Folkestone & Hythe District Council

Agenda

Meeting: **Council**
Date: **26 November 2025**
Time: **7.00 pm**
Place: **Council Chamber - Civic Centre Folkestone**

To: **All Members of the Council**

YOU ARE HEREBY SUMMONED to attend a meeting of the Council on the date and at the time shown above.

Anyone who wishes to have information on any matter arising on the Agenda which is not fully covered in these papers is requested to give notice prior to the meeting to the Chair or appropriate officer.

This meeting will be webcast live to the council's website at https://folkestone-hythe.public-i.tv/core/portal/home.

Please note there will be 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.

Dr Susan Priest
Chief Executive

1. **Apologies for Absence**

2. **Declarations of Interest (Pages 7 - 8)**

Queries about the agenda? Need a different format?

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Email: committee@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk or download from our website
www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk

Date of Publication: Tuesday, 18 November 2025

Members of the Council should declare any discloseable pecuniary interest or any other significant interests in any item/s on this agenda.

3. **Minutes (Pages 9 - 16)**

To receive the minutes of the meeting of the council held on 1 October 2025 and to authorise the Chair of the Council to sign them as a correct record.

4. **Chair's Communications**

5. **Petitions**

There are no petitions to be presented.

6. **Questions from the Public**

1. **From Ms K Scott to Councillor Connor McConville, Cabinet Member for Assets and Local Government Reorganisation**

Could you tell me who is responsible for upkeeping the Marine Crescent Stairs which run down from the Leas to Marine Crescent? Since the closure of the Road of Remembrance they are signposted as one of the ways down to the harbour and are used the residents the of Marine Crescent and Parade. They are currently unlit, and in a state of disrepair, strewn with rubbish. Lastly, there are currently 2 tents erected on the paths that are closed off half way down and people living there - can the council please do something about this please?

2. **From Ms H Phelps to Councillor P Blakemore, Cabinet Member for Transport, Regulatory Services and Building Control**

Can a bike rack be installed at Marine Crescent, Marine Parade, Folkestone? I have contacted Kent County Council for the granting of a BikeHanger but that decision has been delayed and deferred and highly unlikely to happen.

3. **From Ms J Verona to Councillor J Martin, Cabinet Member for Otterpool Park and Planning Policy**

We have a problem with foul smelling drains at the rear of Marine crescent. Is the waste water and sewage from Shoreline development being discharged into existing drains used by Marine crescent ? If so this could be the cause of the smell.

4. **From Mr P Jones to Connor McConville, Cabinet Member for Assets and Local Government Reorganisation**

Can you please clarify the councils position on maintenance of the front gardens surrounding Marine Crescent and what the expectation of said groundsworks should look like throughout the calendar year please?

7. **Questions from Councillors**

(Questions can be found on www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk from noon 2 days before the meeting, on Modern.gov, under the agenda for this meeting).

Up to 45 minutes is allowed for questions from councillors.

8. **Announcements of the Leader of the Council**

To receive a report from the Leader of the Council on the business of the cabinet and on matters that the leader considers should be drawn to the council's attention. The leader shall have 10 minutes to make his announcements.

Both opposition groups will have an opportunity to reply to the leader's remarks. The opposition group leaders shall each have 5 minutes to respond after which the Leader of the Council will have a right of reply. Any right of reply will be for a maximum duration of 5 minutes.

9. **Portfolio Holder reports to Council (Pages 17 - 30)**

10. **Opposition Business**

There is no opposition business.

11. **Motions on Notice (Pages 31 - 36)**

The following motion has been placed on the agenda in the order received; up to 60 minutes shall be allowed for debates on motions on notice:

1. **From Councillor Rich Holgate, Green Group**

This Council Notes the outstanding and indispensable work of voluntary organisations across the district, for example Sunflower House and the Rainbow Centre, Age UK and the Romney Marsh Community Hub, and the network of local food-banks, warm-hubs and debt-advice groups. Despite growing demand and shrinking national safety nets, these organisations step up and deliver at a time when many households are squeezed by the long-running cost of living crisis.

It is worth reminding everyone this is a crisis that has not gone away. According to The Food Foundation, as of January 2025 about 14% of households are experiencing food insecurity. Trussell report that demand for food banks has grown over 50% over the last five years.

This Council Believes that countless families and individuals are now reliant on the voluntary and community sector to fill gaps that should not exist. Years of austerity-driven cuts by successive Governments have reduced public service capacity and deprived communities of resilience.

At a county level, KCC under Reform has compounded the pressure by continuing to prioritise populist rhetoric over urgent human need. For example they have discontinued ‘crisis grants’ which were an important service for residents experiencing an unforeseeable short-term hardship.

As reinforced in our Corporate Plan, this Council believes in the principles of promoting community engagement, supporting local action, and reducing inequality. We recognise that this Council has made a conscious effort to enable and strengthen the voluntary and community sector. Through consistent financial support for our three community hubs, our leadership of the District Food Network, and initiatives such as the annual *Meet the Funders* event, we have helped local organisations sustain vital services and amplify their impact. These are achievements every councillor in this chamber can be proud of. Yet we know there is still more to do.

The Council Resolves that this Council has both a moral duty and a practical opportunity to support and strengthen the voluntary sector in Folkestone & Hythe, so that delivery is not undermined by external cuts and local need is met effectively. Through this motion it will take the following steps:

1. To write a formal letter to Kent County Council, urging them to reverse their decisions to abolish or scale down local crisis-loan or similar discretionary emergency assistance schemes, and to restore proper support for people caught in the cost of living emergency.
2. To reaffirm this Council’s commitment to supporting residents through the cost-of-living crisis, including continued backing for foodbank and pantry services, warm hubs (delivered through our community hubs), and cost-of-living advice provided by our welfare team and Citizens Advice Bureau. The Council also reaffirms its support for the Green Grants Scheme, which helps community organisations reduce energy costs and improve resilience, complementing our broader programme of assistance to those most in need at this time.
3. To build on the work the Council has done to increase engagement with the voluntary sector, exploring opportunities for partnership working and opportunities and to raise the profile of the excellent work being done in our district.

We owe a deep debt of gratitude to the voluntary and community organisations that sustain our district through challenging times. The best way to honour that contribution is through action, by committing to support, enable and champion this sector for the long term, ensuring it remains strong, resilient and ready to serve future generations.

12. **Medium Term Capital Programme update 2025/26 (Pages 37 - 44)**

This report outlines a number of upcoming capital projects that have been approved by Cabinet to receive additional capital funding. However, Council approval is required for the projects/additional budgets, to be added to the Medium Term Capital Programme (MTCP) for 2025/26.

13. **Delivering more council owned temporary accommodation (Pages 45 - 56)**

Homelessness legislation, sets out clear guidance around the duties, powers and obligations on housing authorities, towards people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. The Council's Housing Options Team works to prevent homelessness, and part of this is providing access to temporary accommodation (TA) for homeless households accepted for long-term re-housing by the Council.

The number of households in TA has increased significantly over the last 12 months, (from 55 last year to approximately 115), reflecting the national picture of increased pressures. The Cabinet report C/25/42 (included as appendix 1), updates Members on current homelessness trends and the Council's plans to reduce the need for private sector TA, including proposals for the delivery of further Council owned TA units through capital borrowing of £5 million within the current financial year within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

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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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FOLKESTONE AND HYTHE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes for the meeting of the Council held at the Council Chamber - Civic Centre Folkestone on Wednesday, 1 October 2025

Present: Councillors Abena Akuffo-Kelly, Mike Blakemore, Polly Blakemore, James Butcher, Bridget Chapman, Tony Cooper, Laura Davison, Gary Fuller, David Godfrey, Anthony Hills, Rich Holgate, Mrs Jennifer Hollingsbee, Anita Jones, Nicola Keen, Adrian Lockwood, Alan Martin, Elaine Martin, Jim Martin, Connor McConville, Tim Prater, Stephen Scoffham, Rebecca Shoob, Jeremy Speakman, Paul Thomas, Belinda Walker, David Wimble and John Wing

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Clive Goddard, Liz McShane and Jackie Meade

39. **Declarations of Interest**

During consideration of Minute item 42 (Petitions), Councillor Wimble declared that his family have farms on Romney Marsh, and that he is a supporter of Hands Off Our Marsh.

40. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meetings held on 23 July 2025 were submitted, approved and signed by the Chair.

41. **Chair's Communications**

The Chair gave the following communications:

Good evening! I hope everyone had a lovely summer. I have had the great pleasure to support a number of events both in and out of the District since our last meeting.

In addition to flying our Union Jack outside the Civic Centre, I was delighted to raise the Pride Flag for Folkestone Pride at the start of the summer and during August, we raised the Ukrainian flag to mark their Independence Day showing our ongoing support for peace in Ukraine.

During August I attended the Kent International Jamboree with Scouts from all over Kent, Uk and the World! Although I was there as a Scout leader, I also joined the Mayors and VIPs when they visited. I was proud to see Scout groups from Hythe, Folkestone, Cheriton & Lyminge in attendance. They experienced a huge amount of activities, made new friends, learnt about other cultures and sustainability.

In support of our armed forces, I laid wreaths over the summer for VJ Day and the Battle of Britain day. I also laid a wreath in Dover for Merchant Navy Day.

In Hythe, the Civic Society have been celebrating their 80th Anniversary by holding a series of events including a concert by the Hythe Town Concert Band last week who started in 1880. The Civic society not only celebrate and share Hythe's history, but help improve the town through activities such as sprucing the town bollards, putting on flower displays with Hythe in Bloom and gardening near the town centre.

Hythe Town Council recently hosted their second re-loved fashion show to highlight the issues of the fast fashion industry by featuring models in second hand clothing or 'old friends' from their wardrobe. I was pleased to be invited to be a model and feature clothes that I had bought secondhand.

In Cheriton, we celebrated the 30th anniversary of Strange Cargo who have bought us the Charivari each summer involving schools from all over the District. In addition, they have hosted and organised a number of other installations and events involving many members of the community. Thank you to Brigitte and her team for everything they do for our community.

I was pleased to support Folkestone Live which took place a couple of weeks ago. I attended an excellent show entitled - 'Letters you'll never send'. I also supported Folkestone New Music with their Hythe concert as they endeavour to bring new music, artists and composers to our District.

I joined the Mayor of New Romney for his tour of the Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch railway and supported the Mayor of Folkestone for her Charity fundraising afternoon tea.

On Friday 12th September, Cllr Mike Blakemore, Cllr Tim Prater and I took part in a charity fundraising firewalk for South Kent Mind. It was a fun event and despite the temperature being measured at 491 degrees, we didn't burn ourselves. Mike and I raised £270 plus gift aid and Tim raised a similar amount.

Our Nepalese community invited me to two events. Firstly, the food festival at their allotments in Pent Farm. They cooked Nepalese food with their own vegetables and treated us to lunch and dancing! The following week, I joined them with a number of councillors for their celebration of Dashain - this is the celebration of the victory of good over evil. Again we had wonderful food and dancing. We also awarded many certificates to members of the community for various achievements.

