

Minutes of Mersham Parish Council
Meeting held on Monday, 19th October 2020 via Skype

Present	Peter Turley (Chair)	Geoffrey Fletcher
	Peter Hawkins	Stewart Ross
	Kenton Stewart	Melanie Wells

In attendance: Borough Councillor Paul Bartlett, 1 member of the public and Tracey Block (Clerk)

To be actioned by:

<p>To receive and approve apologies for absence.</p> <p>Apologies had been received from Cllr Murphy</p>	
<p>To receive declarations of interest (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Other Significant Interests). The nature as well as the existence of any such interest must be declared.</p> <p>Cllr Bartlett declared an interest in Sevington Inland Border Centre due to the proximity of his home to this site.</p>	
<p>To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 21st September 2020</p> <p>Minutes of the Meeting of the Mersham with Sevington Parish Council on 21st September 2020 were approved as a true record and were signed as such. Cllr Wells proposed approval and Cllr Fletcher seconded this.</p>	
<p>To discuss matters arising from previous minutes that are not covered by the agenda.</p> <p>Mersham Manor – Cllr Bartlett was going to follow up with Ashford Borough Council, they have responded and advised that the matter is now a priority and that a new case officer has been appointed. They also stated that they had been waiting for additional information from the agent which was not received until August 2020.</p> <p>Cllr Turley felt uncomfortable about the wording in the email from Cllr Barlett to ABC planning that confused the Parish Council’s position. The Parish Council had no intention of trying to lay blame but rather to accelerate progress.</p> <p>Cllr Bartlett feels that there are 3 issues in the village that they have not acted upon, access to Green Business Park, Mersham Manor and Chequer Tree Paddock. Cllr Bartlett thinks the Parish Council are being particularly generous with their approach to the Borough Council Planning Department.</p> <p>It is accepted that the Planning Department have been short staff and that it takes the case officers time to get up to speed but this has taken far too much time.</p> <p>Cllr Bartlett explained that this was a personal email and should not have been circulated.</p> <p>Cllr Turley is to contact the Planning Department, give the Parish Councils position and seek further engagement with them.</p> <p>Cllr Stewart explained that the owner of Mersham Manor had written a letter to say that the Borough Council had been tardy in their response.</p> <p>OpenReach – we are waiting for a response. There will need to be a sub-committee set up, is there anyone willing to drive this? Cllr Fletcher is happy to assist with the driving of this committee. Cllrs Stewart and Wells also offered to help take this forward. The Clerk will continue to chase OpenReach.</p> <p>The stiles have not yet been assigned, these are A369 and AE368. The Clerk will follow this up with Faye Faiers and with Clair Bell if necessary.</p>	<p>PT</p> <p>TB</p> <p>TB</p>
<p>Public session: To receive questions and comments from the public on any agenda item.</p> <p>The member of the public wished to contribute with regard to the DfT consultation.</p>	

