

POSTLING PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of Postling ANNUAL PARISH MEETING held at Postling Village Hall on Tuesday 27 May 2025 at 7.30pm

1. Attendance and apologies for absence

Attending: Chairman Frank Hobbs, Councillors Helen Calderbank, Christine Hobbs, Daniel Shaddick, George Burgess, Parish Clerk Clare Hamilton, and Gill Dixon.

Apologies: Cllr John Pattrick, Cllr Rob Lye, Jim Nicholls Postling VH, District Cllr Elaine Martin, District Cllr Jenny Hollingsbee, KCC Cllr Christopher Hespe.

2. Minutes of previous Annual Parish Meeting

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 26 May 2024 were approved unanimously and signed.

3. Chairman's report

Your Parish Council has had a quiet year.

Local planning applications have on the whole been straight-forward and non-controversial.

There has been no news regarding a bus shelter at New Barn for passengers wishing to travel in the Canterbury direction, which is supposed to be funded by Pentland Homes.

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 in starting any building is putting pressure on the District Council to allow more sites to be developed elsewhere, with no help towards infrastructure.

Our District Councillors Jenny Hollingsbee and Elaine Martin have attended our meetings on a regular basis as has our County Councillor Susan Carey. Susan stood down at the recent election and we are now represented at County Hall by Christopher Hespe from the Reform Party. We would like to place on record our thanks for Susan's help over the years as either a County member or District Member.

The state of local roads is a continuing problem, as is the volume and size of traffic using them. We are drawing up a Parish Highway Improvement Plan, and are meeting with KCC Highways next month to discuss our suggestions, which were reached after parishioners were asked for their comments.

You will no doubt have heard that Folkestone Sports Centre has been bought by Roger De Haan's Trust to continue as a sporting venue which will include the swimming pool.

Age UK announced the closure of their centre at Lyminge which will be a blow to local residents including some in Postling. What will happen to the building is not known at present, it is owned by the District Council.

Finally, I would like to thank your Councillors for their inputs and time, and of course our Parish Clerk Clare for her excellent work in keeping us up to date on everything.

Frank Hobbs
Chairman

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4. Postling New Village Hall Association report

I'd like to start by thanking Chris Reynolds, who stepped down as Chairman last year after many years of service.

I would also like to express my gratitude to the committee members, volunteers, and the Parish Council for their ongoing support and commitment in keeping the village hall a valuable and viable asset for our community.

Annual Report

1. Governance

It has been recommended that we update the hall's charitable status by becoming a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). The committee has agreed to this, and I am currently working with others to make the transition.

The committee has agreed to meet more frequently in future, at least three times a year. This will help us address any concerns promptly and keep things moving forward without delay.

2. Running Costs

Financing the running costs of the hall remains a challenge, but after reviewing and increasing our hire fees, I believe we are now in a stronger position.

We have submitted an application, courtesy of Chris Clark, to the District Council's Green Grant Scheme for the installation of solar panels. Electricity is our largest expense, and if successful, solar panels would provide significant long-term savings while reducing our carbon footprint. We expect to hear the outcome in June.

3. Maintenance

Our main user, Badgers Bridge Nursery, has worked closely with us and now provides funding for a regular cleaner.

Over the past year, committee members, together with volunteers from the village, have carried out various maintenance tasks. These have included a thorough deep clean of the hall, removal of most of the moss from the north-east side of the roof, repair of broken roof tiles, grass and verge cutting. These efforts were completed at little or no cost, helping keep the hall in good condition.

The walnut tree in the rear garden had to be removed after assessment by tree surgeons and the tree officer determined it was a safety risk due to its diseased state.

The removal of the tree created an opportunity to re-landscape the rear garden. This was completed over the Easter break, funded by the nursery, and has resulted in a vibrant and safe play area for all village hall users.

4. Usage/Hire

The hall continues to be regularly hired by groups such as the Table Tennis Club and Craft Club, along with occasional private bookings. It also serves as a venue for village events, including providing tea and cakes during Open Garden events and hosting quiz nights. I intend to continue promoting the hall as a valuable village amenity and encourage its increased use.

