



Folkestone & Hythe District Council

Appendix 1: Annual Performance Report - A snapshot of our year: 2023/24



Our Corporate Plan - 'Creating Tomorrow Together'

In February 2021, we published our new Corporate Plan 'Creating Tomorrow Together', a 34-page document setting out our over-arching principles and service ambitions up until 2030 following approval by councillors.

The plan identifies the main priorities and themes of the council, including the key role we will play in leading the district's recovery from the coronavirus pandemic.

The name of our corporate plan was inspired by the excellent relationships and networks which the council already has - and will continue to build on for the benefit of residents. It also alludes to the recovery work already being undertaken.

The plan was subject to public consultation in late 2020 and incorporates the key points raised during the consultation period to ensure it reflects the needs and ambitions of our residents, businesses and key stakeholders across the district.

The plan is focused on four service ambitions which are priority areas of action that relate to the key services that the council plans, delivers and commissions and six guiding principles that guide everything that we do (see summary image).
















The adopted service priority actions as part of the plan have been further developed into a corporate action plan, with progress against the plan itself monitored annually.

The current corporate plan is scheduled for review this year and with the change in political administration in May 2023, work is now underway on reviewing and developing a new plan to ensure that it fully reflects the priorities of the current administration. The work on the development of a new plan will be continuing throughout the remainder of the 2024 year with full adoption planned for early 2025.

A copy of our current corporate plan can be found here: [Creating Tomorrow Together – Corporate Plan 2021-30](#)



Creating Tomorrow Together: Corporate Plan 2021-30

<p>Service ambition 1: Positive community leadership Priorities in the next three years</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  Improve physical and mental health & wellbeing  Safer communities  Supporting & empowering our communities 	<p>Service ambition 2: A thriving environment Priorities in the next three years</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  Ensure an excellent environment for everyone  Grow the circular economy & reduce waste  Increase our resilience to climate change 	<p>Service ambition 3: A vibrant economy Priorities in the next three years</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  Reinvigorate the high streets  Support a vibrant & diverse business community  Help people access jobs & opportunity  Grow the skills we need for the future 	<p>Service ambition 4: Quality homes and infrastructure Priorities in the next three years</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  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 		
<p>In everything we do we will follow these guiding principles:</p>					
<p>Sustainable recovery We will do all we can to ensure a strong recovery for the district from the effects of COVID.</p>	<p>Locally distinctive We will protect the special distinctive and diverse nature of our district - working with our key partners to enhance it.</p>	<p>Greener Folkestone & Hythe We will encourage and create a more sustainable district consuming fewer natural resources.</p>	<p>Transparent, stable, accountable and accessible We will be financially sustainable and communicate effectively with our communities in an accessible way.</p>	<p>Working effectively with partners We will engage with partners to understand the vital role they play and work collaboratively with them to ensure the best outcomes for our residents.</p>	<p>Continuous improvement We will embed a culture of continuous improvement, seeking feedback and being innovative and creative to find new ways to deliver services.</p>

Above: Corporate Plan - Service Ambitions and Guiding Principles

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 2023/24

Safer Streets Funding: The council made a successful bid during the year for government funding from the Safer Streets fund to make Folkestone town centre an even safer place for shopping and socialising. The bid was made jointly by the district's Community Safety Partnership (CSP), Kent Police and the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner and £271,351.60 was awarded by the Home Office to be spent over two years in Folkestone's central ward. The Safer Streets improvements included:

- The purchase of five portable CCTV cameras that can be used in different locations when anti-social behaviour or crime issues are reported.
- Funding for more than 30 trauma packs, to help with the treatment of injuries prior to the arrival of an ambulance crew, which are being delivered to town centre venues.
- Funding for a personal safety app has also been given to Home-Start Shepway to distribute to families.

