

District Councillor Report – March 2026

Budget – the FHDC budget was set at the full Council Meeting held on 25 February. My group voted against the budget as we felt borrowing £6m to improve the Hythe Swimming Pool was not sensible. The Hythe Pool has been subsidised for many years and is constantly requiring maintenance. We feel this funding should be put towards a new facility that would also create additional income to help with running costs and for a facility to be more sustainable.

My account – My account is a good way of reporting issues to the Council. There is a long list of issues that can be reported in this way, for example fly tipping, missed bin, anti-social behaviour, noise nuisance, dangerous dog etc. If you have not registered go to www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk and click on My account at the top right hand corner

Independent Custody Visitors - The ICV Scheme is a statutory, volunteer-led programme that helps ensure people held in police custody are treated fairly, with dignity, and informed of their rights. Volunteers make unannounced visits to custody suites and play a vital role in safeguarding some of the most vulnerable people in our communities. Applications are welcomed from people of all backgrounds, identities, and lived experiences. If you'd like to give back, support your community, and help promote transparency in policing, this could be the role for you. Applicants must be at least 18 years old to apply. Find out more and to apply, please visit kent-pcc.gov.uk/icv

Ward Grants – the 2025/26 scheme is now closed and will re-open for 26/27 at the end of May.

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New affordable homes

The first council tenants have begun to move into newly built, affordable rent homes on the Risborough Barracks development in Folkestone. A total of 44 homes are due to be completed by the Autumn and will all be allocated to applicants on the council's housing list. Six new homes are also being provided by the council in Lyminge and will also be let at affordable rents to those on the waiting list. All the new properties have an EPC rating B – keeping energy costs down for residents and supporting the council's carbon reduction ambitions.

Council agrees balanced budget

Folkestone & Hythe District Council's 2026/27 budget – the third in succession not to be funded from general reserves – has been approved. While it provides £20m to be spent on key services supporting residents across the district, there is also a strong focus on the future. An improved council tax reduction scheme is also being introduced to further help working age, low-income households. The budget is supported by a 2.99% increase in the district council's portion of council tax (equivalent to approximately 17p a week for a Band D property). The council is responsible for collecting council tax but 75% of the money is distributed to other services e.g. Kent Fire and Rescue.

Local Government Reorganisation

Just a reminder, central government's consultation on the five options for the future number of local authorities in Kent and Medway has begun and is open until Thursday 26 March. F&HDC councillors agreed last year to support the option known as 3a. This proposes three unitary authorities – east, west and north Kent and puts the current district together with the council areas of Dover, Thanet, Canterbury and Ashford. It also follows the area covered by the Police force, Kent Fire and Rescue and the NHS. To take part in the government's consultation, visit [Local government reorganisation in Kent and Medway - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/local-government-reorganisation-in-kent-and-medway)

Folkestone Town of Culture bid

More than 90 people attended workshops to help in the first stage of a possible bid for Folkestone to become the UK's first Town of Culture. The workshop discussions and feedback will greatly assist the council to write an expression of interest in putting the town forward for the accolade. If successful the next stage would be the preparation of a full bid to gain the prestigious title and £3 million to fund a programme of cultural celebrations during 2028.

High Streets Connect and Grow Rural

Free district-wide programmes are running to help businesses adapt, attract customers and grow. Free mentoring and interactive workshops are being offered as ideal **for high street retailers, cafes, hospitality venues and visitor facing independents**. The rural programme will empower creative makers and diversification projects across Romney Marsh, the North Downs and rural communities. They are **ideal for farm enterprises, rural producers, accommodation providers, home based makers and start ups**. **More information by emailing economy@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk**

Good Food Retail Project

Seven local shops in the east of Folkestone are taking part in a new project to promote eating well on a budget and staying healthy. The council is supporting the Kent County Council led project in which the stores are encouraged to stock healthy food choices and display recipe leaflets and advice about healthier eating.

Folca building

An important step towards bringing an iconic Folkestone building back into public use is to be made next week. Folca 2 – the Art Deco section of a former department store on Sandgate Road – will be subject to a range of improvement works ahead of its repurposing, starting Monday 9 March. Over six months, Folkestone-based company AW Construction will ensure the structure is watertight and ready for use. Specific tasks include an internal strip out, damp proofing, replacing the existing roof and some windows, and the installation of a new party wall which will separate it from Folca 1. The first visible work will be the removal of external stairs on Albion Mews Road as this is critical to the first phase major energy efficiency improvements. £1.44m from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme will be used to transform the building and reduce its CO₂ emissions by over 100,000kg per year. Most of the work being carried out is internal, but scaffolding will be necessary on Albion Mews Road and Sandgate Road.

Folkestone A Brighter Future - halfway through

The regeneration of Folkestone town centre is now more than halfway complete. The scheme has been running for ten months with work continuing at seven different sites around the town.

The new linear bus station on Middelburg Square has progressed well, with some of the permanent bus shelters now installed. Cheriton Place will be the next site of works for the rest of March and into April with improvements to the footways and paving.

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