



Folkestone & Hythe District Council

Annual Performance Report

Appendix 1: A snapshot of our year: 2022-23



Your District - An Overview

Our district is situated on Kent's south east coast and covers an area of 140 square miles. It is a place of variety and contrast with a landscape characterised by rolling chalk downland, wooded valleys, wild marshes, and a 26-mile coastline. The district has a population of approximately 113,300 of which 57.4% (32,900) of female residents and 59.1% (33,100) of males are of working age.

Our principal town, Folkestone, is home to just under half the district's population. It is also the area's commercial hub, particularly for creative and digital media - one of the UK's fastest-growing sectors. The Creative Quarter in Folkestone's Old Town is home to a thriving collection of artists' studios and creative businesses and offers artists, retailers and business-people the chance to become part of this lively and ever-growing community.

As well as its strong creative focus, the district attracts a variety of innovative small and medium size businesses (SMEs) and is home to strong brand names including Saga, Eurotunnel, Holiday Extras, the Aspinall Foundation and Church & Dwight.

The historic town of Hythe is the district's second centre of population and one of two ancient Cinque Ports in the district. Its central feature is the Royal Military Canal, built for defence against invasion in the Napoleonic wars with France. To the west are the wide-open spaces of Romney Marsh, home to New Romney, our second Cinque Port; Lydd, a member of the Confederation of Cinque Ports as a 'limb' of New Romney, and a number of smaller coastal communities. Contrasting with the wild expanse of marshes are the North Downs, a ridge of chalk hills that stretch from Dover to Farnham. The Downs are home to pretty villages, including Elham, Lyminge and Postling, hidden valleys and thriving vineyards.

Although the district is rural and coastal in character, it is very well connected. The M20 offers easy access to London and other major motorway networks, London is under an hour away via High Speed 1 (HS1) from Folkestone and we have unrivalled access to mainland Europe via the Channel Tunnel.

We think our district is a great place to live, work and visit. It's where the past has made its mark and where a bright new future is unfolding. As the local authority for the district, we have a key role to play in shaping that future.



The Old High Street, Folkestone



Royal Military Canal, Hythe



Dungeness, Romney Marsh

Your Council - An Overview

There is a three tier local Council system in Kent made up of the county council, 12 district and borough councils, parish and neighbourhood councils, alongside Medway Council operating as a unitary. There are 13 wards in the district currently represented by 30 elected councillors.

Folkestone & Hythe District Council is responsible for the delivery of many different public services. Some of our key priorities include planning for a successful local economy with a diverse range of employment opportunities, delivering excellent value and high performance in service delivery, and working together to support the life of our communities. Services provided include managing development through making decisions on planning applications, household waste collection and recycling, street cleaning, car parks and on-street parking, environmental health, housing and homelessness, managing local parks and open spaces and supporting local culture and leisure activities and facilities.

The Council has won or retained the following awards in 2022/23



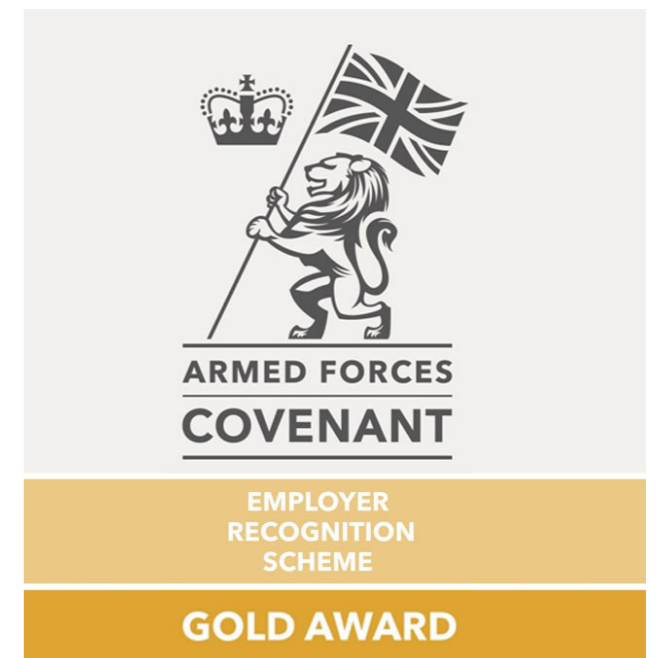
Successful reapplication of the Customer Service Excellence Award.

Awarded 16 compliance pluses for showing innovative practice, delivering a service that is over and above what the customer could normally expect and showing practice that could be usefully shared with other organisations.



Winner of Benefits and/or Welfare Reform Team of the Year at the Institute of Revenues Rating and Valuation's Performance Awards (IRRV).

Highly commended in the Excellence in Social Inclusion category.



