

POSTLING PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of Postling ANNUAL PARISH MEETING held at Postling Village Hall on Tuesday 28 May 2024 at 7.30pm

1. Attendance and apologies for absence

Attending: Chairman Frank Hobbs, Councillors Helen Calderbank, Christine Hobbs, John Pattrick, Daniel Shaddick, Rob Lye, George Burgess, Parish Clerk Clare Hamilton, Cllr Jenny Hollingsbee and three members of public.

Apologies: Cllr Susan Carey, Cllr Elaine Martin, Chris Reynolds.

2. Minutes of previous Annual Meeting

Minutes of the Annual Meeting held on 23 May 2023 were approved unanimously and signed.

3. Chairman's report - Cllr Frank Hobbs

Your Parish Council has had an interesting year.

Our membership has changed twice. After Yvonne Mumford did not re-stand at the elections in May, we co-opted Robert Lye. Charlie Wilkins then moved to Cumbria and we have co-opted George Burgess to take his place.

Local planning applications have on the whole been straight-forward, but Postling Lodge's retrospective application was deemed to be approved because of timing issues. The Outlook continues to be a problem with the large piles of chalk and only very slow works being done, there is very little we can do about this. The Pent Farm Solar Farm application reached its conclusion. The public meeting we held was unanimous in opposing the application, which your Council concurred with. The application was called in to the Planning Committee at Folkestone & Hythe Council, the members of that committee supported the Planning Officers views to refuse permission. We have told by Lyminge PC that Pentland Homes will fund a bus shelter at New Barn for passengers wishing to travel in the Canterbury direction.

Otterpool Park slowly continues on its way, the District Council is still looking for a strategic partner to put money into the scheme. The Parish Working Group is still meeting regularly with the Otterpool team. The delay is putting pressure on the District to allow more sites to be developed.

The state of local roads is a continuing problem. Some work was done on Cuckoo Lane with a promise that further work would be done in this financial year. This work is now scheduled for early July. We keep our fingers crossed that it will happen, we are told that £13,000 has been allocated. We have also received complaints about the state of Sandling Road, but little can be done to improve the situation without considerable expense to your Council, and therefore yourselves as local Council Tax payers.

Last but not least I would like to thank Clare Hamilton, our very efficient clerk, for her continued time and efforts.

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4. Postling New Village Hall Association report

The committee has only met once for our AGM.

It is quite difficult to maintain the balance between a steady income stream from our regular nursery user and yet keep the hall looking reasonably inviting for members of the Village to use when required.

During the year, various items of remedial work have been undertaken. Much of the plumbing in the toilets has been replaced and we had to replace the main water heater.

I am becoming concerned that over the last three years our income is no more than covering our outgoings and I think that the new committee will have to look at this very carefully. Electricity costs have risen significantly, but at last are showing signs of easing slightly. We discussed the possibility to install some solar panels and have had one quote in order to give a guide as to the likely outlay and potential returns. I feel that it will need some creative thinking in order to come up with a workable scheme, but I think there could be potential for long term savings.

I am standing down as of now and wish the Committee well for the future.

Chris Reynolds

5. Appointment of Representatives to the Village Hall Association

Cllr John Pattrick proposed the re-election of Jill Dixon and Chris Clark, and the election of Jim Nichols. Cllr Helen Calderbank seconded, all in favour.

6. District Councillors' reports - see Appendix

Cllr Christine Hobbs thanked Cllr Jenny Hollingsbee for her work and support, and for attending our meetings regularly.

7. Kent County Councillor's report - see Appendix

8. For information

Meeting closed at 7.50pm.

Signed Frank Hobbs, *Chairman*, May 2025

Appendix

District Councillor Jenny Hollingsbee



Folkestone & Hythe District Council - North Downs West - District Councillor Annual Report

After the May elections last year, a new minority administration was in place at the District Council. The Greens, together with two Liberal Democrat Councillors formed the administration supported by the Labour Group who took the Chairs of all the major committees. My former colleague, Cllr Susan Carey decided to stand down as a District Councillor but continues as a KCC

Councillor. I was very pleased to be re-elected to represent the Communities of Bodsham, Elmsted, Etchinghill, Lyminge, Postling, part of Rhodes Minnis, Sellindge, Stelling Minnis, Stanford, Stowting and all points in between.

Unfortunately, the new Administration has stopped the Princes Parade project of a new swimming pool and leisure centre and there are no plans in place to replace the time expired Hythe Swimming Pool which the leisure centre would have replaced. Despite committing to build Otterpool Park New Garden Town 'at pace' the new Administration has paused implementation for at least two years. The Council is searching for a Strategic Partner to help fund the project. This means housing targets will not be met and developers are able to push for sites that would otherwise be deemed unsuitable.

