

COUNCIL UPDATE 9.2026

JOINT TRANSPORT BOARD

The JTB met on 1st September.

CHANGES AT THE INLAND BORDER FACILITY (IBF) AND TO BROCK

- Brock 2.0 will not come into effect until the new European Entry Exit Scheme (EES) is fully operational. This is because Brock 2.0 is shorter (allowing full traffic movements at J8) and certainty is needed that shorter Brock can cope.
- There will be changes on the operations carried out at the Sevington IBF with ***transit*** movements transitioning to alternative locations provided by the Port of Dover and Getlink from early 2027. This must mean that the necessary infrastructure will be made available at the Port of Dover / Eurotunnel. In other words, from early 2027, facilities to start and end transit movements will no longer be provided at the IBF. The impact on the number of jobs at Sevington needs to be understood alongside what this means for DEFRA and ABC's Port Health operations at the IBF – these are these being retained “until further notice”.
- A £16.5m investment at J10A is designed to ease traffic congestion by creating an additional lane for traffic to join J10A from the Tesco direction and traffic signals to allow traffic to join J10A from Mersham.

A20 MERSHAM

Installation of pedestrian island between the A20 Hythe Road, Mersham and The Street are currently in the design stage with the expected date for construction Spring 2027.

FINBERRY – BUS LINK ROAD

Street adoption remains critical to the introduction of a bus service. Crest have a 1st tranche of roads to be adopted by KCC south of the entrance roundabout which are at final snagging. That adoption allows for a further tranche of adoption including the stretch of Avocet Way south of the entrance roundabout to the southern boundary of Finberry (the boundary located partly along the northern link road between the Finberry and Bridgefield). Work on the final wearing course and remedials will require work by the end of 2026 (or very early in 2027). Each of the developers who constructed the link road is responsible for adoption of its portion. South of Finberry, Taylor Wimpey has responsibility for adoption. A dispute between the parties, due to streetlighting specification, is understood to be moving towards resolution. Stagecoach have approved locations for shelters/stops:



Figure 1: Finberry bus stop locations/shelters

Minor refinement is needed to the approved arrangements at the Bridgfield end to work better with the Damara Way/ Finn Farm Road junction and the existing signals controlling restricted vehicular movement over the Accommodation Bridge which requires legal agreements with Network Rail and Highways England to allow for enforcement on their assets. Controls for the restricted vehicular movement on the link road will be by ANPR installed at either end of the road. This installation is understood to be dependent on KCC's use of available DfT monies before 31/03/27 and is in KCC's hands. Based on continued progression of outstanding adoption issues at Bridgefield and Finberry, Stagecoach appears comfortable to prepare to extend the existing B-line service into Finberry in 2027, potentially during the first part of the year. As Finberry is likely to build out further in the future on its western side (240+ new homes) and will connect with the Waterbrook Park development there may be future opportunities to adapt and add further bus service provision.

LOCAL PLAN TO 2043

New Regulation Steps Introduced Under Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026

STEP	WHO DOES WHAT?
 Publish local plan timetable	LPA: publishes and maintains the timetable, setting out the anticipated and actual dates for plan making. Parish council: uses the timetable to plan its engagement and evidence gathering.
 Publish notice of intention to commence local plan preparation Regulation 19	LPA: publishes a notice at least 4 months before plan making is due to commence. Parish council: uses this period to prepare local evidence, identify issues and plan its engagement.
 Scoping consultation Regulation 20	LPA: consults stakeholders on how they should be engaged and what the plan should contain. Parish council: identifies local priorities, evidence and issues for the LPA to consider.
 Gateway 1: self-assessment of readiness Regulation 21	LPA: prepares and publishes its self-assessment of readiness for Local Plan preparation. Parish council: has no formal role for this gateway. Reviews the published information and prepares for forthcoming engagement and consultation.
 Consultation: proposed Local Plan content and evidence Regulation 23	LPA: consults for at least 6 weeks on the proposed plan content and supporting evidence, including the draft vision. Parish council: assesses the proposals against local circumstances, evidence and priorities and submits a focused response.
 Gateway 2 Regulation 26	LPA: seeks observations and advice from the appointed person (on behalf of the Planning Inspectorate) on progress with the proposed Local Plan. Parish council: has no formal role for this gateway. Monitors the process and prepares for Regulation 27 consultation.
 Consultation: proposed Local Plan Regulation 27	LPA: consults for at least 8 weeks on the proposed Local Plan and supporting documents. Parish council: makes its formal representation, identifying specific concerns, supporting evidence and proposed changes where appropriate.
 Gateway 3 Regulation 31	LPA: seeks observations and advice from the appointed person (on behalf of the Planning Inspectorate) on whether the proposed Local Plan complies with the prescribed requirements. Parish council: has no formal role for this gateway. Its Regulation 27 representations should already have been submitted.
 Submission Regulation 34	LPA: submits the Local Plan and supporting documents to the Secretary of State for independent examination. Parish council: may be invited to participate in the examination by the Inspector, depending on the matters under consideration and the Inspector's discretion.
 Adoption	LPA: publishes and adopts the Local Plan following examination. Parish council: uses the adopted plan when considering future development proposals and monitors its implementation.

A Notice of Intention to commence a new local plan was published by ABC on 30 June 2026. The Scoping Consultation for the new plan ran from 2nd September to 23rd September 2026. The Local Plan will shape housing, infrastructure and environmental protection across Ashford Borough to 2043. A key challenge will be ensuring that future growth is supported by secure water supplies, adequate wastewater treatment, transport, schools, healthcare and other essential infrastructure.

One of the main issues facing the Borough is to maintain the current separation of settlements. In particular, the Call for Sites in the previous Local Plan process proposed a huge number of new houses between Ashford and Mersham on land owned mostly by the Church Commissioners. Development on this scale would be completely inappropriate due to the lack of supporting infrastructure and its impact on the East Stour Green Corridor. It is therefore

vital that the new Local Plan includes Strategic Policy SP7 from the existing Local Plan, which deals with the separation of settlements. For this same reason, it is important that the new Local Plan includes the 'Mersham Wall' - an identified area for no development between Mersham and Ashford.

A second major issue facing the Borough is the inability of the infrastructure of the area to cope with the proposed increases in population. It is therefore vital that the Local Plan should include provision to ensure that the necessary infrastructure keeps pace with housing development. Areas of most concern are schools; health facilities; GP surgeries; sewage removal; highways; and water. The question is not simply where housing can be developed, but whether the infrastructure needed to support it can be delivered at the right time and in the right place.

Ashford Borough Council will work with Southeast Water and Southern Water throughout preparation of the new Local Plan. Southeast Water's current Water Resources Management Plan concludes that water supplies are expected to be sufficient across most of Ashford Borough until 2030. Beyond that date, action will be **required** by these statutory providers to increase supply capacity. As the new Local Plan extends to 2043, long term water resilience will therefore need to be considered alongside planned growth.

The new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) has now been adopted by the government. ABC objected with concerns over infrastructure for water and concerns on how deliverable residential sites really are. The government has not address concerns in Ashford over water infrastructure and have no strategic plan for the "water stressed" southeast. They said the strategic plan to deliver new water infrastructure was a matter for Southeast Water as a statutory infrastructure provider. There is uncertainty as to whether planning authorities can turn down applications on the basis of water supply scarcity because water supply companies, as statutory providers, are **required** to supply water to new homes; the fact that they cannot or will not is a reason for the council to reject planning applications. This is bonkers and the reality is that the new homes will not be sold if they have no water supply!

Changes in the NPPF mean that strategic plans now look forward for 25 years (previously 20 years); but local plans are now over a 10-year period (previously 15 years).

The proposed minimum level of social-rented housing has been dropped.

A further complexity is the capacity for developers to build out their consented housing allocation; we have seen progress at Finberry has been glacial. Partly this is of their own making because they have failed to deliver on site promised facilities which could mean that sales have not met expectations. At

nearby Crown View there is already a shop and worked has started on community facilities.

KENNINGTON TOWN COUNCIL (2nd September)

The following dates for events were agreed:

Christmas Community Day – Saturday 5th December 2026

Annual Assembly – Monday 17th May 2027

Community Outdoor Cinema Event – Saturday 10th July 2027

Community Day – Saturday 21st August 2027

COMMUNITY SAFETY UNIT (CSU)

The CSU met on 3rd September, key issues included.

- 54 reports of anti-social behaviour in July and August, above average.
- 7 Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) issued.
- All Amnesty Bins (formerly knife amnesty bins) have now been refurbished and installed, and a programme is in place for their maintenance.
- The Church Yard Passage PSPO (the “Gating” Order) has been renewed and is in place for a further three years.
- August saw a slight decrease in reports of fly-tipping with 115 reports.
- 25 stray dogs were reported with 8 returned to owners.
- There is a joint operation with Kent Police planned for to tackle waste crime.
- Catapult related crime and ASB has been the most recurring and frequent issue across both urban and rural areas. From the Police perspective appears to be the largest singular concern across our communities. Mainly involving young people this is an issue, which it is strongly felt needs a co-ordinated multi-agency approach and it is suggested **a bespoke conference/workshop** takes place to examine the causes, motivations and opportunities to tackle this issue.
- From 7th September, Kent Police CSU will be known as Neighbourhood Policing Teams (NPT) to bring their name in line with national terminology; there will be no change to personnel, service provision and structure as it is a name only change.
- There have been a total of 1,072 wildfires across Kent this year. The wildfire season is coming to an end; however, a number of fires are deep seated and although the rain has helped, the risk of wildfires remains. **There are also issues with water supplies.**

ANNUAL MEMBER MEETING EKHUFT

The AMM was held on 3rd September.

I raised concerns regarding delays in obtaining medicines from the William Harvey Hospital on-site pharmacy, with patients directed to local supermarkets or external pharmacies. This is important as issues with dispensing may cause delays to discharge particularly at the weekend.

Drugs may need to be shipped between acute units and the protocol for dispensing drugs from Canterbury for Ashford patients have been short in leading to inadequate supply.

The Chair accepted that this was not acceptable and explained that the Board has a programme of tackling delays with on-site dispensing and have an action plan to resolve. The concerns that I raised, are not new and have been raised elsewhere by my fellow governors. I will monitor changes.

I had a follow up meeting with the Chair of the Trust on 10th September on the Integrated Improvement (Recovery and Improvement) Plan. Plans around governance stability have been largely completed. There is a risk about the latest month's financial results due to heatwave pressures and temporary staff rate changes.

There are ongoing challenges on the maternity and neonatal operations – key stillbirth actions are included in the maternity and neonatal improvement programme. There is by a high rate of vacancies, but these are covered by expensive agency staff. Areas of improvement include better diabetes control in expectant mothers and ensuring timely access to caesarean sections.

The latest patient survey (500 responses) was discussed, showing our hospitals about the same as other Trusts.

▼ Admission to hospital	Patient Response ⓘ 7.0 / 10	Compared with other trusts ⓘ About the same
▼ The hospital and ward	Patient Response ⓘ 7.4 / 10	Compared with other trusts ⓘ About the same
▼ Basic needs	Patient Response ⓘ 7.9 / 10	Compared with other trusts ⓘ About the same
▼ Doctors	Patient Response ⓘ 8.8 / 10	Compared with other trusts ⓘ About the same
▼ Nurses	Patient Response ⓘ 8.5 / 10	Compared with other trusts ⓘ About the same
▼ Care and treatment	Patient Response ⓘ 8.2 / 10	Compared with other trusts ⓘ About the same

SOUTHEAST COAST AMBULANCE SERVICE (SECamb)

Governors met on 10th September with its AMM on 25th September.

There was a 16% increase in demand for ambulance services over the summer heatwaves, when there were periods of extraordinary demand culminating in the Trust's busiest day on record on was 26th June. The resilience planning helped and the learning is being used as the service develops the plan for winter. Resilience (against heat, cold IT outage etc) are now built into a year-end plan which includes Virtual Care to direct callers to the right care earlier – resulting in better outcomes for patients, protecting emergency capacity at acute hospitals and a stronger and attractive workforce offer. Virtual Care is often called “Hear and Treat” - as opposed to “See and Treat”. **999 calls are for help not an ambulance.**



Aside from the heatwave demand spike, demand for the Trust's 999 service has increased by 8%, significantly above the 4% growth assumption within the 2026/27 Operating Plan.

