

Folkestone Town Meeting

MINUTES of the Annual Assembly of the Town Meeting for the Parish and Town of Folkestone held at the Town Hall, Folkestone on Tuesday, 21st May 2019 at 7 p.m.

TOWN COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Councillors Abena Akuffo-Kelly, Ann Berry, Paul Bingham, Michelle Dorrell, Ray Field, Peter Gane, Jonathan Graham, David Horton, Dylan Jeffrey, Nicola Keen, Mary Lawes, Connor McConville, Jackie Meade, Belinda Walker, Richard Wallace and Roger West.

REPRESENTATIVES FROM OTHER ORGANISATIONS: Acting Chief Inspector Andy Brittenden – Kent Police, Mark Havell – Folkestone Manager Kent Fire and Rescue, Ali Chambers – Rainbow Centre, Angela Conyers – Friends of Folkestone Museum and 13 Folkestone Electors.

IN ATTENDANCE: Jennifer Childs - Town Clerk, Georgina Wilson – Administrative Officer.

ABSENT: Councillor Dan Brook

Prayers

Prayers were led by the Mayors Chaplain, Rev Eileen Webb.

1594. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Tim Prater.

1595. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

1596. MINUTES

The Council was asked to receive and authorise the Minutes of the Town Meeting held on 29th May 2018 and to ask the Town Mayor to sign them as a correct record.

Councillor Dylan Jeffrey felt that the resolution on page 608 should be amended to show Mr Stephen Shaw as the proposer.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Town Meeting held on 29th May 2018 be received and signed as a correct record.

Proposed: Councillor Roger West

Seconded: Councillor Abena Akuffo-Kelly

Voting: F:16, Ag:0, Ab:0

1597. 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.

1598. APPOINTMENT OF TOWN MAYOR'S CADET 2019/20

Sergeant Elisabeth Summers of 99(Folkestone) Squadron Air Training Corps was appointed as the Mayors Cadet.

1599. BESTOWAL OF FOR MERIT AWARDS

Mr Robert Moulard was presented with a 'For Merit Award' for his services to the heritage of the Town of Folkestone, including the refurbishment of the bus shelter on Canterbury Road, the finial on the Tea Rooms at Radnor Park and the Leas Lift carriage.

He was honoured to receive the award and wanted to accept it on behalf of everyone who works hard in Folkestone to preserve the heritage of the town. He also expressed his gratitude to the Town Clerk, staff and Councillors.

Councillor Mary Lawes left the meeting at this juncture having previously given her apologies.

1600. OPEN FORUM AND QUESTIONS FROM ELECTORS

Ray Duff asked the Council if they would immediately call on Kent County Council to suspend the public consultation on the reduction of library open hours; especially given the result of the recent local elections; and instead engage in open and good faith discussions with all the new Town Councillors in the District alongside any other community groups who may be interested, with a view to agreeing better solutions to the issue than currently planned? Eg. Hythe Town Council are likely looking in to taking over the running of their library, similar to Sandgate.

The Town Mayor responded that the library is an important service to the town. This issue will be referred to the Community Services Committee for further discussion and it will be brought back to the Full Council in the future.

Susan Chivers asked what the Council could do to help the rough sleepers and beggars within the town?

The Town Mayor answered that the Folkestone and Hythe District Council have plans to deal with rough sleepers as well as the severe weather plan, but further discussions are needed to find a way forward. She has supported the Rainbow Centre for the last three years and it is one of the charities she will be supporting this year as Mayor.

Robert Mouland gave the history of the Victorian fountain on the East Cliff; it was dedicated to Sidney Cooper Western in 1897 and was moved from its original position at the top of the Road of Remembrance in 1922 because of highway improvements to its current position. It has recently been awarded grade 2 listing and HLF money has been applied for to refurbish the fountain. There has been lots of discussions to move the fountain to the sea front with no consultation with residents, can the Folkestone Town Council take steps to stop these plans?

Councillor Ann Berry responded that this was originally raised by a member of Go Folkestone but there has been no further information on this from the District Council.

