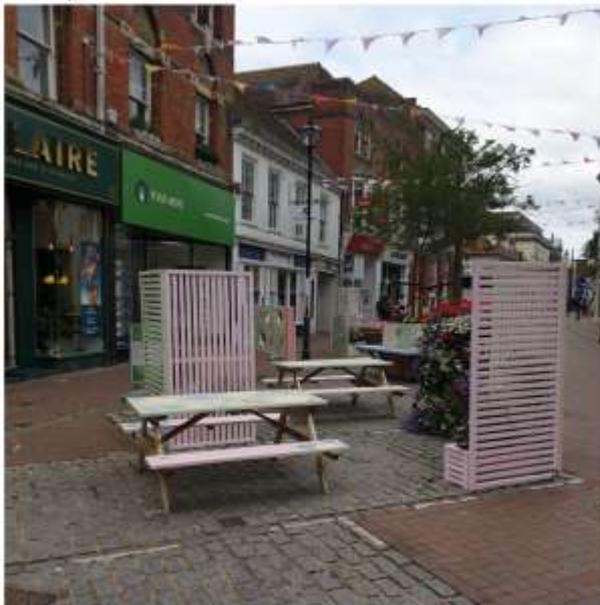


COUNCIL UPDATE 7.2022

TOWN CENTRE IN SUMMER

The seating in Middle Row looks great but let down by the phone box in the Churchyard. There is no Parish Council covering the town centre area, but I have asked the Borough Council not adopt.



Summer planting and seating



But the sorry state of the phone box lets the area down

LOCAL CHILDREN'S PARTNERSHIP GROUP

This was held at Waterside Children's Centre, Waterside on 5th July. Key issues:

- Sgt Katie Reed gave an overview of new community policing model. PCs have taken over from PSCOs. They will be higher profile to tackle ongoing ASB in Kennington but it is essential that issues are reported timely on the Kent Police website as this offers real time response (not AI).
- Following forums in the spring, SEND advice and roadshows (in person to enhance digital offering) are going to be offered. There will be at least one big event per district per year (more if possible). These are ideal opportunity for parents who feel their child may be neuro-diverse. There are over 450 service offerings across Kent. The Ashford event date is TBC.
- "Making Sense of Autism" training courses are to be rolled out in schools. It consists of new language and approach for teachers, classroom assistants, wider education workforce and KCC education officers to look at autism from a strength point of view (autism it's a difference not a deficit).
- i-THRIVE is an approach that ensures that young people get the emotional wellbeing and mental health support they need when facing

difficult situations. The goal is for every young person in Kent to thrive, but if they do need extra help, they know where to go to find the right support. Young people will be supported to get the help they need. Further information is available from <https://kentresiliencehub.org.uk/i-thrive/>

KENT ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS (KALC)

The July meeting was held on 5th July. The key issues were:

- There was an update presentation on the neighbourhood policing team from Insp Simon Johnson (see June report for details)
- The Biffa waste contract ends in March 2024. Under the new contract (with Suez), alternate weekly collection will continue. ABC is unlikely to require further separation even though the government now allows for this. There will be day changes to collections as each week, half of the borough will have waste collected and half will be green recycling. Textiles, waste electricals and electronic equipment (WEE) will now be collected in road shows. The Suez trucks are smaller (18 tons rather than 24 tonnes) so they will manoeuvre better on tighter roads.
- Street cleansing is “output based” – streets are cleaned when they need to be based on experience and reporting through the website / app. There are 1,200 bins to be emptied.
- Suez will work with Demelza to recycle furniture from bulky waste collections.
- Biggest contaminants are black sacks, textiles, food waste and nappies. A communication exercise will be carried out.

COMMUNITY SAFETY UNIT

This meeting was held on 6th July. The key issues were:

- The “Better Off Calculation” was demonstrated by Job Centre Plus staff <https://www.betteroffcalculator.co.uk/login>. It shows how much better off claimants would be in work. Universal Credit can pay 85% of childcare costs as long as the provider is OFSTED registered. The Flexible Support Fund will pay any costs to get unemployed into work including the first three months travel cost; it could be a bicycle. Other costs could include a haircut or a laptop. A recruitment event is held every other Wednesday at the Job Centre Plus.
- Liaison between South-eastern enforcement team, Kent Police, Transport Police and Ashford Partnership Against Crime (APAC – a group of 65 businesses and organisations in and around Ashford) has improved considerably through DISC (DISC empowers communities to share information so they can better protect themselves and their property, staff and customers).