Last week, I was pleased to welcome the District Youth Forum back with Cllr Mike Blakemore and Cllr Rebecca Shoob. We focused mainly on the District Leisure Strategy and Housing and Homelessness. The young people 'grilled' our councillors and made many valid points and suggestions. We look forward to welcoming our second cohort in December.

Our District has been honoured to host the Folkestone Triennial again this summer. This amazing event has bought a huge amount of visitors to our District this summer. I have certainly enjoyed visiting the artworks. If you haven't managed to visit it yet, I have organised a guided tour on 14th October which you are all welcome to join.

42. Petitions

The Lead Petitioner introduced her E-petition titled "Stop industrial-scale solar sprawl on Romney Marsh" which had received a total of 414 signatures. As per the petitions scheme, set out in part 4 of the constitution, petitions which receive more than 250 signatures can be presented to a meeting of Full Council.

Proposed by Councillor Scoffham
Seconded by Councillor Thomas

RESOLVED TO:

Refer the petition to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as the case may be, for their observations before deciding whether to examine the issues raised by the petition;

(Voting figures: 27 for, 0 against, 0 abstentions).

43. Questions from the Public

The questions asked, including supplementary questions, and the answers given are set out in Schedule 1, appended to these minutes.

44. Questions from Councillors

The questions asked, including supplementary questions, and the answers given are set out in Schedule 2, appended to these minutes.

45. Announcements of the Leader of the Council

The Leader made the following announcements:

Good evening Councillors, I hope you all had a great summer and return to this Chamber tanned and relaxed ready to meet the forthcoming challenges - of which there are many!

To begin with some good news, I completed the Rotary Folkestone Half Marathon on Sunday! A terrific event, in brilliant weather, attracting many visitors to Folkestone, well organised and a pleasure to participate in. My thanks go to the Rotary who have supported the race for many years and to Ray Johnson, the Race Director, who works so hard to stage the event. In terms of my time, let's just say I didn't win.

As usual I have been attending meetings with Parish Councils, other organisations, developers, consultants, individuals and businesses in our District, and I will continue to do so.

Local Government Reorganisation

I want to spend a little time outlining where we are on Local Government Reorganisation. Firstly, the Minister responsible Jim McMahon has been replaced by Alison McGovern, however we understand there will be no change in timetable or delivery. I have been in regular contact with all of the Kent Leaders. We have appointed KPMG to act as our partners through the process and will be "crunching the numbers" presenting the data and offering advice on the evidence, they will not however be making recommendations. KPMG organised an "Ignition Event" which was a full day of workshops, attended by almost all of the Kent Leaders and CEOs to help clarify issues. The Kent Leaders met on the 3rd September to agree a shortlist of 2 options for KPMG to work up detailed businesses cases on each, the two selected were 3a, a three unitary arrangement and 4b, a four unitary arrangement. Following those discussions KCC decided to prepare a detailed business case on 1a, their preferred option, which is a single unitary option, Medway have also decided to pay KPMG to carry out a business case analysis of their preferred option, 4d, which is a four unitary arrangement, and finally Dartford and Gravesham are paying KPMG to work up a business case for their preferred option 5a, which is a five unitary solution!

If you have been keeping track this means we have to choose between a single unitary, a three unitary solution, 2no. four unitary arrangement and a five unitary arrangement!

As I have said many times, this choice will be made by all of us in this Chamber. Our Local Government Reorganisation working group will be meeting on the 17th October, and I will be presenting the information to you at a Councillor Briefing arranged for the 12th November, we will decide which option to support at an extraordinary meeting of the Council to be held on the 19th November. Once the decision is made by the Council the decision will be ratified at a meeting of the Cabinet who will meet on the rising of the Council.

Councillor McConville and I are arranging to attend many Parish Council meetings over the next month to canvass the thoughts of Town and Parish Councils, can I ask all Councillors to raise the subject of Local Government Reorganisation and the choices we have before us, at the Town and Parish Council meetings they attend. I want to hear everyone's view.

I have covered much of the information I was going to provide in my answers to Councillor Hollingsbee's questions.

The meetings, discussions and communications with Homes England are intense at the moment, and with so many options being discussed I am sure the Council will understand when I say there are a number of those discussions that Homes England do not want me to repeat in public for commercial reasons. I will say this however, based on the resources Homes England are pouring into the facilitation of our future agreement, I am more confident now that I have been in the last two and a half years that progress will be made.

Naturally, I was disappointed that Otterpool had not been included on the Government's New Towns Task Force list. We were becoming increasingly aware that Otterpool was unlikely to be included. Homes England have confirmed that our non-inclusion in the list would not impact on our Collaboration Agreement and our joint working to deliver the project.

Some of what I was planning to say has been covered in my answer to Councillor Hills. My discussions with Southern Water continue and we will be arranging more discussion with the Community Groups, Southern Water and the EA regarding the bathing water quality on all the District's beaches. Members will no doubt have seen the reports on the quality of our bathing water, while we started the season very well with consistently good results, in August the results were disappointingly poor. As many of you know, Southern Water do their own testing, and in my last meeting with them last week… (20.11)

The Green Grants programme has been significantly over subscribed this year with many diverse and imaginative projects coming forward all aimed at saving energy, carbon and money, all Ward Councillors have been advised of the provisional assessment and we welcome feedback and comment, all of the hard work lies ahead and I am grateful to the officers for their excellent work thus far.

I am delighted the 6th Folkestone Triennial, entitled, "How Lies the Land?" has received so much critical acclaim. The Triennial asks us the question, and the art works offer the artist's response. I know our Chair Councillor Jones is arranging a "Chair's Tour of the Triennial" and if you haven't visited yet please do take this as a last opportunity to witness something remarkable.
The works supporting Folkestone a Brighter Future are causing some traffic disruption at peak times in the Folkestone Town Centre and everything that can be done to reduce congestion is being done. KCC are directing the works and their Contractors have been very good at notifying works and helping resolve problems. Our officers have been engaged with every aspect of the works and we are looking forward, like everyone else to their conclusion.
I attended the Grow in Kent event at Ashford International Station, lobbying Euro Star to reopen the International Station at Ashford, the event was attended by the Rail Minister, local Kent MPs including Tony Vaughan and Sojan Joseph,

the Leader of KCC and several District Council Leaders. We all stressed the need to reopen Ashford Internation Station to improve communication and opportunities for Kent Business.

I have met with many hospitality businesses. The good news is the early sunshine this year has driven footfall, with, for example, visitors to the Harbour Arm are up this year by 20% over last year, most attractions and hotels are reporting increased visitor numbers. The problem however is their cost base has also risen, squeezing their margins and restricting their ability to invest. Many hospitality businesses also report that people are generally being more careful about their spending. The Council is ready to do whatever we can to promote business in our District. This Council is a friend to good business.

I would like to offer my congratulations to Councillor Paul Thomas who has been appointed at Vice Chair of NuLeAF the National Coordinating body for Councils accommodating Nuclear facilities. Councillor Thomas has represented this Council at NuLeaf very well and I am delighted that his talent and commitment to communities has been recognised.

The opposition leaders then responded to the Leader in turn.

Councillor Lockwood thanked the Leader for all the work he does for Members, as well as congratulating him on his half marathon, and echoing his comments congratulating Cllr Thomas. He expressed that he is grateful for Councillors across the board, particularly Romney Marsh colleagues, for keeping the fight going for clean water in the district. He highlighted that Ofwat recently agreed £104bn of investment in infrastructure, but that this won't help in the next season, and stated that like many things in this country it can't be done overnight. He agreed it is important to keep the pressure on Southern Water and the Environment Agency, and thanked Councillors.

On Local Government Reorganisation, he expressed amazement that the Leader had summarised the position in half a page of A4, raising a 135 page LGN document as an example. He thanked the Leader for being a beacon in Kent in sharing the information with Members, for having things like the Cabinet working group, and for having full council meetings. He stated that proposals will be submitted on November 29th and Members will see what comes from that. He thanked all cabinet members and officers who support the Members with their case work. He expressed that if they work together, they can fix some of these issues for people, and that as a local Councillor that gives him the greatest pride.

Councillor Mrs Hollingsbee then responded and stated she thought that the work that has gone into Local Government Reorganisation has been amazing, and that it would be interesting to know how much that has cost the Council in terms of officer time and resources.

Regarding Otterpool Park, she highlighted that she didn't receive an answer to her question about what the Plan B is in relation to Homes England, and that they do take their time. She also highlighted that even if a figure is agreed, it has to be approved by the Treasury. She expressed that she is still anxious about how Otterpool will proceed, and that she thinks the Council should have a plan B.

On Ashford International station, she expressed absolute support for Cllr Martin's comments and stated that reopening it would open up a lot of business for this area.

In relation to hospitality costs, she expressed that these are provocative and that all the Council can do is support them, but highlighted that people and businesses are struggling, and any support the Council can give is really important. She concluded by congratulating the Leader on his half marathon, and Councillor Thomas on his election to NuLeaf.

The Leader then responded to the opposition leaders and endorsed the comments made by Councillor Lockwood thanking officers for their fantastic work.

Proposed by Councillor J Martin
Seconded by Councillor Prater; and,

RESOLVED:

That the announcements of the Leader be noted.

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

46. Portfolio Holder reports to Council

The Portfolio Holder updates had been circulated within the agenda pack and noted by Members.

47. Opposition Business

There was no opposition business.

48. Motions on Notice

There were no motions on notice.

49. Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 - Council Policy

The report set out the Council's policy on the use of directed surveillance and covert human intelligence sources under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000.

Proposed by Councillor Fuller
Seconded by Councillor Prater

RESOLVED:

1. **That report A/25/17 be received and noted.**
2. **That the RIPA policy and procedure attached as Appendix 2 be approved.**

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

50. **Gambling Act 2005 - Update to the Statement of Principles**

The Gambling Act 2005 requires the council, in its role as the local licensing authority, to prepare a Statement of Principles related to the exercise of its gambling licensing functions. The Statement of Principles must be reviewed every three years, and the current statement runs until 2025. The Statement of Principles has been reviewed and updated to cover the next three year period from 2025 to 2028. This report seeks approval from Full Council to adopt and publish the updated statement.

Proposed by Councillor Jim Martin
Seconded by Councillor Keen

RESOLVED:

1. **That report A/25/16 be received and noted.**
2. **That the updated Gambling Statement of Principles for the period 2025-2028 be approved.**

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

Council – 26 November
Agenda item 9 (Portfolio Holder reports)

1. Report of the Leader and Cabinet Member for Otterpool Park and Planning Policy

A more detailed planning policy portfolio report, this reflects how busy our planning department is:

Policy

- The planning policy team are continuing to work on the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HEELA). The team are assessing the sites that were submitted to us for consideration during the two 'calls for sites' that were held earlier this year. Around 170 sites were submitted and the team are undertaking desk-based assessments and going out to see the sites.

