

COUNCIL UPDATE 5.2026

55 MABLEDON AVENUE

Housing Services are working to create new social housing on the former Piper Products site at 55 Mabledon Ave. The main contractor has a policy on substance abuse and a regime of checks and assessments which is expected to include random testing for sub-contractors. The contractor has been asked to advise ABC how they are going to deal with reports of substance abuse by their sub-contractors and share their substance abuse policy. ABC treat these matters seriously as do their contractors.

PARK MALL DEMOLITION

Concerns have been raised on the ongoing demolition works at Park Mall. The demolition is being undertaken strictly in accordance with an approved Risk Assessment and Method Statement (RAMS), which specifically addresses dust, noise, vibration, asbestos management, protection of adjacent structures and public safety.

In relation to dust, active suppression measures are in place during demolition and crushing activities, including misting systems. These are what have been generating most of the noise. Photographic evidence of these measures has been provided to the Council.

The timber hoarding is a requirement as part of the planning conditions **at completion of the demolition** and creation of the temporary carpark, not during the works. This is because the hoarding needs to be movable for the works to take place. However the contractor has also confirmed that timber hoarding will be installed around St Georges Square earlier than originally planned to try to help reduce dust migration into surrounding areas.

Noise and vibration have been assessed and are being managed through controlled, sequenced demolition techniques, appropriate plant selection and maintenance, and site supervision. Monitoring and mitigation measures are in place to minimise impact where reasonably practicable. Working hours are strictly controlled and reinforced with site staff in line with the permit.

With regard to asbestos, the council have undertaken the required Refurbishment and Demolition surveys, and no demolition can take place until all known asbestos identified through surveys has been removed. Should any previously unidentified asbestos-containing material be discovered, works will stop immediately, the area will be made safe and further assessment undertaken before works recommence.

The contractor has also undertaken Health & Safety site inspections and audits. In addition, an independent site visit by Costplan, acting on the Council's behalf in the role of Principal Designer will take place to review the arrangements on site and provide further assurance.

ABC recognise the concerns around the Tank Café and neighbouring properties. The Tank Café building does not fall within any of the requirements for a Party Wall notice and ABC will continue to keep dialogue open throughout the works and keep them updated and fully briefed.

The Council will continue to monitor the situation closely, work with the contractor to ensure compliance, and ensure that the works are carried out safely and responsibly, while minimising disruption to residents, businesses and visitors as far as possible.

LORRY PARKING AROUND THE IBF

The A2070 is an "excluded road" from its junction with the M20 Motorway to its junction with the A2042 including all slip roads. This means the road falls outside both Kent County Council's and Ashford's ability to enforce parking rules. Please can you report any HGVs waiting outside the IBF to <https://report.nationalhighways.co.uk/>. These photos were taken on Friday 1st May.



The indicated lorry is parked up on the white hatching on the inside lane of J10A (you will see no driver in the cab)



A20 towards Willesborough



A20 towards Mersham



A2070 Link Road

ABC do have powers to clamp HGVs parked in Orbital, Ashford Business Park, Wootton Road and Ellingham. This applies only to cab and trailer units; cabs cannot be clamped as they are under the weight limit and detached trailers cannot be clamped.

CHURCHYARD

The Churchyard in Ashford town centre is “closed”. This raise the question whether responsibility for its maintenance will be with the unitary or town council after Local Government Review.

In the first instance the Church of England need to ask the Town Council if they wish to take it over. If they decline, it remains with the Borough Council who accepted responsibility under Local Government Act 1972 when asked some years ago. The moot question is whether it can be transferred to the Town Council because ABC have already accepted and the responsibility will transfer to the unitary. Kennington St Mary's, for example, is maintained by ABC so did not transfer to the Community (Town) Council in Kennington (CoE have never asked Kennington Council) and the question of the transfer from ABC to the unitary applies here as well.

KENT AND MEDWAY BETTER MENTAL HEALTH NETWORK

The group met on 5th May. Key issues included.