Mobile Food Services: A new service providing a mobile foodbank and pantry service across the district was launched during early October 2023 to provide easier access for people struggling to meet the increased cost of food, helping residents facing an emergency who have been referred by agencies to the foodbank for free food vouchers. A van was kitted out with shelving, a fridge and a freezer and will be the mobile arm of the existing Shepway Foodbank, operated by Folkestone's Rainbow Centre. The van will also deliver a mobile version of the Hythe Pantry service which has been supporting its members by offering a weekly food shop for just £5 per week. The van and service has been funded by central government through a wider £1 million grant secured by the council from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund of which £20,000 capital was allocated towards the cost of the vehicle with the Trussell Trust and the Folkestone Works Programme provided a further £40,000 capital. Additional revenue for wrap around services and other activities that have supported this innovative project (excl the Household Essential Fund projects) amounted to an additional £62,000 revenue funding from UKSPF.

District Food Network: The partnership has continued to meet and work together on a wide range of initiatives throughout the year, including the mobile food service. The community fridge networks have continued to develop, with new locations being developed at Hawkinge and Cheriton in addition to the existing one at Wood Avenue Library in Folkestone. The community fridge provides an opportunity to reduce food waste, receive free, unwanted, in-date fresh items for those that need them. The District Food Network (DFN) is further developing through existing contacts, and through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund work, community gardens to improve physical and mental wellbeing, as well as providing fresh produce, linked to the mobile food service. The DFN was showcased at a

Kent-wide Food Summit and also has an updated the Food Resources directory for the district.

Community Hubs: The council has continued to work with the three community hubs that were originally set up in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The hubs have engaged with projects to address the cost of living crisis, as well as UKSPF projects including the distribution of small household items such as slow cookers, heated blankets, etc, as well as supporting the development of pop up kitchens (cooking demonstrations) linked to the mobile food service. All three hubs continued with the provision of warm spaces through the winter, operating from October 2023 – March 2024. This provided the community with an opportunity to access warm, safe spaces, low cost food and hot drinks, etc. The hubs noted that footfall was extremely high, with people staying for long periods of time. The hubs have been able to signpost to other support services where users have needed further help.

Changing Places Toilets: Following a previously successful bid for funding through the Changing Places Fund Round 2, which resulted in the Council being awarded a £205,000 grant to pay for the construction new Changing Places toilets. A total of two of these new facilities have been opened in the district during the year in the following locations: Lower Leas Coastal Park, Folkestone and the Central car park Dymchurch with a third facility at Radnor Park, Folkestone due for completion by end of June 2024. Changing Places toilets are designed to meet the needs of disabled children and adults with complex needs who rely on carer support. Specialist equipment inside includes ceiling hoists and changing tables.

Ward Grants: A total of 233 Individual ward grants totalling over £86,000 were awarded during the year to benefit local charities and community groups across the district including: Folkestone Sports Centre Trust, Strange Cargo, Romney Marsh Community Hub, Folkestone Music Town, Caring altogether Romney Marsh, The Sandgate Society and Kent Coast Volunteering.

Welfare Team: The Household Support Fund has enabled the Council to support 3,118 households with £414,492 in support during the year. This is mainly help with food, clothing and bedding. 19 households also received carpet support for a total of £25,284 and an 11 additional households received new boilers totaling £30,000. An extra £20,700 was also sourced which funded supermarket vouchers for an additional 207 households.

The Home Essentials Fund (UK Shared Prosperity Funding) also supported 421 households to a value of £136,421. This included 88 white goods and 111 new beds/mattresses.



Safer Streets Funding to make Folkestone town centre an even safer place for shopping and socialising



Hythe Pantry Service operating from a new van with the Shepway Foodbank



Opening of new Changing Places Toilets in Lower Leas Coastal Park

01 Positive Community Leadership in 2023/24

Community Safety Unit:

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:

- **Operation Sceptre (May 2023)** – The Community Safety Team worked with other partner agencies on Op Sceptre a national knife campaign led by the Kent Police Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) to raise awareness of knife crime and to detect and prevent knife crime in our district. The officers started from Folkestone Bus Station and divided into two groups of three visiting retailers and giving staff posters to display. The outlets included Choice, TK Maxx, Poundland, ASDA, Savers, McDonald's, a charity shop, Taco Bell, Sainsburys and a military supply store. Knife wand sweeps were also conducted in St Eanswythe's churchyard, the Harbour area, and Payers Park.
- **KCC Youth Council (June 2023)** – The Community Safety Team, Violence Reduction Unit and others attended the KCC youth Council to provide 15 young people opportunity to ask about the district and the safety. We took on board concerns young people faced with new technology, the impact of media and social media, and perception of safety from a young persons perspective. We shared best practice, advice and guidance, signposting to specialist services and projects the Community Safety Partnership is running.
- **Violence Against Women and Girls Event (July 2023):** The Community Safety and Licensing teams worked with Kent Police for the Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls' event outside the Leas Cliff Hall in Folkestone. Representatives from the Kent County Council youth service, Home Start Shepway and Cheriton Baptist Church engaged with more than 100 people. Kent Police asked the public to complete a survey on how safe they feel in and around the district. A broad range of information was covered, and advice was given regarding ensuring a taxi is licenced. The officers highlighted the 'Ask for Angela' scheme which enables anyone feeling unsafe and vulnerable to seek help by approaching local business
- **Tall Ships Event (July 2023):** The Community Safety Team supported young people from Folkestone, Hythe and twin town

Boulogne-sur-Mer set sail for France in July as the 2023 Tall Ships project reached a triumphant conclusion. Thalassa – a three-masted barquentine – left the Folkestone Harbour Arm on the afternoon of Sunday 10th July, waved off by proud relatives, council representatives and nautical enthusiasts. The teenagers from England and France crewed the ship, took it in turns to cover the four-hourly watch shifts and undertake tasks such as putting up sails, adjusting rigging and duties in the mess. They arrived in Boulogne-sur-Mer on Thursday 13 July 2023 in time for the famous La Côte D'Opale fête la Mer – a gathering of tall ships and traditional boats attracting hundreds of thousands of visitors

- **The Stade Day of Action (August 2023):** On Thursday 3rd August, members of the Community Safety, Local Area Officer and Ground maintenance teams, local councillors, multi-agency partners including Kent Police, Kent County Council Wardens as well as Urban Pastors came together to clean up a viewing platform on the Stade that had been an area of ASB (anti-social behaviour), materials for the team were sourced through donations including plants and soil from Homebase and The Range.
- **The Community Partnership Roadshows (September 2023):** The Community Safety Lead Specialist along with multi-agency partners, including Kent Police, The Violence Reduction Unit (VRU), KCC Youth Services, and Prevent, hosted five roadshow events that visited eight schools within the district, including The Marsh Academy, Brockhill, The Folkestone Academy and the Harvey Grammar School, to provide students with information on substance use, online safety, the work of the VRU and the 'Ask Angela' campaign with local retailers for people who feel vulnerable.
- **Safer Business Action Day (March 2024):** In support of the Safer Business Action Day, Scott Butler from Community Safety along with Kent Police, FAPAC (Folkestone Area Partnership Against Crime) and officers from Bouverie Place were out in the town centre. The officers gave crime prevention advice to local business and engaged with the public about crime reduction guidance and support.



Making improvements at The Stade Day of Action



Community Partnership Roadshows hosted with schools in the district



Community Safety Partnership stand at Safer Business Action day in Bouverie Place, Folkestone

Service Ambition 2

A Thriving Environment

Our Priorities:

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

02 A Thriving Environment in 2023/24

Schools' Sustainability Project: In March 2024, young students were invited to support a new council initiative to tackle environmental issues with sustainable solutions. The Schools' Sustainability Project aims to encourage awareness of local ecological concerns, support schools to take practical action and introduce young people to the workings of the council. A total of 23 young people aged between 7-10 from Elham Church of England Primary School, Sellindge Primary School and The Churchill School in Hawkinge took part in a trial for the programme held in Civic Centre in Folkestone. The pupils spent time considering issues affecting the local environment and presented projects on their sustainable solutions that could not only help improve their surroundings but the planet too.

Net Zero Toolkit: In October 2023, the council published a Net Zero Toolkit, a guide detailing the best way of achieving net zero carbon in a house build or renovation. The best practice toolkit is aimed at homeowners as well as small or medium-sized house builders, architects, contractors, self-builders and consultants, and covers steps from pre-planning through to construction. Council officers worked with Kent County Council and with industry experts Etude, Levitt Bernstein and Introba to produce the guidance detailing the very latest design approach and good practice. The production of the toolkit was funded by the council's Climate Change reserve fund and by Homes England and has drawn on work carried out by the council on proposed developments within the district, such as Otterpool Park.