- We're intending to produce our new local plan under the new system introduced by the 2023 Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act. We've been undertaking background evidence work on the submitted sites while waiting for the government to publish detailed regulations and guidance. These were to have been published this summer, but we now understand that they will be published before the end of the year. A new set of National Development Management Policies - intended to replace some local plan policies - will also be published, alongside a new version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – both before the end of the year. Some of these documents are likely to be in draft for consultation and we'll take these to Members early in the new year before giving our comments to government.

- Work on Design Codes with our East Kent colleagues continues. We've recently held an online consultation so that local people can provide feedback on the design and character of the development they'd like to see across East Kent. In Folkestone we've set up a Community Panel to guide the work and the next meeting will be at the Burlington Hotel on Saturday 29 November.

- Work continues on the annual Community Infrastructure Levy Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS). The IFS identifies infrastructure needs, infrastructure costs and anticipated funding from developer contributions and how we intend to spend these contributions to improve infrastructure across the district. Key proposals were discussed by Overview and Scrutiny Committee yesterday (25 November), and they will now be firmed up before being taken back to Members for approval later this year.

- The Planning Service has been working on a Development Update newsletter to inform residents about what is happening on some of the key sites whilst also highlighting the development proposals we have in the district and our open for business proactive approach to working with developers.

Strategic Development

- There are a number of large scale applications that are either in the pre-application or application stage, and the Strategic Sites continues to work proactively with applicants to improve the sense of place, quality of layout, landscaping and architecture.

- We have a number of Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs) with applicants, which, whilst we had previously outsourced these to external consultants, we are now dealing with in-house. PPAs are a project management tool to help resource planning applications and deal with them in a timely manner – whilst working with applicants.

- The two applications in the Sellindge Core Strategy Broad Allocation have recently been approved, providing a total of 157 dwellings with affordable housing and S106 contributions.

- Land at Elmtree Farm in Sellindge has also been resolved to be approved, providing 105 dwellings with affordable housing and S106 contributions. This was outside the settlement boundary but Officers worked with the applicant to come up with a landscape led, high quality layout which incorporates and responds to the natural landscape features of the site.

- Planning Committee recently approved two employment sites at Mountfield Park – which will help support the local economy.

2. Report of Councillor Prater, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Governance

Firstly, thanks to the Finance team, and especially Alan and Jonathan, for all their ongoing work. I hope they know that I do appreciate them :)

As always at this time of the year, our budget setting process is in full swing, and some of the key strands are already in process.

The Budget Strategy and timetable was agreed by Cabinet in October (https://folkestone-hythe.moderngov.co.uk/ieIssueDetails.aspx?IId=27889&PlanId=0&Opt=3#AI20610), and some of the key milestones to the 26-27 budget drawn from that (https://folkestone-hythe.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s52748/Appendix%201%20-%20Budget%20setting%20timetable.pdf) are:

- 25 November 2025 Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be provided update on budget setting 2026/27
- 8 December 2025 Draft Council Tax base to Town and Parish Councils
- 10 December 2025 Cabinet to consider Fees & Charges
- tbc December 2025 Provisional Local Government Settlement
- tbc January 2026 Final Local Government settlement
- 3 February 2026 Finance and Performance Scrutiny Sub-committee consider draft GF, HRA, MTFS and Council tax resolution
- 11 February 2026 Draft Budgets, MTFS, MTCP & Council tax resolution to Cabinet
- 25 February 2026 Final GF & HRA budgets, MTCP and Council Tax resolution to Council.

So **lots** to look forward to 😉

There are too many unknowns over the next 8 weeks to be confident of the final shape of our budget yet, but we'll learn more from the Government's budget in November and Provisional Local Government Settlement in December. The Strategy lays out our assumptions to date, and the budget will change as we fill in current gaps, or estimates, with real numbers. To be honest, we're not expecting either to be packed full of good news for district councils, but always the optimist, me...

Budget Monitoring to the end of Q2 is now (at the time of writing) making its way through Scrutiny (https://folkestone-hythe.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=504&MId=5619) prior to Cabinet. You'll note that there is currently a projected overspend of £435k in the General Fund. That's not comfortable, and there are actions in place to mitigate and reduce that, as always. However we believe our monitoring is now in a good place and we have a clearer idea of our likely projected outturn than before, and I reassure myself that we're not KCC who at this stage are currently projecting an almost £50m overspend, so 100 times ours…

The work to replace the Finance system is still on target to complete in April 2026.

We hope that the final accounts for 2024-25 will be complete and signed off by the auditors by December this year. Finally marking the full "catching up" of the backlog of many years. I'm looking forward to the Chair of Audit and Governance Committee hopefully receiving and being able to sign them in December - a real early Christmas present for the Finance Team (and, to be fair, our external auditors) that would have got them there if so!

Finally, in my last report I referenced the work to Housing team were doing on bringing forward proposals to reduce our increasing Temporary Accommodation costs. I was delighted to see those proposals come forward to Cabinet in October (https://folkestone-hythe.moderngov.co.uk/ieIssueDetails.aspx?IId=27921&PlanId=0&Opt=3#AI20740), and enthusiastically endorsed the purchase for around £5m of another 20 units of accommodation for use as TA. It will take a little time to deliver (as you need the right units in the right place) but is the right direction both in terms of providing the right support to residents, and financially to this Council and our Council tax payers.

Thanks are due to Rebecca and the Housing Team for making this happen, and I hope we start to see a significant impact from that in the next financial year. Whether that will then mean we have “enough” TA will depend on the numbers coming forward: there is still an upwards trend, and if that continues, we may need to go further again.

3. Report of Councillor Mike Blakemore, the Cabinet Member for Community and Collaboration

The Baton of Hope, raising awareness of suicide prevention, visited Kent in September and I was honoured to speak at a warm-up event at F51, alongside the Baton of Hope charity’s co-founder Mike McCarthy. We attracted lots of attention as the Olympic torch-style (very heavy!) Baton was expertly carried by skaters from F51 through Payers Park and down the Harbour Arm.

The District Council is signed up to the Kent Wide Better Mental Health Network’s Concordat and participates in Kent County Council (KCC)’s Suicide Prevention Network and has promoted consultation on the new Kent and Medway Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention Strategy. The day after the Baton’s visit, the council held a small wellness event at Safe Haven in Rendezvous Street, Folkestone, which offers vital out of hours mental health support.

I attended the Community Safety Partnership quarterly meeting in October and this month helped to chair the annual networking event for partners at the civic centre. Community safety now very much embraces wellness, and it was marvellous to see the chamber almost completely full of fresh and familiar faces. We couldn't have accommodated all the partners as they now number more than 290: up from 38 in April 2024! Thank you to officers for all their work on this vital area.

Community safety was also the theme of last month's Folkestone Community Forum, which the police joined along with council officers. The importance of partnership was again underlined and we had a very constructive conversation about how to encourage community support for the police and the council enforcement team. Wider policing issues were discussed at the Kent Police & Crime Panel in October.

On health, this district – the only one in Kent and Medway - has been selected to be part of the National Neighbourhood Implementation Programme, which seeks to brings different parts of the NHS, together with other partners, closer together in providing care. I attended a workshop at the Leas Cliff Hall, which heard some powerful examples of the challenges staff in different organisations and disciplines face, and how they meet patients' needs.

I also attended the Kent Health & Wellbeing Board in September, where I was among members raising concerns over community pharmacy provision.

I was pleased to introduce the council's annual Meet the Funders event in October. This again proved extremely popular, with all 80 places snapped up by community organisations in just over 48 hours. Thirteen representatives from national and local funders and support organisations attended.

The council chamber was packed with guests again earlier this month for our second youth forum, where the young people who took part back in February returned to discuss two topics they had raised with us: mental health and housing. Next month we welcome a new cohort for the first of two sessions.

Finally, I was pleased to be quoted in the local press on behalf of the council last month, supporting a bid submitted to KCC by Creative Folkestone and Sunflower House to reopen Grace Hill library. We also used social media to back the proposal, which would see them work with KCC to seek funding to repair and reopen the building as a multi-use space. We will find out in the spring whether they have been successful.

4. Report of Councillor Polly Blakemore, the Cabinet Member for Transport, Regulatory Services & Building Control

With the Folkestone A Brighter Future works ongoing, Cllr James Butcher and I had a site meeting with KCC Highways staff in October to walk through the works to better understand the various temporary road layouts and provision for pedestrians and public transport users. It is an evolving picture which changes almost daily but we were able to offer feedback and suggestions based on our own and our residents' experiences. I'm pleased to report that as I write the works at Radnor Park roundabout are just wrapping up and traffic is flowing again. Temporary bus shelters have now been installed along Middelburg Square and my thanks go to council officers for escalating this following a breakdown in the contractor's supply chain. The bus shelter renewal project is continuing across the district through the winter months, with some new structures already installed in Hythe and Cheriton. In addition, following approaches from the Shepway Bus Users group, I highlighted the dearth of bus stops along West Road, bordering the extensive and ongoing new development at Shorncliffe, to KCC's public transport planning and operations team. I'm pleased to report that they have agreed to install three new bus stops with a further two under consideration as the development grows.

I am grateful to Cllr Butcher for chairing September's District Focus Group in my absence. We learned that Spencer Dixon, KCC's Deputy Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, is the new chair of Kent's Enhanced Partnership Board, which oversees bus services working with operators and councils. We now eagerly await the Government's forthcoming funding announcement and details of how the money will be spent to improve services in our district. There is no shortage of suggestions!

Along with Cllr Belinda Walker, I met with representatives of Southeastern, Network Rail and KCC at Folkestone Central station which has been earmarked for a Station Travel Plan (STP). We were there to contribute to an access audit, examining the station as a transport hub with a view to improving sustainable connections. Our input will now be incorporated into the STP.

The extension to Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) A1, incorporating Ingles Road in Folkestone, is now live. Meanwhile, a survey of residents of Varne Road and Hasborough Road on the East Cliff, Folkestone, demonstrated that there wasn't sufficient support for parking restrictions to be introduced, despite representations from several residents, so no scheme will currently be coming forward for these streets. Meanwhile, a statutory consultation on the introduction of restrictions in Segrave Crescent is scheduled for mid-November following receipt of a petition from residents.

Officers are currently working on a revision of the CPZ framework so that it better addresses current and potential on-street parking issues. The proposed guidelines will be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in January before going out to public consultation.

Thank you to Cllr Jim Martin for stepping in for me to chair September's Licensing Forum. This time we left the council chamber for Dymchurch Village Hall, where officers updated those present on the activity of the team and shone a spotlight on the benefits of the collaborative relationship with the police e.g. on licence reviews and new applications.

We continue to support and lobby for the transfer of freight off our roads and onto the railways. Along with Cllrs Jim Martin and Stephen Scoffham and senior representatives of Network Rail, I met with Sojan Joseph MP and Nick Brittin, parliamentary assistant to Tony Vaughan MP, to garner support for infrastructure plans to facilitate the project. Network Rail are submitting finance cases to the DfT for consideration.