Councillor Richard Wallace added to Cllr Berry's comment, Terry Begent had done a lot of research into the history of the fountain and refurbishment needed. If the fountain was to stay in its current position it would be a good time to lower the boundary bushes to make the fountain easier to see.

Councillor Peter Gane felt that this issue should be discussed by the Community Services Committee and in the meantime the Town Clerk should contact the District Council for an update.

Councillor Belinda Walker commented that the New Folkestone Society were against moving the fountain from its current position.

The Town Clerk will contact the District Council to find out their plans and report back to the Community Services Committee.

Ray Duff asked if the new Council would write to Network Rail immediately for a full update on the works to the bridge at Central Station that were due to be completed by 2020, and make this information public?

The Town Mayor had checked with South Eastern to find out if there are any planned works to this bridge, there are no large planned works to this station up to the end of the year. The Town Clerk will contact Network Rail to find out what their plans are.

Susan Chivers asked about the Council's policy to increase tourism in the town. With Debenhams closure are there plans to utilise that building?

The Town Mayor hadn't yet been in discussions with the District Council about this site but will be as soon as possible and she welcomes all ideas for possible uses of the building and hopes that there will be a chance for everyone to have a say in the building's future.

The Town Clerk read out a question from Pat Cocks who was unable to attend the meeting; will the Town Council consider and further state what influence it will bring to bare on the owners of the Leas Pavilion and the Planning Department to prevent it from deteriorating any further.

Councillor Ann Berry reported that the District Council are enforcing the builders of the proposed flats to do deterioration works on the Pavilion, however she was not aware of an end date for those works. There is a group that have worked hard to raise awareness of the need to preserve this building. Once she has further information, this will be reported back.

The Town Mayor will be meeting with the Friends of the Leas Pavilion and hopes to work with them to bring the building back into use and will also be discussing this further with the District Council.

Councillor Laura Davison read out a question from the Chair of the Central Ward Residents Association; what is the Town Council's budget, what are the priorities for expenditure, what is the Council's strategy for priorities, how can residents have a say in directing expenditure?

The Town Clerk requested that the questions be emailed directly to her for a complete response, but the Town Council's budget is available online and the Council has a strategic Corporate Plan up to 2020.

Lynne Smith welcomed the new Councillors and expressed the towns gratitude to Councillors that had lost or kept their seats for their service over the last municipal term, she also wanted to record her thanks to the Town Clerk and staff. She then asked about other uses for the Debenhams building once it becomes vacant, Folkestone already has a cinema and does not need another, a bowling alley would be a better alternative.

The Town Mayor responded that the closure of Debenhams raises lots of opportunities for the building and she hopes for a wide consultation. Silver Screen is currently celebrating their 30th birthday this year.

The Town Clerk added that Folkestone Town Council have supported the Silver Screen with the refurbishment of the foyer and chamber as well as funds towards audio and digitalisation.

1601. REPORTS BY KENT COUNTY COUNCILLORS (FOLKESTONE AREA)

Unfortunately, there were no County Councillors present.

1602. REPORTS BY FOLKESTONE & HYTHE DISTRICT COUNCILLORS (FOLKESTONE AREA)

Councillor Laura Davison – Central Ward - had some main points that she will be focussing on:

- Crime – significant efforts have been made within the ward and residents would like a regular Police surgery within the Central ward as it does in East ward.
- Street cleaning and fly tipping – Giles Barnard at the District Council has provided equipment for litter picks in the ward and they have been looking into further street cleaning including replacing bins etc.
- Housing – there are many empty properties at the same time as people being homeless or living in unsuitable accommodation. They would like a complete audit of all the empty properties within the District and further discussion on this subject.
- High Street – the public need to be heavily involved in the future plans for the Debenhams building.
- GP crisis – health is a part of the District Councils remit and the Council needs to be more proactive.
- Library – a letter has been sent to Kent County Council about investment in the library and raised concerns about the library staff but no response has been received from KCC as yet.

Mike Summers asked what could be done about seagulls, they are no longer just at the harbour but progressing their way through Folkestone adapting their behaviour to live in the town.

