

COUNCIL UPDATE 2.2022

EAT WELL – SPEND LESS

I attended the latest “Eat Well – Spend Less” roadshow organised by ABC at Ashford market on 1st February. This followed successful events at Stanhope, Repton Connect, Park Mall and Tenterden. There were stalls including One You Services offering free health checks; ABC welfare intervention; South East Water offering water saving tips; Ashford together, transforming, connecting and revitalising communities and bringing people together; SEK – Connect Well Community Navigators; KCC Adult Social Care & Health offering advice on social care and public health; KCC Ashford Children’s Centre – sharing their offer and services and; Digital Inclusion & Capability funded by KCC Helping Hands.



S106 CONTRIBUTIONS

Councillors had its annual presentation on Infrastructure Funding Statement on 3rd February on 2021/22 municipal year. Items relevant to my ward / division are as follows.

Money to be provided under obligations entered into in 21/22

- £214,764.75 towards affordable housing
- £11,664 allotment improvements in the borough
- £19,008 allotment improvements in urban Ashford
- £34,213 tree planning
- £534,528 towards Sydenham or another urban practice
- £245,931 towards outdoor 3G sports (could be Finberry)
- £283,935 towards Knatchbull improvements

Money received in 21/22 (from prior obligations)

- £67,869.29 for Repton PS or Highworth
- £47,299.06 to be spent at Gateway
- £81,972.64 towards town centre enhancements

- £511,899.35 towards Knatchbull
- £107,799.96 towards Highworth
- £6,202.71 towards Ashford North Youth Centre
- £9,838.82 Templar Way open space commuted sum

Money spent in 21/22 (may arise from prior obligations)

- £67,869.29 expansion at Repton PS / 3 new classrooms at Highworth
- £511,899.35 expansion at Knatchbull
- £107,799.96 expansion at Highworth
- £6,202.71 enhancements at Ashford North Youth Centre
- £37,089.80 enhancement to lighting at Station/DOV underpass.

STONESTREET SOLAR

The Evolution Power Community Liaison Panel was held on 7th February. We learned that the developer received around 175 responses to their consultation from residents and 25 from statutory consultees, the majority opposed the development. EP mailed 2,200 houses up to 4km from the application site in Mersham and Aldington, this is a low response. That said, apathy does not equal approval. Discussions challenged several aspects of the proposal and pushed for another public consultation to show how the applicant has responded to the resident and statutory body concerns expressed in the first round. We requested that this consultation include another exhibition event in Aldington Village Hall. Visual and landscape impact, best use of land, public rights of way, the so-called community fund and visibility of data were all brought up. We also learnt access will be re-routed to avoid Evegate Mill; further protection will be given to skylark, brown hare and yellowhammer species; no community fund has been offered by the much larger Cleave Hill solar development in Graveney, near Faversham and F&H think there is no material effect on the ANOB

The applicant will be talking to KCC and ABC to try to reach agreement about revisions. Members of the Community Liaison Panel will be kept informed as to how these discussions progress but will not meet until there are concrete alternatives ready to be put forward in the next round of consultations.

VICTORIA PARK

The KCC meeting on 7th February agreed an application to Central Government to enhance access to Victoria Park will be made. This will follow completion of the Lottery funded improvements and the completion of the residential development north of the Stour. Two projects are proposed (i) widening up to 3.4km of off-road cycle paths and footways, new footways and crossings to enhance access to the park (ii) raised table crossing at Cryol Road to provide a link into the park & Arcon Road to improve link to shared use path, traffic calming on Woolreeds Road to improve cycle comfort, reduce speed limit to 20mph, declutter shared path between Arcon Road and Beaver

Lane, install toucan/parallel zebra crossing across Beaver Lane and convert adjoining footways to shared use, Jemmett Road to Noakes Meadow traffic calming to reduce vehicle speeds and make more comfortable cycling.