<p>Village Alliance is to request that the members respond to the consultation.</p> <p>The Village Alliance is delighted with the positive response from the Borough Council and would like to know how we stay in touch with the Borough Council, would like to know how we take this forward, would like to know how the land will be progressed with the DfT.</p> <p>Cllr Turley explained that Linda had presented the village alliance petition to the Borough Council and that Cllr Bartlett's motion had been unanimously approved.</p> <p>This was to retain the land as a buffer and also how this land might be obtained by the Borough Council.</p> <p>Cllr Turley had been in communication with the DfT who advised that the Borough Council will be the driving force from here with regard to this piece of land.</p>	
<p>To receive report from Borough Councillor</p> <p>Detailed report attached below</p> <p>Sevington Inland Border Facility and adjacent field green belt</p> <p>Cllr Bartlett reported that there are 3 strands of work – designating the buffer zone, buying the site and developing a management plan. The Borough Council will have to negotiate the purchase from DfT. It is hoped that this will take place at the open day. Cllr Clarkson is to be left to take this forward with Minister Maclean by December 2020. A lot of background work is going forward. The Minister who will sign the SDO is Robert Jenrick MP, there will be the opportunity to speak with Public Servants going forward. ABC are regularly speaking to DfT and Mott Macdonald. If Robert Jenrick is to sign the SDO, then the PC need to continue to lobby Gerry Clarkson and Roger Gough (KCC Leader). As long as the key people are regularly reminded of the aspirations for the site until a decision is reached then we should be successful.</p> <p>The relevant part is to have the land registered as SP7 ie a buffer zone. However we do not know when the new government planning legislation will land. In some form it is likely that there will be some change to the planning rules which will require a new Local Plan. In the meantime the Parish Council could think about what is wanted for this piece of land. The PC should take the lead on designing this piece of land.</p> <p>Cllr Turley expressed discomfort as there has been nothing placed in writing – suggest that a letter is written to Gerry Clarkson thanking him for his verbal support and request a plan from the PC and request that Village Alliance undertake something similar. Village Alliance is looking for written support from Minister Maclean and will request a response to formalise the plan.</p> <p>What are we asking for the new field? Cllr Turley believes this is a community project: 1. Suggest asking Year 6 at the Primary School for ideas, other community groups, 2. find out if there are other locations that could be looked at, ie top of Detling Hill near the showground (White Horse Woods), 3. See if there is a student writing a thesis for recommendations for the site. Suggest contacting the Universities. What are other thoughts?</p> <p>Cllr Ross – have we thought about the soil being removed in a year's time? How is this soil to be removed and where will it be located following removal? Cllr Ross to ask Kyle Cliff Sites Lead (Kent), FERR Operations, Department for Transport and to let PC know if/when a response is received. It was suggested that the question could also be asked of Daniel Fryd who is leading the community consultation engagement.</p> <p>Others have found Kyle responsive, suggest Cllr Ross contacts him in the first place.</p> <p>Cllr Wells think that tree planting is a good idea and perhaps a trail. If noise is to be cut, trees are not great at cutting noise.</p> <p>Cllr Turley thought the Parish Council should be looking to have a paper with detail as to what we want, having undertaken some community engagement. Need to consider who to approach and come back with some thoughts. To revisit in November.</p>	<p>PT</p> <p>SR</p>

<p>To discuss the latest position with regard to the Planning White paper and agree a response with regard to the consultation.</p> <p>Cllr Bartlett would like to draw attention to the White Paper proposals. The key point is that any response should be looking at question 8a, will struggle to find allocation. The idea of no planning committee is not a positive suggestion. Cllr Bartlett could send something he has put together. Cllr Turley agreed that PC should respond. Cllr Fletcher to review Cllr Turley's draft response.</p>	PT			
<p>To receive an update on funding options for a Speed Indicator Device</p> <p>Thanks to Cllr Bartlett's £2140 grant, however, Cllr Bell is lacking funds – the Clerk is to contact Michelle Byrne to ask if there are any further funds available. This is to be re-visited in November. The sign would be able to be mounted at 3 different locations. The Speedwatch speed device could be sold second hand – Clerk to contact the person who trains the volunteers in case there is a group who would be interested in purchasing this sign.</p>	TB TB			
<p>Update re: purchase of new equipment for Village Caretaker</p> <p>The Village Caretaker system is working well and as we come to the end of the 4th year, we had a major repair on the lawn mower last year and have decided that this needs to be replaced. It is planned to replace the mower and strimmer and to repair the hedge cutter. The mower is to be traded in. There are sufficient funds available to pay for these replacements. Some of the balance will be recovered in the next year. Cllr Turley explained the need for this.</p> <p>Cllr Fletcher thanked Cllr Turley for putting in place the depreciation budgets and without him this would not be viable.</p>				
<p>Update on Mersham Sports Club re: option to purchase extra land in advance of full pavilion funding</p> <p>Cllr Turley as trustee attended the Sports Club meeting. The Sports Club continue to pursue the new replacement building and additional land. While great progress has been made there is a shortfall in funding. A revised pavilion design is being pursued. The Sports Club have been offered a sale site office free of charge to enable them to have some interim additional space.</p> <p>They are continuing to pursue grants from the awarding bodies and have a promise of about £500,000. They are considering progressing with a phased approach, purchase the land and continue with the old pavilion for a period until the new pavilion can be fully funded. The Parish Council has been a strong supporters of the club and if they want to use the PC money for the purchase of the land, Cllr Turley proposed that we approve this. All were in favour. Cllr Ross asked whether they were looking at self-build or whether they are only looking at builders. Cllr Turley explained that they had considered an overall manager but doesn't think as yet that they have a detailed plan in how they will undertake the build itself.</p>				
<p>Planning matters: to authorise a response to any application(s) and to note any recent planning decisions by Ashford Borough Council or any correspondence on planning matters.</p> <p>A list of Planning Applications was circulated as Appendix A with the agenda, those requiring a response were:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="97 1675 1401 1771"> <tr> <td data-bbox="97 1675 373 1771">20/001391/AS</td> <td data-bbox="373 1675 837 1771">The Hay Loft, Laws Lane, Mersham</td> <td data-bbox="837 1675 1401 1771">Construction of proposed storage building</td> </tr> </table> <p>No objections raised, however, Council requests that comments by the neighbours be taken note of.</p>	20/001391/AS	The Hay Loft, Laws Lane, Mersham	Construction of proposed storage building	
20/001391/AS	The Hay Loft, Laws Lane, Mersham	Construction of proposed storage building		
<p>Financial matters:</p> <p>a. To note/authorise the following:</p> <p>i. To note the Parish Council's Financial position <i>The Parish Council bank balance as at 30/09/2020 of £17012.40. We are currently running with an underspend. Funding may be required for the JPF.</i></p> <p>ii. To authorise any payments</p>				