At the quarterly Joint Transportation Board this month I put in a request to KCC for an update on our district's Highway Improvement Plans (HIPs) to be brought to the first meeting of 2026. HIPs are a mechanism whereby town and parish councils collaborate with Kent Highways to create a plan for improvements based on engagement with the local community. At the last count, just 15 out of our 30 parishes had an active HIP.

The latest edition of the Environmental Protection Newsletter has been published. Do take a look to see the sheer scope of work that goes on in the small team, including dealing with the ever-growing problem of environmental crime. Please share far and wide as these unsung heroes really deserve the support of both Councillors and residents.

5. Report of Councillor Gary Fuller, the Cabinet Member for Resident Engagement and Accountability

This month the Council's updated Information Management Framework was discussed at Cabinet. It included an easy read version, something I've been keen on adding to all public facing Council documentation.

Alongside this, we have met our targets on managing both information requests and complaints in the second quarter. That's thanks to the exceptional work being done by the team and I'm pleased to note that this has carried on into October too.

The annual election canvas is continuing apace and we're close to reaching internal targets thanks to the hard work of the team. We're also processing postal vote reapplications (re-apply now if you haven't already) and there are Lydd Town Council by-elections occurring before Christmas, so it's a busy time for the team. Early next year we'll be moving to new election management software too.

For the financial year to date we're successfully answering approximately 95% of calls, with average wait times at around two minutes. Answer rates have improved by 6%, with wait times halving, which is an excellent trend and a reflection on the ongoing hard work and dedication of our customer support team.

We're working on various improvements to council systems. These include bringing historic planning documents online and improving the functionality of My Account. Alongside this, we're maintaining our vigilance for potential cyber threats, carrying out various exercises to identify weaknesses, and keeping processes for dealing with cyber-attacks under review. My thanks go to our hardworking IT team for keeping us safe at a time when many large organisations are suffering attacks

6. Report of Councillor James Butcher, the Cabinet Member for Place Plan, Heritage, Tourism and District Economy

Folkestone – A Brighter Future:
Construction continues to progress well on Folkestone – A Brighter Future, our government-funded regeneration programme. Recent activity has focused on highways improvements across the project area:

- Rain garden construction has begun along Cheriton Road. These gardens will help collect surface water runoff, filter pollutants, and provide valuable habitats for wildlife—supporting our wider ambition to enhance biodiversity and create a greener, more welcoming town centre.
- Temporary bus shelters have been installed at Middelburg Square, while we await the installation of permanent shelters, which will feature living roofs.

- To enable highway works in and around Middelburg Square, temporary suspension of bus stops has been necessary. The project team has worked closely with Stagecoach to communicate these changes to the public.
- The works at the Radnor Park roundabout are now complete.
  Regular newsletters from JCE provide detailed updates on progress and next steps. You can subscribe via folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/FABF.

Folca Redevelopment

As outlined in the 16 July Cabinet report, the Folca site is progressing through phased development:

Folca 2 – Phase 1: Weatherproofing and Strip-Out

- Tender period: October – December 2025
- Contractor appointment and mobilisation: January 2026
- Construction period: January – July 2026

Folca 2 – Phase 2: Future Use Design

- Employer's Agent appointed
- Lead design team tender to be published in early 2026
- Cabinet paper with recommendations to be presented in early 2026

Folca 1 – Disposal

- Following Cabinet's decision, Avison Young has been appointed to manage the disposal of Folca 1 on behalf of FHDC and marketing is now live.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)

The latest six-monthly report has been submitted to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities:

- Healthy Communities - all projects under the "Healthy" theme are progressing well.
- High Streets - pilot markets curated by Kent Food Hubs are scheduled for 15 November and 13 December (Christmas-themed) on Guildhall Street. There has been a strong uptake from stallholders, and planned activities include children's crafts and live music from Folkestone Music Town. A multi-channel communications campaign is underway to promote the events.
- Skills - two new UKSPF-funded programmes are being commissioned: (1) "High Streets Connect", supporting retail, hospitality, and town-centre businesses to adapt and grow, and (2) "Grow Rural", targeting rural enterprises, farm diversifications, and home-based businesses to build confidence and digital capability. Procurement for a delivery specialist is live, with a response deadline of 21 November.

Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) 2025–26

15 expressions of interest have been received, leading to 11 applications being invited, with 5 full applications submitted so far (from New Romney, Hawkinge, Ivychurch, and Bodsham).

The tight delivery deadline of 31 March 2026 has limited some organisations from applying, as their projects are in the early stages of development, particularly where planning permission is required. We are continuing to promote the scheme to encourage smaller, ready-to-go projects.

Town Centre Operating Model

The Town Centre Operating Model will complement the physical regeneration being delivered by the Folkestone - A Brighter Future project with a plan for bringing more vibrant activity to the town centre. The plan will be reviewed by CLT in early December before being brought to Cabinet for approval.

Economic Appraisal
Lichfields has been commissioned to deliver a comprehensive economic appraisal of the district. The aim is to:

- assess current economic conditions and future potential
- identify priority projects for sustainable growth
- develop a 3-year economic plan

Stakeholder engagement will begin before Christmas, including consultation with the Romney Marsh Partnership Board, the Folkestone Community Forum, and the North Downs Forum.

The Nest (Former Romney Marsh Visitor Centre)
Since opening The Nest has launched a café and shop featuring local makers and produce, alongside a growing programme of community events:

- Weekly Crochet & Craft meet-ups
- Creative Needle Felting, Artist Talks, Yoga, and Dementia Hug in a Mug
- A Winter Festival will take place on 5 December (3–7pm), featuring a festive market and a visit from Father Christmas.

Mountfield Road
All seven original plots have secured planning permission and are either complete or nearing completion, and final site works are underway.

Heritage Strategy
The Heritage Strategy is now live on the council website. Feedback from the consultation was instrumental in shaping the final document, and we recently brought together stakeholders to discuss the final version of the strategy, to highlight the Council's priorities, and to identify next steps.

7. Report of Councillor Stephen Scoffham, the Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Environment and Biodiversity

Freight to rail
Recently, along with Cllr Polly Blakemore and Cllr Jim Martin, I took part in a meeting involving our two MPs and senior representatives from Network Rail. At the moment, the section of track between London and Folkestone is a broken link in a heavy freight rail network that extends from Scotland to the far side of mainland Europe. There is a compelling commercial case why it should be upgraded and technical studies have established two different approaches, both of which could be implemented if supported by the Department of Transport. We have around 7000 heavy goods vehicles travelling through the district each day and they account for around half of our total transport emissions. Operation BROCK is a constant threat. Hopefully the Dept of Transport and Lord Hendy (Rail Transport Minister) will recognise that a modern freight network is essential in building the economy and protecting the environment.

Working towards net zero
After careful research and extensive consultation, the District Wide Carbon Plan has finally been drafted and was presented to the Cabinet last week. One key finding is that since 20025 average emissions in our area have reduced by around 2.4% a year. Whilst it is encouraging that our emissions have been decreasing, the pace is not nearly fast enough. Research from the Tyndall Centre has established that if Folkestone-Hythe is to do its fair share towards limiting global warming in line with the

Paris Agreement, we need to reduce our emissions by around 13% annually. This will enable us to reach net zero by 2041. It is a challenge that involves all members of the community – direct emissions from council operations only represent 0.4% of the total. However, there are multiple ways that the council can provide leadership. The report details 54 actions arranged into five ‘pillars’. Putting the plan into action and regular reporting will be crucial if it is to make a meaningful contribution to improving air quality.

Sustainable Futures Forum
The latest Sustainable Futures Forum was held in early October. Over 70 attendees came to a volunteer/skills fair at the Grand on the Leas, organised by Liu Batchelor and James Wilderspin. There were representatives from bigger corporate volunteer teams such as Saga, Holiday Extras, Walker Construction, Amey and Sleeping Giant Media as well as a wide range of community groups. Exploring the way business can work with local groups to achieve social impact is high on the list of preferences for the next event in the spring. The Forum is proving as successful as ever and going from strength to strength.

UNESCO cross channel geopark
The application for the UNESCO cross channel geopark has now been submitted. This is the final stage in a long process that was marked by a festival at Dover Castle on 7th and 8th November. If approved, the geopark will cover the North Kent downlands and surrounding areas, connecting people from Sevenoaks in the west to St Omer in Nord Pas de Calais in the east. It will incorporate the marine environment and be the first geopark in the world to be connected by the sea. Interestingly, Folkestone and Dover lie within its borders.

Geoparks have three main objectives which centre around conservation, education and sustainable tourism. These themes are already brought together in the display board on the East Cliff in Folkestone. This tells the story of how Britain became separated from mainland Europe 450,000 years by a huge flood. The implications of this single event have rippled through the centuries and have had a profound effect on the history not only of Britain and Northern France but of places much further afield.

The geopark application gives us the opportunity to promote Folkestone, Hythe and surrounding areas for sustainable tourism. Local hoteliers and others in the hospitality industry have independently expressed their enthusiasm for the environment and identified ways they can reduce their carbon footprint. It is likely to be more than a year before the results of the UNESCO application are announced, but this is a timely moment to seize the initiative to grow the local economy in a sustainable way – one of the five themes in our new corporate plan.

8. Report of Councillor Jeremy Speakman, the Cabinet Member for Waste and Street cleansing and Corporate Health & Safety

Waste and Street Cleansing

- Ongoing liaison with the public and the Waste Management Team to ensure that day-to-day issues and complaints from the public relating to refuse collection and street cleansing are promptly addressed. This included meeting local residents to review placement of street litter bins.
- Ongoing review of current waste management and collection arrangements to ensure maximum efficiency and value for money for residents.

- Ongoing liaison with enforcement and Waste Management Team to resolve fly tipping issues.
- Regular liaison meetings and support to local groups such Hythe Environmental Community Group, Go Folkestone and Romney Marsh Litter Pick Watch to promote their valuable contribution to the Circular Economy through such initiatives as e-waste recycling scheme.
- The Waste Management Team continues to work on the ‘Raise the Rate’ campaign, with aim of increasing the district’s recycling rate. The boost to food recycling from the bin sticker campaign last year appears to have been sustained.
- Veolia continue to perform very well in terms of low rates of missed bins, operating well within the contract standard of less than 50 misses per 100,000 collections.
- The Waste Team gave a presentation to Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 30/9/25 giving an overview of the service, current performance and forthcoming projects related to the Simple Recycling Proposals from the Environment Act 2021, Packaging Extended Producer Responsibility and preparations for the next contract.

Corporate Health & Safety

Accidents and Incidents reported (Apr-Oct 2025)

7 minor workplace accidents, 11 verbal abuse and 2 other dangerous occurrences recorded since April 2025. None were reportable under RIDDOR. However, following our annual Occupational Health Screening a member of maintenance staff has been diagnosed with HAVS (Hand – Arm Vibration Syndrome), which is a reportable disease to the HSE under RIDDOR. We have followed the advice from the Occupational Health doctor in limiting the employee’s exposure to using equipment, for example by switching to a battery powered leaf blower.

