

COUNCIL UPDATE 2.2024

COMMUNITY SAFETY UNIT

The unit met on 1st February. Key issues were:

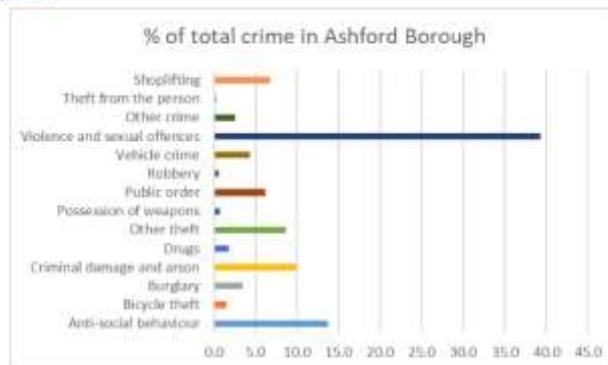
- A leaflet is being prepared for all services available to rough sleepers and street drinkers.
- ABC has appointed contractors to improve security to the Flour Mills, with the cost being recharged to the owner.
- The town centre PSPO order has gone live having been extended to include Elwick Place.
- A consistent approach in using knife bins is being coordinated across Kent.
- The policing teams have been augmented by PC Selina Roberts covering Kennington & northern wards. PC Alan Hobday will join covering the town centre.
- Several e-scooters have been seized with prosecutions to follow. Education is continuing but was taken off the agenda for the half-term year 9 briefing (reproduced below).

09.0	
0A	WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS
M	
09.1	
5A	WE ARE WITH YOU – SUBSTANCE USE
M	
	PREVENT
09.4	<i>Session Title: Pyramid of Hate</i>
5A	A workshop that is built on the Pyramid of Hate, will explore hate / prejudice (the type that young people encounter on a day to day basis) -specifically: Misogyny, Antisemitism, Islamophobia and Homophobia and will feature a number of short videos and audience participation and some slides with key terms in between and a follow up lesson for schools.
M	
10.1	VRU - COMMITMENT PLEDGE, BYSTANDER
5A	The VRU and Kent Police Schools team will deliver a commitment pledge focusing on knife crime.
M	The pledge is to educate on knife crime with the Bystander approach to encourage safe reporting and speaking up.
10.4	
5A	TIME TO THINK – opening the mind to learning and positive motivation.
M	
	YOUNG PERSON Survey AND VIDEO
	What is available locally for youths to attend and where to go.
11.0	Survey to all students to capture where they feel safe and what all agencies can do to improve local opportunities - voice of the child.
0A	
M	Ashford Safer streets app awareness.
	Zero Tolerance – Stagecoach video
11.2	ONLINE SAFETY – The LAW
0A	
M	Includes Sending images online and the law
11.5	

- A safer business action day is planned for 13th March.
- The community wardens held a series of bike marking events in the half term break.
- A meeting with Deborah Prior has been held discussing how the information on Ashford Partnership Against Crime (APAC) can be distributed in Kennington.
- There has been investigation of “charity collections” in the town centre residents are asked to ensure that they are registered charities.

- Work on International House roof temporarily knocked out the line of sites cameras to the monitoring centre. Steps have been taken to avoid a repeat. Ashford Police now have real time access to the monitoring centre, there is a plan for the police to have access to historic footage.
- Sk8side are finding it difficult to attract users in Bockhanger a publicity drive is being organised.
- The Jobs Centre will offer to pay 25% of training costs for anyone seeking to access training to enhance their employment chances.
- The following graph on crime was distributed.

Crime types



FLOOD STREET

I asked for a discussion on parking at the Sports Club in Flood Street at the Parish Council. This follows discussions regarding visibility when there are activities at the Club, generally on a Saturday morning. The matter could be added to the Mersham “Highways Improvement Plan”. The sports club have built an additional car park to the side of the existing clubhouse and are in the process of applying for planning permission for a further car park to the left of the main entrance. If this is agreed, they estimate parking for at least 70 vehicles in the total parking space provided.



WATERBROOK HOUSING UPDATE

An application has been submitted for the first tranche of 144 new homes at the old lorry park in Sevington. The developer thinks an Environmental Impact

Assessment is not required to be undertaken. Instead, they say detailed environmental assessments will be undertaken in accordance with appropriate guidance and submitted as part of the supporting planning documents. But what do you think, it's just 250m away from Finberry? I have called this application in to the planning committee to the discussion and decision making will be in public. The Ref is PA/2024/00260.



SEVINGTON CHURCH CAR PARK

I have requested that the PC uses my remaining Community Grant of up to £772 to provide signage and a bin at the new car park next to St Mary's Sevington along with some dog poo bags. This is because there have been people meeting there in the evening and leaving litter.

COMMUNITY SAFETY TASK GROUP

The group met on 5th February and discussed the following priorities.

- To prioritise youth intervention work we need to understand:
 - What young people want.
 - Provide a communication piece on what activities are available and where.
 - Identify what other support is available.
- To identify what are the long-term cause of street drinking and substance abuse.
- Consider CCTV redeployment from areas it is less used to areas it is more needed.

HML

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has said that "significant intervention" is required to address the housing crisis in the UK, with concerns regarding the quality of new homes, high and unclear estate management charges, and issues with planning. I am delighted the CMA has looked at state management charges. The biggest issue (aside from failure to carry out work) is billing for historic work. Billing can take months or even years to get up to date. It appears that the issue is that this historic liability attaches to the

property so when people sell their property the liability lies with the new purchaser. The new purchaser can be liable for a substantial sum, and this can be chased with debt collectors and possibly CC judgements, affecting peoples credit rating.

KENT MENTAL HEALTH NETWORK

The group met on 6th February and was told about additional digital pathways available for parents to reduce parental conflict. They are “Me, You and Baby Too” (highlighting changes that new or expectant parents face), “Arguing Better” (for parents still tother but are facing stress and couple conflict), and “Getting It Right For Children” (for separating parents highlighting awareness on how children can be put in the middle of parental conflict). Information is at ParentalRelationships@kent.gov.uk. Details of the Perinatal Mental Health Helpline were circulated:

If things don't feel quite right, talk to us

Mental health helpline for parents-to-be and parents of new babies

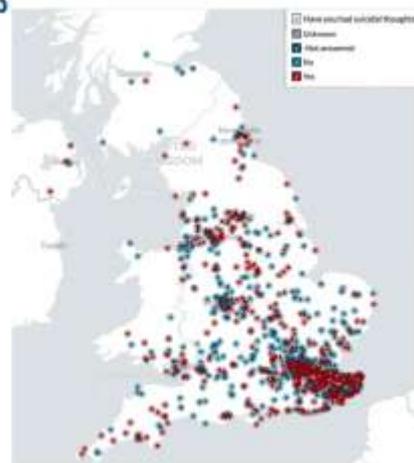
Text **KENT** to **85258** for free, or phone **0800 107 0160**
For more information visit kent.gov.uk/familyhub/mentalhealthhelpline

Kent Family Hub

A presentation was given by Dads Unlimited (DU). They now provide access to a Family Court barrister at reduced rates as they have been given a special licence from the Bar Council to do that. Each dot on the map is a DU client – those in red are clients with thoughts of suicide.

IMPACT OF SUPPORT - ENGLAND AND WALES 2023

- 4272 clients supported
- 75% clients represented to avoid being LiPs
- 4361 children
- 1585 domestic abuse victims
- New cases doubling each year
- Av. res. time 40 (no DA) vs. 14 wks (DA)
- Mental wellbeing scores +3.86 / +7 (DAVE)
- 10/10 Reviews for mentoring
- 100% of Family Court Support service users had a positive outcome
- 5* reviews for Co-parenting workshop
- Full engagement from all Statutory Services



A presentation was given by Amparo. This is the Kent wide suicide bereavement service. It provides psychological first aid, crisis intervention and emotional support for families impacted by suicide (<https://amparo.org.uk/>).