One aspect discussed as the wide definition of traumas included in “Category 2”. It covers stroke, chest pain or suspected heart attack, major trauma, severe burns, epilepsy, heavy blood loss, and sepsis. It was discussed whether all needed the required 18-minute response time.

An estate review will identify where Multidisciplinary Clinical Assessment Centres are to be located for Virtual Care. In Kent it is likely to be at the 999/111 Emergency Operations Centre in Medway, but the review is ongoing including an assessment of dilapidations when leased property term comes to an end.

Nationally, there is a huge gap between paramedics coming out of university and the jobs available. There are not any up-to-date numbers for the southeast but in Wales there were 300 graduates and only 30 jobs. There are career challenges for the existing workforce but no recruitment needs for paramedics at SECamb as staffing levels are satisfactory.

The dignity of patients who have passed in a public place was discussed following a distressing incident for the family of the deceased that that took place with the patient placed in a body bag without any police provided pop-up gazebo until the undertaker arrived. An enhanced protocol was discussed and agreed giving privacy and dignity.

ASHFORD BC CABINET

The Cabinet met on 10th September.

ADDITIONAL PEDESTRIAN ACCESS TO LOWER HIGH STREET FROM PROPOSED TEMPORARY EDINBURGH ROAD CAR PARK

I submitted a motion to Full Council on 16th July 2026 requesting “Plans for a short route exit from the temporary car park at the former Park Mall area to the High Street to be created in time for the car park opening ahead of Christmas trading.” This was supported by 50 traders in the town centre. The only designed pedestrian access is via St George’s Square, a safe and well-lit route that encourages natural surveillance but without CCTV (as recommended by Kent Police) and is a long route for pedestrians to take if they wish to access the High Street. Businesses are facing additional cost pressures and footfall in the town centre needs to be increased to boost trade. The reason for the additional pedestrian access is to allow quicker and easier access to the High Street to allow “pop and shop”. The Council needs to be business friendly and do what it can to support businesses who are looking for this boost to trade by improved connectivity.

No further action on this will be taken because any potential additional routes would cost an estimated £40,000–£60,000, require further approvals, will delay the planned opening ahead of Christmas 2026 and, in some cases, create community safety concerns.

Kent Police recommend for access routes to be kept to a minimum, and the pedestrian and vehicle access to be located adjacent to each other. The reasoning for this would be to ensure the car park remains as secure as possible and ensure that those entering the car park have a legitimate purpose. Kent Police want to prevent the car park becoming a shortcut for those wishing to get to and from the High Street via Edinburgh Road. There is also an increase of e-scooters, e-bikes, mopeds and similar vehicles being driven on pedestrian routes which are being reported as ASB and nuisance incidents to the local policing team on a regular basis, increasing the routes

that can be used by these individuals will likely have a detrimental impact on the local policing team. This approach contradicts our policy on encouraging walking and cycling into the town centre; we should be providing the opportunity to walk and cycle and design out the risk from electric bikes and scooters. There is also an aspect of the Community Safety Unit on ensuring the safety of women and girls who may benefit from a shorter, well-lit route. If Taylors Passage is so dangerous, why was it not closed years ago?

The reasons given by the Administration of the Council are money (it will cost £40-£60k), lack of long-term value and time it will take. Lots of reasons to not do it, but at a time when the High Street is suffering from reduced spending, shop closures and tax rises this is the time to support our hard-working traders and give them a boost.

The Council is committed to improving connectivity into the town centre as part of **future** phases of redevelopment of Park Mall and mindful of the impact on the High Street (but sadly not at this stage although it is expected to be looked at again in the new year).

CAR PARK TARIFFS

Short term car park prices will be increased by on average 8% and long-term parking by 17%. This will hit workers in the town plus commuters and will result in more parking in the streets without control. On-street car parking are up 70p from £1.30 to £2, a whopping 54% - that's massive and cannot be justified by inflation rates.

The 'Free After 3pm' parking initiative at Elwick Place Car Park will be withdrawn with effect from 1 November 2026. An equivalent free parking offer will be provided at the temporary car park on Park Mall site when it opens, **for a period of six months** only.