Councillor Laura Davison was unaware if there is a strategy for dealing with seagulls but will investigate further.

Councillor Ann Berry added that seagulls are a protected species, she has heard about bin bags available that are stronger and able to prevent seagulls ripping the bags.

Lynne Smith asked, on behalf of a Folkestone business owner, if there will be consultation on the future of the Debenhams building, there have been reports that the District Council has plans for this building but there has been no public consultation, why is a new cinema included in this plan when we already have one?

Councillor Laura Davison shared those concerns and felt there needs to be more transparency in these discussions, there is limited information available and the community needs to be at the front and centre of any future discussions.

The Town Clerk added that the District Council had set up a Strategic Advisory Group made up of local businesses and representatives from other local groups from Folkestone who have developed the plans as a starter for ten, but these plans are not confirmed and there will be a public

consultation. The Silver Screen Cinema are sitting tenants of Folkestone Town Council and Council have and continue to be supportive of them.

Ray Duff asked the Town and District Councillors about the Climate Change Emergency Plan and whether it is being discussed at District level and could it be done at Town Council level also?

Councillor Laura Davison advised that it is on the newly elected Councillors agenda at the District Council.

The Town Mayor reported that she had attended a meeting with the Cinque Port Mayors and this issue was being discussed. Community Services Committee will be discussing this issue and how we can protect our town and future residents. The Town Council has already signed up to the Nottingham Agreement and will be looking at ways to become a carbon neutral.

1603. REPORTS BY KENT POLICE

Acting Chief Inspector Andy Brittenden of Kent Police gave a report on their activities over the last year.

Crime has risen across the whole country; in Folkestone it has risen by 20% which is slightly under the national average. The biggest impact on the increase has been the way crimes are now recorded, this gives a clearer picture of crime.

The Community Safety Team has been increased which provides better provision in the town centre and it is hoped to increase it even further.

There is an operation currently taking place with various partners including housing and Social Services etc to engage with hard to reach members of the community and young people, this seems to be paying off particularly in the Creative Quarter where there has been reports of crime by young people. They have also been enforcing warrants under the Misuse of Drugs Act and dealing with the antisocial behaviour that comes with that.

Everyone was encouraged to ensure they report crime, including to the 101 telephone service, which isn't perfect, but work is happening around improving that. Crime can also be reported online and through a text chat service and other ways are being investigated, but if the crime isn't reported then it would not be included in statistics or planning for future provision.

Kent Police are just beginning to get back to the numbers of Police Officers they had before the reductions began in 2008.

Councillor Roger West reported that the biggest problem affecting residents of Cheriton recently has been the increase in travellers.

CI Brittenden responded that this is also a big problem in Hawkinge and he will be visiting them shortly to discuss ways forward but it is a difficult situation as there are only limited powers the Police can use. Advisors have been brought in to share their advice and experiences on dealing with this and finding a way forward. More work needs to be done on the Public Space Protection Order to include this issue; the District Council are collaborating on this also.

Councillor Dylan Jeffrey asked about 'county lines' drug dealing.

CI Brittenden answered that there are a number of operations running currently, one is based around train stations and stopping people travelling on the train into other areas to carry out crime.

Councillor Nicola Keen asked more about 'county lines' and vulnerable children being used.

CI Brittenden informed the Council that teams have been brought together under one leader to enable links to be seen quicker and acted upon with inclusion of other relevant agencies. They have dedicated Youth Officers and it is hoped that an ex-gang member will be speaking at local schools warning them about getting involved in gangs.

Councillor Peter Gane asked about children when they reach the age of 16 being put into unsuitable accommodation often out of the area they grew up in, is there any that is registered with OFSTED?

CI Brittenden reported that the Missing Children's Team used to stop at 16 but now that age has increased to 18/19 or if they are classed as vulnerable that age increases again. He will liaise with Social Services to find out more about this but there are strong links between the Police and Social Services. Whole families have been moved out of an area if it was felt the only way to keep a child safe from a gang.

Susan Chivers asked what could be done about the increasing level of anti-social behaviour taking place at Kingsnorth Gardens recently.

CI Brittenden was aware of the ongoing issues in this area and meetings will be taking place over the coming weeks to discuss this further.

Linda Bower commented that robberies around areas close to Folkestone Central Train Station seem to have increased, people are travelling to an area, getting off the train and carrying out robberies before returning to their own areas on the train.

CI Brittenden was not aware of any particular spike in reports of this kind but he will look into it further.

1604. REPORTS BY KENT FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Mark Havell, Borough Commander, gave an update on the activities of the Fire Service over the past year.

Folkestone Station have 2 fire engines, one is manned full time and the other is manned part time, Folkestone also have a water rescue boat. In the last year they received 507 call outs, 216 of these were fires of which 39 were house fires, 7 of which were chimney fires, there were no fatalities or serious injury from house fires. There were 74 road traffic accidents of which 3 were fatal and 19 were serious injuries.

Community Safety is a big part of the service that Kent Fire and Rescue offer, this includes home safety visits. They also work closely with their Police and Local Authority colleagues in the area.

A team has been set up that visit local schools and educate young people on the dangers of fire and other issues. The team have visited 12 secondary schools and 19 primary schools so far.

They also work with known 'fire setters' to try to educate them to the dangers of their behaviour for themselves and the local community.

Councillor Ann Berry asked about the fatal accidents and whether they were all in the same area, she had tried previously to reduce speed limits but had been informed by KCC that they need to have enough evidence that a particular area would benefit from a reduced speed limit, such as statistics on accidents.

Mark Havell responded that these accidents were not all in the same area, any trends in statistics are monitored closely and would be acted upon immediately.

Councillor Dylan Jeffrey asked about the reduction in call outs and road traffic accidents and wanted to know if this would lead to a reduction in service?

Mark Havell confirmed that this was not on the agenda, when they are not on call outs fire fighters carry out lots of other important work around the community such as the home safety checks, speaking with schools and working with known 'fire setters'.

1605. REPORTS BY COMMUNITY GROUPS

Ali Chambers became Chief Executive of the Rainbow Centre in April last year, and there has been significant change. The homeless support work has been very busy with 300 clients being helped in the past year. A lot of their clients have multiple complex needs with homelessness compounded by mental health and drug issues.

Changes to the benefit system has increased the number of people using the foodbank service. Between January and April last year 415 people used this service, for the same period this year that number increased to 806 people.

The Winter Shelter is a vital service and it is inspiring to see the volunteers working with empathy and kindness. The Rainbow Centre has helped move 18 people off the streets in the last year, there is a 6-month pilot project aimed at supporting tenancy sustainment, working with recently housed people to ensure they stay in that accommodation.

The Centre has 8 employees supported by over 300 volunteers, and they have recently received the Investors in Volunteers Award.

1606. REPORT BY FRIENDS OF FOLKESTONE MUSEUM

Angela Conyers congratulated the Town Clerk and officers of the Council on receiving Accreditation Status from the Arts Council for the Museum.

She advised that the Friends were set up a few months after the opening of the Museum to support and promote the Museum, there are currently 60 members. Many of the Friends are local people who have been following the development of the Museum and had a shared enthusiasm for its success.

The Friends raise funds through charging a fee to join, claiming gift aid and charging a small fee for the events that they run. These funds could contribute to the purchase of new items or support new projects, they are also able to bid for additional funding that the Town Council would not be eligible for.

Some events that have been held include talks on various subjects, walks and days out.

The Museum is a great credit to Folkestone Town Council who have succeeded in providing a major community resource within the Town Hall in the very heart of the town and in promoting the importance of the town's heritage.

**1607. TIMES AND DATES OF THE NEXT MEETINGS OF FOLKESTONE
TOWN COUNCIL**

13 June 2019 at 6.30 p.m. – Extra-Ordinary Full Council Meeting

12 September 2019 at 7.00pm – Ordinary Full Council Meeting

14 April 2020 - (Provisional Town (Electors) Annual Assembly)

The Meeting concluded at 9pm.

.....Town Mayor
12th September 2019