5 Other

We were very grateful to receive a generous donation from the family of Peter Russell, who sadly passed away a few months ago. Peter, who lived in the village for many years, painted a beautiful large landscape picture of Postling, which the family kindly gifted to the hall. It's a wonderful tribute and a treasured addition to our village space.

Jim Nicholls

Chair, Postling Village Hall Committee

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5. Appointment of Representatives to the Village Hall Association

Cllr Christine Hobbs proposed the re-election of Jim Nicholls, Gill Dixon and Chris Clark.

Cllr Helen Calderbank seconded, all in favour.

6. District Councillors' reports *see Appendix*

7. Kent County Councillor's report *see Appendix*

8. For information

Meeting closed at 7.50pm.

Signed Frank Hobbs, *Chairman*, May 2026

Appendix

North Downs West

Annual District Councillor Jenny Hollingsbee Report 2024/2025



As one of the North Downs District Councillors, I represent the Communities of Bodsham, Elmsted, Etchinghill, Lyminge, Monks Horton, Postling, part of Rhodes Minnis, Sellindge, Stelling Minnis, Stanford, Stowting and all points in between. I attend as many Parish Council Meetings as possible and many events throughout the year. The following is a brief summary of my monthly reports.

Otterpool Park – After almost two years into the current Administration, the only movement on Otterpool Park is a six month collaboration agreement with Homes England. We await to hear the outcome of this arrangement as The Council continues to search 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.

Local Plan – The current housing target for our District is 838 units per annum and as part of the process for the new Local Plan, the District Council has made a 'call for sites' on two occasions. The Council are seeking land for several uses, the main one being housing (including plots for Gypsy and Travellers and self-build) but also for employment and community uses. For further information, please see the FHDC website.

Everist Court (Jubilee House) Lyminge – It was very disappointing to learn of the closing of the Age UK Hythe & Lyminge Centre in Lyminge. I put several questions at full Council to the Leader asking for consideration to be given to maintaining, at least a small Community facility.

Government Rural Prosperity Fund – Local Village Halls and Community Centres in the North Downs Ward were encouraged to make an application to this fund and I am pleased to report that Sellindge & District Playing Fields Benevolent Society (£25,000) and Stowting Peace Room (£9,450) have both been successful in receiving funding towards installing Solar Panels. This work has now been completed.

Folkestone Sports Centre – The news that Folkestone Sports Centre had closed was extremely bad news for the Community. I am pleased that a buyer has come forward to keep and maintain the Sports Centre. With Hythe Pool maintenance costs constantly increasing, lets hope that the Folkestone Sport Centre Swimming Pool opens soon.

Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation - In view of the Government Reorganisation Programme with Kent County Council, Medway Council and the Districts and Boroughs likely to disappear over the next few years, I put forward a motion to full Council on 29 January to ask the Secretary of State for permission to remain as a Cabinet/Leader style of Governance. This was to allow resources, Officer and staff time and funding to be focused on ensuring our residents get the best deal possible moving forward. The Secretary of State agreed with this decision and at the Annual General Meeting of the Council earlier this month, this decision was ratified by full Council.

Ward Budgets

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

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

Date	£ Spent	Description	£ Balance
06/06/24	£500.00	Playground improvements - Lyminge	£2500.00
07/07/24	£500.00	Monks Horton Community	£2000.00
30/07/24	£500.00	Curtain replacement –Etchinghill VH	£1500.00
02/09/24	£500.00	Noticeboard for community, church and school	£1000.00
10/10/24	£500.00	Village Hall Heating - Stowting	£500.00
27/02/25	£500.00	Renew of sound system – Stanford Church	£0.00

I continue to serve on the Planning & Licensing Committee and the Personnel Committee. I also lead the Conservative Group. Throughout the year I have attended many Parish Council Meetings across 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.

