

County Councillor Lottie Parfitt-Reid 2022

Ukraine:

Firstly, I want to say how impressed I am with how generous and supportive our community has been and how often the villages wheels galvanise quicker and with greater agility than our authorities! This was also noticeable with the local response to Covid 19.

The current situation is to prioritise providing a secure base which offers warmth and kindness, something which I know many of our residents are extremely keen to do.

It is right therefore that our focus at the moment is to ensure those who have been matched as sponsors, are able to offer a place in their home to the Ukrainians who will be joining them. 2064 Ukrainian families have been matched with 824 households across Kent. 614 Visas have been issued. We are also now undertaking DBS and home checks. We will also have to plan for early days Welfare checks

As I'm sure you can appreciate this is a significant task, but providing that place, in a home, in our community should help our guests feel a sense of normality and safety which they must be craving.

For the Ukrainian children, attending school alongside other children is going to be an important part of helping them to integrate. Those families with school aged children will be helped to find a place in a school as close as possible to their new home. A letter from the Secretary of State for Education was received on Friday (1 April) confirming government expectations that if there are school places available in the local area, even if not in the immediate vicinity of the family's home, the local authority will work with families arriving from Ukraine to enable the children to attend school as soon as possible. The Secretary of State expects that we should also be looking to provide places and, where necessary, use the flexibilities to admit above published admission number (PAN) and exceed the infant class size limit, as well as using the in-year Fair Access Protocol.

At the moment, our efforts are concentrated on finding places for the Ukrainian children in line with these expectations, but it's difficult to gauge the scale until we get a further feel for the numbers of children we need to accommodate and the spread of refugees across the country.

It is very important we give children time to recover from being forced to leave their homes and the need to ensure access to interpreters and other support carers. These considerations are an important part of the arrangements we are putting in place for the families arriving in Kent and every family will be allocated a support worker to help them navigate those difficult early days. This will be funded from the £10,500 per person government grant (excluding education, which is funded separately) that councils receive for 'wrap around support', including language provision.

The leadership team at KCC are very keen to have open discussions regarding ideas for supporting refugees and have actively encouraged all ideas. I was among a group of members who were trying to get County Hall used as a reception centre. However, at this stage the government are keen to stick to the model of Ukrainians only coming here once they are matched, although I wouldn't be surprised if we are over taken by events and that situation and therefore model changes.

Finally, if anyone is having difficulty accessing information or support, please encourage them to contact me and I shall do my best to assist them. Fortunately, so far, I have had no such message in my inbox.

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Highways:

A significant part of what I do and have done within the division is related to highways, the usual potholes, road markings, signage, faulty traffic lights, speeding etc. The hardest part being the managing of expectations of residents regarding speed limits. Whilst we have the ability to look at sat nav data, which does give a good basic information as to whether a problem exists, it often flies in the face of resident's beliefs, so I have for a number of parishes funded speed surveys for specific roads. And this is something that Sutton Valence may want to consider.

The budget for new schemes is tiny the whole of Maidstone in only 30k and that has to be spread over many parishes as well as the town centre.

On a slightly more positive note KCC are applying to the Department of Transport for additional powers (currently with the police) to enforce moving traffic offences. Five Went's will be part of the pilot scheme. This will allow us to use ANPR to catch offenders.

West of Pleasance View B2163

The system here was cleansed on 13/05/2021 including the manholes mentioned and the pipe under the carriageway. They were found to be running slowly due to roots in the lines. A follow up job was then arranged for CCTV and root cutting which was attempted 06/08/2021 however the job was not completed to a satisfactory level therefore another job was raised. Unfortunately, since then there have been discussions with the contractor regarding traffic management on this road which have delayed the completion of the job.

The contractor has now confirmed what traffic management will be required to complete the works and they are going to be undertaken on 23/05 between 09.30 – 14.30 under a road closure.

Public Transport:

Buses:

Following a Bus Service improvement Plan (BSIP) briefing

The National Bus Strategy (NBS) was published March 2021

NBS – Principle of levelling up, i.e., raising industry standards to match London cover

3 billion has been made available to be delivered through BSIP and Enhanced Partnerships (EP)

Our BSIP had to be submitted 31/10/2021- with a 213 million ask. EP formed on 1st April 2022

EP contains only commitments that can be delivered at little to zero cost to either KCC or its operators

4th April – Indicative funding allocation received - £35.1 M

£24.1m for capital and £11 of revenue

KCC awarded 9th highest in the country

Now working with Department of Transport to meet very tight deadline.

Main Issue is that funding can't be used to subsidise services ear marked for withdrawal so can't be used to sustain existing services. It has to go to new or improved services.

Next Steps

18th April – EP board to agree proposals

25th CMM (Cabinet) to sign off

By 2nd May – Sign off to Department of Transport

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Public Rights of Way

Brief highlights, in terms of County wide for the last year we delivered:

a capital asset management programme of £900K plus a raft of schemes funded through developer section 106 agreements.

A revenue works programme of around £400k including vegetation clearance (35Km of path are cleared in the Maidstone Borough Council area and this is completed 3 x during the growing season) a Containment of Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) programme of £600K of repairs to the network following the extremely high levels of use of the Public Rights of Way network during the COVID lockdowns.

There were 34 issues reported in Marden Parish in the financial year. 37 were resolved (presumably some were from the previous year). To put that in context 978 reports were received for the Maidstone District for the same period; we receive more reports than we're able to clear.

I am awaiting an fuller update for the whole division

Breakdown of Spend Year 21-22

Covid19 Local Recovery Fund (CLRF) Spent £4196:

21-CLRF-MA-5 Langley Lions - Storage Area - £500 - Current Status: Complete sent for payment

21-CLRF-MA-6 Langley Lions - Langley Lions under 7s - £500 - Current Status: Complete sent for payment

21-CLRF-MA-11 Staplehurst Monarchs Youth Football Club - New Football Pitch at Staplehurst School - £300 - Current Status: Complete sent for payment

21-CLRF-MA-26 Staplehurst Monarchs Youth FC - £500 - Current Status: Complete sent for payment

21-CLRF-MA-28 Staplehurst School PTA - £500 - Current Status: Complete sent for payment

21-CLRF-MA-29 Marden History Group - Replacement of Marden Heritage Centre Equipment - £500 - Current Status: Complete sent for payment

21-CLRF-MA-25 Staplehurst Free Church - Community Fridge - £1000 - Current Status: Complete sent for payment

21-CLRF-MA-30 Marden in Bloom - £396 - Current Status: Complete sent for payment

Covid Member Grant (CMG) Spent £2730:

21-MA-7 Collier Street Parish Council - Resurfacing Car Park - Village Centre - £500 - Current Status: Complete sent for payment

21-MA-11 Staplehurst Parish Council - High Street Railings Painting £300 - Current Status: Complete sent for payment

21-MA-12 Marden Parish Council - Ground works for Library £500 - Current Status: Complete sent for payment

21-MA-15 Chart Sutton Parish Council - Jubilee Lunch - £1430 - Current Status: Complete sent for payment

Breakdown of Spend Year 22-23

CMG SPENT: £1,500

CMG REMAINING: £15,770

Staplehurst Community Hub - Chat Club - Queens Jubilee lunch - £500 – Current Status: With Manager

Staplehurst PC - Youth Club start-up - £1000 – Current Status: