

COUNCIL UPDATE 13.2021

REPTON CONNECT COMMUNITY KITCHEN



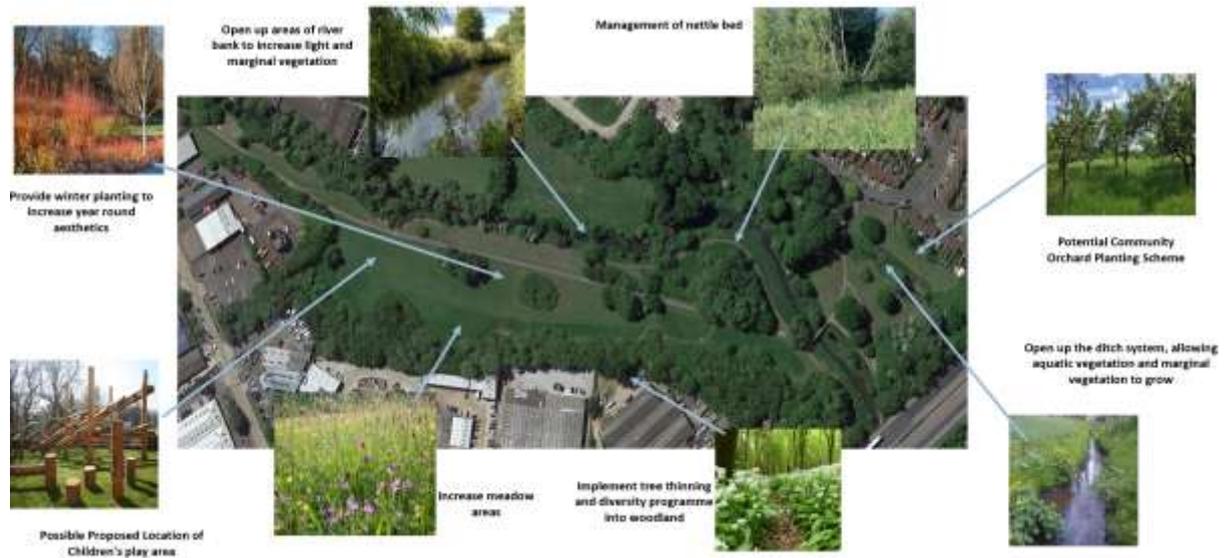
I attended the opening of Repton Community Trust's Community Shop on 26 November with Mayor Calum Knowles, Cllr Liz Wright and the team from Repton Connect including Beth Rice and Michelle Knight. It is intended that the Community Shop will reduce reliance on food banks. It follows a 'social supermarket model' where people donate a min of £1.00 for every £5.00 of items chosen up to the value of £20.00. People can visit once per week and the shop is open to anyone, which helps reduce the stigma associated with food banks.

The shop is situated in a converted storage container in the grounds of Repton Connect Community Centre and will be run by staff and volunteers. People pick up a basket and can select fresh and ambient food, hygiene, and cleaning products, just like a standard shop. There is an emphasis on sustainability, reusing and recycling with minimum waste.

This project will run alongside 24hr food lockers, emergency food parcels, food deliveries, self- isolation support project and community fridge.

QUEEN MOTHERS PARK

More information is now available on the work being carried out at Queen Mother Park.



Kent County Council, in partnership with Ashford and Swale Borough Councils, has been awarded £275,129 from the Local Authority Treescape Fund which will lead to the planting of more than 41,000 trees and saplings across those two areas.

In Ashford, trees will be spread across Ashford with a number in the Willesborough and South Ashford. The council's intention is to plant 135,000 trees over the next three years -representing one for each resident. This funding will support the project with the first 30,000 going into the ground this winter. The council intends to create a number of densely packed plantations varying in size from 500 square metres upwards. Using a mix of native tree and shrub species these plantations will be planted in areas of existing open space where the addition of trees will create opportunities for biodiversity.

Where possible meadow areas will be created around some of these new plantations to maximise and encourage species to colonise new habitats. Residents will start to see some preparation of sites in the next few weeks, each one will be fenced off to support the development and establishment of the tree saplings.

LOUDON COURT

6 fast growing trees have been felled at Loudon Court to prevent root damage to nearby property. I have asked for slower growing replacements to be planted.



Elsewhere new trees are being planted below the area next to the Stour between Mill Court and Mabledon Ave (the old Energen cricket pitch). This is part of the Queen's Jubilee Tree Planting Initiative with 136,000 trees planed (one for every resident in the Borough).