The Kent Wildlife Trust discussed their ongoing “Wilder Wellbeing” programme. These are free Green Social Prescribing (GSP) Wellbeing programmes which support adults to connect with nature to improve their physical, mental, and social wellbeing. KWT have arranged a free 12-week Nordic Walking and Conservation Activity Wilder Wellbeing Programme at Hothfield Heathlands starting Tuesday 2nd June 2026 to 25th August (in the morning). Nordic walking is a low-impact, full-body activity that uses specially designed poles to enhance your walking technique. It's a great way to build full-body strength, improve fitness, and meet new people while enjoying nature. There will also be opportunities to take part in habitat management activities such as clearing vegetation to support local wildlife. Sign up here: <https://kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/wilder-wellbeing/nordic-walking>

A mapping exercise is being carried out to provide access to nature-based interventions as part of social prescribing. The priority are Kent Coastal areas which includes Ashford as it is part of the “Marmot” priority area. For nature-based providers (and prescribers) to join the Heath and Nature Network please email healthnaturefund@kent.gov.uk / Vicky.macdonald@kent.gov.uk. The aim is to strengthen and support the Green Social Prescribing/Health and Nature sectors across the county. Main aims are to strengthen the relationship between the clinical sector and the VSCE/nature-based intervention delivery sector, by engaging GPs and social prescribers and

working on ways to create more efficient pathways. A Health and Nature Fund has been utilised to train organisations to deliver Nature-based interventions, and to fund new projects to increase access and opportunity in Kent.

IBF – LANDSCAPING PROPOSALS

A meeting was held on 6th May to discuss the approach from the DfT as landowner on their approach to landscaping. Key issues were as follows.

- Willow has overtaken a lot of the margins around the drainage ponds. This will need to be addressed.
- Much of the planting has not grown well due to the wind, snapping the growth. Also, the lack of watering has contributed to whips dying. Replanting has taken place in early 2026.
- Mulch on the slopes has been washed away. The soil is poor and stoney and compacting has impeded drainage. There will be improved watering, mulching and more robust species selected that can withstand the wind
- There is significant erosion of the rural setting of nearby listed properties due to the IBF buildings – planting in the wildflower meadow and taller planting in the buffer zone will mitigate this.
- The viewing corridor will be maintained.
- I have asked whether the hedges taken out along Highfield Lane (IBF side) will be replaced.

CORRIDOR CARE

As part of my role as governor of EKHUFT, I look for assurance that Corridor Care is being tackled at WHH. There are five ways the hospital management are tackling corridor care:

- New Internal Professional Standards
- Improving discharge processes for patients who no longer need to be in hospital in partnership with KCHFT and KMMHT to deliver changes to ensure there is the right capacity in the right place at the right time to support patients' onward care
- A 'pull' flow model to get patients through the right pathway for their needs and into the right place - whether that's a bed or back home - as quickly as possible
- Streaming in ED, which means making best use of the different urgent care teams and facilities within hospitals, such as Same Day Emergency Care (SDEC) and Acute Medical Units
- Addressing process issues and issues within the culture that are getting in the way of getting patients to the right place as quickly as possible.

The Trust has seen no patients in ED corridors across the Trust since 21 April. They have halved the number of patient delays that were due to its own internal processes within hospitals.

- 90% of patients received a first consultant review on time, the best performance in the last 12 months
- 32% of ED referrals were responded to within one hour, the highest level in a year
- Finding the right onward journey for patients with the most complex needs requires system wide collaboration. Through collaboration, clearer processes and focussing on each patient and their needs, the median additional days waiting to leave once fit to do so has dropped from 7 to 5 days.
- Greater help from KCC is needed for those “not fit to reside”.

PROTECTING THE STOUR



This map show Chalk (in green) and chalk streams (in Blue). The new local plan for Ashford should include:

- A minimum no development buffer of 50 metres as recommended by Natural England.
- The addition of chalk streams and their catchments to the list of irreplaceable habitats, alongside ancient woodland, within national planning policy and guidance with stronger wording to protect chalk streams.
- Parallel investment in water supply and treatment infrastructure as a condition of planning approval.

COMMUNITY SAFETY UNIT

The unit met on 7th May. Key issues included.

- Support for those suffering domestic abuse (DA) is by Rising Sun (a domestic abuse organisation) who support those affected through every step of removing abuse from their lives and improving their safety; it includes access to refuges (provided by Clarion), hotels or other safe places. Safe places are available until Council or other housing becomes available; DA sufferers are a priority on the housing list. Safe places can need to be out of area, so victims are away from danger, but an issue is ensuring priority of a new school for children; **children in care are a priority for a new school place but not children where**

DA is involved. Responsibility for identifying those in abuse situations is with all agencies, ABC, KCC, NHS, Kent Police, Kent Fire & Rescue. All of which can carry out safeguarding visits but most referrals are from Kent Police. Anybody can refer a care to Rising Sun using referral forms at www.risingsun.com, calling 0800 2000 247 or in-person at The Willow Centre Tuesdays 9.30am to 12pm. An increase in DA is expected during the World Cup and a campaign against DA will be led by Football United Against Domestic Abuse and Women's Aid during the tournament noting the games are very late in the day due to time differences.

- There were 43 ASB reports during April with 8 FPNs issued under Ashford PSPO (often by Community Wardens); Tenterden PSPO is out for consultation.
- Ashford is ranked lowest for crime in east Kent. Kent Police patrols have increased around Memorial Gardens where the security has been reviewed. The Memorial Gardens are supposed to be locked overnight, and investigations are ongoing as to why it has not been following a recent incident.
- Sheds and garages are being targeted in rural areas with garden furniture which is now out for the summer being stolen. There have been 6 thefts from parish churches.
- There have been 3 relatively small outside (camp) fires in April, but these divert resources away from domestic fires and caution is needed in the warmer months as small outside fires can be larger very quickly. Specialist off road vehicles are required to come to Ashford from Herne Bay which can take an hour.



TOWN CENTRE

I was at Sojan's coffee morning on 9th May. Most discussion was about the town centre.

- A new town centre regeneration strategy is being prepared by HM Government and will be published in about three months' time. To what extent Ashford will benefit from funding remains to be seen but local councils now have the power to assist with bringing properties empty for

two years back into use. It is hopeful that the “Levelling Up” funding provided by HM Government in 2022 for the Newtown Works could be replicated for Town Centre regeneration projects started recently at Park Mall.

- Bringing people into Ashford by enhancing public transport liability and ensuring that roadworks do not restrain ability to get into town – Albert Road restrictions do not help while New Street is closed. There are 5m visitors a year to the Designer Outlet but few of them bother to visit our High Street.
- A GP surgery in Folkestone High Street has increased footfall and this could be considered in Ashford by augmenting the services offered at Sydenham House and Vicarage Lane.
- Incentives for retail through tax breaks, particularly business rates are required as this can be a prohibitive cost for new businesses. If HM Government acts on this there must be a way to ensure that landlords do not just increase rent, so the occupancy costs fall.
- ABC could mentor businesses more effectively to show them the opportunities from locating in Ashford. Better publicity is needed for the Food and Drink Festival and Market Days on the first Saturday of each month.
- The number of beat officers in Ashford is now at 12 with 4 vacancies now filled, officers need to be visible.
- Restoring Eurostar remains a priority and HM Government have promised to ensure that Ashford Station is operational so that new service providers have the option of stopping here.
- An extra youth hub is planned for Ashford, and this must be accessible in the town centre. Young people should have a say in where it will go.
- The High Street Fountain has not worked for years, restoring it would increase interest in the Town Centre alongside promoting our heritage including the Mark IV Tank and Hubert Fountain in Victoria Park.
- Littering and graffiti needs to be addressed with enhanced litter collection; this will bring back civic pride.
- A visitor centre promoting the River Stour could be in Civic Park which could be used to promote and showcase its protected chalk stream status.