5. Ashford - Route 5 (Construction)

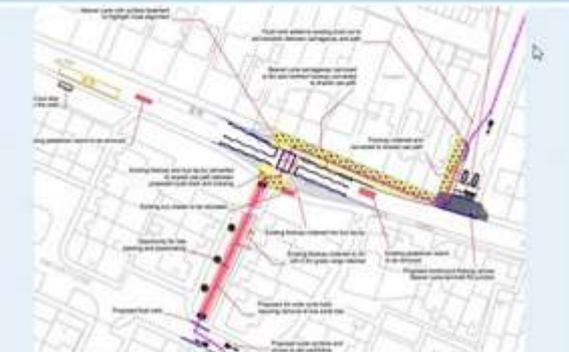
£1.8m-£3.1m	BCR 1.62
Status: Feasibility design	Length – 3.4km
Level of Support: Good: Community + members via previous engagement/consultation	
Description: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> On and off-road cycle route, walking route improvements Connect neighbourhoods and new development to Ashford town centre Links in with Route 7 ATF3 bid, detailed plans developed subsequently 	
Key elements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Widening existing off-road cycle paths and footways New footways New crossings Minor on-road improvements for quiet routes 	




Extracts from design plans

7. Ashford - Route 7 (Development)

£2.0m-£3.3m	BCR 1.15
Status: Feasibility design	Length – 900m
Level of Support: Good: Community + members via previous engagement/consultation	
Description: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mostly on-road cycle route Connect neighbourhoods and new development to Ashford town centre Links in with Route 5 ATF3 bid, detailed plans developed subsequently 	
Key elements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Side road junction improvements Short off road cycle path Raised tables – traffic calming New crossing 	




INTEGRATED CARE PARTNERSHIP

The Kent and Medway ICP met on 8th February. The ICP is setting up a new citizens' panel aiming to recruit around 2,500 people. Members are being actively recruited through a professional market research organisation to

ensure the panel reflects the wider population. People will be enlisted for a time limited period, after which new panel members will be recruited to ensure continued access to fresh views and continued representation to any changing demographic.

Panel members will take part in regular surveys and be invited to take part in other specific engagement activities such as online polls or discussion forums, or taking part in small group work, or larger workshops to develop plans and share their views.

To register your interest please email kmicb.engage@nhs.net.

PCSO REVIEW

Tracey Harman (Assistant CC – Kent Police) spoke at the ICP on the Chief Constable's review of the role of PCSOs which is "about to be published" and will be implemented in June 2023. KALC had separately noted the loss of monthly updates from the PCSO at parish council meetings. The ACC gave the following commitments of the review.

- There will be no reduction of service.
- Individual named officers will be allocated to beats, these officers have wider powers to PCSOs
- A level of PCSOs will be maintained at a reduced level because they provide a useful intelligence role but there was no commitment to re-introduce the monthly parish briefings (the assumption is that these are covered with the Community Voice emails).

QUANTOCK DRIVE VILLAGE GREEN

KCC have had no contact with the new landowner, but the Auction House has, we are told, passed on the details of the Village Green application to them. There is still no update regarding the Title at the Land Registry.

The better view of the Regulations is that KCC's duty to inform the landowner does not apply if that person cannot reasonably be identified. In my view KCC have now reasonably exhausted all avenues so the next stage will be a report to the KCC Member Panel. KCC have a couple of other large Village Green cases (involving very lengthy and complex legal advices) that need to be done first, so there will be a slight delay before the Quantock application is considered by KCC Members.

IBF PLANTING

The Department for Transport has provided the following answer to Damian's written parliamentary question to the Secretary of State for Transport. The question was "what progress his Department has made on fulfilling its

commitments on environmental mitigations for the Sevington Inland Border Facility.”