- A 24 hour, easy to access defibrillator is needed in the town centre as not all units are not always available (this could be installed in the disused Churchyard phonebox).
- A mirror on the station underpass has not yet been installed as the bridge owner (HS1 / National Rail) has not yet given consent.
- There are ongoing issues around the Cloverleaf Roundabout. ABC intends to write to the landowner. This may trigger ability to take action against the landowner / event organiser.
- Increase reports of risky lake swimming at Conning brook and Singleton. Adam Staunton has been advised. ABC should explore creating a safe cold water swimming area as this has significant mental health benefits.
- ABC Housing / CSU / KCC Wardens are now carrying out town centre walkabouts on the first Wednesday of month to liaise with businesses and town centre users to identify ASB areas.
- Kent Police are working with Waitrose Car Park Owner to ensure that ASB does not re-occur as the nights draw in.
- Now the KWG has been secured, ASB has been displaced to Old Flour Mill. There is ongoing liaison with the owners.
- £13m rebuild on Kent Fire Station will start in September for 18-month period.
- KCC Wardens have a new model and plan to expand their work in Kennington. A bike marking event will be scheduled.
- 7 outstanding "line of sight" cameras are up but not connected due to issues with the legal / BT link issues.

FARE SHARE

Volunteers needed!

Join the fight against hunger and food waste

Volunteer with us at FareShare Kent to save good food from going to waste and fight hunger within your community.

At our depot in Ashford, we currently distribute good quality surplus food to 228 charities throughout Kent. Last year we provided enough food to make 3.3 million nutritious meals for families and individuals in need.

Get active, gain new skills, meet new people and be part of the change.

"If I were to encourage others to join FareShare Kent, I'd say 'just do it!' You really feel you're giving back to the community and stopping all the food waste going to landfill!"

Jackie, Volunteer

Sign up now!

fareshare.org.uk/volunteer

Interested? Want to find out more?

Contact us on:

admin@faresharekent.org.uk
faresharekent.org.uk
 Unit 4 St Johns Court, Ashford Business Park,
 Foster Rd, Sevington, Ashford TN24 0SJ
 01233 500477

[f](#) [t](#) [i](#) [@faresharekent](#)

FareShare Kent



CPRE KENT

CPRE held a presentation on 6th July at Aldington Village Hall “Shout From the Rooftops: Delivering a Common-sense Solar Revolution”.

- Solar panels on rooftops protects the beauty of our landscapes
- There is 250,000 ha of south facing commercial roof space in the UK
- Failure to embrace rooftops will see the area of Greater London lost to ground based schemes
- Rooftop will spare land for food and nature
- Barriers include cost and resulting look of retrofitting roofs when they are not of optimum design and poor grid connectivity
- There are best practice examples identified by CPRE

We need:

- A proper land use framework setting principles for ground based solar
- New builds should be orientated under planning regulations
- The code for sustainable homes should include solar
- Require commercial car parking to provide solar energy generation
- A range of financial incentives are required (low cost loans)
- Better community engagement e.g. (KCC’s www.kentcommunityenergy.org)

WATERBROOK ALDI

ABC will be meeting with the Church Commissioners to review the position in respect of the Aldi Waterbrook s.106 linkage with the delivery of the Local Centre application at Finberry. The Finberry Local Centre application was submitted to the Council in outline in 2019 and CCE now (in 2023) has a workable 'Stodmarsh' (nutrient neutrality) solution taking land owned/controlled nearby out of agricultural use.

ABC are focussed on the issue of the outline permission (completion of s.106 and agreement of planning conditions) as the key component of helping moving matters forward in terms of Local Centre reserved matters detail and delivery of the Centre.

There is a need for pragmatism but ABC must ensure that the outstanding needs of the residents of Finberry - in terms of delivery of the Local Centre and the smaller scale commercial offer alongside homes - are factored into the discussions about the Waterbrook s.106 and how that might be varied.

COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

This met on 11th July. The key issues were:

- We had a presentation from the Community Payback scheme from the probation service. A job advert has been issued as there are only 2 supervisors in Ashford. The Payback work carried out included setting up the community gardens at the Limes and Shadoxhurst. They painted the One You shop in Park Mall. Any ideas for potential projects would be welcomed.
- -7.6% reduction y/o/y in serious violence following increase in hotspot foot patrols from the police
- Action plan for Bockhanger and Beaver ward have been produced and includes actions to increase public confidence and ensure take up and most efficient use of available grant.
- 2 drivers have been issued with s59 orders by Kent Police for ASB driving at Eureka. These orders give the police the opportunity to educate drivers as to the effect of their driving on others as younger drivers are not always aware. The management company at Eureka (Savills) are looking into shutting off the overspill car park near the cinema / "zig zag" path when it is not needed.

BUS SERVICES

I met with Stagecoach on 11th July to discuss bus changes for Ashford. Here are my notes:

March 2021 – National Bus Strategy (BSIP) – KCC funding £19m (£12.5m capital eg Bus Priority Schemes & £6.5m revenue e.g. Kent Travel Scheme price hold) awarded March 2023. This spend has started with Free Bus Weekend 24/25 June.

Next BSIP est £16m (£12m capital, £4m revenue), date of award TBC.

No more than 10% of BSIP revenue can be used to support services. Service supported if “Socially Necessary” and “leaves students without means getting to schools and sustainable in long term” OR “profound impact on social inclusion and sustainable in long term and cost per passenger journey less than services withdrawn by KCC”.

The result of this is:

The following services will be supported by KCC:

515	Singleton to Towers)	
516	Towers to Willesborough)	
517	Hythe Rd to Knoll Lane)	These are w/d by Stagecoach
518	Highworth to Tenterden)	
519	Stanhope to Towers)	
&			
2	Tenterden to Ashford (A28)		Service w/d by Stagecoach (bar 3 off-peak services); KCC will fund school service via 962, HS1, AS1/2/3/4.

This leaves the following service changes by Stagecoach leaving KCC to fund (subject to budget):

1	Ashford to Canterbury	No longer stops in Wye – Stagecoach to look at this again
2A	Ashford to Tenterden via K'nth	Sunday withdrawn, additional off peak, no service Park Farm
10X	Ashford to Maidstone	Sunday withdrawn
A	Singleton	reduced early AM, early eves & Sat PM
B	Kennington to Bridgefield	reduced early AM, early eves & Sat PM, some late eve w/d
C	WHH to Town Centre	reduced early AM, early eves & Sat PM, some late eve w/d
D	Stanhope	reduced early AM, early eves & Sat PM
AD	Stanhope	extra early AM, late eve “brought back” by KCC
G	Godinton to Orbital	peak services “brought back” by KCC
965	Park Farm to Lenham Sch	running time reduced
10E	Egerton to Ashford	PM departure times changed
10	Folkestone to Ashford	Some late journeys w/d, no longer serves Lympne, Sun w/d

New timetables in about 10 days time.

RE G LINE – There is s106 funding for former shuttle bus which will be used on bus stop improvements at Asda and staff travel schemes.

RE B LINE – State of Play note on s106 to be finalised to see if this can subsidise the service. Note pre-application from Persimmon on turning circle at Bridgefield (which was temporary) so might produce an impetus to extend the B LINE to new Bridgefield extension / Finberry. Finberry extension dependant on KCC enforcement of bus only route (BSIP funding).

COMMUNITY WARDENS

The shape of the Community Warden service in Kent is the subject of a 12-week consultation beginning on 12th July. The proposal has been developed with information from service users and input from staff and partners to maintain the broad scope and strengths of the service. Data has been used to identify the communities which would benefit most from having a warden. This

includes areas of deprivation, a high elderly population and isolated and rural locations. Other factors such as proximity to services and public transport changes would also be taken into consideration. Wardens would also continue with their proactive work, helping people connect with services they might otherwise have difficulty accessing, feeding into the work of partner organisations including Kent Police, Kent Fire and Rescue Service, borough, town and parish councils, schools, health providers and community groups, supporting communities in emergencies and carrying out safeguarding visits.