Cheque No:	Payee	Amount
502035	JRB Enterprise – dog poo bags	£ 103.14
502036	Playsafety Ltd – ROSPA Inspection	£ 107.40
502037	black sacks and gloves for I King	£ 30.98
502038	Ian King	£ 118.31
502039	HMRC	£ 76.80
502040	T Block	£ 321.96

A copy of the budget v expenditure was distributed to all Councillors. Cllr Fletcher does not think there is any harm in building up a reserve and considers raising the precept when the Parish Council split from Sevington to be a good idea.

Any Other Business (for information purposes only):

Cllr Hawkins

The streetlight opposite Bower Lodge is still not working. Cllr Hawkins and Cllr Wells have reported this. The dark sky policy is not an excuse for not repairing streetlights. Cllr Bartlett to follow this up.

TB

Chris Denyer is considering that the service will be held outside. Does the PC have any objections? No objections, request communication to be resent.

Cllr Ross

Discussed the issue with A20, there is a sign that states from 19th – 25th of October, resurfacing will take place from J11 to Flood Street. The Clerk had received communication to explain that no resurfacing will take place on A20 until J10a was complete. Clerk to follow this up to find out when work will be completed and when resurfacing might take place.

TB

Determining the time and place of ordinary meetings of the Council up to and including the next annual meeting of the Council.

Monday 16th November 2020

Monday 18th January 2021

Monday 15th February 2021

Monday 15th March 2021

Monday 19th April 2021

Monday 17th May 2021

All

The meeting closed at 8.47pm

COUNCIL UPDATE NOVEMBER 2020

HIGHWAYS

1. Blind Lane was closed for up to 8 days at the start of October to enable water pipe repairs to be carried out by South East Water.
2. I am looking into additional traffic calming following reports for speeding at the junction of Sir John Killick Road and John Haselden Crescent in Repton. This issue has arisen now that Sir John Killick Road is no longer a dead end and runs into Spindlewood End.
3. A traffic scheme is under design for calming on Bybrook Road.
4. Works are scheduled on the carriageway at The Pasture for 5 days from 12th October. I am hopeful this will improve the situation for residents who have reported noise and vibrations from dips in the carriageway.
5. KCC have carried out an inspection of the footpath works in the Godington Road area. The snagging list is:
 - Western Avenue – The section between No.17 and the school.
 - Outside No. 49 Western Road splashes of material on the boundary walls and the slabs /tiles on the entrance paths this is to be removed and the wall/ footway joints levelled as agreed with the resident.
 - Sackville Crescent – The section between Western Avenue and Kings Avenue.
 - Godington Road – several sections where the material has shrunk back along the kerb line as well as some where it may cause ponding issues.
 - A number of chamber covers require attention in each of the roads where the treatment has been applied.