Green flag awards: Four of the district's favourite parks and green spaces have continued to fly the Green Flag after retaining their status for 2023/24. The Lower Leas Coastal Park, Kingsnorth Gardens, Radnor Park and the Royal Military Canal have all been recognised with the celebrated award 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.

EV Charging points: A cross-partnership project that has brought electric vehicle charging points to locations across Kent has been celebrated in Folkestone. In June 2023, Representatives from Kent County Council and Connected Kerb one of the UK's biggest providers of EV charging points, attended an event at the Civic

Centre to celebrate the achievements of the scheme. More than 100 points have been installed in 26 of Folkestone & Hythe's car parks as part of 'Kent 600', an initiative to create a better network for electric cars and encourage more people to take up the green option. The Council partnered with Kent County Council (KCC) and five other local authorities for the roll out. The charging points offer a mixture of fast 7Kwh and 22Kwh depending on the location.

Princes Parade: Work to remove the hoarding at the Princes Parade site in Hythe began in March 2024. The boards are surrounding the council owned site previously marked for development and have now been transferred to Otterpool Park where they are being reused to secure currently vacant buildings. They will be further used when construction work begins on the new garden town. A 1.2m high stock fence (wire mesh stretched between wooden posts) is being installed instead. A decision over the future of the site is due to be made after public consultation later in the year. Potential uses will be informed by the public's views together with the advice received from the council's contaminated land consultant. During the hoarding removal and fencing installation council officers and contractors worked alongside an ecologist to ensure the badger setts and other wildlife habitats are safeguarded.

Carbon Strategy: Residents and businesses were asked to give their views on a strategy to reduce carbon emissions across the district in late 2023. The proposed District-Wide Carbon Plan was published by the Council and sets out the suggested approach towards a net zero future. The plan recommend efforts be concentrated on five priorities, known as the priority pillars of focus, – road transport, residential, commercial and industrial, waste and water and carbon absorption and biodiversity. The Actions are listed against each of the five pillars – some that can be achieved by the council alone, some by collaboration and those which can only be delivered by other organisations.

New solar powered facilities for Coastal Park: A new toilet block powered by solar panels and boasting a green roof planted with wildflowers was officially opened in Folkestone's Lower Leas Coastal Park in June 2023. The new facility provides an additional four toilets – including one with full disabled access – for residents and visitors to the park, as well as a small commercial kiosk, near the foot of the Zig-Zag Path. The solar panels on top of the block will generate enough energy to power the toilets, the hot water and the vast majority of electricity needed to operate the kiosk.



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



Removal of hoarding at Princes Parade site. A decision over the future of the site is due to be made after public consultation later in the year



Installation of new solar powered facilities in the Lower Leas Coastal Park that opened in June 2023

02 A Thriving Environment in 2023/24

BinsforGreenSeas – A new ‘BinForGreenSeas’ plastic bottle recycling bin was installed at Sunny Sands in Folkestone in September 2023. The bin was sponsored by the councils’ waste management and street cleansing contractor, Veolia with the hope that the eye-catching bins will encourage beachgoers to recycle their plastic bottles. The ‘BinForGreenSeas’ was designed by two students at the University of East London in 2019. At 1.5m in height, the iconic design resembles a life buoy as it encourages beach visitors to ‘throw marine life a lifeline’. Designed to Grab the attention of passers-by, these bins help to make the connection between litter thoughtlessly left behind on beaches, and the harmful effect this has on marine life and human health. Each bin is both symbolic and practical in reducing plastic pollution.