KENT POLICE

Kent Police have introduced a new messaging system which allows members of the public to receive messages directly from their local Police station and PCSO's. Those who sign up to the system will receive updates on various things such as community events; latest Scam alerts; Crime prevention advice as well as personal messages from your PCSO. You can reply to messages to offer assistance with CCTV or information you may have about the message you received. Please sign up online on the My Community Voice Kent website to start receiving updates. www.mycommunityvoicekent.co.uk

STROKE REVIEW

On 4 November the Secretary of State for Health announced approval of the Kent and Medway stroke reconfiguration with the implementation of three hyper acute stroke units (HASU) for Kent and Medway in Ashford, Dartford and Maidstone.

This is an important development for patients, meaning no matter where they live in Kent and Medway, they will benefit from being admitted to units that are able to provide excellent stroke care 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The unit at Maidstone has started work implementing the changes with the number of beds increase from 22 to 46 to cope with extra patients following the closure of stroke services at Medway Hospital in 2020 and Tunbridge Wells Hospital in 2019.

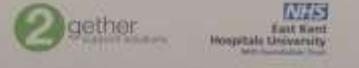
It is hoped that this vote of confidence in the WHH by the Secretary of State and the ongoing expansion of its emergency admission units will be followed by major further building work, equipment and staffing at WHH as the East Kent Transformation of health services gathers pace.

I visited the WHH on 26 November to see progress on delivering these improvements. New critical care facilities will increase capacity by about 40% and should be open in the first part of 2022. This diagram shows the new layout. The new HASU will be located on a basement floor below the new rapid assessment and resus unit (shown in light blue).

EXTENSION AND REFURBISHMENT TO EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT, WILLIAM HARVEY HOSPITAL, ASHFORD



- Accident & Urgent Treatment Centres
- Major Department
- Rapid Assessment and Triage
- Procedures
- SDEC (Main Care Emergency Care)
- Mental Health
- Patient Rooms
- Staff Facilities



GENERAL PRACTICE

I chaired a briefing at KCC with GPs on how the service they offer has evolved during the pandemic.

During September 2021, there were 883,900 (face to face c60%) appointments across Kent & Medway, at their highest level since January 2020. There were 42,600 “no show” appointments which is about 1 in 20. These are slots that could be used by others and go to waste when patients do not show up. Very few of these appointments are by video or online (just 1,800) showing that GPs / patients have not embraced a “new way of working” that was used during the pandemic.

There is unmet demand at GPs because:

- Practice lists have increased by 5% during the pandemic
- Increase waiting times for surgeries lead to untreated conditions
- Increase impact of seasonal viruses, and
- Workforce shortages at GP practices.

The following actions are being taken to resolve unmet demand and delays in securing appointments during telephone triage.

- NHS England has provided £8.3m of extra funding
- Increased recruitment and support to retain staff following opening of the new medical school in Canterbury in September 2020
- Acute hospitals will now manage their surgery waiting lists directly with patients rather than via GPs which will reduce burden on GP practices
- Repeat prescriptions may now be extended to provide medication to 56 days rather than the current standard of 28 days, this will reduce the time spent by GPs on repeat prescriptions
- Communication with patients for them to use NHS 111 before contacting their GP
- Extending e-consult to all GPs so they can use online consultation and home monitoring
- 21 premises improvements and changes to surgery layout at GPs have been identified. Social distancing at surgeries was reduced to 1m from 19 October
- Better use of s106 funding
- New telephone systems are to be piloted, these are often the bane of patients experience
- Electronic prescribing will enable hospital consultants to issue prescriptions from hospitals reducing work for GPs
- Increased use of community pharmacy consultation for the purchase of over-the-counter medicine

KCC have asked for quarterly reports on progress including quantification of unmet need and ratios of patients per GP across Kent. It was noted that when patient frustrations boil over into verbal and physical abuse with ill-informed

accusations being hurled at GPs through social media and other channels this compounds the issue with retaining staff. The NHS is planning to restart face-to-face Patient Participation Groups shortly.

SEVINGTON IBF

I attended a briefing by the DfT on their plans for the land east of Highfield Lane on 15th October (the High Field).

1. Land east of IBF to be used to give a biodiversity gain.
2. IBF is already showing a net biodiversity gain so this proposal will go much further than DfT first planned on the biodiversity gain.
3. Conversion from arable to a wildlife asset will give 800-900 kg of nitrogen credits plus a small prosperous credit.
4. Proposals represent DfT response to ABC demand for a green buffer zone.
5. PROW will be maintained across the High Field, but no other PROWs are proposed.
6. Stockpiles of soil and seedbanks will be used on the eastern site so not moved offsite.
7. These plans have been worked up with KWT & KCC. KCC have asked to plant a Miyawake area.
8. Dry ponds on site will provide an area for great crested newts.
9. Area has a high potential for archaeological finds, KCC have asked for a detailed assessment which may delay the start of planting.

