District Councillor report – November 2026

District council election May 2027
The District Council will be held on the 6th May 2027. The first of several events for those thinking of standing for election next May is being held on Wednesday 25 November. The drop-in session is from 5pm until 6pm in the Civic Centre, Folkestone, and is for anyone interested in finding out more about what being a councillor involves. It will be followed by further sessions in early 2027 for prospective parish and district candidates and will cover paperwork and timelines.

Free Christmas car parking
The council's free parking initiative across Folkestone, Hythe and Romney Marsh returns this December. To support the local economy, charges at council car parks and on-street pay-and-display bays will once again be waived on the three Saturdays leading up to Christmas - 5,12 and 19 December.

Young Responders Programme: Street First Aid Training
Young Responders is a free programme from St John Ambulance designed to equip young people aged 11-25 with the confidence and practical skills to respond to real-life emergencies. Sessions include when and how to perform CPR, how to place someone in the recovery position whilst waiting for the emergency services and how to respond to catastrophic bleeding.
For information, including eligibility for adult groups, contact Claire Ferguson at claire.ferguson@sja.org.uk.

Community Transport Service
The Community Transport Service is open to transport members in the Folkestone and Hythe area. They are able to take member to everything from hospital appointments to chiropodists and dentists, eye appointments, GP surgeries etc. Their volunteer drivers help people aged 65 plus who live in Folkestone & Hythe District and who are unable to get to essential medical appointments. There is an annual membership (£25) and transport members cover the drivers' mileage and a small admin fee per journey. Information can be found at https://www.kcv.org.uk/what-we-do/community-transport.

Youth Forum's largest turnout
A new group of local school students has been welcomed to help shape the district's future. The Youth Forum, in its third year, gives young people the opportunity to involve themselves in the democratic process and share their own priorities for the district. Meeting at the Civic Centre in Folkestone, a total of 49 pupils from Brockhill Park School, Folkestone School for Girls, The Harvey Grammar School, Folkestone Academy, Turner Free School, Lighthouse on the Marsh, The Marsh Academy and The Beacon attended. They contributed their views on outdoor sports and recreation facilities identifying opportunities to enhance parks, play areas and spaces for teenagers.

Allen Foundation Sponsorship
The Allen Foundation is designed to fund support for disadvantaged young people in the UK. It is offering grants of between £5,000 and £15,000 to charities and not-for-profit organisations working with young people aged 12-21 who are socially excluded or marginalised, and who may have experienced significant issues within their lives. The grants can be used to support a range of activities, including core costs, project work, and capital expenditure.
Applications can be submitted at any time. Information can be found via the link https://allenlane.org.uk/applying-for-funding/

Sustainable future for the district
This is for residents and local businesses who are making positive, sustainable change in the district. Taking place on Saturday 28 November from 2.30pm until 5pm, the event will showcase actions of local champions making change happen in our communities. The event is organised by the Sustainable Futures Forum, which is supported by the council, and is being held at Speedway in St Eanswythe Way, Folkestone Information can be found at Eventbrite.

North Downs Forum
The next meeting of the North Down Forum will be held this Thursday, 12th November at Hawkinge Community Centre at 7pm. Discussions will include updates on our ongoing project such as the Patchwork Farm project whose aim is to connect grower and growing spaces and The Nailboune monitoring group. Our local MP Sojan Joseph will be attending to discuss the No. 17 bus service and anything else you want to raise. Everyone is welcome.

Ward Grant
I still have some Ward Members Grant available for local groups. Please see https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/community/ward-budget for details and application form or contact me.