Amparo SLW role
Emotional and
Practical Advice
and Guidance
should be one of the
following:

- Support with accessing external bereavement services (if not covered within Amparo contract to provide this)
- Support around speaking to school about the suicide/sudden death bereavement process
- Advice around the grief process- normalising feelings
- Suicide/SH/SI risk
- Peer support groups
- CYP FAB
- Transitional support
- Provide resources to access online support groups etc
- Social Worker Support- contact
- CYP Practical Support Agreement- can we say it is bereaved by suicide when contacting services including schools on your behalf?
- Family support –identified by beneficiary
- Circle of Support (Mind mapping)
- Currently no cyp CORS/ORS/SWEMWEBS being used? *RB to confirm*



ADULT SOCIAL CARE FEES

KCC is seeking feedback on proposed changes to adult social care charging to ensure taxpayers' money is targeted at those most in need. Residents can have their say on proposals to (i) factor in higher, or enhanced, rates of disability benefits in financial assessments, and (ii) introduce a one-off fee for new self-funders, in two consultations launched on 6th February 2024. Both consultations are at www.kent.gov.uk/adultsocialcarecharging

Including higher level of disability benefits in financial assessments:

Considering some enhanced benefits when assessing how much public money will contribute to a person's care could raise around £3.5million a year. Higher rates of Attendance Allowance and Disability Living Allowance would only be considered when an individual is receiving day and night care arranged by KCC. This proposal does not apply to anyone in a residential care home.

Self-funding arrangements:

KCC is also gathering views on the proposal to introduce a new self-funding arrangement set-up fee for all new self-funders. A proposed £352 fee would cover administration costs when an individual does not qualify for publicly funded care but would like KCC to negotiate and manage their care on their behalf with providers. Under the proposals, all new self-funders would be able to decide if they wish to pay the new fee, or to make other arrangements for their support that does not involve the Council – meaning the fee would not be required. This could include arranging care directly with a care provider or asking a relative or friend to do this for them. In 2023 there were 400 new

self-funders. Based on this figure, if the proposed set-up fee was to be introduced, KCC would expect to raise around £140,800 a year.

FLY TIPPING

I have reported fly tipping in Cheesemans Green Lane (Ref 19414456)



CHILDREN AND YOUNG PERSONS MENTAL HEALTH

Children's Mental Health Week was 5-11 Feb. Both the NHS and KCC recognise that they need to improve the support available to children and young people for their mental health and emotional wellbeing in Kent and Medway. Surveys on a new model of care were open from 18 August 2023 and closed on 1 November 2023. Between January-April 2024 Phase two is engaging and developing the therapeutic model of care working with vulnerable communities. Services cover depression, emotional support, safe spaces for LGBTQ+ community, learning disability and eating disorders. Autism is not a mental health problem. It's a developmental condition that affects how you see the world and how you interact with other people. Just like anyone else, autistic people can have good mental health. However, people with autism do often experience mental health problems.

Councillors had a meeting to discuss progress on 8th February. The 2023/24 budget for Kent & Medway was £37m (2024/25 £42m) covering (i) single point of access, (ii) crisis pathway (including "tier 4" in-patient), (iii) mental health support teams in schools (NHS England funded separately), (iv) neurodevelopment (autism and ADHD) & learning disability team and (v) eating disorder interventions about getting sufferers well physically before addressing the cause. 221 children are waiting 18+ weeks for intervention following assessment (none of these are in Ashford). There were 35,727 assessment referrals out of 435k population.

ASHFORD BOROUGH CORPORATE PLAN 2024-2028

The draft Plan was opened to consultation with Members. The vision is "To make Ashford a place where people, business and nature can collectively thrive". It is supported by three priorities:

- Planet - Working to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and creating places for nature will be at the heart of everything we do.
- People - Listening and serving the Ashford community; we will make best use of available resources to build a society that is equitable and fair.
- Place - Make Ashford a place people are pleased to call home and love to visit, planning for the future of our community.

The following projects are central to addressing the challenges and to achieving the plan over the next four years.