A flat-rate overnight charge of £2 from 18:00 to 08:00 across Council-operated car parks from 1 January 2027, ending the free after 6pm policy designed to encourage visitors to the town for evening events.

Free on Sunday at Elwick Road will be removed once the interim car park at Park Mall opens. Also to be removed is free parking after 3pm on Sunday and Bank Holidays at Station Road and all-day free parking on Sundays and Bank Holidays at Flour Mills car park.

Free parking after 6pm (3pm in some car parks) alongside free parking on Sundays (in some car parks) has been a fantastic way of encouraging and increasing visitors to our town centres and high streets, improves access to services, help businesses to thrive, and attracts new investment, particularly

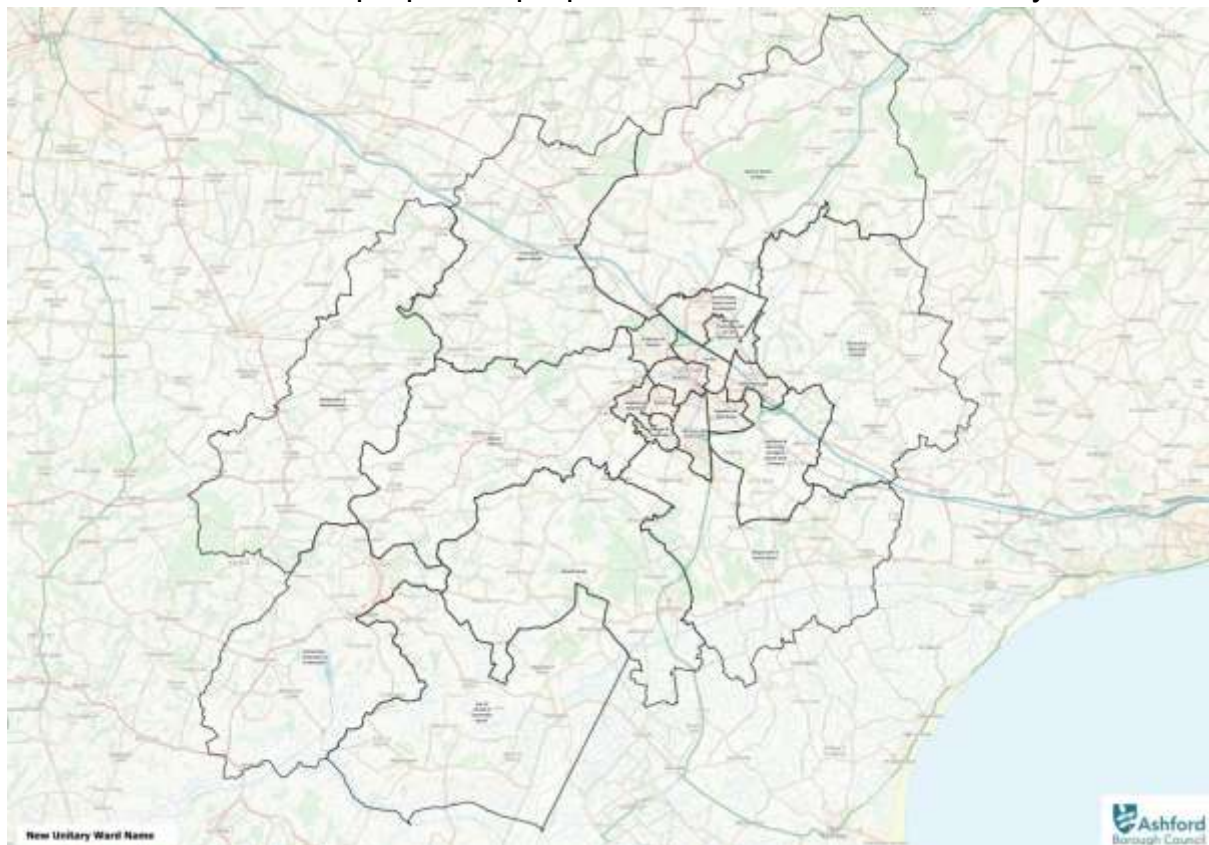
evening businesses. Continuing this will encourage higher spending in local businesses, supporting employment and may encourage repeat visits and strengthen the local economy. Encouraging residents to visit our town centres will have a positive impact for those put off from visiting our town centres because of fear of receiving a parking fine or worried about their safety because it allows closer, well-lit access to facilities.

ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE NEW UNITARY COUNCIL

The National Association for Local Councils (NALC) recently met with the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) to ensure parish and town councils and their communities have a strong voice in electoral and boundary arrangements.

This is to ensure electoral and boundary arrangements reflect local communities, identities and circumstances. Parish and town councils can provide local knowledge and close connections with residents to build a clearer understanding of how communities work in practice and ensure local circumstances are properly considered.

This is relevant due to proposals proposed in Ashford for the unitary.



CENTRAL ASHFORD COMMUNITY FORUM

The Forum met on 14th September. Key issues included.

- The parking strategy does not address lack of parking permits available in the car centre for those who live there and need access to a car and spaces to purchase for a reasonable price. This is illustrated by the proliferation of HMOs in the town centre who do not have access to car parking facilities.
- The K6 Telephone Box in the Churchyard need adopted and a new use found for it. Ownership will be investigated.
- The Shadow Town Council meets for the first time on 15th September. Its job will be to establish constitution and precept ahead of elections in May 2027.
- The Forum supported a radical review of the parking charges including a long-term commitment to “Free after Three” and a half hour of free parking for shopping. Adequate provision needs to be made for businesses, so their customers can park. A half hour of free parking would be a fantastic way of encouraging and increasing visitors to the town centre and high street, improve access to services, help businesses to thrive, and attract new investment. It is expected to encourage higher spending in local businesses, supporting employment and may encourage repeat visits and strengthen the local economy. Encouraging residents to visit our high street will have a positive impact; those not visiting our town centre because of fear of receiving a parking fine or because they are worried about their safety will do so as free parking allows closer access to facilities.
- Empty shops and dilapidated facias present a poor impression of the town centre. New Rents, Bank Street and the Man Of Kent pub are cases in point. The Council should bring back the grants for refurbishing shop fronts.

KENT COMMUNITY HEALTH NHS FOUNDATION TRUST (KCHFT)

The Annual Members Meeting (AMM) was held on 15th September. Key issues included.

- Elective care targets have not been met by KCHFT, partly due to rising demand.
- Care will transfer to being delivered in 45 “Neighbourhoods”, in other words through enlarged GP surgeries. This is part of the NHS 10-year plan, single point assessment hubs and frailty home treatment have reduced acute hospital admissions by 600.
- 95% of patients admitted to the Community Hospitals **during pharmacy opening hours** receive a medication review within 24 hours.
- Practical changes including transport has resulted in missed appointments falling by 10% in Kent’s most deprived communities.
- Swift action in March 2026 resulted in 11,000 Meningitis vaccinations delivered.
- Traditional analogue landlines in the UK are being permanently switched off by January 31, 2027, as part of the nationwide upgrade

managed by Ofcom and network providers. There are concerns how Lifeline (or similar) will operate. They are ideally linked to two mobile networks to give resilience. Further details here:

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/phone-internet-downloads-or-tv/check-your-personal-alarm-will-work-after-the-landline-switch-off>.

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY CHANGES (NPPF)

Councillor had a briefing on changes on 16th September.

- NPPF is now the most important material consideration for decision and local plan making. They do not (yet) have statutory weight.
- Where Local Plans are inconsistent with National Policy, Local Plans “carry very little weight”. This is potentially an issue for Ashford as our Local Plan was adopted in 2019 (a new Ashford Local Plan is under preparation).
- Two key policies for Ashford:
 - The principle of development within settlements is a default “yes” unless outweighed by adverse impact in NPPF (e.g. heritage / biodiversity, flood risk and habitat issues).
 - Development outside settlements is acceptable unless there are exceptional circumstances and the benefits do not substantially outweigh the any adverse impacts. Acceptable development outside settlements will include rural businesses, limited infilling within groups of houses, development that meets an “unmet need” and development on previously used land.
- Development is acceptable where 5-year housing supply is not met or housing delivery is less than 75% where the development is well-related to an existing settlement considering existing infrastructure. This applies to all settlements in Ashford Borough. “Settlements” does not include hamlets.
- Highway impact must be “severe” before its impact may be considered.
- Development must now make “efficient use of land” which may suggest more dense developments will be brought forward.
- Design issues in the Local Plan are still important – bad designs may still be rejected.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The committee met on 22nd September. Key aspects included.