Kent County Council - Susan Carey stood down as a Member of Kent County Council as at 1 May 2025. She has been our Kent County Councillor for 20 years and I would like to put on record my personal thanks and also that of residents of the Elham Valley Division. Her kindness, expertise and willingness to help and support residents over the years has been exceptional. Personally, I have worked with Susan for 26 years as previously she was also my District Colleague for North Downs West. I will certainly miss such a wonderful friend and colleague and wish her and her husband John, all best wishes for their retirement.

jenny.hollingsbee@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk

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District Councillor Elaine Martin - Annual Report

This report gives a brief overview of some of the activities of the District Council over the past year and future plans.

Local Government Reorganisation

In December the government published a white paper on local government reorganisation. This is a hugely ambitious project to reshape local government. The District Council and County Council will both be dissolved in the next few years. They will be replaced by a higher-level strategic authority which will eventually be run by a mayor covering Kent and Medway and a lower-level tier of unitary authorities which will be more concerned with operational matters. The relationship with town and parish councils will be 'rewired' as well but there are no details about what this actually means. There are on-going discussions about whether to divide Kent into three or four unitary authorities. The government has asked for final agreed proposal to be submitted in November and we will obviously be doing our best to speak up for the residents of Folkestone-Hythe.

New Corporate Plan

We are in the final stages of revising our Corporate Plan. This builds on and extends the plan which is currently in place. The strap line for the plan is 'Our District, Our World'. This encapsulates how we

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can be aware of global problems such as climate change, biodiversity loss and inequality, whilst taking local action. The subtitle of the plan is 'Building Prosperity and Well-Being for All'. This highlights both the need for a sound economy and the health and welfare of the people who live in the district. The plan was informed by an extensive and highly successful consultation and included the views of a significant number of young people.

Otterpool Garden Town

Although not visible there has been a lot of progress made this year with the Otterpool Park development. On 1st February the Council finally signed a collaboration agreement with Homes England which runs the next for six months. The purpose of the agreement is to explore the potential for a strategic partnership. There is now a realistic prospect of making progress on Otterpool. The agreement also meant that Homes England paid F&HDC a £1.56M contribution to the historic planning costs for the 10% of land that they own on the site.

Working with Young People

One of the Council's objectives is to work more closely with young people and to involve them in decision making. This spring we held a Youth Forum in the Council Chamber to consult with representatives from all the secondary schools in the district about their ideas for the future. There will be another meeting of the Forum this coming September. We have also been working in different ways with primary schools in Hythe, Cheriton and Hawkinge on environment and sustainability issues.

District Council meetings on tour

For the first time ever, the October meeting of the full District council was successfully held outside of Folkestone. The Marsh Academy, New Romney was a fitting venue for this first meeting. Members of the public were able to meet some of the district council's elected members before the meeting. It is hoped that the full District Council meeting will continue to move around to various locations throughout the District to encourage more members of the public to attend.

The old Debenhams building (FOLCA)

The old Debenhams Building and associated buildings in Bouverie Place have been empty for many years. Plans for refurbishing the area are proceeding steadily with support from the Levelling Up Fund but the plans involve many different players, including KCC and the NHS. The plans have also been impacted by devolution. However, council officers have now secured a grant of £1.44 million for a heating pump system for the Debenhams building which will both help expedite the project overall and greatly help in the Council's long held ambition to become net zero.

Overview and Scrutiny

Southern Water, the Environment Agency, KCC and the Romney Marsh Area of the Internal Drainage Board all sent representatives to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting. The district's potential risk of inland flooding and the quality of the coastal bathing water were all discussed in detail. The aim of the meeting was to publicly shine a light on the problems of inland drainage and flooding risks and the pollution found on our beaches.

Sustainable Futures Forum and Green Grants Scheme

Local people are working with the Council in a variety of ways to reduce carbon emissions, enhance biodiversity and build community resilience. The Sustainable Futures Forum which was launched a few years ago goes from strength to strength, attracting around 90 participants at an event this autumn. The Green Grants scheme which has recently been launched to support sustainability initiatives has attracted 59 applications. These have come from town and parish councils, charities, local groups and organisations and small businesses across the district. Applicants will know if they have been successful by July at the latest.