- Finding the Nitrate Neutrality solution for the Stour Valley catchment area to bring forward development.
- Delivering the Councils Affordable Housing Programme.
- Converting the Civic Centre to apartments.
- Bringing forward the Kent Woolgrowers site.
- Plans for a mixed-use Town Centre and taking the Odeon project forward.
- Options for the redevelopment for Park Mall.

My response to the consultation was that this needs to focus more on what needs to be delivered to improve the way in which the Council is regarded by its residents. Developments such as the Civic Centre / KWG / Odeon and Park Mall have been talked about for a long time – have Swanton House and the former B&Q site been forgotten? Key issues (for me) are as follows.

- Ensure new community centres are delivered in Finberry and Bockhanger.
- Planning applications are dealt with swiftly and fairly including adequate resources in enforcement.
- Improve provisions for parking for residents around the town centre and enforcement is done fairly. Make it much easier to park in our towns, better signs are needed.
- Make sure that Brompton Bikes does not result in 4,000 workers parking in south Ashford & Willesborough. I accept this employer will be a key driver for the town's prosperity.
- Ensure developments in the Borough are done responsibly and deliver biodiversity gains and green spaces are properly joined up. They should protect and enhance what is already there. The Land Mapping Commission should be central to the new Local Plan to 2041.
- Ensure that resources are provided to improve the delivery of broadband in areas of the Borough that have been left behind. This is essential for businesses as well as residents.
- Ensure textile and small electrical recycling are available as these are outside the new refuse collection contract. We must be clearer in what can be put into the grey bin, DIY waste is not permitted but this includes wood and that is not right as it can be used in the waste to energy plant.

- We need to continue to reflect the needs of the community during the cost-of-living crisis, not all of our residents have the luxury of paying for more expensive green ways of heating their homes.
- We need to ensure the existing cycling and walking opportunities are properly developed. There is not easy walking route from Finberry to the town.
- We need to promote the right to buy as it released cash for us to build more council houses without losing housing stock in the community.
- We need to ensure proper use of the apprenticeships levy and ensure that the College are offering courses in what the town needs.
- Maintain and support work of the CSU, protecting our CCTV monitoring service. Find out why there are so many reports of ASB.
- The look of our towns needs to be a priority with increased resources in tackling litter and graffiti.

REPTON AVENUE

KCC has recently received additional funding from the Government which Kent will use across the county to deliver another Pothole Blitz Programme (PHB). The PHB Programme is due to start in March 2024 through to September 2024.

The initial list of roads includes the following roads in my division / parish areas. Repton Avenue, Carlton Road, Church Road (Sevington), Laws Lane (Frith Road end) Faversham Road (Trinity Road to Towers) and Lower Vicarage Road, Kennington. These roads are all areas that have been raised with me by residents. I am advised that inclusion in the list does not guarantee that a road will be included in the PHB programme as the list is a starting point for assessment to enable priority to be established. Nevertheless, this is a good step forward.

SCHOOL STREETS

Councillors had a meeting about “School Streets” on 13th February. A School Street is a road outside a school with a temporary restriction to motorised traffic at school drop-off and pick-up times, during term times only. The restriction applies to school traffic and through traffic – but, more importantly, not to students/pupils and parents/guardians using ‘active’ travel modes such as Walking, Cycling or Scootering (not e-scooter as these are illegal). The result will be a safer, healthier, and more pleasant environment at the school entrance. These need to be brought forward with the support of the school and has been used at two schools in the county (Southborough Church of England Primary School, Broomhill Park Road and Southborough and Drapers Mills Primary Academy, St Peters Footpath, Margate). I have asked that Godinton PS is considered for the next tranche, and I will work with the

headteacher to have this in their Travel Plan. Further information is at <https://kentconnected.org/school-streets-kent/what-are-school-streets>

STONESTREET SOLAR

I have the following message from the developer:

There has been a slight slippage with the submission (to the Planning Inspector). "EPL 001 Limited (the "Applicant") is in the process of finalising its Development Consent Order application and expects to submit this in late March 2024. Community Liaison Panel members will be informed when the application has been submitted. It is proposed to hold the next CLP meeting in April following the submission, but before the Acceptance stage, to provide details of the next phases of the DCO process, including how members of the community can participate."