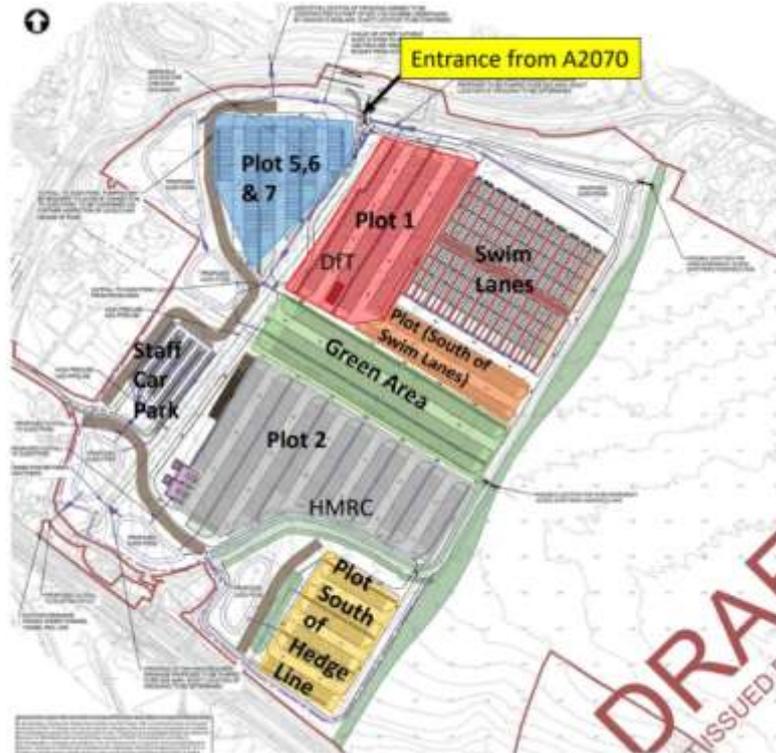
MACE LANE / SOMERSET ROAD

Somerset Road/Mace Lane was identified by KCC to install a 18 month "pop up" cycle lane due to its close proximity to schools, businesses and Ashford International Station. It fitted the requirements set out by the Government. However, there were immediate concerns among drivers during busier periods and pedestrians at all times due to the removal of crossing points. The cycle lane was removed quickly but the aim of encouraging people to cycle or walk to reduce traffic volumes remains.

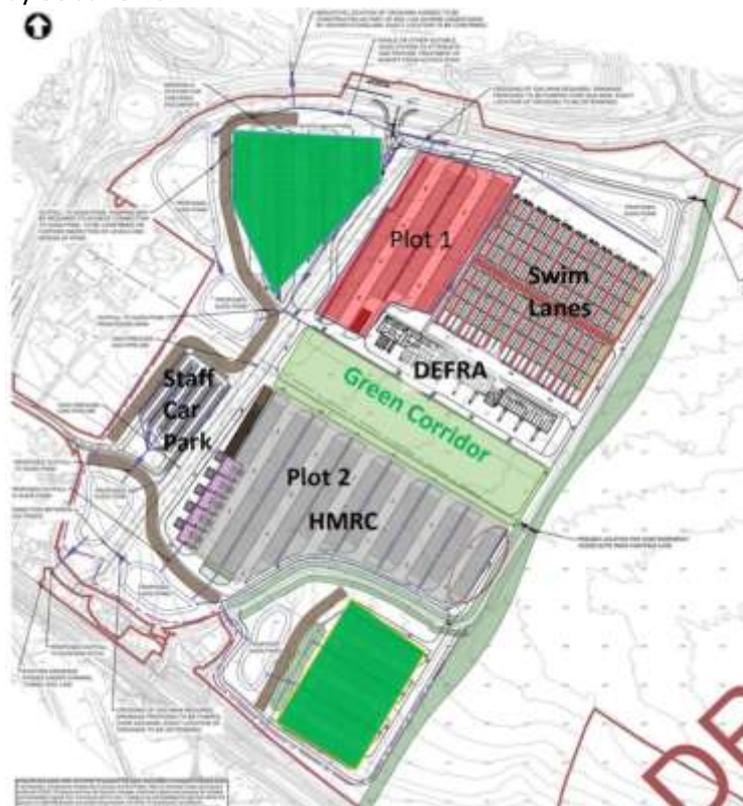
The weight of public opinion was such that the cycle lanes could not be sustained; it caused congestion and too much risk to pedestrians without the traffic light crossings. Future cycling schemes will be considered but these will be managed by Sustrans, an organisation with much more experience in cycle routes and sustainable transport schemes.