Gold Award winner in the Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) in recognition of the council's work in employing and supporting persons in the armed forces community.

Service Ambition 1

Positive Community Leadership

Our priorities:

- **Improve physical and mental health & Wellbeing**
- **Safer Communities**
- **Supporting & Empowering our Communities**

01 Positive Community Leadership in 2022/23

- A new Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) was developed by the council to set out how residents are consulted on local planning matters. The draft document was consulted on between October and November 2022 and was adopted by the council in December 2022. The new SCI will ensure community involvement is effective at all stages of the planning process, including when the council prepares a new local plan and when it makes decisions on planning applications, consults on planning appeals and takes enforcement action.
- Following a successful bid for funding through the Changing Places Fund Round 2, the Council was awarded a £205,000 grant to pay for the construction of three new Changing Places toilets. The facilities are planned to be built at the Lower Leas Coastal Park and Folca in Folkestone, and at the Coast Drive Destination Project in Greatstone. Changing Places toilets are designed to meet the needs of disabled children and adults with complex care needs who rely on carer support, and have more space and appropriate equipment than standard disabled toilets. With support from the local organisation Need2Change, a bid was submitted to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities in 2022, and a grant was awarded in February 2023 for delivery of the new facilities in the financial year 2023/24.
- The council's efforts in supporting vulnerable members of the community have once again been recognised by a panel of judges and have been awarded Benefits and/or Welfare Reform Team of the Year at the Institute of Revenues Rating and Valuation's Performance Awards (IRRV), and have also been highly commended in the Excellence in Social Inclusion category with judges praising work that had been undertaken to engage with and help harder-to-reach groups in the district, such as armed forces veterans. In addition, the judges were also impressed by the £221,000 worth of projects delivered in the district through the Household Support Fund - some of which included delivering beds to children sleeping on mattresses or on the floor.
- The district hosted the eighth annual Kent & Medway Civilian-Military Armed Forces Covenant Conference in June 2022. The event was attended by more than 150 people, including serving and former personnel from all the services, public sector and other organisations, including service charities. The theme of the day, organised by the Kent & Medway Civilian Partnership Board, was promoting a greater understanding and awareness of the needs of the armed forces community. Service children, housing, homelessness, employment and service charities were all discussed. There was also an update on the new Armed Forces Act and what it means in practice.
- The council successfully re-applied for the Customer Service Excellence (CSE) accreditation during the year. The accreditation is a Government standard developed to offer a practical tool for driving customer-focused change within organisations. The independent assessor was very impressed with the council's ongoing commitment to customer service and awarded 16 compliance pluses for showing innovative practice, delivering a service that is over and above what the customer could normally expect and showing practice that could be usefully shared with other organisations. This is the highest number of compliance pluses we have been awarded in one go and continues to be great recognition for the service we provide.
- A summit on the rising cost of living took place in September 2022 in the council chamber. The event was designed to ensure the council was working effectively in partnership with local organisations and the voluntary sector to assist residents who might face challenges around food, warmth and energy during the coming winter months. Voluntary organisations across the district were invited to discuss how best to help residents faced with rapidly rising costs. These included Kent Police, Citizens Advice and representatives from the health and education sectors.



The district hosted the eight annual Kent & Medway Armed Forces Covenant Conference



Revenue & Benefits team were awarded Benefits and/or Welfare Reform Team of the Year at the Institute of Revenues Rating and Valuation's Performance Awards (IRRV)

**CUSTOMER
SERVICE
EXCELLENCE[®]**



Successful reapplication of the council's Customer Service Excellence accreditation with 16 compliance pluses

01 Positive Community Leadership in 2022/23

- A total of 168 individual ward grants totalling over £89,000 were awarded during the year to benefit local charities and community groups across the district including: The Bayle Residents Association, CARM (Caring All Together Romney Marsh), Folkestone Festivals, Hythe Environmental Community Group, Kent Coast Volunteering, Future Skills Community Interest Company and Action on Homelessness in Folkestone.
- The Council supported 377 households with Discretionary Housing Payment support. This support included short-term help with rental top ups and help with rent in advance/ deposits and arrears payments to help residents improve their housing situation and afford to move to more suitable and affordable accommodation. The total support offered was £244,238 funded by the Department for Work and Pensions and Kent County Council via the Household Support Fund. The Council has also supported 567 households with Council Tax payments (for those in receipt of Council tax Reduction) by reducing bills for the year by a total value of £252,717.
- The Council has been able to utilise analytical information it holds to identify and contact over 200 households in the district that were not maximising their income and has been able to offer additional Council Tax Reduction of £84,262 that would have otherwise been unclaimed during the year.
- In February 2023, four district warm spaces in the district helping residents struggling with the increased costs of heating their homes have been boosted with additional funding. The Council has received the funding from UK Power Networks, as part of the distribution network operator's initiative to ramp up support for customers over the winter. The £27,300 contribution will go towards the warm spaces offered by the district's community hubs in New Romney, Hythe and Folkestone and the Nepalese Community Centre in Folkestone. The money has helped with the additional costs of opening and running the warm spaces and enabling fuel vouchers to be given to those attending who are most in need. Between February and March 2023, 222 people accessed the Warm Spaces, 146 Fuel Vouchers were handed out to the value of £6,450, 133 people received Personalised

Energy Saving Advice and 97 were signed up to the Priority Service Register.

- The council produced a handbook to support Ukrainians arriving in the district and their hosts providing guidance on many issues and advising people where to get support. The handbook covered topics including welfare and finance, emergency food, health (including mental health), education and other assistance for children and young people, sports and leisure, and housing. In addition to the handbook (which was translated into Ukrainian and Russian), a dedicated email address and phone line was established for people to ask questions.
- The council has also worked alongside the local Ukrainian community, and a small number of local volunteers and Kent County Council to support the delivery of Ukrainian language lessons for children at Sunflower House, Folkestone. The programme, which was championed by our newly arrived Homes for Ukraine residents (many of whom are teachers by profession), welcomed around 20 children on a twice weekly basis to learn Ukrainian language, learn the wider Ukrainian curriculum and to build friendships with other children across our district. Our local volunteers provide English lessons at the same time for around 15 parents/carers and this complements and is in addition to existing English for speakers of other languages courses.
- Following a successful application to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, the sum of £1m was awarded to Folkestone & Hythe District Council. The funds are allocated in phases across 3 years, with the council being awarded £100,035 for financial year 2022-23. The funds allocated in this period were utilised partly to give support to low-income households with energy efficient solutions to help reduce their costs. In addition, funds were used to contribute to the Rainbow Centre's mobile van and pantry project as well as to the community hubs across the district in providing support to signpost those who are most in need.



The council has supported households during the year through allocation of funds from the Household Support Fund as well as identified additional households eligible for council tax reduction.



The Folkestone Nepalese Centre was one of four warm spaces established in the district.

01 Positive Community Leadership in 2022/23

The council's Community Safety Unit (CSU) has worked on the following community initiatives with Folkestone & Hythe Community Safety Partnership (CSP) during the year, including:

- **Folkestone Jubilee Festival:** The Community Safety Unit hosted an exhibition stand in June 2022 to promote general safety information with a focus on how to report issues in the local area. The team shared details about safety apps and handed out a variety of safety leaflets which provided details about keeping children safe and how to report information to the council and police.
- **Folkestone Pride:** In July 2022, the Community Safety Unit hosted a stand where the team wore their Pride wrist bands and engaged with over 200 people. Discussions with the public covered personal safety in the community including topics such as violence against women and girls. Safety whistles were handed out and the team promoted safety apps. The team also handed out spikey bottle stoppers and provided advice about safer socialising.
- **Gaming Bus:** The Kent and Medway Prevent team bought their Gaming – Awareness of Hate and Extremism event to the district. The gaming bus visited the Lower Leas Coastal Park at the end of July 2022 and was fully equipped with virtual reality games such as FIFA to provide a fun, interactive and safe space where the Community Safety partners and the Prevent team could share important messages and raise awareness with young people and their families about countering hateful extremism and spreading awareness around gaming safely online. Around 30 children boarded the bus and the team engaged with over 65 people about hate and extremism on the day.
- **Welcome event for Ukrainians** – In September, the Community Safety team attended an event at the Folkestone Quarterhouse to meet Ukrainians and their hosts to offer guidance on everything from nursery placements to job skills over a cuppa and cake and form new friendships. Organisations were on hand offering advice on benefits, family matters, housing, jobs and more. Over 100 people attended the welcome event.
- **Ask Angela Campaign:** Shops in Folkestone town centre have thrown their support behind a safe space scheme to help anyone feeling anxious, overwhelmed or worried about their personal

safety. Bouverie Square retailers have joined the scheme which is using the same discreet approach as the 'Ask for Angela' bar and club safety campaign. Shop staff will recognise if anyone approaches them and 'asks for Angela' that this is a code-phrase for requiring help and possibly a place of safety. The scheme has been launched by the Folkestone & Hythe Community Safety Partnership and most of the shops taking part will be displaying 'Ask for Angela' stickers in their Windows.