KCC are proposing to retain six teams covering two districts each, with a minimum of one team leader and three wardens per team and to distribute the further 14 wardens across the teams according to need. Having a place where people can speak to wardens in the town centre, ideally the lower High Street (a site of ASB) would make people feel safer. Community wardens are better placed to follow up with victim support and safeguarding which enables beat officers to concentrate on front line issues. If possible they should educate about the use of e-scooters and the impact of speeding.

Visit www.kent.gov.uk/communitywardenreview and complete the online questionnaire.

KCC BUDGET 2024/25

Consultation started on 13th July on the 2024/25 KCC budget. It is open for 8 weeks until 6th September. The consultation asks about KCC's priorities which are currently:

- Care and support for vulnerable adults (32% - £380m)
- Care and preventative services for vulnerable and disabled children (17% - £209m)
- Older persons social care (15% - £180m)
- Public transport including home to school transport (8% - £94m)
- Waste recycling and disposal (7% - £88m)
- Highways management and maintenance (4% - £42m)

These 7 priorities account for 83% of the KCC budget. It is suggested that Highways expenditure increases by £5m to tackle backlog. Other costs include planning, economic development, library, adult education, public health and interest on debt. Contingencies are always required, for example Godinton PS hall and adjacent areas will need to be repaired as reinforced autoclave aerated concrete was found present; this work should be completed by end September.

DOVEDALE COURT

I attended a meeting on 14th July to hear of plans to develop Dovedale Court in Quantock Drive. The unit is owned by Home Group Housing Association providing a home for 10 supported people by national charity, United

Response under KCC contract. They now wish to expand the garden and create a community garden which will create shared access to a green space to benefit from nature and the natural environment. Community garden projects bring long-term benefit to the entire community. Furthermore, it can deliver wellbeing and recovery under the NHS social prescribing and community referral schemes. With the cost-of-living crisis the setting can provide a setting to promote personal learning around sustainability, horticulture and the environment, food production, independent living skills and health and wellbeing. The aim is to:

- Work with community volunteers to create an inclusive welcoming garden that promotes health and wellbeing for all within a community setting.
- Promote community building outreach opportunities including shared harvest, seed and plant swap community open days.
- Deliver environmental activities for the people supported and the wider community.

The team would like to:

- Get the activities at Dovedale known about locally.
- Create contacts with NHS.
- Ensure that planning / tree management are correctly carried out
- Continue the strong relationship with KCC ASC.
- Engage with possible commercial and public sector grant givers for support.



STONESTREETSOLAR

Responses to the new round of consultation closed on 17th July. Here are the points I made:

- The approach taken by the developer is not one that acceptably minimises the impacts of the scheme on the rural location (including the character and quality of the countryside) as it exists.
- The applicant says that reducing the scale of development would not be viable but fails to provide any evidence to support that position.
- There is little evidence how landscape and visual assessment has informed the scheme layout and extent as part of 'good design'. Matters of location, energy export capacity and available land seem to be the primary drivers of the scheme; good design is a secondary consideration.
- The applicant fails to show 'considerable effort towards minimising the landscape and visual impact of solar PV arrays'. 'Considerable effort' must apply to the scheme ***as a whole***.
- The applicant has not demonstrated 'good design' in respect of matters of landscape, visual amenity and heritage impacts.
- ABC policy includes the importance of minimising landscape, visual, public right of way user experience, and heritage impacts and this has not been done.
- The applicants should have used the Design Council to undertake a design review. The design principles guide produced by the National Infrastructure Commission Design Group (NICDG) recommends that design review panels should be set up for every NSIP scheme.
- The screening along public right of way networks sets out to minimise outlook into the solar park. But this may impact on the ability of users to appreciate the surrounding landscape. The screening has an adverse impact on the other qualities enjoyed by public rights of way users to appreciate the surrounding wider landscape.
- A good portion of the site sits within a bowl in the landscape and the locally changing topography nature of the landscape means that insufficient attention has been given to a properly informed analysis and appreciation of that landscape to inform scheme design and extents from the outset.
- There would be significant adverse impacts arising from the scheme on elements of landscape character and visual amenity for the 40 year duration of the scheme. Specifically, there are the cumulative effects linked to the solar farm planning application a short distance away at Church Lane, Aldington.
- A revised Heritage Statement has not been submitted and so it is not possible to comment on the impact on the setting of the heritage assets. A more thorough identification and analysis of the designated and non-designated heritage assets needs to be made, to include the impact on long-range views of the proposed development across the historic landscape.
- Construction traffic will pass through Aldington village because the 'on-road construction route' proposed is along Goldwell Lane.