My requests (in no particular order):

1. Site to be designated as SSSI once work completed to give protection from future development.
2. Stodmarsh gain from NN to be gifted to ABC to support ABC's own social housebuilding agenda not sold to the highest bidder.
3. ABC to contact adjoining landowner (Church Commissioners) to see if the 20 ha or so they own next door could be included give further NN gain to allow building on Church Commissioners Bridgefield land which is allocated for housing.
4. DfT talked about meeting capital costs plus first 5 years of maintenance; I asked for 10 years. ABC's Aspire to carry out the maintenance while DfT are meeting the cost.
5. Long term ownership to be transferred to ABC. The decision maker is Trudy Harrison MP so I suggested Trudy visited so she can see how well Sevington IBF is operating and how DfT has worked with KCC/ABC.
6. Interpretation boards to be provided on archaeological finds including the cold war monitoring post on site. All material finds available to Ashford Museum.

documentation. UK EHP are ideally placed to fill this shortfall in OV's but will need their qualifications and DEFRA regulations to be reviewed and updated. There is only 6 months to achieve this until July 2022. The issue was explained to Lord Frost (full member of Boris's Cabinet) on 16 November 2021.

AE369 (Footpath near Church/Cheery Glebe)



The Public Rights of Way team have recently arranged replacement of two stiles on footpath AE369 in Mersham



LOCAL PRIORITIES – BOCKHANGER/BYROOK

The survey *carried out by ABC* to identify local priorities has been shared; it will be used to agree the next steps on the new community hall.

It identifies the following priority issues:

- Tackle social isolation
- Address anti-social behaviour
- Increase community cohesion

Less important were:

- Promote and use better existing community facilities
- Provide affordable housing
- Provide work, training and education

The most frequently mentioned aspects of the local area that was liked are:

- Local amenities (post office/shops/play areas/schools pubs)
- Green, open spaces and closeness in proximity to countryside
- Friendly and caring neighbourhood and a good community feel
- Access to wider facilities (hospital/town centre/train station/motorway)

The issues that need improvement are:

- Too much traffic and its speed
- Perceived crime and anti-social behaviour including littering
- Potholes and road surfaces (footpath Park Rd to Kennington)
- Overdevelopment and subsequent infrastructure strain

CONNINGBROOK LAKES



The Loop Sculpture by Julia Clarke has been installed as part of ABC's Conningbrook Country Park Public Art Strategy. Further commissions, The Birds and The Teasels, will be installed in due course. There will also be an

installation of The Birdhide by the ecolake by next summer. 'The Loop' uses a steel framework woven with willow (a sustainable material).

SAFER STREETS

I attended a presentation on 22 November 2021 of how the Home Office Safer Streets initiative funding of £550k will be spent. The funding will provide personal safety equipment, such as drink testing kits and personal alarms, support creating safe havens and installing more CCTV in the Memorial Gardens. A digital app will be developed which will show safe routes between key locations such as the lower high street and train station.

An important point raised on streetlights. Following the streetlight conversion to LED, the timing of the lights was set for lights to come on 30 minutes after sunset and to go off 30 minutes before sunrise. Concerns were raised about this timing and also about occasions when unpredictable weather and cloud cover resulted in it appearing darker for longer. To address this, the timing was changed to lights on 10 minutes after sunset and go off 10 minutes before sunrise. There is no functionality to override the time lights switch on and off on overcast days, therefore the timing of lights coming on will be looked at by KCC.

UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM SEEKER CHILDREN

The Home Secretary confirmed on 24th November that councils across the UK will be **required** to accept allocations of unaccompanied asylum seeker children who arrive in the UK via the English Channel in small boats. The Home Office took "urgent steps" to allocate children to places in care, and that all 217 UK local authorities will be obliged to accept allocations. Councils were given two weeks to present any reasons why they should not be forced to accept more children, including if they are already caring for a number that exceeds 0.07% of their broader child population. Funding of £143 per child per night will be provided to councils. Kent has been dealing with a disproportionate amount of UASC because up to 30 Councils felt unable to offer places for children.

KCC SOLAR FARM

Kent County Council has been awarded time limited grant funding towards the delivery of a number of low carbon energy projects. This will be used to deliver a c2.98MW solar park in Kings Hill within close proximity to the Kent Scientific Services building. The scheme is seeking to offset over 633 tonnes of carbon a year from KCC's energy requirement and will contribute significantly to the de-carbonisation of KCC energy supplies and meeting its carbon neutrality 2030 target.

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