Recognition of Waste Service by OFLOG: In February 2024, the council were contacted by the Office of Local Government (Oflog) and asked to present to other local authorities about the high performance of its waste and recycling service. Oflog highlighted the council as a leading district in terms of its low contamination rates in its recycling collections and overall recycling rate compared to similar authorities. The presentation looked at the strategic and operational decisions taken in relation to the recycling service including the council's focus on contract performance, its continued investment in the service and approach to communications. The presentation was followed by a Q/A session and discussion with senior colleagues from other authorities and was well received. The council's overall waste collections continue to perform well within the missed bin targets (29.4 per 100,000 achieved in Quarter 4 and 34.2 average over the year.) The council will be launching a new campaign at the end of July to promote recycling and overall recycling rate - the 50:50 campaign.

Environmental Enforcement: 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:

- Ongoing fly-tipping had been occurring on the disused railway tracks on Tram Road, Folkestone. Officers conducted patrols, spoke with residents and surveilled the area. Anti fly-tipping signage was erected on both railings and the railings of the bridge. The team have worked with the landowners to clear the waste and we are pleased to say that it has been clear since.
- Regular patrols and focus have been given to the popular East Cliff area. Officers have made efforts to reduce dog fouling by increasing patrols, including under cover ops to tackle the ongoing dog fouling concerns. Letters were door dropped to residents of East Cliff and additional signage erected. Officers also engaged with dog walkers on the grassed corner of East Cliff and poo bags were handed out.
- Officers took a proactive approach to reports of dog fouling by patrolling the entire Dymchurch sea wall, putting up additional signage and stencils

to warn dog walkers of the consequences of not picking up after their dog. One specific stretch was identified as a problematic area and additional patrols have been conducted to manage the situation.

- Joint patrols were conducted with the Community Safety team in the Warren, Folkestone to tackle and investigate multiple temporary campsites. There had been evidence of weekend parties causing littering and posing fire risks as well as the public wild-camping. Some instances have left large volumes of scattered waste posing threats to wildlife and damaged ground in our SSI area.
- Several promoters have attempted to advertise their events illegally in the district. Officers documented the instances of fly-posting and worked with the companies to advise on the process and planning permission required to advertise. One promoter went out of his way to travel directly from Gatwick Airport following a holiday to personally remove the posters. Another promoter failed to remove the posters as instructed and was issued and paid Fixed Penalty Notices amounting to £1,100

The team have undertaken educational and campaign events within the district during the year including:

- **Folkestone Talks:** The team were invited back for a second year to talk to children of primary schools at the Folkestone Talks event. Officers attended different schools and helping to educate about littering, fly-tipping and mainly on dog control. The talks were followed by an educational game relating to true and false statements about dog fouling. The children had to throw the false statements in a mini bin and put the correct statements next to the toy dog.
- **Paws for Thought:** Two events were held during the year to highlight the importance of having an up to date micro-chip and chatting with residents and dog owners about the dog restrictions in the district. Officers were really enthusiastic about the event and there was a high level of engagement with the public who were equally keen to chat.
- **Love your Beach:** The officers attended Sunny Sands in Folkestone on a number of occasions for the ‘Love your Beach’ campaign to highlight the dog control orders which are implemented throughout the summer months and the impact of litter during visits to the beach to the public.

The team have thoroughly investigated a number of fly-tips they encounter across the district, including the following cases:

- Officers investigated a fly tip in Harbour Way. They engaged with businesses to educate and resolve the matter of securing bins preventing future occurrences, which resolved the waste issues going forward.
- An investigation was held following reports of burning commercial waste in Jointon Road. An interview under caution was conducted where the offender admitted the offence and a £300 Fixed Penalty was issued.
- A man from Dover did not dispose appropriately of materials following home improvements and deliberately fly-tipped it in communal bins and the pavement in London Street. The resident was brought in and interviewed under caution where a £300 FPN was issued.



A new BinForGreenSeas installed at Sunny Sands beach in Folkestone sponsored by Veolia



Installing new dog fouling signage by Environmental Enforcement Officer



Paws for thought event at Sunny Sands, dogs and owners were happy to chat, clarity was provided on restricted areas.