SEVINGTON INLAND BORDER FACILITY

Scheme plans have been published. This is how it will look on 1 January 2021:



And here is how it will look by 30 June 2021



A DfT portal will be opened in October which will be open for comments (good and bad) for 14 days. They will be considered and a response made public before a final decision is taken by the Secretary of State. All the work carried out to date has been carried out under the AXAX planning consent.

This consultation will be our one and only opportunity to make it clear how we want the land between Highfield Lane and Blind Lane to be managed when construction is finished. One possibility is a partly wooded area (managed in a way very similar to how the Church Commissioners intend manage Captains Wood). This ticks some big and important boxes as to providing carbon offset and reduces nitrate run off from the previous farming activities. If we ask for a "trim trail" used elsewhere in the borough it will deliver on health and wellbeing aspirations.

PANARAMA

Ashford Borough Council has purchased the east and west wing adjacent to the Panorama building in Ashford. It comprises 109 units of one and two bedroomed flats. The deal is an £18.5m investment and is the largest ever handover of general needs accommodation to be managed on one site by the council. The acquisition is to provide affordable rented accommodation to key workers that have an identified housing need. In addition, it will also free up existing homes through transfers of key workers and, where possible, will provide vacant units in which to house those in temporary accommodation, or from the housing waiting list.

There are 65 homes in the east wing and 44 in the west wing. Work on the west wing is due to be completed this autumn, while the larger block is expected to be completed by early 2021. The deal will grow ABC's housing stock amid pressure for more affordable housing. It also creates real social benefit and sends out a positive message about cohesive communities in the heart of Ashford. If you have a housing need and want more information, visit <https://www.ashford.gov.uk/housing/council-tenant/becoming-a-council-tenant/new-quarter/>

FINBERRY SCHOOL

The Stour Academies Trust, with the support of KCC and the School's Local Governing Body, is proposing to change the designation of the existing SRP at Finberry Primary School (Ashford) from Social Emotional and Mental Health Needs (SEMH) to ASD (Autistic Spectrum Disorder). A copy of the consultation document and the response form can be accessed on the School website here: <http://www.finberry.kent.sch.uk/srp-consultation/>. As KCC are supporting the consultation an Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed which can be viewed on the KCC website here: <https://kccconsultations.inconsult.uk/consult.ti/finberryprimary/consultationHome>

While on the matter of schools, The Wyvern School in Ashford now has part of its electricity supplied by the power from 320 solar panels. The school has also had a complete upgrade over the summer to replace 486 lights with new energy efficient LED lighting. These will reduce the school's electricity demand by around 25%. The lighting project was managed by LASER (KCC's wholly owned energy specialist company). Taking into account the reduction of electricity from the new lighting, the solar PV system will produce 49% of the school's power requirements and in real terms 33% due to the amount used onsite and exported based on the school's power demand. The school will save around £17,353 a year on its energy bill from the combined projects and will reduce its carbon emissions by 33 tonnes a year.