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

District Councillor Report – Sellindge Newsletter November 2026
Otterpool Park LLP, working in collaboration with Homes England, has submitted updated information to the District Council as part of the current outline planning application. The updated information reflects a number of minor changes and updates that were presented to the community in June. It also brings the application into line with the latest National Planning Policy Framework and other relevant legislation. The updates include additional flexibility to support the early delivery of new homes at Hillhurst Green, following further land acquisition by Homes England earlier this year. Details of the planning process and links to the planning documents can be found here Otterpool Park outline planning application – Folkestone & Hythe District Council. The Head of Planning has confirmed to me that this updated planning application will go to the Planning Committee.
New Local Plan - A Local Plan guides decisions about where new homes, employment space and community facilities should be developed, while helping to protect the environment and respond to climate change**.** More information is available at Folkestone and Hythe Local Plan 2045 There will be further public consultation in 2027 once a draft is prepared. I have a Planning Policy Steering Group Meeting on 20 October and will be able to report further on this next month.
Cost of Living support
The Cost of Living and Health Event will take place on Monday 2 November 2026 between 10.30am and 3pm at Hub on the Beach in Greatstone (TN28 8NR). Organised by the council's community safety team, the event will bring together a range of local organisations to offer guidance on staying safe, healthy and financially secure. There are several schemes to help residents finding the rising cost of living challenging. Visit Help and support with the cost of living – Folkestone & Hythe District Council
Spot the Scam – an event is being held on Friday 6 November from 10.30am to 3pm at Age UK, Sandford House, Stade Street, Hythe, CT21 6BD. The event, organised by the council's Community Safety team, will offer practical advice and support for anyone who wants to learn more about recognising scams and protecting their personal information from scammers.
My Account – please do sign up to this, if you have not already done so. It is an easy way of reporting issues and looking up information. Just go to www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk and click on 'My Account'.
Local Government Re-organisation – the Government has just announced that Kent & Medway may have a Mayoral Authority and that although District Elections will go ahead in May 2027, there could also be elections in May 2028 for a Shadowing Authority. Nothing has been confirmed and FHDC is waiting for further information.

Contact jennyhollingsbee@folkesteone-hythe.gov.uk Mobile 07887918458

Kent County Councillor Update Report for Parishes, 13 October 2026

Judicial Review of Government's Decision on Local Government Reorganisation
KCC has submitted a legal challenge over the government's decision on local government reorganisation in Kent after repeated requests for an explanation of why and how the decision was reached went unanswered. Whilst the government has recently announced a review and pause to the local government reorganisation process, the original decision to divide Kent into four Unitary authorities remains in place. With the legal deadline to challenge that decision approaching, KCC has taken steps to protect Kent's interests whilst continuing to press the government for answers. Reorganisation would impact massively on residents, so KCC believes that the public should be informed about how decisions were reached, whilst ensuring that it stands up for residents.

Water Resilience Partnership
At KCCs invitation, leaders from water companies, regulators, local authorities, environmental organisations, business and farming attended the inaugural Kent Water Resilience Partnership meeting. KCCs initiative follows significant water interruptions in the past year and growing concerns about the long-term pressures facing water resources. So, the County Council brought together organisations that have a role in the planning, managing, regulating and protecting Kent's water future. Planning took place to ensure the communication continues moving forward, to strengthen water resilience in Kent. Thanks to the many thousands of people who submitted their thoughts prior to the first meeting, which formed the agenda for the day.

Armed Forces Covenant
KCC has pledged its support for the Armed Forces Covenant as a promise to ensure those who serve or have served, and their families, are treated fairly. KCC has pledged to ensure armed forces communities will not be disadvantaged in accessing KCC services as a result of their service in the military.

Active Travel Business Grants
Amounts of up to £5,000 are available for small businesses and not-for-profit organisations providing projects for walking, cycling and wheeling. There is a tight deadline, so visit KCCs website at www.kent.gov.uk for details.

Waste
KCC is now at its highest-ever waste recycling level. Currently, 99.6% of municipal waste is kept out of landfill.

KCC manages the 'Kent Community Waste Prevention Fund' through which grants of between £500 and £5,000 are allocated to schemes that promote recycling. Details can be found on the KCC website at www.kent.gov.uk.

Grants for Bus Shelters
Parishes have been invited to apply for this scheme, managed by KCC, so this is just a reminder for them.

Member Community Grants
Small community grants in the region of £250 or £500 are available to non-profit-making, constituted groups with a bank account. Due to the rules about spending prior to impending local elections in May 2027, the funding should be allocated as soon as possible. So organisations

interested in applying for a small grant, whether for an event, equipment costs or a programme of activity, should inform me by email to get the ball rolling as soon as possible (Christopher.Hespe@kent.gov.uk).

Chris Hespe
Kent County Councillor for Elham Valley, and Cabinet Member for Local Government Efficiency and Reorganisation