SEPTEMBER NEWSLETTER

September 2026 was another busy month for the administration at KCC culminating in one of the proudest moments in this council's recent history with the Brigade of Gurkhas receiving the Freedom of the County, to the Leader putting the Government on formal notice of legal action over its handling of local government reorganisation and closing with the Armed Forces Covenant Conference in Gravesend, the team has not stopped.

Under the leadership of Cllr Linden Kemkaran at KCC, Reform councillors continued to deliver on infrastructure, waste, water resilience and community engagement, while refusing to let Kent be treated as an afterthought by Westminster.

Here are the September highlights:

Reform UK National Conference, Birmingham

Reform UK's National Conference took place at the NEC in Birmingham from 3 to 5 September, and the Kent team was there in force.

The Leader of KCC joined leaders from Lancashire County Council and Calderdale Council on a panel examining the Reform UK vision for devolution and local government in England, setting out what a Reform administration looks like in practice after more than a year running the country's largest county council. It was a reminder that Kent is no longer just participating in this conversation, it is helping to lead it.

Read more here:

https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/event/ifg-reform-uk-party-conference-2026

Government Pauses Local Government Reorganisation

On 7 September the Government announced it was pausing local government reorganisation and ordered councils to stop work while it reviewed its own decision.

This is the same process Kent County Council never asked for, worked on in good faith for months, and has already spent close to a million pounds of residents' money complying with. Councils, staff and residents were left with no clarity on what happens next or when.

The Leader made the position plain: Kent has done everything asked of it, meticulously and by the book, and deserves considerably better than to be left in limbo by a Government that cannot make up its mind.

Read more here:

https://www.lgcplus.com/politics/governance-and-structure/county-leader-considers-legal-action-against-lgr-07-09-2026/

https://www.kentonline.co.uk/maidstone/news/council-leader-threatens-legal-action-against-careless-and-345399/

Kent’s new Super University

The Leader attended the official launch of LASE – the London And South East University Group, formed by the merger of the Universities of Kent and Greenwich. The new uni will have a renewed focus on training and skills development, not just on degrees and post-graduate achievement.

The Leader has agreed to a close working relationship with Vice Chancellor Professor Jane Harrington to align KCC's ambitions to get more young people trained up and into work.

Read more here:

https://x.com/LeaderofKCC/status/2097989242521592163

Recycle Week 2026

Kent County Council joined the national call to rescue your recyclables during Recycle Week, running from 14 September. The campaign encouraged residents across the county to check what can be recycled at home and to make sure valuable materials are not lost to general waste.

It follows on directly from the momentum built by July's first-ever countywide Fly-Tipping Conference and the Kent Fly-Tipping Action Plan. Cleaning up Kent remains a priority for this administration, and that means both enforcement against waste criminals and helping residents do the right thing.

Read more here:

https://news.kent.gov.uk/articles/recycle-week-2026-kent-county-council-joins-the-call-to-rescue-your-recyclables

Full Council, 17 September

Kent County Council's Members met in Maidstone on 17 September. The Leader opened by describing it as a privilege for Members to have begun proceedings by awarding the Freedom of the County of Kent to the Brigade of Gurkhas. (more in next section)

In her update, the Leader reported on engagement with South East Water's new leadership, building on the Kent Water Resilience Partnership formed earlier in the year after repeated supply disruptions across the county, and reiterated this administration's focus on financial accountability.

Three motions were debated. The Liberal Democrat motion on veterans as a strategic reserve for community resilience passed unanimously with 69 votes in favour and none against, and Reform councillors were pleased to support it. The Green Party's 20mph motion was defeated by 48 votes to 16. A Restore Britain motion on extending free bus travel before 9.30am was defeated by 48 votes to 17.

Members also dealt with Planning Applications Committee term changes, treasury management reporting and committee updates.

Read more here:

https://news.kent.gov.uk/articles/county-council-meets-in-maidstone

Brigade of Gurkhas Awarded the Freedom of the County of Kent

On 17 September, following a motion proposed by Leader Linden Kemkaran, Kent County Council voted to award the Freedom of the County of Kent to the Brigade of Gurkhas. The motion carried with cross-party support, 69 votes in favour with 2 abstentions.

The honour recognises more than two centuries of loyal service to this country, including around 100,000 Gurkha soldiers in the First World War and more than 110,000 in the Second. Kent is home to the Royal Gurkha Rifles at Shorncliffe in Folkestone and the Queen's Gurkha Engineers in Maidstone, and the bond between the Brigade and the people of this county runs deep.

At the ceremony the Leader paid tribute to the Gurkhas' duty, courage, loyalty, professionalism and selfless commitment to others.