This is very evident in Sellindge and I arranged a recent meeting for local residents to put questions to the Planning Officers on the many planned and proposed developments.

During the year I proposed a motion to full Council to support Small Modular Reactors at Dungeness which would provide continual future employment for around 1,000 people. Unfortunately, this was not supported by the current Administration who put the emphasis on wind and solar, excluding any references to nuclear.

I was elected to lead the small Conservative Group and I serve on the Planning & Licensing Committee and the Personnel Committee, I also meet the Chief Executive and the Leader on a monthly basis to discuss issues of concern. I was appointed by Kent Conservatives to stand on the Kent & Medway Police & Crime Panel.

The current Administration decided to go ahead with moving to a Committee System form of governance in May 2024 but realised the time scale was too short so a motion was passed to postpone until May 2025. Under this system, decisions are either taken by a committee or delegated to Officers. A £100,000 budget was allocated for this change which the Conservative Group voted against.

Although a challenging year, it has been good to see some of the projects carried forward from the Conservative Administration, for example the £20m levelling up funding for the regeneration of Folkestone Town Centre and the Rural Prosperity Fund where Stowting Peace Room and Sellindge Sports and Social Club have been successful in securing funding for the installation of solar panels. This fund is still open and details can be found at <https://folkestone.works/rural-england-prosperity-fund/>

A number of projects that I have supported have come to fruition this year, including the opening of the MUGA at Stowting Primary School, the launch of the Royal Kentish Cameo path which runs from St Martin's in Canterbury via St Mary & St Ethelburga in Lyminge to St Mary & St Eanswythe in

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Folkestone and the digitalisation of Stanford Parish Council Minutes right back from the 1800's. These documents can be found on the Stanford & Westenhanger History Society website. The new round of Ward Budget funding starts at the end of May - Ward Grant Application forms and guidance can be found at www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/community

See other projects I have supported through my Ward Budget as below -

Date	£ Spent	Description	£ Balance
10/07/23	£200.00	Evington Village Hall	£2,800.00
01/09/23	£500.00	Sellindge Scouts	£2,300.00
13/10/23	£200.00	Sellindge U16 Football	£2,100.00
15/10/23	£350.00	Stanford & Westenhanger History Society	£1,750.00
07/11/23	£475.00	Sellindge Bowls Club	£1,275.00
17/11/23	£366.00	Rhodes Minnis Community Defibrillator	£909.00
17/11/23	£400.00	The Real Power OF Music CIC	£509.00
27/01/24	£200	Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical	
06/02/24	£ 309.00	Parish of St Mary and St Ethelburga Lyminge	£309.00

It was heart-warming to see so many people come together to celebrate the coronation of King Charles. Let's hope this joyful occasion will set the tone for the rest of his reign. It is good to see him at a public event again after his cancer diagnosis and we wish him well.

Throughout the year I have attended many Parish Council Meetings cross the North Downs West Ward and have supported lots of events. I try to attend as many events as possible and I am always happy to meet residents to discuss issues. I receive many emails on planning matters which I am pleased to try and address with the Planning Department as well, as, of course, any other issues residents want to bring to my attention.

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District Councillor Elaine Martin - Annual Report

The past year, for me, has been a wonderful learning experience: so many new people to become acquainted with, so many new projects and issues to understand.

Great progress is being made with the Folkestone Levelling Up grant work and it is on schedule for delivery in 2025. There have been 3 very successful public consultation events with the introduction of a virtual fly though of the proposed changes to the town centre. Feedback from over 1000 engagements have been fed into the design and development of the scheme.

The District Council continues with its Carbon reduction plan for housing, wave 1 has been completed and wave 2 is in progress. The program of insulating and other energy performance work has resulted in reduced energy bills for residence and a significant carbon saving. During the year the District Council completed the first Net Zero Council homes in the District, at Ross Way in Cheriton.

The District Council also introduced a Green Business Grant Scheme to help smaller businesses become more energy efficient and awarded grants from the government funded Rural England

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Prosperity Fund for both community and business projects. Two of these grants have been given in this Ward; one in Stowting and one in Sellindge.

The Warm Spaces initiative has continued this year for people who need a warm place to go and to socialise, this helps reduce their energy costs. The District Council are still providing assistance for households that are being affected by the ongoing cost of living crisis.

The Tall Ships event, which is a joint venture between FH&DC and Boulogne, has had to be cancelled this year due to Boulogne pulling out because of their domestic commitments. This year they are hosting a leg of the Olympic Torch relay and next year they will be holding a stage of the Tour de France, both of which take a lot of organising and put pressure on their budget. They hope to be able to resume the Tall Ships event, in cooperation with the District Council, in 2026.

