costs as much as possible;
- look to some meantime use of areas of the building to mitigate costs;
- work alongside Creative Folkestone and other community partners to deliver its vision for the building, including gaining the grant support required to make it viable;
- Work to return accessible library services to Grace Hill where they belong.

Proposed: Councillor Tim Prater

Seconded: Councillor Nicola Keen

Voting: F: 16, Ag: 0, Ab: 0

2211. FOLKESTONE TOWN COUNCIL BUDGET AND PRECEPT 2026/27 – DEFERRED FROM ITEM 2202

To review **Report C/26/408** which concludes the budget making process for the Town Council's precept requirements for 2026/27. The proposed budget is £1,140,370 and precept to be decided.

- RESOLVED:**
- 1) To receive and note **Report C/26/408**
 - 2) To approve a Town Council budget of £1,145,367 for 2026/27.
 - 3) To confirm a Precept of £1,126,367 for 2026/27, in accordance with the provisions in Sections 39,41 and 50 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992. This equates to a Council Tax 4.08% increase and a Band D household Council Tax of £73.99 (£1.43 per week) – this is an increase of £2.90 which equates to 6p per week
 - 4) To authorise the Town Mayor to sign the Precept demand form.
 - 5) £19,000 use of Reserves has also been approved to pay for IT improvements.

Proposed: Councillor Connor McConville

Seconded: Councillor Abena Akuffo-Kelly

Voting: F: 15, Ag: 0, Ab: 1

2212. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Thursday, 12 March 2026 at 7pm – Ordinary Full Council Meeting.

The meeting concluded at 8:41pm.

.....**Town Mayor**