BOCKHANGER HALL

The September Community Council asked that I produce an initial business plan which has been prepared for discussion at the October meeting. The key issues are that ABC should be asked to meet the capital costs of construction and set up from the Business Rate Reserve Fund and the Community Council takes on running and risk of shortfall from the operations.

PLANNING WHITE PAPER

My personal letter is below setting out my opposition to a 25% increase in housing target number for Ashford. Responses are due by 31st October.

*Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP
Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and
Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF*

October 2020

*Dear Secretary of State
White Paper on The Planning System consultation*

Ashford has long supported the Government's growth ambitions, consistently delivering more new homes than its counterparts. Ashford has led on 'Infrastructure First' development, demonstrated by the recent

J10A construction and is well placed deliver its planned levels of growth, in return for the upfront investment in necessary infrastructure to support high quality development.

I write to express my strongest concerns regarding the proposals outlined in the planning white paper. These proposals would be severely detrimental to Ashford's commitment to deliver a genuine infrastructure led approach to new housing and economic growth for the benefit of residents, communities and businesses across the borough. My concerns are as follows.

- *It is a rule-based system which eliminates discretion from local communities as to how much they build.*
- *It sets out a prescribed housing requirement, with no right of appeal.*
- *The algorithm which determines the Borough's annual increase in housing numbers is based of the number of houses it already has so it is an ever-increasing upward spiral of housing.*
- *The most expensive areas of the borough will get the most new houses, that's wrong. New housing is required in the areas of towns that need housing, not rural areas (which tend to be expensive).*
- *Constraints on areas for building include ANOB's but not areas that really need to be protected such as flooding risk areas, conservation areas, wildlife areas and areas that (if built on) would cause nitrate run-off.*
- *Planning permission would be given in principle when land is included in the local plan. This eliminates the obligation to consult and the opportunity to make representations at Planning Committees.*
- *It removes the right of hearing and the public examination process which is anti-democratic and eliminates local involvement.*
- *Generic design codes for the whole Borough would be inappropriate, one size does not fit all and what Ashford needs Tenterden may not want.*

Ashford has been tasked with the enormous challenge to meet the substantial increases in housing since identified as a growth area in 2001. The latest proposal would result in a step change, 25% above housing targets in the adopted Local Plan, these figures are simply not deliverable.

The cumulative impact of the proposed changes will dramatically increase levels of housing to the most alarming, unsustainable levels, and reap further misery on residents, communities and businesses in Ashford who would not experience the benefits of growth.

The proposed approach will only serve to compound a series of severe pressures experienced in areas across the borough on all forms of infrastructure, and on our cherished natural and historic environments.

I do recognise the Government's manifesto commitment to deliver nationally 300,000 new homes per year and I do accept that the planning system has its limitations. However, it is a sector that is completely exhausted by consultation and fatigued by change. Local planning authorities require certainty and confidence to make plans in response to genuine local needs

I urge you to abandon this latest set of changes to the planning system and discuss alternatives which are proportionate, realistic and strive to improve the quality of life for people and the Ashford community.

ODOUR NUISANCE

The long hot summer and serious fire at Cobbs Wood on 15th September has brought into focus the problems that we have in Ashford over nuisance dust and odour. Residents are entitled to have "quite enjoyment" of their homes and the "great stink" of 2020 from Cobbs Wood and Bybrook Waste Water Treatment works will be remembered and requires action.

KCC is responsible for granting planning consent for buildings and significant changes to buildings which deal with waste. This means that when operators wish to build/change something they need consent from KCC. Conditions are imposed to prevent inappropriate odour as far as height, scale, pollution activities etc., much like any other planning application. Planning conditions can be imposed but must be proportionate and related to the work. If these conditions are not adhered to notices can be issued requiring remedy but it is necessary to specify the condition which has been breached with evidence of the offending party. ABC is responsible for most other planning

applications and investigating potential nuisance from odour but have no statutory powers to require the offending party to remedy. ABC in their role as planning authority can ask builders of new houses to make a proportionate contribution towards odour infrastructure as part of their planning application. The Environment Agency have enforcement responsibility for any air quality incidents (including dust).