The Red Arrows display has also had to be cancelled this year due to the unavailability of the Arrows team in August. Folkestone Town Council have, however, been able to book them for their Armed Forces Day celebrations in June.

The District Council have been able to publish a balanced Budget this year without, as in previous years, recourse to the general reserves. This was achieved by a lot of hard work by the Council's Officers. One result of this is that we were able to limit the number of compulsory redundancies to just three members of staff. Fifteen other members of staff took voluntary redundancy and others were reallocated to different positions within the Council.

In December, I attended a community meeting to discuss the future of the Davidson Mill at Stelling Minnis. The windmill, along with 7 others, is proposed for disposal by KCC. I, like many others, expressed my deep concern at the potential disposal of this heritage asset (Grade 1 listed). The Windmill has now been listed as an Asset of Community Value.

The District Council is supporting the Kent Downs application to secure cross channel UNESCO global Geopark status for the Kent Downs National Landscape together with the neighbouring protected landscape in France.

The proposed development of Princes Parade has been cancelled. The much-hated white hoarding that has surrounded the site for the past 18 months has finally been removed. Because of the contamination on the site, it is being replaced by a 1.2 metre high stock fence to prevent anyone accessing it. A District wide public consultation will be held later in the year to decide what you would like to see happen to the Princes Parade site.

The development of Otterpool Park is facing a number of challenges. Primarily a shortfall of approximately £80 million. The previous administration had already loaned the Otterpool Park LLP £119 million so the further request from the LLP for £80 million simply could not be afforded. The District Council's leadership has focused on rebuilding the relationship with Homes England as a primary funding source. There were detailed discussions with the Crown Estates with the aim of them becoming a strategic partner in the scheme. Sadly, these discussions resulted in the Crown Estates deciding the scheme was unviable. The District Council has carried out a re-evaluation of every element of the scheme, and this work continues. A new Managing Director and restructuring of the Otterpool Park team has been carried out. The team is now smaller but much more focused on creating a deliverable scheme. Because of this, Homes England are now very much back on board and there is great confidence in the future of Otterpool Park Garden Town development.

The new Parliamentary boundary lines, drawn up by the Boundary Commission, will be implemented for the next General Election. North Downs West and North Downs East wards of the F&HDC area

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will now form part of the Ashford Constituency at Parliamentary elections. The District Wards and the County Council Divisions will remain the same.

I have been in regular attendance at parish council meetings to listen to local views and answer questions. I have provided reports to the parish councils and local newsletters and supported local events. I have allocated all but £10 of my Ward Members Grant to:

£475.00 Sellindge Bowls Club for replacement of the consumer unit to comply with current legislation

£400.00 Folkestone Music Town to provide a programme of music, technical and related business workshops in the Ward

£215.00 Church of St Mary the Virgin, Stowting (Stour Downs Parish) for upgrading their fire protection equipment

£800.00 the PCC of the Ecclesiastical Parish of St Mary and St Ethelburga Lyminge to produce a pamphlet to promote the Kentish Camino walk

£200.00 Hythe Bay Children Centre for nursery equipment

Jenny and I collaborated to fund some of these projects from our Ward Member Grants.

There have been many issues for the administration to deal with in the last year including Stagecoach cutting the bus services and the ongoing problems being caused by Southern Water's unacceptable performance. The next item on the horizon for The District Council is to review the Corporate Plan which sets out the strategic direction for the council up to 2030. With continued prudent management, the District Council is looking forward to a bright future.

2023/24 Annual Report Kent County Council

Your County Council continues to offer over 300 services ranging from the recycling and disposal of waste collected by the district councils in Kent, to care for the elderly, the disabled, child protection, fostering and adoption, lifelong care for those with a Learning Disability, Trading Standards, the Coroners' Service, registration of births and deaths, libraries, streetlights, roads, public rights of way, provision of school transport and more.

Demand for social care continues to rise and costs for some types of care particularly for children have risen well above inflation. Savings have been needed across all areas of the council's work and services redesigned to minimise cost. We are reducing the number of buildings we use especially those that are particularly costly to run such as County Hall in Maidstone and more services are being delivered online or through outreach.

Whilst there is a mandatory system for sharing the care of adult asylum seekers with other local authorities, there is no such scheme for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Child (under 18 year olds). UASC are increasingly trafficked across the Channel from France to Kent and the numbers are greater than any one council can reasonably be expected to absorb. Other local authorities are understandably reluctant to take on care for more young people and after years of wrangling about introducing a mandatory scheme to share the burden, KCC has taken the Government to court. The courts have so far ruled that KCC is responsible for all UASC arriving in Kent and that we must give the same level of care to them as to children already resident here. The courts have also ruled that

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the voluntary transfer scheme to other local authorities is not working and that the Government must take action. This is a serious situation and further court rulings are expected.