With this delay, there is the possibility of a meeting in the village hall to discuss additional information from the developers, including:

- An explanation why the development size is "oversized" at 60MW higher than the NCIP levels and to what extent this results in visual impact and loss of amenity to local residents.
- Further details on the battery storage system including the proposals to mitigate fire risk – will water/chemicals be stored on site.
- Further details of the additional flood risk in Lower Mersham created from the surface water being retained by the fencing and the additional contaminated water used to maintain the solar panels.
- Ask for improved visualisations including from the trig point on Colliers Hill.

SPECIALIST CHILDREN'S CANCER SERVICES

I attended a meeting on 20th February to discuss changes the NHS are proposing. The current services are split between Marsden and St Georges. There are new National Service Provisions which requires the service that are current provided at the Marsden (Sutton) to be moved to St Georges (Tooting) because St Georges has a specialist Children's Intensive Care Unit. Also, St George has a proton beam unit. In essence children's intensive care can be provided face to face on the cancer ward at St George as specialists are on site; it avoids transport to intensive care specialist if required. There is also an option that St Thomas' could provide these services rather than St Georges. Conventional radio therapy will move from the Marsden to UCH (central London). Both possible sites have committed to ensure that parents have help with transport to assist them to access the new sites (including ULEZ reimbursement). This will include dedicated parking and drop off.

The consultation finished in mid-December and the NHS are pleased with the number of respondents including those from Kent. The feedback is published on their website and is described as mixed. A day was spent in East Kent,

meeting with families to discuss travel, parking and accommodation. There were nearly 3,000 responses and 58 community events.

KENT PENSION FUND SUSTAINABILITY TARGETS

I attended a meeting on Pension Fund Sustainability Targets on 22nd February to discuss the focus of the Pension Fund's targets. The Fund Committee has agreed an ambitious policy package to address climate risk, including a headline net zero target of 2050; interim emission reduction goals aligned with limiting global temperature increases to 1.5°C; and a 15% target allocation to sustainable investment assets by 2030.

The work evaluated the Fund's exposure to physical and transition climate risks, an exercise which showed that the Fund's beneficiaries have a vested interest in the successful decarbonisation of the global economy. By setting a clear ambition to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050, the Fund is taking a decisive step in meeting this challenge. In addition to adopting a net zero target of 2050, the Fund will also target a 43% reduction in emissions arising from its equity investments by 2030, and a 69% reduction by 2040. This pathway is consistent with the pace of decarbonisation required by the latest science to limit global warming to 1.5°C, as assessed by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. As the global economy moves away from fossil fuels over the coming decades, the interim milestones will be critical in helping the Fund to navigate transition risk safely.

The Fund's approach is grounded in the recognition that a reduction in the Fund's portfolio emissions must result from real-world decarbonisation. Investors have an important role to play in driving the transition to a low carbon economy and the Fund will invest in companies and industries that are aligned with the transition. The Fund will invest in climate solutions that support wider decarbonisation of the economy. Climate risk is paramount for long term investors like the Kent Pension Fund. In setting a formal net zero target and related measures, we are facing the challenge head on. Further details are at <https://www.kentpensionfund.co.uk/>. The Pension Fund manages £8bn on investors on behalf of local government pensioners.

CENTRAL ASHFORD COMMUNITY FORUM

The Forum met on 26th February. The Key issues discussed included:

- The Forum will chase up ABC to ensure it is consulted on applications in the area.
- I met with ABC officers on 23rd February to discuss the process in achieving Parish status following the SACF meeting which shares this objective. Funding for CACF in the meantime needs to be sourced by Members Grants.
- The areas of the town proposed for development are expected to be published in March. News is awaited concerning The Former Mecca,

Park Mall and Debenhams which have been talked about being developed but the result of the “call to sites” is awaited.