OUT-OF-HOURS PLANNING ENFORCEMENT

Councillors discussed out-of-hours planning enforcement on 14th May. The public rightly expects Ashford Borough Council to have robust arrangements in place to respond to urgent planning or environmental incidents at any time, including weekends and Bank Holidays. For many years there have been informal arrangements so that any actual (or evidence of imminent) unauthorised development involving residential occupation that required immediate and urgent action, be undertaken with the aim of preventing further unauthorised residential development and/or occupation of land from taking

place on land which is not in public control. The principal purpose of this cover has been to enable the Council to stand up resources quickly to investigate an alleged breach of planning control and allow officers to make an informed judgement as to whether emergency enforcement action is justified and likely to be successful, in most cases, this has been through the seeking of a temporary injunction in the Courts to prevent further or anticipated unauthorised development from taking place and, in particular, the residential occupation of the site. The benefit of an injunction being granted by the Court is that any breach of the injunction can lead to further punitive court action including committal proceedings, and previous experience shows this provides a significant incentive for unauthorised work to cease. Since January 2020, there has been 4 emergency planning enforcement callouts on a Bank Holiday weekend which were responded to. On three of the four occasions, an application was made to the Courts for an interim Injunction Order which were all successfully obtained. Councillors agreed that this level of cover will become the default position for the four bank holiday weekends (Easter break, the two May bank holidays and August bank holiday).

HERITAGE ASSETS

Councillors discussed the protection of three of Ashford's heritage assets on 14th May. The assets are the Hubert Fountain in Victoria Park, Woodchurch Windmill, and the World War One Mark IV tank in Castle Street. £1 million will be allocated to support essential improvement and restoration works to these assets, alongside other necessary opportunities that may be identified over the coming year. The proposals are supported by a commitment to strengthen partnership working with key heritage stakeholders and to pursue external funding opportunities in order to maximise long-term value.

The Victoria Park 'Hubert' Fountain was prioritised due to its outstanding aesthetic and artistic value as a nationally significant cast-iron fountain, its association with the International Exhibition of 1862, and its central civic role within Ashford's principal park. Ongoing deterioration now threatens original fabric, and its high visibility means further decline would have a disproportionate impact on the quality of the public realm and civic pride.

Woodchurch Windmill, a Grade II* listed landmark, holds outstanding communal value and strong historical and evidential significance as a rare surviving working smock mill. Managed by the Society of Friends of Woodchurch Windmill under a formal agreement, with Woodchurch Parish Council aiding in exploring future options for the windmill. Storm damage in 2019 has left the structure in poor condition and closed to the public, placing an important community asset at risk while highlighting the opportunity for reengagement, skills preservation and long-term sustainability.

The WWI Mark IV Tank has outstanding national and international significance as one of only seven surviving examples worldwide, with exceptional evidential, historical and communal value linked to the First World War and post-war commemoration. It is a Grade II listed memorial and registered with the War Memorial Trust. Its poor condition, including active corrosion and structural vulnerability, presents an immediate risk to an irreplaceable heritage asset. The £300,000 would provide a significant fund to initiate restoration works, secure external funding including pursuing additional grant opportunities, develop a robust project business case including commissioning specialist surveys, appointing appropriate conservation consultants, and advising on best practice approaches for the restoration of the tank, and explore opportunities to develop and deliver an educational programme and enhanced interpretation relating to the tank, its history, significance and contemporary meaning. **There was no suggestion the Mark IV Tank would leave Ashford**, “The desire to retain this piece of history in Ashford is foremost, and this commitment of funding will enable us to continue to explore options to achieve this outcome.”

The Ashford Local Plan to 2030 refers to Heritage Assets:

9.126 [...] Ashford does not currently have a Local List and the council will therefore prepare a SPD setting out guidance and recommended methodology on Historic England's Guiding Principles for Local Heritage Listing in order to support local groups wishing to prepare Local Heritage Lists.

This Local Heritage Lists would be prepared by local groups such as parish councils which can be considered when planning applications are considered. However, no work has not yet started on the SPD and will now have to be part of the next Local Plan to 2042. It is pleasing that ABC has created a list of its own assets but ownership of heritage assets are not restricted to just those owned by ABC and greater work is needed.

FORMER POST OFFICE CONVERSION INTO HMO

Planning application 21/01933/AS to convert the Former Post Office on Tufton Street has now ‘effectively’ been approved. The only outstanding matter is securing credits to offset the impact of nutrients from the development on Stodmarsh SSSI which is very well advanced. All calculations for nutrients have been agreed with Natural England and so ABC are simply now awaiting confirmation that they have secured the required nutrient credits (imminent) and the planning permission will be issued.

