

District Councillor Report

Green Grant Programme – I was pleased to support the applications in the North Downs West Ward as follows –

Postling Village Hall – £11,700 - Solar PV & battery storage systems

In the Sticks Childcare - £10,944 - Solar PV & battery storage systems for Lyminge nursery

Rebel Farmer - £1,000 - Conservation event Lyminge

Folkestone – A Brighter Future – Work is now fully underway on this £20m regeneration scheme initiated under the previous Administration. At the last full Council Meeting I raised the issue of traffic disruption all around the town. I understand KCC are directing the works and are working hard to resolve problems.

Princes Parade – The Leader of the Council has confirmed that the Princes Parade site will remain exactly as it is for the time being. It will be interesting to see how this changes under the Local Government Organisation.

Otterpool Park – a further collaboration agreement has been signed with Homes England and I await to hear further details.

Local Government Re-organisation – the 14 Districts of Kent and Medway continue to meet to try and come to a consensus as to how Kent & Medway should be divided into unity bodies and how many. I attend the FHDC working group and from the information I have heard and read, if there is not a consensus by the 28 November 2025, then Government will direct. We do know that the timeline is for new shadow unitary bodies to be set-up in May 2027 and for the new structure to go live in May 2028.

Ward Budget – I still have some funding available to support local organisations – please email me with any request up to £500. I have recently supported Canterbury Beekeepers to the tune of £274 to provide an Asian hornet trap in North Downs West.

KCC Budget 2025/26 – Please do respond to this consultation Visit www.kent.gov.uk/budget This consultation closes on the 29 September.

Rural Grants The Rural England Prosperity funding has been extended with a further £180,000 from central government to help businesses and rural communities in the district. [The Folkestone Works website](#) has further information including how to apply and the eligibility rules

Folca in Folkestone

The Edwardian section of the former town centre department store is to be put up for sale. This is part of a new strategy for the building agreed in July by the council's Cabinet members. The future of Folca 2 – the Art Deco section on Sandgate Road – is being explored with a mixed-use scheme the preferred option. This could be fully commercial or a combination of public sector, medical and commercial uses.

Folkestone - A Brighter Future

A quarter of the £20m regeneration scheme is now complete. As part of the project the Folkestone bus station will move to a linear layout and Bouverie Square will return to its former use as a garden square. The two bus stops outside the bus station will be moved temporarily from Tuesday 2 September. The rest of Folkestone bus station will close on Saturday 20 September. Stagecoach services currently operating from the bus station will run from temporary stops erected along Middelburg Square.

Coastal destination project

The project is bringing to the site a new visitor hub, improved water sports facilities, 93 beach huts and a 120-space car park with electric car charging points. Public toilets will include a Changing Places facility. The council is funding the scheme with the support of the Nuclear Decommissioning authority through the Nuclear Restoration Services.

Romney Marsh

After a year of being closed the Romney Marsh Visitor Centre opened again at the beginning of August and is to be known as The Nest. They will be offering a café, retail and community space. Working alongside the visitor centre's new operator, the Romney Marsh Countryside Partnership, with F&HDC's support, continues to manage the 11-hectare nature reserve.

Solar Farm proposals

Currently, solar farm applications projecting a generating capacity below 50 megawatts are decided by the local planning authority. Those above 50 MW are known as a National Significant Infrastructure Project and are submitted to the government's Planning Inspectorate. The webpage [Solar projects in the Folkestone & Hythe district | Folkestone & Hythe District Council](#) explains the council's role in solar farm planning applications.

Princes Parade, Hythe

Two public consultation events at Hythe Town Hall were held at the beginning of July. The two sessions were designed to give residents further opportunities to make suggestions for the future of the stretch of land on Hythe seafront. Reflecting views shared in the online consultation, the majority of those attending the events wanted the site left as open space supporting biodiversity.

Contact: Elaine.Martin@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk

Kent County Councillor Report for Parishes – 12 August 2025

Reforming Kent's Roads

The new Administration at Kent County Council pledged to address the problem of potholes in Kent, which was raised constantly during the May 2025 elections. So in response, KCC has agreed to invest £67 million to repair, renew and protect Kent's 5,400-mile road network. Some 12,000 potholes have been repaired between April and the end of July 2025, and additional crews are on the roads dealing with repairs and improvements. Please report road defects and potholes to KCC on-line if possible, or by telephone if it is easier.

Budget Consultation – Closing date 29 September 2025

Kent County Council has to set a balanced budget and therefore is consulting the public currently regarding the budget for 2026/27. Most of KCCs budget comes from Council Tax, business rates, government grants and income from service users. The cost of delivering services is expected to rise by £124 million and the funding is forecast to grow by only £74 million. So, the funding gap for the next financial year will be at least £50 million. KCC is keen to hear residents' views on which services they would be happy to see cut or protected, and suggestions on how to make savings and increase income.

Member Community Grants

Each elected Member of KCC has a small amount of funding to allocate in grants to voluntary and not-for-profit organisations, primarily for events and activities. The grants are usually in the region of £250 or £500 and aim to enhance the wider community. If your organisation would like to be considered for a small grant, please contact me with a broad outline of your project/scheme on Christopher.Hespe@kent.gov.uk

Christopher Hespe

Kent County Councillor for Elham Valley