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Recycling and waste

The campaign to raise the district recycling rate to 50% or above continues to achieve results. The 'raise the rate' campaign started in early 2024 with the introduction of an A to Z guide for recycling and waste. There were also several question-and-answer sessions on our social media pages answering questions from the public on what they found difficult to recycle. From September to November last year, we launched a joint project with KCC to sticker refuse bins with 'no food waste' labels. The tonnage of food being recycled has now risen to over 15% in comparison with same period in the previous year and reported in the local press. The next phase of the project will be focused on paper/card recycling. Discounting the price for a black box for residents is one of the options being discussed.

Council House Programme

In May 2023 the Council agreed a target to build 20 new houses a year, or 80 over its full term. This target will not only be achieved but it will certainly be exceeded. There are already plans for 99 affordable council homes to be delivered over the next 24 months and another 77 affordable homes are being built by Orbit on council owned land at Biggins Wood. This is a very significant achievement in the current financial climate and all credit is due to officers and others with responsibilities for this programme.

Age UK in Lyminge

In November a decision was made by Age UK to close their Lyminge hub and on the 31st March the lease for the building was handed back to F&HDC. This is a great loss to Lyminge and the surrounding villages. The decision was made because the cost of running the facility was unsustainable and they had been making a loss on running the services there. Dementia support will still be available in Hythe. To continue to make use of the building as a community facility it would need to keep the fire alarm, lift, boilers, fire extinguishers, etc. compliant, maintained and serviced and the council do not have the resources to do this.

Kent County Councillor Susan Carey - 2024/25 Annual Report

The past year has seen continued financial challenges as demand for Social Care continues to outpace our income and from April this year companies that provide care face increased costs from tax rises which will further worsen this situation. However, Kent County Council continues to offer hundreds of services ranging from the recycling and disposal of waste collected by the district councils in Kent, 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.

The very first elections to Kent County council were held in January 1889 with the council formally coming into being on 01 April 1889. Now the Government is planning to reorganise local government in England combining Districts and County Councils so the election held on 01 May this year is likely to be the very last election for Kent County Council. The Government will have the final say on the shape of the new councils but has indicated that the new combined council/s should have a minimum population of 500,000 (there are around 1.6m in Kent as a whole). At some point we also expect there will be a mayor for the whole of Kent with responsibility for strategic planning, transport and other Kent wide issues.

All your services will continue and there may be economies of scale. There will almost certainly be fewer councillors in the new set up and that may leave a bigger role for parish and town councils

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particularly if they too look to combine (there are at present no compulsory plans for this but it could be done on a voluntary basis). I shall miss you all but especially my friend and District Council colleague Jenny Hollingsbee and I'm glad she is continuing to serve you.

For most of my time at KCC, I have held roles with countywide responsibilities, the most recent being KCC's Cabinet Member for Environment when I introduced the booking system for our Household Waste Recycling Centres as a lockdown measure. This proved so popular with the public that it has been refined and kept. We also won over £25m in Government funding for projects to reduce energy use and carbon emissions which helped pay for two solar parks (both of which went through planning without a single objection) and energy efficiency measures in our offices. In the two years I was responsible for this area we reduced our carbon emissions 30,267 tonnes to 13,550 through our own actions (i.e. over and above the decarbonisation of the grid). We also funded and installed Electric Vehicle charging points in District Council owned car parks across Kent (our EV600 scheme) as well as trials for taxi drivers and some village halls. There are a further 10,000 EV charging points coming for across Kent to help those who don't have off-road parking. We not only planted an additional 169,313 native trees across Kent but saw them established in their early years through mulching and watering. The full scheme will see 1.5m trees established. I was also able to support a project to reestablish disease resistant elms and the White-letter Hairstreak butterfly which relies on elms for habitat. Many people talk about environment, KCC delivers.