We have had several verbal abuse incidents reported from members of the public visiting CAP as well as through email. In response to this we have set up a ‘customer of concerns register’ and procedure and which has been rolled out with key managers to protect customer-facing staff (whilst meeting GDPR).

Health and safety procedures and risk assessments

We are continuing to review and update our procedures and risk assessments, with our focus since the last update being on:

- Driving at Work procedure and driving at work generic risk assessment, with a new Driving at Work E-learning module which was rolled out late throughout October.
- All Civic Centre based teams’ risk assessments have now been updated, (including Environmental Health, Emergency Planning, Lifeline, Housing, Building Control and Engineering).
- A beach Risk assessment procedure and accompanying risk assessment template has been created, the CHSO and beach engineer have now completed all beach risk assessments throughout the district.
- CHSO is currently working with ground maintenance to update their risk assessments and safe systems of work.

Health & Safety activity continues to be monitored through the Staff Consultation forum and regular portfolio-holder updates.

A half-year report is due to be presented to the Audit & Governance committee 17-Dec 2025.

9. Report of Councillor Rebecca Shoob, Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness

Two very significant pieces of legislation were enacted last month.

The Renters' Rights Act gained assent at the end of October, although the provisions are not yet in force. Extensive preparatory work by the Private Sector housing team has been ongoing all year and will continue through to commencement of the Act, expected next year. The additional duties for councils will be significant, although it is to be noted that we have not yet had any indication of what new burdens funding will be available to help with this.

Last month also saw the coming into force of Awaab's Law. This applies to all Social landlords, such as the council, who will have to address any reported emergency hazards and all damp and mould hazards that present a significant risk of harm to tenants within fixed timeframes. Our assets team has been planning for the new legislation for some time, undertaking and delivering training in preparation for the introduction of the new law, which requires all those who visit tenants to be aware of the urgency and reporting procedures for damp and mould. Our repairs and maintenance team already has robust procedures in place for inspecting reports of damp and mould in our properties. Our contract with Mears, who have a dedicated national Mould and Damp Team, already operates to the timescales and responsibilities determined by Awaab's Law.

I attended the October Strategic Tenants Advisory Panel. STAP members were given a very informative and thorough run through of the results of this year's Tenant Satisfaction Survey. The excellent survey results, which are a huge credit to the housing team, will also be considered by Overview and Scrutiny. The results will be published in the next tenant newsletter.

Work to bring down energy costs across our social housing stock continues. Work is nearing completion of year two of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Wave Two, which will see 300 homes improved. We now have over 76% of our stock at EPC C or above.

Grant funding from the Heat Network Efficiency Scheme has funded studies looking at how to improve the heat networks at some of our most inefficient Independent Living schemes and we are now working on capital funding bids to help fund the works identified.

I attended the annual street count on the night of 4th November. Twenty one rough sleepers were counted. However, this year's count had been brought forward to the beginning of the month and unlike last year, when it was pouring with rain, this year was unseasonably mild. We do not think, therefore, that there are consistently 21 people rough sleeping and the statistics show an average of 15-16.

The winter shelter is due to open on 1 December and outreach partners are currently working to identify and engage with people to take up the much needed places.

While the number of households in temporary accommodation has slightly increased to around 115 since my last report to full council, our homelessness prevention team is doing excellent work to ensure that people are helped to move on into permanent accommodation as quickly as possible. In common with councils across the country, the cost of having to use nightly lets for temporary accommodation is putting an unsustainable strain on the General Fund. To address this, Cabinet is recommending to Full Council that it approves an additional budget of £5million to invest in increasing our stock to be used as temporary accommodation, potentially up to a further 20 homes. We will also make available more of our suitable HRA properties for temporary accommodation use in the short term.

10. Report of Councillor McConville, Cabinet Member for Assets and Local Government Reorganisation

Assets

The fantastic Coast Drive Destination Centre in Greatstone continues to get closer to completion and interest surrounding the new beach huts remains positive.

The Ship Street site is still being marketed to potential housebuilders, and the team are optimistic of finding a partner to bring forward the challenging site and offer much needed homes to local people as well as regenerating the area.

Also undergoing a market exercise is Folca1, with any proceeds from the potential sale of the building being transferred to the work for Folca2, which will see some early work occur in the new year as part of the FABF project.

The grounds maintenance team continue to do a fantastic job in our parks, gardens and open spaces. I would like to point out some of the work the team does specifically with trees. Residents have noticed a small number of trees have been removed recently, for various reasons, however rest assured that there are at least 70 new trees planned to replace them.

The tenders have gone out for the design and build of the new destination play area at the Coastal Park and the engineering works to stabilise the cliff above the play area. The cliff stabilisation works are expected to start early in the new year.

Finally, you may have noticed that a certain saint has found her head. Many thanks to everyone involved in the restoration.

Local Government Reorganisation

It has been a very busy month; Jim and I have been visiting the town and parish councils to gain their opinions on which option they would prefer in terms of how Kent will look with new unitary councils. The majority was clearly in favour of the same option. The council will have met on the 19th to take a vote on which of the five options it wishes to support and then feed that information back to the Secretary of State.

After all the Kent councils have done this, it will then be a waiting game to see which option the SoS will decide upon.

For more information and to keep up to date please visit the councils page https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/democracy/devolution-local-government-reorganisation

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This Report will be made public on 18 November 2025

Report Number **A/25/21**

To:	**Council**
Date:	**26 November 2025**
Status:	**Non – executive decision**
Responsible Officer:	**Ewan Green, Monitoring Officer and Director of Strategy and Resources**

SUBJECT: MOTION ON NOTICE FROM COUNCILLOR HOLGATE

SUMMARY: Councillor Holgate has submitted a Motion on Notice for Full Council 26 November 2025, which seeks support in respect of strengthening the voluntary sector in Folkestone. This report provides background to the community initiatives currently supported through the voluntary sector and considers the implications of the motion.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **To receive and note report A/25/21.**
2. **To consider the motion on notice put forward by Councillor Holgate.**

1. **INTRODUCTION**

1.1 On 5 November 2025, Cllr Holgate submitted a Motion which asked members to resolve the following:

That this Council has both a moral duty and a practical opportunity to support and strengthen the voluntary sector in Folkestone & Hythe, so that delivery is not undermined by external cuts and local need is met effectively. Through this motion it will take the following steps:

1. *To write a formal letter to Kent County Council, urging them to reverse their decisions to abolish or scale down local crisis-loan or similar discretionary emergency assistance schemes, and to restore proper support for people caught in the cost of living emergency.*

2. *To reaffirm this Council's commitment to supporting residents through the cost-of-living crisis, including continued backing for foodbank and pantry services, warm hubs (delivered through our community hubs), and cost-of-living advice provided by our welfare team and Citizens Advice Bureau. The Council also reaffirms its support for the Green Grants Scheme, which helps community organisations reduce energy costs and improve resilience, complementing our broader programme of assistance to those most in need at this time.*

3. *To build on the work the Council has done to increase engagement with the voluntary sector, exploring opportunities for partnership working and opportunities and to raise the profile of the excellent work being done in our district.*

We owe a deep debt of gratitude to the voluntary and community organisations that sustain our district through challenging times. The best way to honour that contribution is through action, by committing to support, enable and champion this sector for the long term, ensuring it remains strong, resilient and ready to serve future generations"

1.2 In order to inform member decision making, this paper sets out the implications for consideration.

2. BACKGROUND

1.1. Support for communities and the voluntary sector across the district is recognised as a priority within the Council's Corporate Plan 2025-2030 'Our District, Our World' and contributes to positive outcomes for the key themes identified in the plan:

- A well-run, listening council that works closely with its partners.
- Improving people's health, wellbeing and sense of community.
- Building new homes, improving the quality of existing homes and tackling homelessness.
- Growing the economy in a sustainable way and creating opportunities for all.

- Enhancing our local environment and supporting climate action.

Please refer to:
https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/policies-plans-documents/corporate-plan

1.2. The Council remains committed to supporting residents through the cost-of-living crisis. To this end, the council has supplemented its own financial support with funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

1.3. Initiatives include the mobile food service managed by the Rainbow Centre (combined pantry and food bank service) has received UKSPF funding as have five community spaces for delivering direct support such as food and fuel vouchers and delivery of warm spaces throughout the winter period from October to the end March. These allow anyone visiting to receive hot food and drink (at very reduced cost or free e.g. soup and a roll). Items to help combat the cold are also provide as well as support to address digital poverty.

1.4. Organisations such as the Citizens Advice service have also received funding to provide money /debt advice and support with financial inclusion interventions as well as very tailor-made bespoke support to residents to address their specific needs.

1.5. The breakdown of UKSPF grant funding for this element of the work is provided below (additional FHDC community grant funding is also shown):

Service	UKSPF Grant 25-26 (for Cost-of-living work)	FHDC Grant Funding 25-26 (for core service provision not all Cost of Living)
Mobile Food Service – Rainbow Centre	£15,000	
Citizens Advice Bureau – range of services	£10,000	£67,800
Folkestone Community Hub (based in Cheriton - SKC Age UK building)	£8,000	£5,000
Hythe Community Hub (based at Age UK Hythe and Lyminge building)	£8,000	£5,000

Romney Marsh Community Hub	£8,000	£5,000
Sunflower House (Foord Rd Folkestone)	£8,000	
Folkestone Nepalese Community Centre (Cheriton).	£8,000	

1.6. The Welfare Team continue to support vulnerable residents with a host of benefits advice and cost-of-living advice and their allocation of UKSPF funding (Home Essentials Fund) supporting residents with white goods, beds, carpets and utility support eg boiler servicing complements their work on hardship through the management of each round of the government's household support fund.

1.7. The Council also provides grant support, in addition to the above, via grants to organisations for community activities and a Green Grants scheme.

1.8. Further information on grants to community organisations in 2025-26 is available in the Community Grants Schedule, Appendix 13 of the Council budget setting report:

https://folkestone-hythe.moderngov.co.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=19956#mgDocuments

1.9. The Green Grant Scheme aims to help community groups, charities, town and parish councils, schools and small businesses to bring forward ways of increasing climate resilience, reduce carbon footprints and enhance green spaces, local wildlife & biodiversity. There were four categories offering grant funding of between £1,000 to £20,000. Decision panels took place in June this year, with 38 projects being approved for funding to a total value of £195,000. The scheme has been well received by the successful community groups, businesses, and organisations. Whilst there are larger green projects such as solar panel systems, the grants have also enabled a wide variety of community-based projects to be undertaken which otherwise would not have gone ahead. The scheme has now closed to applications.