- **Self Defence Classes:** The Community Safety Team arranged free self-defence classes for women and girls in April and for boys under 18 in June 2022. The sessions were held at Folkestone Sports Centre and lasted for 5-weeks.. The sessions focused on confidence, situational awareness (avoiding situations in the first place), conflict de-escalation and techniques.
- **Violence Against Women and Girls (Walk and Talk):** In July a walk and talk took place with representatives from the Community Safety Team, Kent Police and Home-Start Shepway. The representatives walked through Folkestone town between 4.00pm to 6.00pm handing out information about personal safety and safer socialising. The group also promoted various safety apps and handed out personal safety equipment. This engagement activity was designed to target those working and socialising in the evening.
- **Folkestone Youth Hub Festival:** In August, the Community Safety Unit had a stand on the grounds of Mundella Primary Playing Field supporting Kent County Council Youth Hub. This was an interactive festival for the whole family to enjoy with games, music, and karate amongst other activities. The team handed out safety information for both adults and children including information about the mental health services available to them.
- **Operation Henosis:** Monthly multiagency operations have continued throughout the year between the Council's Community Safety Unit, licencing and environmental enforcement teams joining with Kent police to patrol hot spot areas of Folkestone. During these operations the officers have engaged with local businesses and homeless people and patrolled locations suffering from problems of anti-social behaviour. The teams completed door knocks to neighbourhoods where issues have been raised, they also posted flyers through doors about how to report to the council and police.



CSU and Enforcement teams out with Kent Police as part of Op Henosis



The Gaming Bus came to the district to raise awareness of hate and extremism with young people.



CSU officers at the Folkestone Youth Hub Festival

Service Ambition 2

A Thriving Environment

Our priorities:

- **Ensure an excellent environment for everyone**
- **Grown the circular economy & reduce waste**
- **Increase our resilience to climate change**

02 A Thriving Environment in 2022/23

- During the year, the Council began developing a Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy for the district. A comprehensive evidence-gathering exercise was undertaken in 2022 to map the district's network of green spaces and water bodies. The strategy found that the district supports many rare habitats and species, including Turtle Doves and chalk grassland orchids. The draft strategy identifies fifteen strategic priorities, including the need to: protect and enhance core sites and improve links; mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change; improve cycling and walking routes; support people in taking exercise and engaging with nature for their physical and mental health; and protect water resources and incorporate sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) into new developments. The draft strategy was published for public consultation from November 2022 to January 2023 and a revised version will be taken back to the council for adoption soon.
- Folkestone and Hythe joined with the county council and other Kent district and borough councils in a group-buying scheme to secure discounts on the installation of solar panels and battery storage for domestic and community buildings. Interest in the Solar Together Kent scheme has been high, and installations took place throughout 2022 and early 2023. At the end of the 2022/23 scheme 1,638 solar panels have been installed across the district, delivering carbon savings of around 150 tonnes a year, contributing to total carbon savings across Kent and Medway of approximately 1,510 tonnes a year.
- In June 2022, the Council formed the Carbon Innovation Lab (CI-Lab), an informal group of invited stakeholders, including businesses, community groups and special interest groups, to share ideas and collaborate to promote and deliver low carbon initiatives and to draft a District Wide Carbon Plan. Emerging from the CI-Lab, we have the Folkestone & Hythe's Sustainable Futures Forum with a vision to engage and empower local people by giving them a platform to showcase their sustainable ideas and projects for a more sustainable future for our community. The first project delivered a 'TEDx-style' event comprising a series of community engagement events culminating in the main event on the 29th of April 2023 that will

featured eight residents delivering talks on projects/initiatives they are doing to impact positively our environment.

- The district's waste operator Veolia achieved a 5% drop in carbon emissions. As part of its contract with the council, Veolia has committed to support the council's objective of achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2030. Reporting its 2022 figures compared to the previous two years Veolia has attributed the drop in emissions partly to a reduction in the fuel consumption of its vehicles. This is due to equipping new vehicles with electric bin lifts under the new contract and making sure that routes are as efficient as possible and unnecessary journeys reduced.
- Work on rolling out electric vehicle (EV) charging points in the district's car parks was completed during the year. A total of 103 EV charging points were installed in 26 car parks across Folkestone & Hythe and - with the upgrade of the six existing points and the 23 charging points provided by commercial businesses - this means EV owners now have even a greater choice and more flexibility. The new points were installed by Connected Kerb, one of the UK's biggest providers and offer a mixture of fast 7kW and 22kW charging, depending on the location.
- Four of the district's beautiful parks continued to fly the Green Flag after retaining their status for the 2022/23 year. The Lower Leas Coastal Park, Kingsnorth Gardens, Radnor Park and the Royal Military Canal have all been awarded the prestigious accolade once again. The Green Flag award is the international quality mark for parks and green spaces which display the highest environmental standards, are beautifully maintained and have excellent visitor facilities.
- The council joined a network of local authorities to help achieve its climate change objectives during the year. The UK100 undertakes research and publishes findings on a range of topics, including transport, homes and buildings, energy, waste reduction, green finance, and clean air. It works with Government ministers and civil servants to influence policy on these issues. The council has pledged to use its influence as part of the UK100 to reduce greenhouse gas emissions both internally and with residents and businesses.



