

District Councillor Report May 2025

Governance

On 29 January 2025 I put a motion to full Council to remain as a Leader/Cabinet style of Governance rather than move to a Committee system.

On 2 April 2025, the Secretary of State, Jim McMahon wrote the following "I confirm that I therefore consider that your council's proposed course of action - to resolve to reverse the council's decision of June 2023 to move to a committee system form of governance arrangements, and to retain a leader and cabinet model - is likely to improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of some or all of the people who live or work in the area of the local authority. For these reasons I consent to your council resolving to retain the leader and cabinet model.

Citizens Advice Bureau

Although the Folkestone Office has closed, at a recent presentation by Citizens Advice we were informed that a presence will be retained in the Folkestone & Hythe district with the ability to increase the services offered. Advisers are available to be contacted by calling 01304 353861, visiting doverdealadvice.co.uk or by attending the Rainbow Centre, Folkestone (CT20 2AF) on Thursdays between 10am and 3pm.

My Community Voice – This week there is information about six different scams, including voice cloning. For further information please sign up [to My Community Voice Kent](https://www.mycommunityvoicekent.co.uk)
<https://www.mycommunityvoicekent.co.uk>

Finally, I would just like to reiterate my comment in the May Newsletter on Susan. We lose Susan as our Kent County Council Councillor 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 many many 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.

Cllr Jenny Hollingsbee

North Downs West Ward Councillor

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Report for Sellindge Parish Meeting 08 April 2025

Operation Brock is being implemented on the M20 over the Easter holidays by the Kent Resilience Forum of which KCC is a major partner. Operation Brock is a great inconvenience but it has proved effective in limiting the overall disruption to our road network in East Kent. The good news is that the Lower Thames Crossing was given planning consent on 25 March and construction could start as early as 2026. A decision had been postponed because of the General Election last year and it's good to see this long-term solution finally given the go-ahead. The new crossing will be in a tunnel to improve resilience to bad weather and is expected to be in operation in the early 2030s. Sellindge will benefit more than most as a significant share of cross-Channel Traffic is expected to use the Lower Thames Crossing to skirt London and access Kent on the M2/A2 relieving pressure on the M20. KCC will be pressing for the connecting local road network to be upgraded to cope with this new route.

It looks like winter may finally be behind us but Kent Highways gritters still go out when road surface temperatures are predicted to drop below zero. A few years ago a tradition was started of naming each gritter so they could be tagged on social media when spotted. This year kmfm radio ran a contest and 'Grittersaurus Rex' won the popular vote. Other entries included CTRL-SALT-DELETE, Claudia Sprinkleman and Orlando Blooming-cold. Kent Highways' winter service began on 18 October 2024 and will continue as needed until 18 April 2025. It has dealt with the impact of storms Ashley, Bert, Conall and Darragh which collectively caused an additional 1,000 emergency reports about fallen trees, flooding, and other weather-related incidents. This winter, gritting crews have been called out 34 times and have used 7,708 tonnes of salt. Each depot has received an additional 200 tonnes of salt, with a further 500 tonnes delivered in February, to ensure KCC is ready for any further winter events.

A new grant fund has just opened to complement the Baton of Hope Tour that is coming to Kent on 22 September. The Hope Fund has been set up by the Kent and Medway Suicide Prevention programme – a partnership of Kent County Council (KCC), Medway Council and NHS organisations. Charities, volunteer groups and schools are encouraged to apply for grants of up to £1000. It's suggested that community arts projects, schools or community groups designing and promoting messages of hope in their community, sports or physical activities and events within nature should be put forward. Applications need to be made by 15 April.

I've been attending Sellindge Parish Council since 2003 so have seen many councillors and a few clerks over that time. I'd like to thank those who have done their best for their community and wish you all the very

best for the future. Sellindge is growing into a significant settlement with new facilities and homes. Long may it flourish.

Susan Carey, KCC Member for Elham Valley

Local Government Re-organisation

As requested by the Government in its Local Government Reorganisation letter an interim submission was made by KCC and all the Districts in the county. The submission sets out proposals to divide into either three or four Unitary Councils. Feedback on the submission is expected shortly. The feedback will help prepare the final submission which will be delivered to the Government on the 28th November this year.

Otterpool Park

The Otterpool Park Collaboration Agreement with Homes England has been signed. On signing the agreement Homes England has paid F&HDC a £1.56M contribution to the historic planning costs. Homes England will also share any relevant costs incurred during the agreement period. The start of the Collaboration Agreement was backdated to the 1st February and will run until August. The purpose of the Collaboration Agreement is to allow negotiation time for Homes England to become F&HDC's strategic partner and prepare a case for Public Sector funding.

Citizens Advice

Following the closure of the Citizens Advice office in Folkestone the independent and confidential advice offered to residents was temporarily made available by the Citizens Advice Dover, Deal and District office. This agreement has now been formalized and Advisers are available to be contacted by calling 01304 353861, visiting doverdealadvice.co.uk or by attending the Rainbow Centre, Folkestone (CT20 2AF) on Thursdays between 10am and 3pm.

Rural Prosperity Fund Grants

F&HDC have been successful in getting a further £171,402 from the Rural Prosperity Fund. This will be run the same manner as the previous Rural Prosperity Fund grant scheme. The application form will be available soon on the Folkestone Works website.

Folkestone A Brighter Future

Work on Folkestone: A Brighter Future commenced on the 7th April and is due to last until September 2026. The works have gone through extensive consultation and will lead the regeneration of the town centre in Folkestone.

Decarbonisation Grant for FOLCA2

F&HDC have also secured £1.44M grant funding for a heat pump heating system in FOLCA2. This is great news for the project overall, but it will also greatly help towards the Council's ambition to become net zero.

Customer Access Strategy

As part of compiling the Customer Access Strategy, F&HDC are seeking feedback from residents of their experience, both good and bad, of accessing council services currently being provided. The survey can be completed online by visiting the F&HDC website or by going to the Civic Centre in Folkestone and filling in a paper form. The survey is open until 5pm on Wednesday 30 April 2025.

Folkestone Sport Centre

The Administrator has confirmed receipt of the deposit paid by the Sports Trust and the sale of the Folkestone Sports Centre should be completed in the next few days.

Kent County Council Elections

Finally a reminder to bring your photo id along with you to the polling station to enable you to vote in the Kent County Council elections to be held on the 1st May.

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