A list of approved grants can be viewed via the following link:

www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/climate-change/green-grant-scheme

2.9 The Council has also been active in supporting and encouraging volunteer-based community events across the district. This includes working with Kent Coast Volunteering to host the annual Excellence in Volunteering

Awards, celebrating the immense contribution volunteers make in communities across the district. Please refer to:

https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/news/article/330/awards-for-our-volunteering-heroes

2.10 Further background and context to support consideration of the Motion can be found via:

Annual Performance Report 2024-25
https://folkestone-hythe.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s51838/Appendix%201%202024-25%20Annual%20Performance%20Report%20-%20A%20Snapshot%20of%20our%20Year%20v4.pdf

Annual Equality and Diversity Report 2024-25
https://folkestone-hythe.moderngov.co.uk/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=53098

Community Hubs
https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/community/hubs

Community Directory
https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/community/folkestone-hythe-district-council-local-directory

3. IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The motion recommends three actions:

- Formal Letter to KCC
- Reaffirmation of continued support to various voluntary sector organisations.
- Increased engagement by the council with the local voluntary sector.

3.2 Formal Letter – There are no financial or legal implications from drafting the letter. The motion does not expressly identify who should author the letter. If the motion is agreed, it is suggested that the letter is drafted to be sent from the Leader of the Council on behalf of the Full Council.

3.3 Continued Support – The motion does not expressly define the type of support the council should provide although several of the activities listed are currently grant funded e.g.

- Foodbank and pantry services
- Warm hubs
- Cost-of-living advice
- Green Grants Scheme

Any financial commitment arising from the motion would still need to be approved by council within the budget setting process.

3.4 Increased Engagement – There are no direct implications. The council will continue to engage with the voluntary sector and explore opportunities for partnership working.

4. LEGAL/FINANCIAL AND OTHER CONTROLS/POLICY MATTERS

4.1 Legal Officer's Comments (OS)

Local Government Authorities have power to provide hardship funds or community grants.

Additionally, they can offer low interest or no interest loans to community groups or social enterprises.

They can also support financial inclusion initiatives and deliver local welfare assistance to vulnerable residents.

The relevant applicable laws are as listed below.

Community Benefit	Localism Act 2011 (section 1)
Social Well-being	Local Government Act 2000 (Part 1)
Financial Assistance	Local Government Act 2003 (section 12)
General Benefit	Local Government Act 1972 (section 137)
Housing Support	Housing Acts 1985 & 1996

4.2 Finance Officer's Comments (JS)

As can be seen from paragraph 2.5, UKSPF funding has been in use to support a number of community projects. This funding stream ends in the current financial year (2025/26) with no replacement funding available. Should Members wish to continue to support these services for 2026/27 to the same level, it will create a pressure on the General Fund equal to the loss of the UKSPF funding which would need to be factored into the 2026/27 budget setting.

4.3 Diversities and Equalities Implications (GE)

There are no equality and diversity implications directly arising from this motion.

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 Strategy and Resources
ewan.green@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk
The following background documents have been relied upon in the preparation of this report:

None.

This Report will be made public on 18 November 2025

Report Number **A/25/20**

To:	**Council**
Date:	**26 November 2025**
Status:	**Non Key Decision**
Responsible officer:	**Andy Blaszkowicz – Director, Housing & Operations**

SUBJECT: MEDIUM TERM CAPITAL PROGRAMME UPDATE 2025/26

SUMMARY: This report outlines a number of upcoming capital projects that have been approved by Cabinet to receive additional capital funding. However, Council approval is required for the projects/additional budgets, to be added to the Medium Term Capital Programme (MTCP) for 2025/26.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **To receive and note report A/25/20.**
2. **To approve that the project budgets outlined in this report are added to the Medium Term Capital Programme for 2025/26.**
3. **To note and approve the change in match funding for Folkestone: A Brighter Future (as per section 2.6).**
4. **To note the change in funding for the Folca 2 project (as per section 2.7).**

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 A number of capital projects have been taken to the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Officers Group and Cabinet and given authority and budget to proceed. A number of these projects, or additional budgets for existing projects were detailed in the CIL IFS 2024 which was approved by Cabinet in July 2025 (C25/23). This report seeks approval from Council to add the projects/additional budgets to the Medium Term Capital Programme for 2025/26.

2. PROJECT UPDATES

2.1 Lower Leas Landslip – Engineering Works

Following the two landslides at The Leas in the winter of 2023/24 the council have commissioned investigations into the cause of these, have undertaken a drone survey to map the topography of The Leas, and completed an options appraisal to mitigate the impact of the landslide above the Lower Leas Coastal Park play area.

Pre-tender design and specification works have been completed for a scheme of soil-nailing, steel netting and a replacement retaining wall. This project has been tendered in October 2025 and has an estimated start date on site of January 2026.

There is currently a £300k budget in the Medium Term Capital Programme which was approved as part of the annual budget setting process. A report was presented to Cabinet on 21 May 2025 (C/25/01) giving further details of the work required.

An additional £100k of CIL funding has been allocated for this project, included in the Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) 2024 and approved at the 16 July 2025 Cabinet meeting (C/25/23) bringing the total project budget to £400k.

2.2 Infrastructure Improvements to The Leas (paths, walls and steps)

The Leas cliff top promenade is a historic attraction designed in the 1800's and features an upper walkway with bandstand and attractive gardens along with a lower footpath known as Madeira Walk supported by ragstone retaining walls, the Victorian Vinery structure and access paths down to the Lower Leas Coastal Park.

An initial 10-year maintenance plan has identified areas of work required to repair the stone walls, surfaces, steps, fencing and other infrastructure assets along The Leas. Also considered as part of this programme are works to the Vinery and Zig Zag path, Metropole Steps and other routes down from The Leas.

Additional CIL funding of £150k has been allocated for this project, included in the Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) 2024 and approved at the 16 July 2025 Cabinet meeting (C/25/23) bringing the total project budget to £300k.

2.3 Lower Leas Coastal Park Play Area

The Lower Leas Coastal Park play area in Folkestone, is the Council's premier destination play area in the district. Since its construction in 2000, the play area has welcomed hundreds of thousands of visitors year-round. The main piece of play equipment currently is a multi-tower timber structure. Constructed from pressure treated softwood, the structure which is now 25 years old is beyond economical maintenance and repair.

Works to replace the play equipment and make improvements to the surrounding infrastructure has been tendered in October 2025, with construction expected to start on site in late Spring 2026.

This project will redevelop the play area and will:

- Include the replacement of the existing main timber structure with a new custom-built structure.
- Increase the provision of play equipment for users of all age ranges.
- Give consideration for improved accessibility for users with a range of disabilities.
- Improve the infrastructure including seating, paths and cycle parking around the play area.
- Replicate and enhance the quality and experience visitors expect at the Lower Leas Coastal Park.

In May 2025, Cabinet approved that the existing budget of £509k would be supplemented by an additional £141k, from the capital receipts reserve, and £100k from the CIL fund (C/25/04). The CIL funding has been allocated for this project and has been included in the Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) 2024 approved at the 16 July 2025 Cabinet meeting (C/25/23). The total budget for the project is now £750k.

2.4 Wraightsfield Play Area

The strategic play area at Wraightsfield Avenue in Dymchurch has been identified by officers as requiring complete refurbishment due to the deterioration of the aging play equipment. Removal of several items has been required as they have reached a point where it is not possible to repair them, leaving currently only a multiplay unit available for use.

The funding will allow for all the play equipment to be replaced, and new safety surfacing to be installed. On completion, the play area will be returned to a high-quality facility for residents and visitors.

CIL funding of £30k has been allocated for this project, included in the Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) 2024 and approved at the 16 July 2025 Cabinet meeting (C/25/23).

2.5 Beach Management 2025-2030

F&HDC have for many years undertaken a programme of beach management along the Folkestone to Hythe frontage on behalf of the Environment Agency (EA). This project will additionally include maintenance of the frontage by the Hythe Ranges.

The 2025-2030 Beach Management Phase V business case was approved by the EA earlier this year with a financial award of £2,778,340. The grant award has been approved by Cabinet in the General Fund Capital Monitoring Q1 report in October 2025 (C/25/34). This sum is now required to be added to the MTCP 2025/26 so that works can commence.

2.6 Folkestone: A Brighter Future (Levelling Up Fund)

Folkestone: A Brighter Future is one of the Council's key strategic projects, aiming to regenerate Folkestone Town Centre through transport and place making improvements. Works on-site started in April 2025 and are due to complete in Autumn 2026.

As part of the funding for the Folkestone: A Brighter Future project, F&HDC are obligated to provide a 10% match against the total LUF project budget of £21,990,910, amounting to £2,199,091. The original funding profile for this was made up of: £450,000 High Street Regeneration Reserve, £350,000 CIL, £399,901 Economic Development Reserve and £1m Folca 1 Lease Premium Capital Receipt.

As works on Folca 1 utilisation have been ongoing, it has been recognised that the £1m Folca 1 Capital Receipt is unlikely to be realised, especially given the time constraints on the LUF scheme. Therefore, the funding package has been reconsidered, with the following proposed: £802,830 High Street Regeneration Reserve (increase of £352,830), £997,170 CIL Funding (increase of £647,170), £399,901 Economic Development Reserve (no change), and removal of the £1m Capital Receipt.

A report was taken to Cabinet on 22 May 2024 (C/24/07) to seek approval from the Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) 2023 for the monitoring period 2022/23, which set out that that Folkestone: A Brighter Future project would be in receipt of £997,170 of CIL funding controlled by FHDC. Spend was allocated in line with the CIL Governance arrangements adopted in 2020.

The required CIL funding to Folkestone: A Brighter Future project was agreed at the S106/CIL officer group on 10/01/2024 (with a further update agreed at the officer group meeting on 5th February 2024). These conversations led to the drafting of the IFS 2023 that was taken to and agreed by Cabinet on 22 May 2024.

2.7 Folca 2 Project

Folca 2 has received a grant from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) for Folca 2 of £1.44M which will support the refurbishment of the building. Council is asked to note that this grant award is replacing capital budget already approved in the current capital programme, rather than adding to the total project budget.

3.0 BUDGET INFORMATION AND PRIOR APPROVALS

The table below outlines the projects that have been approved in the IFS 2024 paper and/or further Cabinet papers.

These projects/additional budgets are to be added to the Medium Term Capital Programme for 2025/26.