FORMER ODEON COMMUNITY AND (152 Seat / 220 standing) THEATRE SPACE

Preliminary market engagement was completed in August which helped shape the space; there has been strong market interest (6+ parties even though the interest is quite “shallow” for small sized performance organisations). The food and beverage service strategy has now been finalised. A formal tender

launch will take place at end of 2026. The ABC subsidy previously discussed in March starts at £110k pa falling off (hopefully rapidly).

The entrance canopy, signage font, size, colour and lighting will be returned to the original 1936 design. Windows will be reinstated facing on to the walkway between St John's Lane and the Lower High Street, improving safety.

STODMARSH

Approval has been granted for a major new environmental scheme in the Stour catchment that is set to unlock up to 5,000 new homes across Ashford, Canterbury and nearby towns by tackling the nutrient pollution and nutrient neutrality constraints.

The Stodmarsh Ditch Enhancement Scheme is spread across five sites and more than 2.5 kilometres of small watercourses. The scheme uses natural interventions to reduce the levels of nitrogen and phosphorus entering the River Stour before it reaches the protected Stodmarsh wetlands. It will restore heavily managed agricultural ditches into more natural streams that slow the flow of water and allow nutrients to be filtered out. This reduces pollution in the catchment while generating the credits needed to support new development. The scheme requires only narrow strips alongside existing ditches, allowing surrounding farmland to remain in production. It will also support local wildlife and help manage both drought and heavy rain by holding more water in the landscape. The work is secured for more than 80 years to ensure long-term environmental benefit and certainty for local planning authorities and developers.

CARBON FOOTPRINT

ABC carbon footprint for 2024/25 total was 1,148 tCo2e, Folkestone's was 567, Dover 1,384, Maidstone 1,732, Swale 276, Tonbridge and Malling 240 and Thanet 2,283. Delivering a genuine carbon reduction requires electrification of gas heating with a submission to the Green Heat Network Fund to address this along with developing a centralised Fleet Decarbonisation Plan to transition away from fossil fuels. ABC are also continuing work to assess the solar generation potential across the Council's estate, identify opportunities to increase solar capacity and manage a successful Warm Homes programme for both social and private sector housing decarbonisation.

NEETS (NOT IN EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING or STUDENTS)

The Upcycle Your Skills initiative has renewed investment from Ashford, Maidstone and Swale Borough Councils to deliver an expanded Autumn programme. The programme makes a tangible difference, helping young people build confidence, motivation, career readiness and practical skills to

take steps toward employment, education and training. It is a free five-week programme that combines hands-on workshops, one-to-one coaching and direct employer engagement. Participants gain the opportunity to interview for live vacancies with SUEZ, turning potential into real-world job prospects.

QUANTOCK VILLAGE GREEN APPLICATION

The public inquiry into my application for the land to be designated as a village green was held on 29th September and 30th September. It considered:

(a) Whether use of the land has been 'as of right'? (This means that use must have taken place without force, without secrecy and without permission, **it does not matter who the owner is** or whether users believed they had the right to be there).

(b) Whether use of the land has been for the purposes of lawful sports and pastimes? (Activities comprise primarily of dog walking and playing with children, but there are also examples of the land being used for picnics and ball games by those from the housing estate, primarily developed during the early 1970s with only two entrance/exit points thereby indicating the estate is a self-contained area).

(c) Whether use has been by a significant number of residents of a particular locality, or a neighbourhood within a locality? (A large number of evidence questionnaires have been submitted).

(d) Whether use of the land 'as of right' by the residents has continued up until the date of application or, if not, has ceased no more than one year prior to the making of the application? (Private Land Notices appeared immediately following the Landowner's purchase of the land on 13th February 2025 - and prior to the submission of the Application on 4th March 2025).