EAST KENT HOSPITALS GOVERNOR MEETING

Governors met on 15th May. Key issues included.

- Concerns were expressed about the location of the WHH Pharmacy, which is at the back of the hospital. This area is far from areas where patients most commonly need immediate medication (e.g., UTC and ED). In other hospitals pharmacies or collection points are often located near the front entrance for patient convenience. Current arrangements

at WHH mean that some patients are unable to obtain medicines on site and are directed to local supermarkets or external pharmacies. This is especially problematic for parents with unwell children or for patients attending A&E who expect on-site dispensing; delays to dispensing causes delays to discharge particularly at the weekend.

- Concerns were expressed over the long wait times when calling the Outpatients Booking telephone line. These waits are acknowledged as a genuine and common patient experience. Long waits are due to vacancies within the booking team and historical telephony setup issues. This setup issue has now been fixed — staff can log into the system and receive calls from any relevant specialty line, improving flexibility and reducing delays. The Trust is exploring AI-supported call handling, particularly for simple or frequently asked questions.
- Following the award of £4.7m of capital funding for two additional surgical robots, the new robots were delivered during the final week of March, increasing the total number of surgical robots in the Trust to five. Robotic assisted procedures have commenced at both the QEQM and WHH, including the first robotic hysterectomies at QEQM as part of the NHS National Cancer Plan. The expansion of the robotic programme is expected to support improved productivity by reducing post-operative complications, shortening length of stay, reducing readmissions and, in some cases, shortening operating times.
- Work has begun on a £2.8m project to create a new catheter laboratory at the WHH. The new facility, due to open in the autumn, will provide improved clinical space for cardiac procedures and a dedicated recovery area.
- People with learning disabilities and/or autism (LDA) often have difficulty in accessing timely healthcare, experience greater levels of inequalities, longer hospital stays, and delays in leaving hospital. They may also present with very complex clinical presentations, increased risk of harm to self or others, and communication difficulties. LDA patients require specialist assessment and intervention, along with effective care coordination, advocacy, and clinical leadership. Additional Learning Disability and Autism Specialist Practitioners numbers to support a new strategy.

EKHUFT LDA Strategy 2026-2028

- **Enhanced Care and Support:**
Promoting person-centred care, addressing individual needs, and managing risk to promote safe, inclusive and equitable care within the acute setting.
 - **Clear processes and pathways:**
Development of patient pathways within Emergency Departments and inpatient ward settings, highlighting referral criteria for specialist support, and enabling ward staff to promote safe and timely discharge.
 - **Promoting safety and quality:**
Thematic analysis and reporting of key performance indicators, incident reports and patient experience/carer feedback, which will help highlight positive practice, identify areas of improvement, and enable sharing of lessons learned.
 - **Evidence-based practice:**
Using national guidance, national audits, and relevant directives to drive clinical effectiveness and promote best practice.
 - **Addressing inequalities:**
Upholding the human rights of individuals with learning disabilities/autism, and reducing barriers to access timely services and support as required.
 - **Skilled Workforce:**
Ensuring that people with learning disability/autism are adequately supported by a trained and competent workforce.
 - **LD/Autism-friendly environments:**
Creating supportive environments and services that enable people with learning disability/autism whilst being in hospital.
 - **Multi-agency working:**
Strengthening communication and relationships with multi-professional/multi-agency partners, and working with commissioners and others to highlight and develop system-wide objectives.
- ***One of Wes Streeting's last acts was to place EKHUFT in a new “National Intensive Recovery Process” regime by NHSE due to “stubborn underperformance”. Makeshift solutions have become ingrained at the Hospital, due to institutional complacency. The trust is supposed to be given help to improve patient outcome. EKHUFT has had a troubled history and Mr Streeting's time might be better spent on delivering the promised improvements in the NHS rather than indulging in internal political wrangles).***
 - Blood culture sepsis results are frequently (40%) returning a false-positive result due to contamination. The goal is to reduce contamination rates to 3%. This will ensure time critical antimicrobial treatment is commenced without delay. Logistical challenges exist due to the geographical distribution of the Trust's three main sites, currently only WHH and QEQM have the capability to analyse blood cultures resulting in extended load times for samples from KCH. To mitigate this, efforts are focused on expanding the WHH processing capacity to a 24/7 service, as it currently operates a 12-hour schedule. However, the procurement of additional analysers for WHH is currently on hold due to the financial impact (quoted £40,000-£100,000 depending on specific requirements) and the need for a full tender exercise to ensure full financial governance and value for money is evidenced. Blood Science staff have also raised concerns of lone working in Microbiology at night not being appropriate/safe.
 - The Trust remained on track to deliver its £79m capital spend by year-end. QEQM Same Day Emergency Care (SDEC) had been approved by NHS England and additional capital had been secured for robotics, solar panel installation and safety-critical infrastructure.