Green Flag Awards were successfully retained for Lower Leas Coastal Park, Radnor Park, The Royal Military Canal and Kingsnorth Gardens during the year.



The council joined the UK100 network of local authorities to use its influence to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.



A total of 103 EV charging points were installed in 26 car parks across the district.

02 A Thriving Environment in 2022/23

- The use of chemicals in all council managed parks, gardens and play areas has been reduced. Figures show that for the period 2015 to 2021, pesticide and herbicide use fell from a peak of 75 litres to just 14.5 litres in 2021 - an 80% drop. The council's grounds maintenance department has kept the use of pesticides and herbicides to a minimum for several years and following a motion agreed by full council in 2019, efforts have been made to find effective alternative methods. There are still a limited number of situations where chemicals will still be needed, such as to treat invasive weeds like Japanese knotweed and giant hogweed with work continuing to check for new technology and best practice to further reduce the use of pesticide & herbicides.
- A total 48 community environmental volunteer events have been supported by council's Local Area Officer Team during the year. The team have worked with a variety of local community groups and organisations including, The Hythe Environmental Group, 99 Squadron Air Cadets, 1st Cheriton Scouts, Elham and Lyminge Parish Councils, Stowting Wombles as well as local schools and youth organisations. Events undertaken in the year have included, stream cleans, area clean ups and litter picks with 1,155 attendees helping to collect 1,089 bags of litter to help keep the district clean and tidy.
- The Environmental Enforcement Team have worked hard during the year to ensure the district remains a clean and tidy place for both residents and visitors. The following work has been undertaken during the year:
- Dog fouling is an ongoing issue around the district, some areas more than others. Officers have worked hard to patrol problem hot spots and review signage in these areas with tired and worn signs being replaced as well as having good positive engagement with members of the public to encourage them to report fouling cases. In addition there has been active promotion of a new 'It's up to you to pick up our poo' campaign to remind dogs owners of their responsibility to pick up waste after them or face a fine of up to £1,000.
- A high number of visitors enjoyed the Warren during the year. Officers have actively patrolled this area making a visible presence over varied terrain, engaging with holiday makers and tackling issues, including camping, littering and dog fouling. Several successful Community Protection Warnings were issued

to unauthorised campers. Officers also had to extinguish a potential bushfire where campers had left burning embers during a drought period on a windy day. A new camera was erected at the site, together with a sign relating to fly-tipping to deter offenders.

- Work has been undertaken with Kent Police on Operation Piglet. Oil theft has increased and in specific areas throughout the district have either been targeted for theft or used to dump empty canisters. Good relations have been built with the public which has resulted in footage being shared that has been passed onto Kent Police. Officers have actively worked with businesses to educate them on the safe storage of canisters and we have utilised our field cameras to support surveillance.
- A series of early morning patrols have been conducted starting at 06:00am targeting both waste and dogs on beaches. Key areas of our coastline were patrolled to ensure that waste is being disposed of responsibly and bins are regularly emptied. Signage has been erected instructing visitors to take waste home and not leave items next to bins and on the beach. Fixed penalties were issued to visitors who left waste along the coastlines.
- Dog Control Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) placing restrictions on dog fouling (across the district), dogs off leads (on selected areas and dates) and dog bans were reviewed and updated by officers during the year. The review involved working through the public consultation taking into consideration all feedback and presenting the information received, updating the PSPO and signage in the relevant areas.
- A number of successful prosecutions were secured by officers against those who committed environmental crimes in the district during the year, some examples are as follows:
 - An individual fined £796 for failure to pick up dog faeces on Foord Road, Folkestone
 - An individual fined £488 for the breaching of the dog Public Spaces Protection Order on The Leas, Folkestone
 - An individual fined £796 for a littering offence on Bradstone Road, Folkestone



Environmental Enforcement on early morning patrol inspecting rubbish dumped irresponsibly



'It's up to you to pick up your poo' campaign signage to remind dog owners of their responsibility to pick waste after them.