It's been great privilege to serve as your County Councillor and I wish you well for the future.

Susan Carey, Member, Elham Valley

Kent County Councillor Christopher Hespe Report

Following the County Council elections on 1 May 2025, I now have the great honour of representing the Elham Valley division on the County Council. It is a large area of some 20,000 people and 8,000 homes, that includes Postling, with some of the loveliest countryside and villages in the South East. The Elham Valley division includes the larger settlements of Hawkinge, Densole, Sellindge, Elham and Lyminge, with smaller villages in the South such as Newington and Peene, and Elmsted and Bodsham in the North. Firstly, may I offer my thanks to outgoing County Councillor Susan Carey, who many readers will recognise as a hard-working champion of our beautiful area.

I will write again about my priorities as a Councillor, but rest assured, I will endeavour at all times to preserve all that is best about the area, whilst seeking to ensure that any development is sensitive and fits with your neighbourhood plans.

The challenges for the new Reform UK administration in KCC are enormous. We have inherited a Council debt from the outgoing Conservative administration of more than £700 million and there are significant **'in-year' savings to be made** totalling tens of millions of pounds. But there is real determination to get the best for Kent's residents and businesses, achieve value for money, and 'do things differently' if it makes sense financially and in terms of service delivery. We have pledged to make savings, so there will be wide consultation on proposals in due course, in which I hope residents of Postling will participate. We have a number of proposals to make life a little better in Kent, and these will be announced over time, but we will of course prioritise the continued delivery of our statutory core services of Adult Social Care, Special Educational Needs, Highways and Education.

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The other 'big issue' on the horizon is **local government review**, with the prospect of the government potentially merging KCC and the district councils and dividing the County into three or four Unitary authorities. I would be keen to keep you in touch as proposals develop, but I can state that my view would always be to devolve power and responsibilities, where feasible and practicable, to localities.

Over time, Kent County Council, under the new leadership of Linden Kemkaran, will outline its position on a number of matters that will be of interest to residents of Postling Parish, including on the proliferation of proposals for excessively **large solar farms** (of which you know of one only too well!); achieving good **community benefits** on the back of housing developments; the opportunities that should be presented through **disposal of KCC owned properties**, and the opportunities for **procurement** to benefit local small businesses rather than the large, multi-nationals.

Although I have worked for public agencies at national, county, regional and national levels and was a local government Director, I have never been an elected representative. But I am determined to do my best for you.

Here are a few matters that will be of interest to the Parish:

Small Member Grants

Let me know if you have a project, event or group activity for which you would like to be considered for a small grant from KCC. This is for voluntary organisations with a bank account; usually constituted. Recipients could be clubs, societies, voluntary groups, church groups and not-for-profit organisations. Usual size of grant is £250 to £500. It could even fund small highways projects, such as raising kerbs for wheelchairs or installing a new road sign. Should take 12 weeks maximum from you contacting me to us getting the money out of the door.

Waste Transfer Station Proposal, Westenhanger

The planning application for the proposed development of a waste transfer station, which would provide facilities to sort household waste, is continuing to go through the motions. There has been extensive consultation involving the Parishes of Aldington and Bonnington, Smeeth, Lympne and Sellindge. Comments have been fed back to the applicant organisation (WW Martin and KCC).

Operation Brock

Following the calling by Kent and Medway Resilience Forum for Operation Brock to be put in place over the half-term bank holiday, the contraflow is planned to be removed overnight on 27 May and the M20 will reopen as normal on Wednesday 28 May.

Let's Talk Kent

KCC has a portal through which all major consultations will be posted to seek the public's views and comments. The public can sign up to be a consultee. Currently, 60,000 people have signed up to 'Let's Talk Kent', which now covers consultations on local schemes, county-wide budgetary proposals, priorities and savings proposals, public rights of way changes and highways matters.

Christopher Hespe LL.M, MA, BSc Hons
Kent County Council Member for Elham Valley