Project	Funding support required	Timescale for Delivery	Report references
Lower Leas Landslip – Engineering Works	CIL Funding of £100,000 allocated in the 2024 IFS (Which is additional to the £150,000 allocated in the 2023 IFS) New total to be approved in MTCP £400k	Autumn/Winter 2025/26	Recorded in the infrastructure Schedule 2023, and agreed at Officer Group on 10/01/2024 The 2024 IFS approved at 16 July 2025 Cabinet, report C/25/23
Infrastructure Improvements to The Leas	CIL funding of £150,000 allocated in the 2024 IFS (which is in addition to the £150,000 allocated in the 2023 IFS) New total to be approved in MTCP £300k	Completion of 10 year maintenance plan – Summer 2025 Initial works to steps and surfacing in the Autumn /Winter 2025 Repointing of retaining walls Spring 2026	Recorded in the Infrastructure schedule 2023 and agreed at officer group on 10/01/2024 The 2024 IFS approved at 16 July 2025 Cabinet, report C/25/23
Lower Leas Coastal Park play area refresh. Strategic Play Areas as set out in the adopted Play Area Strategy	CIL Funding of £100,000 allocated in the 2024 IFS (which is additional to the £300,000 allocated in the 2023 IFS) Additional Capital funding of £141k from the capital receipts reserve New project budget total to be approved in MTCP £750k	Public engagement undertaken Approved by cabinet in May 2025	Recorded in the Infrastructure Schedule 2023, and agreed at officer group on 10/01/2024 Cabinet report C/25/04 21 May 2025 The 2024 IFS approved at 16 July 2025 Cabinet, report C/25/23

Wraightsfield Play Area refurbishment of strategic play area in Dymchurch	£30,000 Total to be approved in MTCP £30k	Winter 2025	Play Area Strategy 2017 The 2024 IFS approved at 16 July 2025 Cabinet, report C/25/23
Folkestone to Hythe Beach management Phase V 2025-2030	£2,778,340	Winter 2025 – Spring 2030	Cabinet report C/25/34 15 October 2025
Folkestone: A Brighter Future	Change in Match Funding: £352,830 additional use of High Street Regeneration Reserve £647,170 additional CIL Funding £1,000,000 removed from potential Folca 1 Lease Premium Capital Receipt	Spring 2025 – Autumn 2026	Council Report A/22/15 27 July 2022 Cabinet Report C/24/08 12 June 2024 CIL Working Group 22nd May 2024

4. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

4.1 A summary of the perceived risks follows:

Perceived risk	Seriousness	Likelihood	Preventative action
Budgets not updated in MTCP - Projects will not be delivered	High	Low	Approval is required from Council to add projects to the Medium Term Capital Programme 2025/26 so projects can remain on track for delivery.

5. LEGAL/FINANCIAL AND OTHER CONTROLS/POLICY MATTERS

5.1 Legal Officer's Comments (OS)

There are no legal implications arising directly from this report

5.2 **Finance Officer's Comments (DL)**

The capital projects detailed above at 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4 and 2.5 have been included in the quarter one capital monitoring report and added to the medium-term capital programme which was subject to approval by Cabinet on 15 October 2025.

All the projects are fully funded, mostly by CIL which was approved by Cabinet on 16 July 2025 (C/25/23) and £141k from capital receipts which was approved by Cabinet on 21 May 2025 (C/25/04).

The capital projects detailed above in 2.6 and 2.7 have had a change in how they are financed, but the overall budget remains the same.

5.3 **Diversities and Equalities Implications (LV)**

There are no diversities and equalities implications arising directly from this report.

- *Does this Report need an Equality Impact Assessment? No*
- *Is the Equality Impact Assessment attached to this report? N/A*

6. CONTACT OFFICERS AND BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

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

Lucy Vidler
Development Project Manager
Telephone: (01303) 853443
Email: Lucy.Vidler@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk

Rod Lean (FABF Project)
Chief Officer - Place & Growth
Telephone: (01303) 853301
Email: Rod.Lean@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk

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

None

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This Report will be made public on 18 November 2025

Report Number **A/25/18**

To:	**Council**
Date:	**26th November 2025**
Status:	**Key Decision**
Responsible Officer:	**Andy Blaszkowicz, Director of Housing and Operations**

SUBJECT: DELIVERING MORE COUNCIL OWNED TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

SUMMARY: Homelessness legislation, sets out clear guidance around the duties, powers and obligations on housing authorities, towards people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. The Council's Housing Options Team works to prevent homelessness, and part of this is providing access to temporary accommodation (TA) for homeless households accepted for long-term re-housing by the Council.

The number of households in TA has increased significantly over the last 12 months, (from 55 last year to approximately 115), reflecting the national picture of increased pressures. The Cabinet report C/25/42 (included as appendix 1), updates Members on current homelessness trends and the Council's plans to reduce the need for private sector TA, including proposals for the delivery of further Council owned TA units through capital borrowing of £5 million within the current financial year within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **To receive and note report A/25/18.**
2. **To agree a capital growth item of £5M in the current financial year, to enable the acquisition/delivery of at least 20 further HRA owned temporary accommodation units. The growth to be funded through prudential borrowing within the HRA.**

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The use of temporary accommodation in the United Kingdom has risen sharply in recent years, driven by a combination of rising private rents, a shortage of affordable housing, increased evictions and other factors such as those escaping domestic abuse.

1.2 With the increase in homeless presentations, the Council are accepting a homelessness duty on more households, and this coincides with various factors affecting the private rental market.

1.3 Most of the TA provided is in the form of self-contained private rented accommodation, which is rented on a nightly let basis. Approximately 93 households are currently accommodated in private nightly let accommodation, which is expensive. The Council only has 8 units of self-contained accommodation which are held in the General Fund. 10 HRA properties are also currently being used as temporary accommodation, with a further 20 being sourced as and when suitable voids become available to use for TA. Bed and Breakfast accommodation is only used in emergency situations and applicants are moved on as quickly as possible.

1.4 Where the Council uses private sector nightly let and bed and breakfast accommodation, it is only able to reclaim Housing Benefit Subsidy which is currently capped at 90% of the 2011 Local Housing Allowance (LHA) Rate.

- For example, if the Council is using a 2-bedroom nightly let self-contained property in Folkestone let on a nightly rate of £55, or £385 per week, the maximum housing benefit that can be claimed is £114 per week. There is no indication from the Government that it will change this policy position.

1.5 In 2024/25, the TA negative subsidy impact for the Council was approximately £600K. Due to the current level of homeless households in TA, the Council Tax Benefits and Welfare Manager has advised that the negative subsidy impact for the Council in 2025/26 is projected to be approximately £1.2M with recuring pressures remaining each forecast year of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

1.6 Where the Council uses its own self-contained accommodation as TA, it is able to claim 100% of the rental charge from the LHA and there is no negative subsidy impact on the Council’s General Fund. The short-term use of HRA stock as TA will lessen considerable financial pressures each year.

1.7 Delivering more Council owned TA will provide a significant financial saving to the Council’s General Fund reducing the subsidy gap by approximately £280k p.a. The financing costs will be largely covered by the rental income received from 100% housing benefit.

1.8 Further to this, the HRA will own the asset and therefore have the asset value in perpetuity. In future, should the units no longer be required for TA they will be used as general needs accommodation for families on the housing waiting list. The capital sum may also be able to be reduced as officers will apply for Homes England grant if the properties are eligible.

1.9 By acquiring up to a further 20 units of TA, (as detailed in section 3 of the appended Cabinet Report), as well as utilising a further 20 suitable existing HRA units, the TA subsidy gap will be reduced as well as the impact on the

General Fund by approximately £500k-£540k per year. This could be further improved if Homes England funding is available to support the acquisitions/new build, and if more units can be sourced within the available funding.

1.10 Members are asked to note the report and agree a capital growth item of £5M in the current financial year, to enable the acquisition/delivery of at least 20 further HRA owned temporary accommodation units.

2. LEGAL/FINANCIAL AND OTHER CONTROLS/POLICY MATTERS

2.1 Legal (OS) - There are no legal reasons why the Council should not use its housing stock as temporary accommodation. There is specific provision in the Housing Act 1985 Schedule 1 Paragraph 4 that provides that any tenancy granted in pursuance of any function under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (homelessness) a secure tenancy will not arise unless the local authority has notified the tenant that the tenancy is to be regarded as a secure tenancy.

2.2 Finance (JS) The current level of Temporary Accommodation (TA) funding is not sustainable under the existing Government funding regime. This proposal addresses the TA requirement while reducing the financial impact on the General Fund. The high-level financial implications are outlined in section 5.2 of the Cabinet report C/25/42 15.10.2025.

3. CONTACT OFFICERS AND BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

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

Gill Butler – Chief Officer Housing
Email: Gill.butler@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk

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

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Cabinet report C/25/42

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This Report will be made public on 7 October 2025

Report Number: **C/25/42**

To:	**Cabinet**
Date:	**15 October 2025**
Status:	**Key - Decision**
Responsible Officer:	**Andy Blaszkowicz, Director of Housing and Operations**
Cabinet Member:	**Councillor Rebecca Shoob, Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness**

SUBJECT: **HOMELESSNESS UPDATE - DELIVERING MORE COUNCIL OWNED TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION**

SUMMARY: The Council's Housing Options Team is required to provide temporary accommodation (TA) for homeless households, accepted for long-term re-housing by the Council. The number of households in TA has increased significantly over the last 12 months (from 55 to approximately 115) reflecting the national picture of increased pressures. The report updates members on current homelessness trends and plans to reduce the need for private sector TA, including proposals for the delivery of at least a further 20 Council owned TA units through capital borrowing of £5m within the current financial year within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

a) The Council must make the best use of the resources it has available to respond to homelessness in the district.

b) Homeless approaches requiring intervention by the Council have increased over the last 12 months, resulting in increased numbers of households in TA.

c) The proposals set out in this report will provide savings on TA costs (which will be monitored). The TA negative subsidy impact is projected to increase to approximately £1.2m in the current financial year, from £600k in 24/25.

d) Where the Council uses its own Housing stock as TA, it can reclaim 100% of Housing Benefit Subsidy from the Government.

e) The provision of further Council owned TA will assist the Council to reduce the impact on the General Fund of the TA negative subsidy.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **To receive and note report C/25/42.**
2. **To agree a capital growth item of £5M in the current financial year, to enable the acquisition/delivery of at least 20 further HRA owned**

temporary accommodation units. The growth to be funded through prudential borrowing within the HRA.

3. **To note that a further 20 existing HRA units will be used for temporary accommodation when they become available within the next 12 months.**
4. **To support the recommendation to Full Council seeking to approve the addition of the £5m borrowing to the HRA capital plan.**
5. **To provide delegated authority to the Director of Housing & Operations in consultation with the Corporate Leadership Team to utilise the funding to source appropriate accommodation for the HRA to be used as temporary accommodation.**
6. **To note that Officers will apply for Homes England funding should any of the new acquisitions be eligible, and provide delegated authority to the Director of Housing & Operations to accept any grant should the application be successful and reporting through normal channels as appropriate.**

1. Background

1.1 The Council's Housing Options Team provides TA for households accepted by the Council as being homeless. At present the Council has approximately 115 households in TA.

The number of households in TA has risen significantly over the last year as per the national picture of increased pressures. The main reasons for homeless households approaching the Council are:

- Households evicted from private sector accommodation due to a section 21 (no fault) eviction process
- Households fleeing domestic abuse
- Other forms of eviction from private sector accommodation
- Households asked to leave accommodation by other family members
- Those leaving care, leaving the armed forces etc.
- Cost of living issues experienced over the last year.

1.2 Securing alternative long-term private sector accommodation is becoming increasingly difficult at a time when we are also seeing more homeless presentations. The current cost of living crisis, combined with the impact of the Domestic Abuse Act, has placed additional pressure on the Council's TA resources. Short-term placements out of district are also necessary in some cases where there are no suitable available premises.