Answer from Mr Richard Holden: “My Department has already delivered biodiversity enhancements within the Inland Border Facility boundaries by implementing a landscaping scheme to achieve a positive biodiversity net gain as habitats mature. The Department owns the adjacent land to the east of Sevington Inland Border Facility (IBF), known as Sevington East, and intends to use to further offset the environmental impact of the IBF development by creating a local biodiversity asset. Extended archaeological investigations have had an impact on the delivery of this. Those investigations and the work on land formations have now concluded and plans are being updated to deliver the seeding and planting for the biodiversity scheme later this year.”

I spotted these bird boxes next to the footpath in Church Road, Sevington.



ALTERNATIVE FUEL PAYMENTS

If you do not use gas, you can claim a one-off sum of £200. This is so the government ensures all homes benefit from support to combat the rising costs of energy. Families that get gas from the mains benefit from a price cap so this payment ensures that those who use domestic heating oil get government support. It is not means tested.

Your electricity supplier should give you a credit in February so keep an eye on your bill. For further information visit [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) and tap “alternative bill payments”.

SPEARPOINT PAVILLION



John Seaton and me served coffees and teas on 13th February at Spearpoint "Coffee and Chat". Later on, the Mayor opened the new playing area close to the Pavilion.



HIGHFIELD LANE

KCC have made a good job in cutting back the hedges and clearing up the leaf debris from the autumn/winter in Highfield Lane, making it a much nicer place to walk, run and cycle. The picture of the right shows the short section of Highfield Lane which is blocked off to the public and it shows how quickly they return to nature with no maintenance.



With maintenance



Without maintenance

BYBROOK RESERVE

A visit to the Bybrook Nature Reserve on Saturday 18th February to cut back some of the dead bramble growth next to the broadwalk.



BYBROOK ROAD “TWENTY IS PLENTY”

KCC have finished work on the raised “tabletop” crossing between the flats and Bockhanger Square. This was paid mostly by my KCC Community Funding Grant with contributions from ABC and Kennington Community Council.



Concrete road repairs for Bybrook Road are scheduled for 2022/23-2023/24.

CHILMINGTON GREEN SECONDARY SCHOOL

The Secretary of State has entered into a funding agreement with United Learning Trust which enables them to open Chilmington Green Secondary School in September this year. Given the pressure for secondary school places in Ashford, this is good news for all families.

Initially, the school will open off-site in the former Ashford South School, Jemmett Road. Works are underway on that building to provide 120 year 7 places in September. Ashford South has the capacity to provide two years of accommodation should it be required.

I am hopeful that the permanent school site will be transferred to the DfE and once this has been completed, the DfE will enter into the build contract with their contractor, starting on site this spring.

Secondary School National offer day is approaching. Given that places at Chilmington Green are not part of our coordinated admissions process, some families who have applied to Chilmington Green will receive two offers: one from KCC for an existing school and an offer from Chilmington Green directly.

As always, those families who do not receive one of their school preferences will be allocated a place. For a small number this could be at Homewood School or even outside of the Borough at Folkestone Academy or The Marsh. This may well cause families some angst in the first instance. However, once families have accepted places at Chilmington Green and the grammar appeals have been heard, places in Ashford non-selective schools will be available. They will be reallocated in line with admissions protocols with sufficient places for all those who require a place in the Borough.

COUNCIL TAX

The Council Tax levels for 2022/24 have been agreed proposed by the respective authorities:

Financial Year	Ashford Borough Council			Kent County Council			Kent Police			Kent Fire		
	Annual Charge £	Increase from previous year £	%	Annual Charge £	Increase from previous year £	%	Annual Charge £	Increase from previous year £	%	Annual Charge £	Increase from previous year £	%
2023/24	181.25	3.75	2.11%	1,534.23	72.99	5.00%	243.15	15.00	6.57%	87.35	5.00	6.07%
2022/23	177.50	5.00	2.90%	1,461.24	42.48	2.99%	228.15	10.00	4.58%	82.35	1.53	1.89%
2021/22	172.50	5.00	2.99%	1,418.76	67.50	5.00%	218.15	15.00	7.38%	80.82	1.53	1.93%
2020/21	167.50	5.00	3.08%	1,351.26	51.84	3.99%	203.15	10.00	5.18%	79.29	1.53	1.97%
2019/20	162.50	5.00	3.17%	1,299.42	61.74	4.99%	193.15	24.00	14.19%	77.76	2.25	2.98%
2018/19	157.50	3.50	2.27%	1,237.68	58.86	4.99%	169.15	12.00	7.64%	75.51	2.16	2.94%
2017/18	154.00	4.00	2.67%	1,178.82	45.27	3.99%	157.15	5.00	3.29%	73.35	1.35	1.87%
2016/17	150.00	4.55	3.13%	1,133.55	43.56	4.00%	152.15	5.00	3.40%	72.00	1.35	1.91%
2015/16	145.45	0.00	0.00%	1,089.99	21.33	2.00%	147.15	2.87	1.99%	70.65	1.35	1.95%
2014/15	145.45	0.00	0.00%	1,068.66	20.88	1.99%	144.28	2.81	1.99%	69.30	1.35	1.99%
2013/14	145.45	4.78	3.40%	1,047.78	0.00	0.00%	141.47	2.79	2.01%	67.95	0.00	0.00%
2012/13	140.67	0.00	0.00%	1,047.78	0.00	0.00%	138.68	0.00	0.00%	67.95	0.00	0.00%

KCC – COMMUNITY SERVICES

I attended the first public consultation meeting on 22nd February at the Gateway, Church Road. The following were the key issues:

- There are no changes to services offered at Bybrook Children’s Centre.
- The Willow Centre and Waterside will increase the range of services offered from a Children’s Centre to a Family Hub.
- Ray Allen Centre has been closed for 4+ years and will be permanently closed with all services moved to Stanhope Library which becomes a Family Hub and will now deliver children’s services and youth services.
- Opening hours may be extended to accommodate those who 9-5 is not convenient.
- Additional outreach service will be provided.

BOCKHANGER HALL

I attended the public meeting to discuss options on the future of the square on 22nd February. Four options were presented.

- Minimal change to the site (general tidy up but no housing or hall)
- Stand-alone facility without affordable housing in 2-3 years’ time
- Larger stand-alone facility without affordable housing in 5-10 years
- Housing lead facility brought forward as quickly as possible.

My personal preference (not speaking on behalf of any Council) is for Option 3: a larger standalone facility but delivered at pace once the new Borough Council is in place after 4th May. The driver for this would be an application to the Youth Investment Fund with the aim to reduce social isolation for young people and provide larger facilities in the parish. Kennington has a number of smaller halls (St Mary’s, Spearpoint & Scout Hut) but needs a larger place for youth groups. This was borne out by the CHES project.

AE354



Footpath AE354 (northeast of Captains Wood) has been diverted.

PARKING AT JOHN WESLEY PRIMARY SCHOOL

I attended a meeting on 23rd February to discuss parking constraints at the school. The problem is congestion at the drop off point because parents arrive early to collect pupils before the end of the school day at 3.15pm. Actions carried out to date (with limited success resulting in a few near misses):

- PCSO/CEO enforcement
- Letters to parents
- Notices on windscreens
- Staff deployed to move cars along.

It was agreed that we will investigate:

- Additional double yellow lines enforcement on the junction of Cuckoo Lane / John Wesley School Road



- Removing the hedge in front of the school to create additional parking



- Create additional parking at Singleton Centre or in Chart Road
- KCC Road Safety Team to advise on possible actions
- ABC would offer enhanced enforcement
- The school's latest Green Travel Plan will be reviewed and updated to encourage cycling/walking to school.

These problems are not unique to John Wesley School and if these solutions are effective they could be rolled out elsewhere in the Borough.

IBF FOOTPATHS

I spotted 66 dog poos on a walk on 23rd February. I have IBF to provide bins and signage to remind dog owners.



TREE AT RISK

I have reported the tree near Pippin Close “at risk” to ABC from nearby construction work. ABC will speak to Crest (good luck to them with that!)



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