- CACF can demonstrate how it wishes the Town Centre to be improved by responded to a consultation on the next version of the Council’s Corporate Strategy which is expected to be launched in Spring 2024. This should include our vision for the future. The points raised included.
 - Litter bins need to be emptied more regularly can ABC use signalling technology?
 - Public transport needs to be frequent and clean, electronic signs showing the wait time would be beneficial.
 - Graffiti in the town centre needs to be managed better.
 - Integrated parking signage is essential to improve ease of access (and exit) to the town centre.
 - Signage can give a better sense of place and a heritage trail should be reinstated.
- Godinton Road speed reduction measures to 20mph are subject to a Traffic Regulation Order consultation so that feedback from the community is obtained. I have asked for this to be carried out before the end of the current financial year.

SEND ROADSHOWS

Councillors had a briefing on 27th February on the recent SEND roadshow was held which was designed to ensure parents can navigate information on SEND and obtaining an EHCP. There was too much fragmentation in the service and parents are finding it very difficult to access guidance rapidly. These will be developed further as part of the Family Hub model and a digital “informational” offer will be created to sit alongside the face-to-face offering.

SEND Information Hub Advice and Guidance Roadshow events



STROKE SERVICES

Councillors had a presentation on the work being done by the NHS on transforming Stroke Services in Kent on 29th February. Three Hyper Acute Stroke Units (HASU) were proposed to be set up in Maidstone, Ashford, and Dartford. Dartford and Maidstone will “go live” soon after 1 April 2024, with the actual date dependant on recruitment of additional staff.

The Ashford site is in the process of precurring the capital spends; it was scheduled for March 2026, but this is not now achievable. Our view was that there had not been sufficient progress on the development of Stroke Services at WHH and noted that there was no early funding to secure recruitment of the WHH HASU although recruitment to all three units was agreed in 2019.

It was agreed that a recovery plan is required for the delivery of the scheme in Ashford, and we expressed concerns that current work on the WHH scheme has ceased until the recovery plan has been agreed. We did accept and were pleased that the temporary consolidation of stroke service in east Kent during COVID at Canterbury ahead of the move to WHH contributed to significant improvements in care and outcomes in east Kent. More than 1200 people a year in east Kent suffer from a stroke so time is of the essence. Stroke can be life-changing for many patients, leaving them with disabilities and a long rehabilitation journey. The better the NHS can treat a patient who is suffering a stroke in a specialist centre staffed by experts, the better the outcome for them.

Separately, a stroke thrombectomy suite is being built at Kent and Canterbury Hospital, which will enable specialists to treat some of the most severe types of stroke by surgically removing blood clots from inside the brain. Currently, patients need to travel by ambulance to The Royal London Hospital for thrombectomy treatment. Thrombectomy is a procedure in which specialists in image-guided surgery, known as interventional radiologists, use real-time x-rays to reach the clot and remove it from inside the patient's brain. This can instantly restore blood flow to the affected area. The procedure is only effective for some of the most severe types of strokes. The thrombectomy suite is due to open later this year.

STODMARSH NUTRIENT NEUTRALITY

KCC plans to enter Memorandums of Understanding with the government to access £9.8m capital funding and £430k revenue funding to tackle nutrient neutrality issues in East Kent. The requirement for nutrient neutrality in the catchment for the Stodmarsh National Nature Reserve is having a significant impact on the delivery of homes in East Kent including Ashford. The government is offering £9.8m of capital for nutrient neutrality mitigation in East Kent along with revenue grants to support the delivery of the strategy.

Nutrient neutrality is a significant constraint on housing development and requires significant mitigation to offset. Without government support there is unlikely to be sufficient mitigation provided in the catchment to unlock housing in East Kent. The decision supports KCC's "Framing Kent's Future 2022-2026" (<https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/corporate-policies/our-council-strategy>) - under priority 2, tackling nutrient neutrality will support commitments for new housing developments to provide "the appropriate physical and social infrastructure necessary to support new and existing communities' quality of life."

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