GP SERVICES

KCC discussed issues in GP appointments on 19th July. The key issues are:

- Number on appointments up 7% on pre-pandemic but 35,000 patients did not attend their in April (out of 767,260).
- New roles in GP practices pa now 778 (previously 408). Target 1,147 by March 2024.
- Phone systems being upgraded to allow “callback” facilities.
- E-consult now used to secure appointments to avoid “8am rush”. This need to be made easier.
- Improve triage to get patents to the right person (not always a GP).
- Review of phone and online consultations and how people are using these to reduce more time-consuming face-to face.
- Reduce avoidable GP appointments by direct access to referral to specialists.
- Recruitment by “attraction package” and return of experienced GPs.
- Reduce bureaucracy although this is at odds to giving patients access to records – do patients really want this?
- Expand role of community pharmacies.

ORBITAL WALKING ROUTE

I will be working with colleague councillors Sojan Joesph and Steve Campkin to improve the walking route through the moat at orbital. This will offer an improved walking / cycling walk from Finberry to Ashford – it’s shown below as the green line (shorter than the blue line).



Linked to this, I agreed to join a group of councillors at the meeting held on 27th July to look at the medium term financial plan for the Council during August / September. We will look at the capital expenditure plans. The current version is shown below and this does not include provision for improved walking and cycling and I believe it should.

Project Name	Total Approved Budget	Spend at 31/3/23	23/24 Forecast Spend	Future Forecast Spend	Total Spend
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Place and Space					
Planned Minor Capital Works for General Fund Assets	2,000	500	500	1,000	2,000
Ellingham Roof	800	50	750		800
Victoria Park Fountain & Carpark	510	0	0	0	0
International House Works	2,080	113	1,981	0	2,094
Solar PV (various sites)	10,800	73	3,100	7,627	10,800
Solar PV Carlton Road	401	0	0	401	401
Stodmarsh - Phase 1	24,705	190	12,250	12,265	24,705
Newtown Works - Phase 1	87,273	4,162	38,636	44,475	87,273
Newtown Works - Phase 2	58,000		29,000	29,000	58,000
Project Green	70,009	90	34,000	35,919	70,009
Single Grants Gateway Fund	300		75	225	300
Victoria Park Rejuvenation Project	4,169	2,549	1,620	0	4,169
Conningbrook Lakes Country Park development	2,353	143	890	1,320	2,353
Play Parks	1,100	954	146	0	1,100
Health & Wellbeing					
Henwood Temporary Accommodation	6,200	328	5,872	0	6,200
Rough Sleepers Accommodation Programme	3,287	1,540	1,747	0	3,287
Customer Tech & IT					
Digital Transformation	650	179	471	0	650
HRA					
Programmed Works Including Disabled Adaptations	29,738	2,581	4,286	22,871	29,738
Play Areas	298	178	120	0	298
Street Purchases	29,490	28,790	1,345	0	30,135
55 Mabledon (Piper Joinery)	7,552	2,056	0	5,496	7,552
Oakleigh House	15,257	257	377	14,623	15,257
Coneybeare	7,700	0	1,700	6,000	7,700
Tile Kiln	6,924	1,152	0	5,772	6,924
Infill Sites	5,100	0	0	5,100	5,100
Digitalisation	60	0	40	20	60
Decarbonisation	18,400	12	6,000	12,388	18,400
Lifeline	274	0	54	220	274
Court Wurtin	275	63	212	0	275
Monypenney & Vicarage	10,500			10,500	10,500
Millview	800	10	190	600	800
Pym House	8,500			8,500	8,500
Repton Medical Centre	6,000			6,000	6,000
Hope House - High Halden	4,115			4,115	4,115

The proposal to carry out work at the Herbert Fountain in Victoria Park is under threat and a Trust is mooted to access grant funding. The total cost is £510k, but it does need attention:



THE PASTURE PAVEMENT

Work has now been completed on the pavement in The Pasture (near Bybrook Road end). I re-reported it under ref 734327



UK RESETTLEMENT SCHEME

KCC held a discussion of its work on resettlement schemes on 26th July. The work by KCC includes supporting re-settlers with education, adult education, children's services, health, public health and social care. Funding is provided by the government but where numbers exceed expected numbers KCC will need to meet the cost.