New signage being put up by Environmental Enforcement Officers on dog fouling

Service Ambition 3

A Vibrant Economy

Our priorities:

- **Reinvigorate the high streets**
- **Support a vibrant & diverse business community**
- **Help people access jobs & opportunity**
- **Grow the skills we need for the future**

03 A Vibrant Economy in 2022/23

- In January 2023, the council was successfully awarded a £19.8 million share of the Government's Levelling Up Funding (LUF). The bid was submitted in early July 2022 and followed extensive public consultation earlier in the 2022 year on possible projects to deliver the priorities set out in the Folkestone Place Plan. The funding will:
 - Enable a sustainable, attractive and welcoming gateway to be created for Folkestone town centre with a green park replacing the bus station in Bouverie Square.
 - Enable the second phase of Folca to be progressed by establishing new uses for the site, with an intended focus on public services, retail, leisure and business uses for the rejuvenated building.
- Works to bring the Folca building in Folkestone back into use began in early March 2023. The building will be separated into two parts: the Edwardian part of the site in Bouverie Place and the Art Deco section in Sandgate Road. The Levelling Up Fund award will partly support the refurbishment of the Art Deco section of the building. New uses for this part will be explored – with an intended focus on public services, retail, leisure and business uses for the rejuvenated building.
- The council in partnership with technology company Bulbtown launched the ExperienceFH app in November 2022. The mobile based app is free to download, and the supporting website gives instant access to a range of promotional offers, discounts, and events from businesses across the district. Local business can sign up at no cost and list their location and opening hours or highlight special offers. Residents and visitors can also check out the very best of what is on offer locally by using ExperienceFH at home or whilst they are out and about. The development of the app was funded using the district's share of the government's Welcome Back funding - designed to reinvigorate high streets following the pandemic.
- In 2022 we introduced a new Green Business Grant Scheme to help smaller businesses to become more energy efficient. Grants of up to £10,000 are available to support businesses (up to £25,000 in exceptional circumstances). The scheme will run

until 31 March 2024 or until the fund is exhausted. So far, 16 applications have been made to the grant scheme. Applications have come a wide range of organisations including a sports trust, community interest company, hotel, financial business, events venue and arts organisation.

- The Romney Marsh Business Hub Grant Scheme was launched in April 2022 which allowed any business leasing an office at the business hub to apply for a non-repayable grant of up to £10,000 with no fund matching required. The grants can be used for office furnishings and computer equipment, and in certain cases can fund the first 3 months rental payments for the business. To date, all businesses that occupy an office at the hub have applied for and have been successfully awarded grant funding totalling £37,706.
- A successful bid was made to the rural England prosperity fund, with the council being awarded £571,000. The funding will be received during financial year 2023-24. This scheme provides funding to support new and existing rural businesses to develop new products and facilities that will be of wider benefit to the local economy. This includes support for framers to diversify their incomes, as well as support for organisations to deliver new and improved community services and for business to benefit the local economy.
- Having been open for applications since 2019, the high street fund grant scheme closed to new applications during November 2022. During financial year 2022-23, a further 12 projects were approved prior to the scheme closure with funding totalling £126,094 being awarded. Since the scheme was launched in 2019, a total of 49 businesses have been successfully awarded funding, with a total of £554,362 being paid to date. Example of projects include shop and restaurant refurbishments, public realm projects and events.



Artist impression of Bouverie Square, Folkestone to be delivered thanks to funding from the Levelling Up Fund.



Tenants at the Romney Marsh Business Hub have benefitted from a grant scheme for new equipment and furnishings.



ExperienceFH app launched in partnership with Bulbtown gives instant access to a range of promotional offers, discounts, and events from businesses across the district.

03 A Vibrant Economy in 2022/23

- The Council in conjunction with the Romney Marsh Partnership and The Education People organised the first 'Romney Marsh Inspires' skills festival in July 2022. The festival hosted at The Marsh Academy in New Romney was opened to Students from Years 8, 10 and 12 attended during the school day and the event was then opened up to the wider Marsh community. All visitors learnt about local opportunities and support services and skills, and the day included workshops run by Kent Choices, LifeSkills, Digital Kent and Social Enterprise Kent.
- **Folkestone Community Works:** The Folkestone Community Works programme, part funded by European Structural and Investment Funds, has continued to provide grant funding and free business advice for local businesses and potential entrepreneurs situated in central and east Folkestone. During the 2022/23 year, 36 grants have been awarded to the value of £524,161 from the scheme that have helped support a number of local businesses, projects and charities including:
 - **Custom Food Lab (CFL):** A social enterprise based on the belief that food is a basic building block of culture, health and stability. The Locavore Growing Project, at Martello Primary School in east Folkestone, is at the heart of its operation. The project holds regular volunteering sessions, family gardening and workshops. Groups involved with the garden include Martello pupils, young people from The Beacon Plus, and residents of Napier Barracks. A grant from Folkestone Community Works (FCW) has enabled CFL to buy an accessible compost toilet, chicken coop and outdoor kitchen. Other items include a solar panel kit with batteries for charging electrical tools, forest school kit and sandpit. As well as the equipment, the money has paid for business development support and for a specialist advisor to create a project manual for sharing community growing and organising practices.
 - **Rainbow Centre:** The charity used the awarded funding from Folkestone Community Works (FCW) to buy a much-needed new phone system, computers and other equipment. The centre helps support individuals and families experiencing deprivation or hardships through various food services (including the new Hythe Pantry), advice for homeless people, and a winter shelter.
- **DB Fabrication:** A Folkestone based business that fabricates street furniture for local authorities, artworks for galleries, art institutions and individual artists, as well as designing and producing props for production companies and tv channels. The funding awarded from Folkestone Community Works has enabled the business to upgrade four of their machines to take on different types of jobs so they can compete with much larger businesses in the same field.
- **Amor Europe:** A Christian charity based in Folkestone that has three areas of work, all focussing on children: building homes (currently in Mexico, South Africa, Moldova and Kenya); training church leaders (Africa and Asia) and eradicating waterborne disease by installing water filters (The Gambia, Ukraine and Burkina Faso in West Africa). Funding awarded from Folkestone Community works will help with the technical costs for the next two years of reporting on the impact of the water filters using a world-class system.
- **Digital Inclusion Support Scheme:** The scheme provides hardware and connectivity solutions for those aged over 16 living in the town's central and east wards who have previously not been able to access the internet. Those eligible to join the scheme are given a laptop and/or a connection solution that enables internet access for 12 months. In addition, they are offered support sessions and one to one support to improve their entrepreneurial skills. The project is funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), through the Folkestone Community Works (FCW) programme and Kent County Council's Helping Hands scheme which is tackling digital exclusion across the county.
- **Open Doors:** A free drop-in session for people aged 16 and over, who live in the Harbour, Central or East Folkestone wards and who are into all things digital. It is run by Screen South, with funding from Folkestone Community Works. At the event, visitors had a chance to try virtual reality, have a go at a gaming programme and animation, and discover field recording and sound effects. The Open Doors team were also on hand to offer practical next steps to getting on the career ladder.



The Rainbow Centre benefited from a new phone system thanks to FCW funding.



The Custom Food Lab benefited from new equipment and business development support thanks to FCW funding.



FCW funding awarded to Amor Europe will support them with costs for reporting on the impact of water filters in eradicating waterborne diseases in overseas countries.

Service Ambition 4

Quality Homes and Infrastructure

Our priorities:

- **Improve outcomes & support for homeless people**
- **Deliver sustainable, affordable housing**
- **Deliver a safe, accountable housing service**
- **Digital inclusion & connectivity**
- **Deliver a sustainable new development at Otterpool Park**

04 Quality Homes and Infrastructure in 2022/23

- In April 2023, outline planning permission was granted for a new garden town at Otterpool Park that will provide 8,500 homes, a new town centre, shops, leisure, educational and cultural facilities and employment land. The new community will offer more than 9,000 new job opportunities centred on the former Folkestone Racecourse site at Westenhanger Station, celebrate the cultural heritage of Westenhanger Castle positioned within an enhanced central park. Approximately 50% of the site will be allocated as accessible green space.
- We developed the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule Review last year and consulted on the schedule between August and October 2022. The schedule was passed to an independent examiner for a public examination at the end of November 2022. The independent examiner was entirely satisfied with the schedule, writing in his report that it would provide an appropriate basis for the collection of the levy, and recommended it for approval. The charging schedule was adopted by full Council on 29 March 2023. This is the culmination of a significant amount of work and is an excellent result which the council, parish and town councils and other organisations can use to secure new infrastructure across the district.
- The Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) is for local authorities, providers of social housing and charities that own social housing to bid for funding from government to install energy efficiency upgrades in their housing stock. In 2022 we were successful in securing £2 million from SHDF (Wave 1), supported by £1 million of council funds. The award was one of the largest in England for any district/borough council and one of only two awards in Kent. Work is underway on retrofitting 125 of the council's poorest performing social homes to bring them up to Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) Band C rating using this funding, ready for low carbon heating. It is estimated that these measures will yield savings of 254 tonnes of carbon emissions or 919,000 kWh heating energy a year. Ross House in Folkestone was chosen as a demonstrator project

for the first 16 homes, and work is now progressing on the remaining 109 homes.