- Urgent care performance improved in January and February, supported by a newly implemented mental health escalation framework. However, significant risks were identified: continuing delays for mental health patients due to external bed shortages, absence of appropriate assessment facilities, and pressures arising from reduced police support in the Emergency Department, particularly with patients showing mental health issues who in the past have had a Kent Police officer with them to create a place of safety.
- Spencer Private Hospitals are a wholly owned subsidiary of EKHUFT, providing quality private healthcare for patients. They offer over 200 private treatments to deliver healthcare needs on demand.
- Additional beds have historically been put in permanently into four bedded bays to create six bedded bays.

ASHFORD ALLOTMENT SOCIETY

At the Allotment Society AGM on 19th May there was an overwhelming vote to support tenant-led management. The Council (Town or Unitary) would remain the owner and set site rules regarding major work such as tree felling. The Society would manage the waiting lists, carry out inspections and allocations of plots. Rent collected would be reinvested in the allotments to improve site facilities. The idea is that control is shifted to those who use the site every day. The next step is to submit a formal proposal to ABC.

ASHFORD TOWN COUNCIL

Establishing a town council for the unparished area of the borough in Ashford is expected to be recommended to enhance local democracy, improve service delivery, and strengthen community engagement. This approach reflects the interests and needs of residents as found from the consultation response which showed a majority (62.63%) in favour of a Town Council and its associated governance arrangements. There will be 16 Town Councillors with elections expected in May 2027.

COUNCIL COMPLAINTS

Councillors met to discuss the number of complaints, the reasons for those complaints and the timescales for handling them, to ABC on 26th May. Key issues included.

- Between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026, the Council received a total of 1244 complaints and increase of 27%.
- The top five service lines complained about were housing (66%), environment (14%), finance (8%), public health (5%), and planning (5%).
- Complaint volumes within the housing service have continued to increase during 2025/26, largely driven by repairs related issues, particularly seasonal pressures linked to heating, damp and mould, and

service delivery delays. The top three reasons are 3rd party contractor, heating / hot water and service standards.

- Housing is responsible for the increase in overdue complaints in Q3 and Q4 and this correlates with the volume of complaints that came in during the winter months in relation to repairs (heating and hot water). Housing consistently has the longest times overall due to the demand created by the volume and complexity of the complaints received.
- Housing is working intensively to make improvements such as the creation of a new team to support complaint handling and amendments to the Housing Complaint Policy and the creation of a new Compensation Policy:
 - a. The new Complaint & Resolution Team will provide a consistent and resident focused service for Housing. This team will analyse themes in complaints to identify systemic issues and provide feedback to inform decision making and learning. The purpose of supporting improved customer experience, reducing escalation.
 - b. The current Complaint Policy will be updated to incorporate the responsibilities of the new team
 - c. A new Compensation Policy will be developed to comply with the Housing Ombudsman's vision of a fair compensation system across the sector.
- Tenants' overall satisfaction with our housing service is 55.8% and has reduced by 3.4% in comparison to last year. Tenants are more satisfied when they have experienced completed repairs, positive interactions with staff members and receive punctual response to queries, which including proactive updates and information. Tenants are less satisfied and the reasons contributing to the decrease in the overall satisfaction score include when they have experienced slow responses to reported repairs or works are outstanding, the poor maintenance of communal areas, lack of updates and information and poor quality of repairs and contractors.