- The UK Resettlement Scheme covers all nationalities but mainly covers those from Syria, Iran and Sudan. To date 115 families (600 individuals) have been resettled in Kent. Specific properties are identified.
- The Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (for those who worked closely with British military or Government) and Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme is for a wider group for those in the country who have stood up for democracy, women's rights, freedom of speech, the rule of law and vulnerable people. 50 families are in settled accommodation in Kent plus those in three "bridging" hotels in Kent. These hotels will close at end August and as at the date of the meeting 9 families in Kent have no offers (42 families have left the hotels, 21 families have definite offers and 10 have indicative offers). Formal offers of property are made by the local authorities to the Home Office.
- The Ukraine conflict has resulted in 1,397 Ukrainians (690 families) in Kent under the Homes for Ukrainians Scheme. 2,317 have left the Scheme (generally to private rented accommodation) since it was set up in 2022 and support is given to the families for Ukrainians to do this by KCC. It is estimated that 900 more individuals will travel to Kent under the scheme as the conflict is ongoing.
- The Hong Kong Resettlement Scheme has accommodated 2,700 in Kent but support is minimal from KCC due to their circumstances.

- Kent is expected to accommodate 1,300 Adult Asylum Seekers who arrive through irregular/unofficial routes. Each region has an allocation by government. It is expected that these will be housed in dispersed accommodation (flats, houses or rooms in a House of Multiple Occupation) as the use of hotels reduces.

IBF AND HIGH FIELD

The bin I requested to counter littering and dog poo on the IBF footpaths has been installed. I have christened it with some litter!



The DfT advise “we are currently expecting the results of the Spring review and will look to implement any remedial actions where necessary, to ensure the successful establishment of the landscape planting.” I have (hopefully helpfully) supplied some photos of trees that have died to complaints.sevingtonibf@hmrc.gov.uk. They advise the inbox is monitored on a regular basis and the site operator aims to respond to all complaints within 48hrs where they can, however where further investigations are needed, this may be slightly longer.



KCC advise the following on High Field Planting, "KCC planted the land to the south of the PROW with wildflower mix in the spring time, so this should be coming through now. The land to the north of the PROW is planned to be cut, sprayed and seeded with wildflower mix this autumn."

A replacement sign for the left turn into Church Road with a new sign (shown below). The new sign should help reduce HGVs heading down Church Road.



With regards to signage on the Strategic Road Network, the DfT have been undertaking topographical surveys and a road safety audit to determine the best locations for the permanent signs. Unfortunately, National Highways are now having to consider some amendments to road barriers due to space restrictions, which has delayed the installation of the signs, but they are aiming to install them over the coming months.

VILLAGE HALL

On 27th July, ABC Cabinet approved a new grant stream following the award £37,532 of Government Funding "providing grants to support improvements to community amenities in the borough. Rural Community Amenities Grants (RCAG) will be used to provide grants within the Community Grants Policy for areas outside of the Ashford Urban Area".

Mersham Village Hall has been extended from developer contributions arising from the nearby development. The Village Hall Committee now needs to deliver certain upgrades to the "old" hall. I have recently provided funding from my Community Grant for LED lighting. The next project is the distribution board which needs replacing as a matter of urgency. I have asked ABC if an application could be made under the RCAG for the distribution board cost.

Paul Bartlett
Mersham, Sevington South and Finberry Ward, ABC
Ashford Central Division, KCC
Grosvenor Hall Ward, Kennington Community Council
Sevington Ward, Sevington with Finberry Parish Council
0773 929 3502
paul.bartlett@ashford.gov.uk or paul.bartlett@kent.gov.uk