

Folkestone Town Meeting

MINUTES of the Annual Assembly of the Town Meeting for the Parish and Town of Folkestone held remotely via Zoom on Thursday, 25th March 2021 at 6 p.m.

TOWN COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Councillors Abena Akuffo-Kelly (joined at 18:42), Paul Bingham, Michelle Keutenius, David Horton, Dylan Jeffrey, Nicola Keen, Mary Lawes, Connor McConville, Jackie Meade, Tim Prater, Belinda Walker, Richard Wallace and Roger West.

REPRESENTATIVES FROM OTHER ORGANISATIONS: Chief Inspector Alice Ames – District Commander for Folkestone and Hythe, Kent Police, Mick Dennis – Dover, Deal and Folkestone Station Manager, Kent Fire and Rescue, Mary Stredwick – Rainbow Centre, Angela Conyers – Friends of Folkestone Museum, Rev Bob Wheldon, County Councillor Rory Love, County Councillor Dick Pascoe, District Councillor Laura Davidson and Sallyanne Curd.

IN ATTENDANCE: Jennifer Childs - Town Clerk, Georgina Wilson – Executive Assistant and Toni Brenchley - Assistant Clerk.

Prayers

Prayers were led by the Mayors Chaplain, Rev Bob Wheldon.

1768. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from:
Councillor Ann Berry due to District Council commitments,
Councillor Jonathan Graham due to work commitments,
Councillor Peter Gane due to personal commitments,
Councillor Ray Field due to other commitments,
District Councillor John Collier due to District Council commitments,
District Councillor Rebecca Shood due to District Council commitments,
Ray Johnson due to personal commitments.

1769. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

1770. MINUTES

The Council was asked to receive and authorise the Minutes of the Town Meeting held on 21st May 2019 and to ask the Town Mayor to sign them as a correct record.

Councillor Rory Love requested that they be amended to show him sending his apologies.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Town Meeting held on 21st May 2019 be amended to show Cllr R Love's apologies and be received and signed as a correct record.

Proposed: Councillor Roger West

Seconded: Councillor Jackie Meade

Voting: F:12, Ag:0, Ab:0

1771. OPENING OF PROCEEDINGS BY THE TOWN MAYOR

The Town Mayor welcomed Councillors, electors and guests to the meeting held in accordance with the requirements of Section 9(1) of the Local Government Act 1972.

1772. BESTOWAL OF FOR MERIT AWARDS

The Town Mayor informed the assembly that Ray Johnson was to be presented with a 'For Merit Award' for his outstanding commitment to community projects and charitable activities in the local community and internationally. Ray is known locally for his many years of commitment and involvement in the Rotary Club and supporting the Gurkha community both home and abroad, raising significant funds during times of disaster and coordinating IT projects.

Unfortunately, Ray could not be present for the meeting but will be invited to the Town Hall, once Covid restrictions are eased, to meet with the Town Mayor and be presented with his award.

1773. QUESTIONS FROM ELECTORS

There were no questions.

1774. REPORTS BY KENT COUNTY COUNCILLORS (FOLKESTONE AREA)

Councillor Rory Love reported on some issues in Cheriton; Cheriton Library has reopened for select and collect services and it is hoped Folkestone will soon re-open; Caesers Way concrete recycling works – there are temporary signs to direct lorries along Tile Kiln Lane rather than Ashley Avenue, further discussions are taking place; new junction at Cheriton Interchange – this has been good for traffic but there are ongoing issues for pedestrians, a survey is due to be carried out.

Councillor Dick Pascoe reported on the financial implications of the Covid pandemic for Kent County Council and some highways issues; the speed limit on Dover Hill has been reduced and a new pedestrian crossing is planned; Canterbury Hill has new barriers after a car crash to make the area safer; pushing to get more money spent on repairing pot holes; with regards to fly tipping they are looking at where to put CCTV cameras to help prevent this; grant funding has been awarded to look into improving the play equipment at East Cliff.

1775. REPORTS BY FOLKESTONE & HYTHE DISTRICT COUNCILLORS (FOLKESTONE AREA)

Councillor Laura Davidson commented on the Folkestone Town Centre Place Plan and lots of work on improving the Town Centre for the future, more information is available on the District Council Website. There is ongoing work with local planning issues and trying to get back to regular litter picks when Covid restrictions allow.

Councillor Tim Prater also commented on the Place Plan and how it needs local input especially by the Town Council; the work at the Three Hills Hub and the old Debenhams building being used as a vaccine centre; Sandgate library being open for select and collect for Folkestone residents; issues with visitors to the Town last summer and how changes have been made around the Lower Leas Coastal park including limits on parking, bigger bins, extending toilet opening times etc, these measures will continue this year.

Councillor Connor McConville reported on challenges to policies on those leaving the care system and Council Tax, work on the Places Plan, and how he is hoping to move the following issues higher up the District Councils priority list: community safety, increased affordable housing, access to Mental Health services and develop the homelessness strategy.

1776. REPORTS BY KENT POLICE

Ch Insp Alice Ames, District Commander for Folkestone and Hythe provided an update. Due to the pandemic the types of crime have been different in the past year, overall recorded crime has seen an overall drop of 10%, solved crimes have increased by 4.3%, violent crime has increased slightly due to a different way of recording these crimes, domestic abuse has increased by 16.5%, as a way of tackling this pro active visits have been taking place during the pandemic to known offenders, drug offences have increased with county lines continuing to be an issue but were easier to deal with during the pandemic due to restrictions.

Work has been taking place with partner agencies such as the Community Safety Team at the District Council. There are 4 dedicated PCs for the Town Centre area and 1 for the coastal area and Hythe, there have been joint patrols and multiagency visits, a crime stoppers initiative with leaflet drops encouraging reporting of crimes.

A new Police Cadet scheme has been set up and due to go live in September for Folkestone, there is a large waiting list for this already. There is ongoing work with youths in the area, a meeting was held inviting them and parents in to discuss issues and there is a dedicated Youth Intervention Officer working on this.

Concern was raised around drug issues in the harbour and the need for more police presence particularly after 6pm near the Burstin hotel, similarly mothers have been asking Damian Collins MP for support due to feeling unsafe taking their children to Cheriton recreation park due to open dealings.

Ch Insp Alice Ames requested that all issues continue to be reported which can be done by calling 101 or accessing the 101 chat via the website: <https://www.police.uk/101> and that she would pass on the concerns to PCSO Howe who covers Cheriton.

18.42pm Councillor Akuffo-Kelly arrived at this juncture.

1777. REPORTS BY KENT FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Mick Dennis, Dover, Deal and Folkestone Station Manager provided an update and although the pandemic has meant changes being made, they have continued to deliver an effective service.

There are two Fire Appliances based at Folkestone Station, one full time, one on call and a water safety unit.

South East Coast Ambulance have been using the Station as an operational base which has been working well.

There were over 700 incidences in Folkestone in the last year, 134 were fires with 25 accidental dwelling fires and 28 road traffic collisions, 5 fire casualties resulting in 1 fatality, there were 13 minor injuries and 2 fatalities related to the road traffic collisions. The trends are constantly being monitored for future intervention.

Community Safety is a big part of the Fire Services activities, they have reduced the number of visits made due to the pandemic but have still carried out over 100 visits.

They have adapted to support the local area during the pandemic including supporting meals on wheels, free schools meals and assisting with the setting up of the local mass vaccine centre. There is a dedicated team who inspect properties in the area and work very closely with the District Council and private sector housing to ensure they are up to the Fire Safety Regulations.

1778. PLASTIC FREE FOLKESTONE

Councillor Belinda Walker provided an update on Plastic Free Folkestone which is part of a wider initiative of the Surfers Against Sewage Group.

There are five key points to meet to be classed as a Plastic Free town, these are being worked on but have slowed down during the pandemic,

currently Folkestone is in the transition stage as a resolution has been made by Council to adopt the initiative. A Steering Committee has been set up which includes members and the Town Clerk; community events such as litter picks and online can't cook will cook have gone ahead during the pandemic wherever possible.

The next two points are being worked on but have slowed during the last year, they are to sign up Business Champions in the Town and to sign up Community Champions, the Guides and Brownies are onboard and provided an article for our Community Magazine.

Everyone is encouraged to take individual actions and lots of information is available online and via the Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/PFFSAS>.

1779. REPORT BY FRIENDS OF FOLKESTONE MUSEUM

Angela Conyers provided an update on activities during the pandemic. A new programme of online talks was launched in September which have been very popular with 60-80 people virtually attending. These talks have been offered for free with a donation recommended and over £1000 has been collected. New people have continued to sign up to join the Friends throughout the pandemic with a membership of 90, a monthly e-newsletter has been distributed to around 140 people.

The Friends are extremely grateful for the support of both the Museum Officers who have worked tirelessly with them during the pandemic and for the ability to raise funds to help with acquisitions that they look forward to seeing in the museum when government restrictions are lifted and the curators programme allows.

1780. REPORTS BY COMMUNITY GROUPS

Mary Stredwick from the Rainbow Centre provided an update since joining the Centre at Easter last year. The team have continued to deliver services under extremely difficult circumstances and wanted to highlight the hard work of local people, the volunteers and staff at the Centre as well as the support from Councils and the continued financial support.

During the pandemic, the Homeless Support Service had to close its doors but continued to provide a telephone advice service and appointment only meetings, they continued to offer the postal service, laundry service, and have continued to give out sleeping bags etc. The Social Club is hoping to open soon and it is hoped this will be a daily activity.

This year's Winter Shelter still took place but in a different way and was extended by a month, they worked with the District Council to secure grants and pre booked rooms in B&Bs, 18 people have been housed, 8

have moved into accommodation with 3 moving shortly. Volunteers and churches have offered a meals on wheels service.

The demand for the food bank has increased by almost 200% and a delivery service has been set up, but it is hoped to return to the old model once Covid restrictions allow to enable more help to be given. The Food Stop mobile service has continued with around 60 people per week being supported.

The Family Contact Centre which provides a safe, friendly place for families to spend time together will reopen and a new service, Debt Management, began at the beginning of the year in partnership with the Citizens Advice and the Rotary Club of Folkestone for which there is already a high demand. There is a consultation on a new strategy 'Delivering the extra mile' which plans to support families before they get to crisis point and need to access one of the services such as the food bank or debt management.

1781. FOLKESTONE TOWN CENTRE PLACE PLAN

The Town Mayor read a statement regarding the Place Plan, and advised that the public consultation will commence on 19th April at 6pm, further information is available by emailing placeplan@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk or visiting the following website:
<https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/folkestoneplaceplan>

1782. DATES OF THE NEXT MEETINGS OF FOLKESTONE TOWN COUNCIL

Full Council AGAR Meeting – 17 June 2021 at 6.00 pm
Full Council Ordinary Meeting – 9 September 2021 at 6.30 pm
Town (Electors) Annual Assembly – 17 May 2022 (Provisional)

The Mayor reiterated her thanks to all the speakers for everything they and their colleagues have done during the most challenging of years.

The Meeting concluded at 19.35pm.

.....Town Mayor