The various operators at Cobbs Wood, EMH, Sheerness etc are responsible for the operations at their properties. They have a licence from the EA (Ofwat in the case of Southern Water in Bybrook) which sets out conditions and statutory obligations.

A meeting is scheduled for 19 October with all interested parties on Cobbs Wood when progress is hoped to be made to find a permanent solution. With McDonalds looking to locate near to Cobbs Wood it is hoped there will be additional impetus to finding a solution.

KENT TOGETHER

Kent residents who are facing financial difficulties due to the coronavirus pandemic may be eligible for support. KCC has received a short term, one-off contribution from central government to support households experiencing financial hardship as a result of Covid-19. Using this grant KCC can support those struggling to afford food and other essentials over the coming months via our Kent Support & Assistance Service (KSAS). If you, a loved one, a friend or someone in the community that you know is in need of support then we can help. Visit www.kent.gov.uk/ksas to find out more. Don't worry alone, help someone struggling today.

WHH FUNDING

As part of a wider package of improvements to Kent's NHS of £38.5m, WHH & the QEQM hospitals have secured £30m of funding to increase patient capacity. The WHH expenditure includes a ten-week building programme (which has already started) to deliver:

- 11 additional treatment cubicles in the Emergency Department
- 8 intensive care beds
- A new, larger Surgical Emergency Admissions Unit, and
- A women's ambulatory unit, which will mean that women with specific conditions can be treated in a dedicated environment, away from the emergency department, and
- An extra 30-bed ward to provide additional capacity for the winter period and increase the number of single ensuite rooms to more easily isolate patients with infections.

KENT RAIL STRATEGY 2021

The draft Kent Rail Strategy for 2021 commenced its public consultation on Wednesday 23 September and runs for eight weeks until Tuesday 17 November. If you wish to respond to the consultation, please visit: kent.gov.uk/kentrailstrategy2021

MOTORING OFFENCES

The Kent Police and Crime Commissioner, Matthew Scott, is seeking local views on a piece of work that's being done to look at motoring offences and whether punishments should change. It's part of a national consultation being run by the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners on road safety. Please complete the 60 second survey using this link: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/apccsaferoads>

CLIMATE CHANGE

In response to the Climate Emergency, the UK Government revised the Climate Change Act 2008 in 2019. This introduced the UK target of net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. KCC has led on the development of the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy and has a target to reach net-zero by 2030. This will rely on many existing technologies and energy programmes already in place including LED street lighting and solar energy schemes. The base line carbon emissions (2010/11) was 58,210 tonnes per year. By 2014/15, this had reduced to 49,461 tonnes per year and in order to be carbon neutral this must fall to 17,500 tonnes per annum.

This will be achieved by renewable energy generation, shifting to electric vehicles and energy rationalisation across the estate and will require investment of the order of an estimated £27m but is expected to deliver returns in the region of £96m. Further information is at <https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s98966/Decision%20Report.pdf>

ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING POINTS

KCC will be partnering with all interested Parish, Community and Town Councils to install extra electric vehicle (EV) charge-points across Kent. The chargers will be located on land owned by the community, such as village hall car parks, and it's hoped they can then be used by local residents and businesses that do not have off-street parking.

The chargers will be owned and operated by KCC for public use. Any financial surplus generated by the charge points will be shared with the hosting council. KCC will use their share of the financial surplus to extend and maintain the charge-point network.

Providing more EV charge-points is one strand of the actions KCC is taking to reach net-zero carbon emissions by 2030. The grant uses funding from the Department for Transport and Kent Lane Rental Fund and is designed to encourage a shift towards cleaner travel in Kent.

Paul Bartlett
Mersham, Sevington South and Finberry ward & Deputy Leader, ABC
Ashford Central Division, KCC
Grosvenor Hall Ward, Kennington Community Council
01233 500667 or 0773 929 3502
paul.bartlett@ashford.gov.uk or paul.bartlett@kent.gov.uk