(e) Whether use has taken place over period of twenty years or more? (Of the 82 witnesses, just under two thirds claim to have used the Application Site for the full twenty-year period. The majority of those who have submitted evidence in support of the Application are longstanding – and in a number of cases original – residents of the estate).

The purpose of the hearing was for the Inspector to consider evidence as to the actual use of the application site during the relevant period to assist her in reaching a view regarding whether the legal tests in s15 of the Commons Act 2006 have been met. She did not be hearing submissions as to why the land should (or should not) be registered as a Village Green, as **factors relating to suitability/desirability/amenity are not be relevant to her findings**.

I was delighted to have the opportunity to present my arguments for creating a second village green in Quantock to the Planning Inspector. I was supported by 20+ residents, 8 of which agreed to act as my witnesses and providing good reports on how they use the land for qualifying sports and pastimes. The process was managed well by the Inspector, and she was generous to me given my lack of legal training. I will find out her recommendation to KCC

within 12 weeks; the next Planning and Regulation Committee at KCC is in November and I doubt her report will make that agenda so it will be the new year before we have a final decision. I remain confident that I have solid grounds for the land being a village green, protecting it from development and I urge residents in Ashford to actively consider this for their own community - I'm happy to help!

CALL-IN TO COUNCIL PLANNING (NATIONAL SCHEME OF DELEGATION “NSOD”)

Councillors had a briefing on new call-in rules on 29th September.

There will now be decided by officers for:

- Developments of up to 9 dwellings.
- Householder development.
- Flatted development.
- Reserved matters where the development is for less than 500 dwellings.
- Minor commercial (less than 1,000sq.m).

A Nominated Officer **and** Member (i.e. both must agree) will decide what goes to Committee with two statutory “gateway” tests. It can be on:

- Developments of more than 10 units.
- Major commercial.
- Retrospective applications.
- Listed building applications.
- TPOs.
- Reserved matters where the development is for more than 500 dwellings.

The “gateway” tests are (i) the application raises an economic, social or environmental issue of significance to the local area and (ii) the application raises a significant planning matter having regard to the development plan and other material considerations. Examples include large multi-phase residential development, change of use for a rural community shop in a residential area and notable listed buildings. Developments in line with the local plan are unlikely to result in a significant planning matter so cannot go to Committee.

The consequence is that call-in rights will go.

ASHFORD COMMITTEE OF KENT ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS (KALC)

The Committee met on 30th September. Key issues included.

- Kent Police are now deploying drones to track nuisance motorbikes to their home address when cautions can be issued along with seizing the bike. Residents are asked to call in sightings of nuisance motorbike as offenders are creatures of habit and this information allow Kent Police to build a picture.

- Every catapult report is logged and building a intelligence picture is essential in deploying resources.
- Kent Police are aware of the sensitivity of feeling towards flags placed on streetlights around Ashford. Remove requests need to be co-ordinated with the owner of the streetlight.
- Information from residents reporting to the CSU / Neighbourhood Watch are vital to create intelligence over the nature of illegal and anti-social activities. This enables Kent Police target identified individuals. This includes drug driving, of which there are increased incidences.
- The PCC are not aware over how Police Forces will be re-organised across the UK and how it will affect Kent Police.
- Potential asset transfers are being rejected by ABC on the grounds of legal costs.
- Parking charges were discussed and it was agreed that a view from the rural area (who need to drive into Ashford) are taken into account during the review.
- Work to clean up Hoads Wood by the Environment Agency have been mostly completed. 40 tonnes of waste was removed.

Paul Bartlett - 0773 929 3502

Mersham, Sevington South and Finberry Ward, ABC
paul.bartlett@ashford.gov.uk

Grosvenor Hall Ward, Kennington Community Council
paul.bartlett@kenningtontowncouncil.gov.uk

Sevington Ward, Sevington with Finberry Parish Council
cllrbartlett@sevingtonwithfinberry-pc.gov.uk

Public Governor, Kent & Medway, Southeast Coast Ambulance Service
Paul.ABartlett@secamb.nhs.uk

Public Governor, Ashford, East Kent Hospitals
p.bartlett2@nhs.uk