IBF LANDSCAPING PROPOSALS

The landscaping proposals for the IBF were discussed on 27th May. Key issues included.

- Based on findings they have identified areas of planting that needs to be reinforced / replanted including new planting to mitigate effect on protected assets.
- The eastern bund beside High Field has been replanted following drought stress and weed growth which caused 10-20% failure. The removed hedging will be investigated, ideally for replacement.
- The wildflower meadow takes time to be established (with natural occurring seeds) and it is too early to determine how established it has become. Weeding will continue and a bramble infestation will be removed.

- The Landscape Management Plan will be updated.
- The SUDS ponds (towards Church Road) require 20% of willows/bullrush to be removed to allow a more open scape and variety and new planting will replace that.
- The cut down bullrushes around the SUDS ponds are taken off site, and I have asked for information on what happens to the cut down growth as they contain particulates.
- The staff entrance / security hut will have additional planting to soften the impact of the fencing. It will 2m away from the carriageway and will be high restricted due to overhead lines. UKPN has a power cable with a 3m easement through the staff entrance; this area cannot have planting.

The signage strategy is awaiting comments from Highways Agency / KCC; target date is 17th June.

KENT ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS – ASHFORD AREA COMMITTEE

The committee met on 27th May, key issues included.

- There have been significant reductions in ASB in town centre and shoplifting. But ASB has gone up across the district possibly because neighbour disputes are now classed as ASB.
- Tenterden PSPO is out for consultation and include e-scooters, e-bike and catapults.
- The dangers and risk of unsafe motorbike riding is being highlighted by Kent Police.
- Kent Police has closed several cannabis cultivation sites in Ashford.
- There has been an increase in catapult use and early intervention is now being carried out at schools. Knife bins are being rebranded as amnesty bins as there is a wider issue with weapons not just knives. An exercise is being carried out to review the locations.
- The danger and risk of entering water courses was highlighted, particularly at Conningbrook Lakes.
- Kent ACRE have issued a second prompt to parish councils on 13th May. The Crowdfunding Platform is due to close on 30th June with a target of £71k and has currently only secured £6k but several pledges are not yet being shown on the platform which seems to have a problem with bank transfers rather than credit card payment. DEFRA funding is dependent on supporting PCs on resilience and emergency planning.
- Changes to the rules where ward members can call in items to the planning committee are planned from October as there will be increased planning delegations to officers. This is to reduce perceived delays to planning decisions when they are made by the Committee. In essence the Committee will only consider major planning applications.

SOUTHEAST COAST AMBULANCE SERVICE

I attended the service on 28th May. The CQC rating the Urgent and Emergency Care and Emergency Operations Centres as 'Good' overall. The Inspectors highlighted the compassionate and professional support in often distressing situations, learning from incidents and a clear focus on equality, diversity and inclusion. Inspectors praised the kind, compassionate and respectful care provided by frontline ambulance teams, strong links between operational and educational teams, safe medicines management and high-quality patient treatment.

The Ambulance sector nationally has not yet achieved aggregate compliance with the C2 mean target (currently averaging, 26:11 vs target 25:00).

A vehicle from Banstead has 130,000 on the clock. Parts supply for FIAT Double Crewed-Ambulance (DCA) spares is still challenging with multiple parts still back ordered to Italy. This is the main driver of the increased vehicles off road over the last 12 months along with aging fleet of Mercedes DCAs. New DCAs are now being delivered into the Trust for commissioning that will reduce average fleet age and improve vehicle reliability.

13 driver training vehicles are being purchased, historically driver training was in old "clapped out" vehicles. They will be easier to maintain and will ensure new drivers start work fully trained on the vehicles that they will use. The cost is £750k.

Progress on creating a Strengthened Local Mental Health Pathways for Kent remains limited due to unavailable data. There is an aim to improve access and responsiveness of Kent's single point of access line for use by Police and ambulance in Kent. It is there to offer advice for Police and ambulance when they are on scene with a patient suffering with mental health illness. It is run by Kent and Medway Mental Health Trust.

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