- A larger bid for Wave 2 of the SHDF was submitted to secure improvements to a further 300 social homes over a two-year period. The government announced on 22 March 2023 that the council had been successful in securing £2.6 million of government funding as part of Wave 2.1. The government funding will be matched by the council, bringing the total spend on improving the homes and wellbeing of tenants to £5.2 million.
- Over this last year, the Ship Street project has taken several steps closer to submitting a planning application for the strategic housing-led development on the site. Over the summer, ground investigations have informed the Council on current site conditions, and with support from Homes England, in December 2022 London based consultants Arup & Partners were appointed to deliver the design works in conjunction with Fletcher Priest Architects. A second public engagement event was held in March 2023 which presented the evolving designs for the site. The design for this former Gas Works brownfield site is being developed to deliver a quality, sustainable development with new public realm including a green link through the site, and a pocket park on Foord Road. A planning application is due to be submitted in Summer 2023, with remediation works and development on site currently programmed to commence in Spring 2024.
- Work has begun on a new road opening up 10 acres of land in Folkestone for new housing. Seventy-seven homes are planned for the southern area of the Biggins Wood site. When they are built 14 will be offered at affordable rent to those on the housing waiting list and nine will be for shared ownership. A commercial area will also be developed on the site offering up to 5,600 square metres of space for new and existing businesses. The £1.15m grant from the government's Brownfield Land Release Fund has helped to fund preparation work on the former brickworks site.



Artist impression of Otterpool Park, the district's new garden town



Artist impression of Ship Street in Folkestone



Artist impression of Biggins Wood in Folkestone

04 Quality Homes and Infrastructure in 2022/23

- The site of a derelict building in Cheriton has been transformed into 27 new homes for local people. The mix of three and four-bedroomed houses and 18 two-bedroomed apartments have been built at the former Brockman Centre in Cheriton High Street. The properties will be offered at social rent and managed by housing association, Moat Homes. The development was officially handed over by Leath Park Developments and main contractor Jenner Group in November 2022 with new tenants moving in before Christmas.
- Following a consultation during the year, tenants living in council managed homes in the Folkestone and Hythe district are now to be offered lifetime secure tenancies. Since 2013 tenants have typically been placed on a 'fixed-term' tenancy which ended after a certain period of time. However, 80% of the 300 tenants who responded to a Council consultation were in favour of scrapping fixed term tenancies. The lifetime tenancies have the same terms and conditions as 'fixed term' tenancies but offer tenants more security and will also mean tenants will not have to go through the tenancy review process every four years.
- 14 new homes were made available for affordable rent in Radnor Park Road, Folkestone during late 2022. The homes consisting of a mixture of one- and two-bedroom flats in two small blocks have been finished to a high standard and are of low cost for the residents to live in thanks to their high standards of energy efficiency. All of the new homes have now been occupied having been let to local people with a wide range of housing needs.
- During the year, the housing service has launched a new Tenancy Welfare and Sustainment Fund in response to feedback from front line housing staff. Staff had identified that for some council tenants, the lack of a relatively small amount of money to fix a specific problem was causing a real issue. The new fund was introduced based on the principle of 'small amounts, big impact'. The fund can be used to assist tenants who have a specific need that they do not have the funds to resolve and that could impact on their tenancy. The funds allocated so far have been used to help tenants purchase white goods, cleaning equipment, skips to assist with de-cluttering properties and some gardening assistance.
- The Better Care Fund (BCF) is allocated to the Council from central government each year for the council to help disabled and elderly people adapt their homes (Disabled Facilities Grants). The Private Sector Housing Team also use this fund to help people who are medically fit to be discharged from hospital but have issues with safety or disrepair in the home. The BCF funded a Housing and Health Co-ordinator at the William Harvey Hospital to work alongside the NHS discharge teams to support patients with housing related barriers to going home. This could be a deep clean and declutter or using our handy-person service to bring a bed from upstairs to downstairs, fit a key safe or a handrail. In 2022/23 the Hospital Discharge and handy person schemes together supported 308 people in our district with faster hospital discharge or prevention from admission into hospital or care settings. This not only saves the NHS money and unblocks beds for those who need them, but also helps people to remain independent and safe in their own homes
- The Private Sector Housing (PSH) Team responded quickly in March 2022 to develop a programme of inspections for the Homes for Ukraine Scheme. The government announced the scheme and expected councils to act immediately. The PSH Team, alongside staff from housing case management, health & wellbeing and customer services rose to the challenge and implemented a scheme within a couple of weeks. Inspections commenced in early April 2022. An inspection form was developed in partnership with our neighbouring Local Authorities in Kent and the PSH team worked in partnership with case officers in housing and customer services to organise a booking and reporting system. Appointments were booked for PSH officers to visit and carry out the safety checks in the hosts' homes and the results were reported back to enable the host to receive their "thank you" payment for helping a Ukraine refugee (or family of refugees) and give the green light for the refugees to travel to the host's home. Since April 2022, the team have inspected 154 homes and deemed the majority of these to be suitable and safe for refugees to stay in. Inspections continue as and when they are required.



Opening of 27 new homes for local people in Cheriton



14 New homes delivered for affordable rent in Radnor Park Road, Folkestone



Tenants living in council managed homes are now being offered lifetime secure tenancies following a council consultation with tenants.

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