Service Ambition 3

A Vibrant Economy

Our Priorities:

Reinvigorate the high streets

Supporting a vibrant & diverse business community

Help people access jobs & opportunity

Grow the skills we need for the future

03 A Vibrant Economy in 2023/24

Levelling Up: Following the council being successfully awarded £19.8 million from the government's Levelling Up Fund for the Folkestone – A 'Brighter Future' project to transform Folkestone town centre. A total of three public engagement events have taken place during the year:

- **July 2023: Phase 1 Consultation:** Improvements to the complicated road system around Folkestone Central train station and to Cheriton Road and Cheriton Gardens, leading to Middelburg Square. The project aims to address this through improved signage and links to the town centre will be created making it easier for pedestrians and cyclists to find their way. As well as more and upgraded pedestrian crossings, proposals for phase one of the project will include a new roundabout at the junction of Shorncliffe Road and Cheriton Road and many more areas of green space and seating in pedestrian areas.
- **November 2023: Phase 2 Consultation:** Proposals for this phase include moving the bus station from Bouverie Square to Middelburg Square. Bus stops will extend around the north and south sides of Middelburg Square, creating pedestrian-friendly transport hub environment and enable Bouverie Square to return to its former use as garden square. A new park will be created where Foresters Way currently is, running alongside Shellons Street as well as a new link between Guildhall Street North and Guildhall Street will be developed to make it easier to cross the road into town, across Shellons Street.
- **March 2024: Phase 3 Consultation:** Proposals for this phase include improvements to Guildhall Street and the pedestrianised area of Sandgate Road. Updated plans for Bouverie Square (the current bus station) have been refined based on the feedback provided by the community at our last event in November 2023.

The public consultation for the project's phases sought to effectively engage the community like never before. The design of Folkestone's digital twin allowed the public to see the proposed changes to the town digitally and for the first time in virtual reality. This approach increased public engagement ten-fold and encouraged better-informed feedback, improving project outcomes for all those impacted by the changes. Over 1,000 people attended the three engagement events during the year of which 235 of those were children from local schools.

Rural England Prosperity Fund: The Central Government initiated Rural England Prosperity Fund opened for applications during quarter 3 of the 2023/24 year. Applications were invited from businesses, charities and community groups residing in areas classed as rural locations, wishing to diversify, boost community cohesion and implement green initiatives. A total of 9 projects have been approved to date, which has resulted in the £143,000 funding for 2023-24 financial year being fully allocated. (The scheme continues into year 2024-25 with a further funding allocation available).

Green Business Grant scheme: A further 13 projects were awarded funding totalling £127,200. Businesses were able to apply for 40% of a project total. The diverse range of projects approved included solar panel system installations, low energy usage LED lighting systems, and a water saving initiative by a local manufacturing business. The sum of £25,000 was awarded towards energy efficient LED lighting systems and Solar panel system installation being implemented as part of the Leas Lift Project ahead of its reopening during 2025. (The Green Business Grant scheme closed to new applications on 31st March 2024 ahead of a final round of decision panels).

Romney Marsh Business Hub and Grant scheme: A further 2 applications were received from businesses leasing an office at the hub. Up to £10,000 could be applied for towards office furniture and equipment. Both were approved for funding totalling £12,000. The scheme has now closed. During year 2023-24, occupancy rates at the hub increased, with 12 of the 14 available offices having been leased by both businesses relocating and new businesses setting up in New Romney.

Romney Marsh Skills Event: The third Romney Marsh Inspires skills and careers event took place during March 2024 at the Romney Marsh Academy. This year's event saw an increase in both the number of businesses having a presence, and attendees to the event. There were 24 businesses in attendance, which included a presence by Folkestone & Hythe District Council. Over 800 students and other members of the public were in attendance.



CGI of Bouverie Square as a new pedestrian friendly green space where the current Folkestone bus station is currently located



Folkestone 'A Brighter Future' public engagement event



Romney Marsh Inspires Skills and Careers event at The Marsh Academy

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 2023/24

SHDF Wave 1: The council was successful in its bid for Wave 1 of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) and received £2 million of central government funding, which was match funded by a further £1 million from the council. The purpose of the fund is to improve the energy performance of social housing in England, on a pathway to net zero carbon ready by 2050 and the council's commitment to increase all our council owned and managed homes to EPC Band C standard by 2030, delivering warm, energy-efficient homes, reducing carbon emissions and fuel bills, tackling fuel poverty and supporting green jobs. A total of 125 homes were initially identified for work in Wave 1, all of which had EPC ratings between D and G. Between May 2023 and February 2024, these 125 homes had energy efficiency measures installed that resulted in them being upgraded to a minimum standard of C or above, including:

Improvement Measure	Number of properties
Ventilation	125
Loft insulation	100
Solar PV panels	87
Cavity wall insulation	43
External doors	26
High heat retention storage heaters	18
Air source heat pump	17
Underfloor insulation	6
Windows	4
Flat roof insulation	2

Ross House: Ross House, a block of 16 flats in Folkestone, is the council's first 'net zero' enabled residential block. Retrofit work at Ross House included externally insulating and rendering the building, insulating the loft and under floor voids, installing photovoltaic panels (PV) on the roof and adding more energy efficient air source heat pumps. The block has also been redecorated and had replacement kitchens fitted. As a result of these improvements, 13 of the 16 flats now have an EPC rating of A, with the other 3 flats being EPC Band B. Tenants started moving in to the new and improved apartments in June 2023. The block was then officially reopened by Elaine Cox, Chair of the Strategic Tenant Advisory Panel, on 18 July 2023, at an event with councillors, staff, contractors, and tenant representatives.

Full Fibre Broadband for council homes: The during the year, the housing team partnered with a company called Netomnia to make full fibre broadband available in some of our social housing blocks of flats. Netomnia covers over 850,000

premises in parts of over 70 towns and cities across the country and they are investing up to £6.3 million in the Folkestone area. In 2023/24, installation has been completed for 269 properties across 18 sites. Tenants in these blocks can then choose whether they want to take advantage of Netomnia's service by signing up with their partner company, YouFibre as broadband supplier.

Housing Online: The housing team has launched an bespoke online system which allows tenants to view and update their information 24/7 by initially logging in via the MyAccount pages of the council website to set up their account. Housing Online is straightforward to use and provides tenants with quick and easy access at their convenience via a smartphone, PC or tablet. The service frees up resources to support those who may benefit from additional assistance and allows council tenants to manage a range of information including updating their personal details, requesting a repair, make online payments and viewing rental statements. Over 700 tenants have signed up for Housing Online during 2023/24, which represents around 18% of all tenants.

Ship Street: During the year, a project to transform the former Ship Street Gas Works site in Folkestone into a high-quality, housing-led development received a £2.5m boost from central government. The successful application for Brownfield Land Release Fund money will go towards the remediation of the site to enable the construction of up to 150 homes. The site has been derelict for more than 60 years, the project seeks to open up the site by providing energy-efficient and sustainable properties at a density consistent with its surroundings. In addition new public spaces will be created as part of the plans including a green link between Folkestone Central railway station and Folkestone Harbour, as well as a small (pocket) park on Foord Road for the community to enjoy.

Bringing Empty Homes back into use: A total of six self-contained flats were completed on the site of a derelict former dance studio in Folkestone, thanks largely to financial support from Kent County Council's No Use Empty scheme (NUE) and the District Council. Torg Developments who acquired the site in The Bayle, Folkestone, in November 2021, with planning permission granted by the council in March 2022. Later that year, NUE provided funding of £820,000 with another £90,000 from the council for the project, which has resulted in the building of four two-bedroom and two one-bedroom flats, together with a new community room on the ground floor. The Folkestone charity Sunflower House has an agreement with the developer to occupy the ground floor space for community activities.



Artist Impression of the Ship Street site in Folkestone



Ross House in Folkestone, the council's first 'net zero' enabled residential block



New self contained flats and community space delivered in The Bayle, Folkestone

Register for **'My Account'** - The easy way to access Council information:

- Pay your council tax and view your previous council tax bills
- Find your bin collection day
- See planning applications within a 500m radius of your registered property
- Report missed bins and dog fouling
- View a history of your council tax reductions and housing benefits
- View details of your local councillors..... and more!

To register and go find out more information about 'My Account' please visit: www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/myaccountinfo

It's clear, simple and fast and is also available on your tablet and mobile.