Support continues for the Homes for Ukraine scheme and should you have a spare room or home you can offer for at least 6 months and you would like to help then please register via the KCC website. Work also continues with refugees who have come to Kent on Government schemes from Syria, Afghanistan and Hong Kong.

The Government has continued to fund various schemes to help the most vulnerable with financial assistance such as the Household Support Fund administered by KCC. We have also devolved some of our Government funding to the districts to distribute. KCC is also offering hardware, social tariffs and training in IT for those on low incomes.

Video equipment, sensors, alarms, memory aids, smart speakers and GPS devices as well as adaptations to people's homes are being used to help the disabled and frail elderly live more independent lives. Helping people live independently in their own homes not only reduces the cost of care but also offers a better quality of life. In 2020 the number of people aged 85 and over in the UK was 1.7 million (2.5% of our population) and this is projected to rise to 3.1 million (4.3% of the population) by 2045. Much effort is being directed at helping people live healthier lives so that they do not spend their final years in poor health. More walking, less obesity and ceasing smoking are all key to this and KCC's Public Health team has many initiatives with the NHS to promote healthy choices.

This year has seen a rise in the number of applicants allocated their first preference primary school for their child. 15,198 (91.26%) received their first choice school and 16,436 (98.7%) received one of their three named schools. For secondary schools there was also an increase in the percentage of pupils offered a place at their first preference school to 78.6% (14,571). With 96% (17,790) offered one of their four preferences.

KCC's award winning No Use Empty scheme is now supported by all 12 district councils in Kent and is the longest running empty property initiative in the country. To date it has returned 8,815 empty homes into use through loans to bring the properties back into a habitable condition. The Loan Fund operates on a recyclable basis with repaid loans funding more renovations. The loans go renovate houses that banks and building societies think too risky to fund but NUE has a good repayment record. Empty homes blight a street so returning them to use benefits both the families who move in but the whole area. On average there are 60 -70 NUE schemes under way at any one time in Kent.

KCC has launched a fourth round of SolarTogether. This is a collective buying scheme for solar panels and battery storage. The scheme is open to Kent homeowners and small businesses and several hundred households have already registered their interest. When we know how many people have registered their interest a reverse price auction (lowest bidder wins) is held with pre-vetted installers. Individual quotes are then sent to those who have registered. Individuals benefit from the 'bulk buying' price and the installers have a guaranteed pipeline of work which benefits them. There's a link for registration via the KCC website and the district councils in Kent are promoting the scheme. (Several households in Hawkinge have taken part in earlier rounds of the scheme and feedback has been good.)

KCC is taking the lead role in the creation of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Kent and Medway. Called 'Making Space for Nature' the strategy will identify the areas that are important for nature and how they can be made bigger, more biodiverse and linked with the other areas. The identified areas will have status in the planning system and help direct where development does and doesn't happen. The strategy will also seek to identify how best to compensate landowners to make space for nature

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over the long term. There's a dedicated website and opportunities to be involved over the next 18 months in shaping the strategy.

KCC has launched a Biodiversity Net Gain Site Register for Kent. Since 12 February all developments with over ten houses are required to deliver a 10% increase in biodiversity. The aim is for this improvement to be delivered on the site itself but if this is impractical then the site register will provide a pipeline of suitable land to deliver this commitment.

Do please keep reporting potholes preferably on the KCC website or to 03000 41 81 81. Nearly 60,000 potholes were repaired on Kent's roads between April and December 2023 and the work continues. The Government has allocated Kent £135m of additional funding to Kent over the next 11 years for road repairs. £8.6m of this will be spent between March and October this year. This is on top of the £50m in KCC's own road and footway maintenance budget. We need more but the extra funding is welcome.

KCC is concerned at the potential impact of the Entry Exit System (EES) being introduced by the EU from 06 October. The implementation date has been deferred several times because of fears that it will cause major delays with biometric checks of everyone entering or leaving the EU. It should be possible for much of these checks to be done remotely but current regulations do not allow for this. KCC has been leading a campaign to get the Government to make the necessary changes and also provide more facilities for freight vehicles. Both the Port of Dover and Eurotunnel have been making investments to help speed the process but there is more that the Government can do to help and KCC continues to make this case.

Another campaign KCC is involved in is to get Eurostar to reinstate stops at Ebbsfleet and Ashford. A survey of Kent businesses saw overwhelming support for this and there is an online petition which now has over 53,000 signatures. Do please add your name if you too want our Kent services resumed.

Susan Carey, Member, Elham Valley