KCC Chairman Jeremy Eustace said the Freedom of Kent is one of the highest honours the county can bestow, recognising the extraordinary military service, sacrifice and commitment of the Brigade as well as the strong and longstanding relationship between the Gurkhas and the people of Kent.

This administration has been consistent all year in honouring our Armed Forces, from the Armed Forces Day flag-raising and the Beating Retreat in June to the Chatham Historic Dockyard parade. This was the proudest moment of that run.

Read more here:

https://news.kent.gov.uk/articles/brigade-of-gurkhas-awarded-the-freedom-of-the-county-of-kent

https://www.kentonline.co.uk/maidstone/news/brigade-of-gurkhas-in-line-for-the-freedom-of-kent-honour-345110/

Leader Puts Government on Notice Over LGR

On 22 September the Leader confirmed that Kent County Council will send a pre-action protocol letter to the Secretary of State, the formal first step towards judicial review proceedings over the Government's handling of local government reorganisation.

The Government announced on 16 July that Kent and Medway would move to four unitary councils. The Leader wrote on 27 July with a list of questions. Those questions went unanswered. On 7 September the Government paused the whole process. The legal deadline to challenge the July decision, however, keeps running regardless.

As the Leader told full council: "A pause is not a withdrawal." The Government has already withdrawn its decisions for four other areas ahead of court proceedings, and the three-month window to challenge the July decision closes in mid-October whether ministers are paying attention or not. The time limit does not stop running merely because the Government has chosen to pause and review its own decision. The KCC administration intends to protect KCC's position, and the pre-action protocol letter will go to the Secretary of State.

She was blunt about the treatment Kent has received: "I will not accept such shoddy treatment of such a careless and clueless government."

The Leader was clear about what is at stake. Adult social care, children's services and highways are services people depend on every day, and they cannot be left hanging while Westminster works out what it actually wants.

Read more here:

https://www.kentonline.co.uk/maidstone/news/council-leader-threatens-legal-action-against-careless-and-345399/

https://theisleofthanetnews.com/2026/09/22/kent-county-council-prepares-to-launch-legal-action-against-government-over-handling-of-councils-reorganisation/

https://www.localgovernmentlawyer.co.uk/governance/396-governance-news/101754-kent-county-council-still-mulling-legal-action-over-government-decision-on-reorganisation-despite-pause

Armed Forces Covenant Conference, 29 September

Closing out the month, the Leader joined KCC Chairman Jeremy Eustace and Cabinet Member for Communities and Regulatory Services Richard Palmer at the 12th Kent & Medway Annual Civilian-Military Armed Forces Covenant Conference, held at The Woodville in Gravesend under the theme "Working together".

The conference brought together council partners, the Ministry of Defence's covenant lead, senior military figures including the Naval Regional Commander, and KCC's own covenant lead Canon

Peter Bruinvels, to strengthen the support Kent offers serving personnel, veterans and their families.

The Leader paid tribute to those who "put their lives on the line every day to train and prepare for a time where they need to defend rights and freedoms which we all hold so dear", and made clear that people who go out to protect this country will be treated with the utmost respect in Kent.

Coming less than a fortnight after the Gurkhas received the Freedom of the County, and the unanimous backing given at full council to veterans as a strategic reserve for community resilience, it rounded off a month in which Kent's commitment to its Armed Forces community was front and centre.

Read more here:

https://news.kent.gov.uk/articles/conference-to-promote-support-for-military-personnel

Delivering for Residents Across Kent

Away from the headlines, the day job continued throughout September:

- London Road: a consultation launched on 22 September on plans to improve walking, cycling and road safety.
- Ramsgate Road: essential footpath improvements confirmed to begin in October.
- Family Hubs: a consultation opened on 24 September on the Family Hubs vision for the county town, building on the Temple Hill and Folkestone openings earlier in the year.
- Public health: KCC backed Stoptober and ran its annual sexual health services awareness week, alongside a push on measles vaccination for children.
- The Leader had an introductory one-to-one meeting with the CEO of Southern Water in advance of the Water Resilience Partnership Forum in October.

Summary - September 2026

Reform UK Kent councillors kept going through a difficult month. Here is what the team delivered:

- National platform - Kent leading the Reform UK conversation on devolution and local government at conference in Birmingham
- Honouring service - the Brigade of Gurkhas awarded the Freedom of the County of Kent, 69 votes to nil against, and the Armed Forces Covenant Conference in Gravesend
- Standing up for Kent - pre-action protocol letter to the Secretary of State over the Government's handling of LGR
- Water resilience - continued engagement with South East Water's new leadership
- Cleaning up Kent - Recycle Week backing the fly-tipping and waste work started in July
- Local delivery - London Road and Ramsgate Road schemes, Family Hubs consultation, public health campaigns