1.3 The majority of the TA provided is in the form of self-contained private rented accommodation, which is rented on a nightly let basis. Approximately 93 households are currently accommodated in private nightly let accommodation. The Council also has 8 units of self-contained accommodation which are held in the General Fund. Bed and Breakfast accommodation is only used in emergency situations and applicants are moved on as quickly as possible. 15 HRA properties are also currently being used as temporary accommodation.

1.4 Where the Council uses private sector nightly let and bed and breakfast accommodation, it is only able to reclaim Housing Benefit Subsidy which is currently capped at 90% of the 2011 Local Housing Allowance Rate. For example, if the Council is using a 2-bedroom nightly let self-contained property in Folkestone let on a nightly rate of £55, or £385 per week, the maximum housing benefit that can be claimed is £114 per week. There is no indication from the Government that it will change this policy position. In 2024/25, the TA negative subsidy impact for the Council was approximately £600K. Due to the current level of homeless households in TA, the Council Tax Benefits and Welfare Manager, has advised that the negative subsidy impact for the Council in 2025/26 is projected to be approximately £1.2M with recuring pressures remaining likely each forecast year of the MTFS.

1.5 Where the Council uses its own self-contained accommodation as TA it is able to claim 100% of the rental charge from the Local Housing Allowance and there is no negative subsidy impact on the Council's General Fund. The use of HRA stock as TA will lessen considerable financial pressures each year. For example, the use of a 2-bedroom HRA flat will cost the Council a net position of approximately £3K including set up and maintenance costs in year 1. Following this it will cost approximately £1,500 p.a. for subsequent years. A comparative 2-bedroom nightly let flat will cost the Council's General Fund approximately £14K per year (based on a nightly rate of £55 per night, less eligible Housing Benefit payments received). However, the private sector cost does include maintenance and an intensive management service. It should be noted that HRA management and maintenance costs are less apparent, as this is dependent on the level of void work required and housing management interventions in managing the TA.

2.0 The Use of the Council's Existing HRA Stock

2.1 The Council's current Housing Allocations Policy permits the use of the Council's housing stock as temporary accommodation. The Council is currently using 15 units of HRA held accommodation as TA for households accepted.

2.2 Going forward, it is proposed to increase the number of Council HRA held properties used as TA up to 35 (an additional 20 units) between now and 2027.

2.3 The Housing Options team will work closely with the Housing Asset Team to set up the accommodation so that it is fully ready for occupation. When HRA properties become void, an assessment process will take place with Housing Options and Housing Operations /Asset colleagues against the set criteria to ensure that the accommodation is suitable to be used as TA. Each property has an approximate set up cost of £3K, for decorating and furnishing costs. This is higher than usual social housing void costs as there is a different specification for TA. There is also a higher turnaround in TA than in long-term council housing. Although the costs will be met from existing TA budget resources, it should be noted that both the void costs and maintenance costs of using HRA accommodation as TA is higher than using it as general needs accommodation.

2.4 This proposal is expected to offer a significant saving in the General Fund of approximately £280k per year against the cost of TA provision through nightly lets in the private sector by reducing the TA subsidy gap. However, it should be noted that it will have an impact on the HRA business plan in terms of reducing the number of properties available to applicants on the Housing List. The use of accommodation as TA will also place additional pressure on the Housing Options, Neighbourhood Management and Asset Teams, along with their contractors. The full impact and costs of the proposals will, therefore, be closely monitored.

2.5 Although the HRA has a £5M p.a. acquisitions / new build budget in its business plan, new properties acquired should be considered against the loss of properties to the HRA; from the recent high numbers of Right to Buy's, the disposals policy of non-viable assets, and use of HRA homes as TA. Whilst in principle the Council could consider using even more of the HRA stock as TA, it is vital that an overall balance is achieved. If too many or the wrong type of homes are used as TA, this will limit our ability to offer suitable long-term homes in council accommodation to both homeless households and wider households through the Housing List. There is already a shortage of large family sized homes. This could increase the size of the waiting list and the overall time that homeless households spend in temporary accommodation.

3.0 Other Priority Actions within the Housing Options Service

3.1 The Housing Options service will continue working to increase the supply of Private Sector Homes available to the Council to enable the team to prevent homelessness and move households on from TA as quickly as possible.

3.2 During 2024/25, the number of new affordable homes delivered in the district was particularly low, with only 23 new affordable homes provided, compared to 75 on average in previous recent years. Most of our regular Registered Provider partners have been reluctant to take on new developments over the last 18 months due to the financial and capacity issues they face. The Council's direct intervention to take on S106 opportunities and work to bring other Registered Provider partners to the district will significantly increase new affordable housing lettings in 2025/26 and 2026/27. This will enable more households in TA, and on the Housing List, to be moved on to permanent affordable homes.

3.3 It is proposed that the Council should also seek to deliver more bespoke TA owned by the HRA. This could involve the acquisition and conversion of existing properties, or the development of purpose-built accommodation on sites in the district, potentially using modern methods of construction to speed up delivery. The acquisitions would be funded through a capital growth item of £5M in the current financial year, to enable the delivery of at least 20 further HRA-owned temporary accommodation units. The growth will be funded through prudential borrowing within the HRA.

3.4 When using Council/HRA owned stock as TA, the Council can claim 100% of the rental charge from the local housing allowance.

3.5 The tables below compare the financial impacts of using temporary accommodation within the private sector (nightly lets) and Council/HRA owned accommodation (based on 2-bedroom accommodation).

a. TA within the Private Sector (nightly let- 2-bedroom accommodation)

Accommodation charge per week	Management cost for the Council	Maintenance and set up costs	Eligible Housing Benefit Payment	Total weekly cost to the Council
£55.00 (£385 per week)	Nil	Nil	£16.28 per night (£114 per week)	£271.00 due to negative subsidy impact

b. TA Council owned (2-bedroom accommodation)

Accommodation charge per week	Management costs	Maintenance and set up costs	Eligible Housing Benefit Payment	Total weekly cost to the Council
Currently charge £50 per night. (£350 per week)	£41 per week per unit	£3,000 p.a.	£50.00	**£99 for mgt and maintenance costs** per unit per week. The income will also need to fund borrowing repayment costs. This can be covered by the £350 weekly

3.6 Delivering more Council owned TA will provide a significant financial saving to the Council's General Fund reducing the subsidy gap by approximately £280k p.a. If the capital sum is provided by the HRA, then the finance charge would be approximately £260k p.a. based on a £5m loan at 5.20% effective rate (PWLB published rates as at 01/10/25 – over 20 years EIP). The financing costs will be largely covered by the rental income received from 100% housing benefit. Further to this, the HRA will own the asset and therefore have the asset value in perpetuity. In future, should the units no longer be required for TA they will be used as general needs accommodation for families on the housing waiting list. The capital sum may also be able to be reduced as officers will apply for Homes England grant if the properties are eligible.

3.7 By using up to a further 20 units of existing HRA stock as detailed in section 2 of this report combined with the acquisition of a further 20 units of TA as detailed in section 3, we should reduce the TA subsidy gap and impact on the General Fund by approximately £500k-£540k per year. This could be further improved if Homes England funding is available to support the acquisitions and if more units can be sourced within the available funding.

3.8 Whilst the actions outlined above represent a positive move in the right direction further action may be required if levels of TA do not subside. Officers will continue to update Cabinet on any further changes in the demand for TA in the district.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

4.1 A summary of the perceived risks to the Council is shown below:

Perceived risk	Seriousness	Likelihood	Preventative action
Increased costs of temporary accommodation due to using	High	High	Use a further 20 units of existing HRA stock and acquire a further 20 units as detailed in

private nightly lets			the report. This will reduce the subsidy gap and improve the position for the general fund.
Increased costs for the HRA (short or longer term)	High	Medium	The impacts will be closely monitored. The General Fund will need to compensate the HRA for any additional costs.
Additional Council TA units may be required	Medium	Medium	The Council will closely monitor demand for TA units

5. LEGAL/FINANCIAL AND OTHER CONTROLS/POLICY MATTERS

5.1 Legal (NM) - There are no legal reasons why the Council should not use up to 35 units of its housing stock as temporary accommodation. There is specific provision in the Housing Act 1985 Schedule 1 Paragraph 4 that provides that any tenancy granted in pursuance of any function under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (homelessness) a secure tenancy will not arise unless the local authority has notified the tenant that the tenancy is to be regarded as a secure tenancy.

5.2 Finance (JS) The current level of Temporary Accommodation (TA) funding is not sustainable under the existing Government funding regime. This proposal addresses the TA requirement while reducing the financial impact on the General Fund

5.2.1 The number of homes to be purchased is expected to exceed 20. The estimate of 20 assumes a base price of £250k per home, but a higher average value is likely because acquisitions will include a mix of property types and locations.

5.2.2 If 20 homes are purchased, they would generate approximately £261k of income for the HRA. This income would offset financing costs, with any shortfall met by the General Fund through the General Fund recharge to the HRA.

5.2.3 The introduction of 20 new homes would reduce the subsidy gap detailed in Table (a) by approximately £283k (excluding management and maintenance costs).

5.2.4 In addition to the purchase of 20 homes, it is proposed that a further 20 HRA properties are used as TA when they become available. This will reduce the cost of the subsidy gap by a further £281k.

5.2.5 Together, these two strategies would substantially reduce current TA pressures on the General Fund. The overall cost of the scheme could be further reduced if successful grant applications were secured.

5.2.6 Finance has considered whether delivery should be via the HRA or the General Fund. The capital growth bid of £5.0m is assumed to be funded through prudential borrowing from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB).

General Fund:

5.2.7 At the time of drafting, the PWLB certainty rate for a £5.0m loan over 20 years was 5.60%. Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) would be chargeable. Using the draft figures, this produces an annual interest charge of £280k plus MRP of £100k, a total annual charge of approximately £380k.

HRA:

5.2.8 At the time of drafting, the HRA concessionary PWLB rate for a £5.0m loan over 20 years was 5.20% (HRA can borrow at 0.40% below General Fund rates). MRP does not apply to the HRA. Using the draft figures, this produces an annual interest charge of approximately £260k.

5.2.9 On this basis, delivery via the HRA would be approximately £120k per year cheaper than delivery via the General Fund, primarily because MRP is not chargeable to the HRA and it can borrow at a cheaper rate. A detailed financial model is required to confirm PWLB rate applicability, eligibility for the concessionary rate, and the final saving.

5.2.10 To avoid adversely affecting the HRA business plan or capital programme, the General Fund would offset the HRA's additional borrowing cost by reducing the recharge the General Fund currently made to the HRA for Council staff and resource use. Reducing that recharge by the value of the HRA interest cost would make the capital growth bid cost neutral to the HRA.

5.3 **Equalities (AH) –** There are no equality or diversity implications arising from this report.

5.4 **Climate Change Implications (AT)-** The Council will seek to maximise the energy efficiency of properties purchased for as temporary accommodation, subject to viability.

6. CONTACT OFFICERS AND BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

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