

COUNCIL UPDATE 11.2025

GLEBELANDS

I have reported a deep pothole in Glebelands (right at the end near the track towards the play area). It filled with water overnight on 31st October so is almost invisible in this photo and this makes it more dangerous.



DOUBLE YELLOW LINES – UNADOPTED FINBERRY ROADS

I have clarified the procedure to securing double yellow lines on unadopted roads on Finberry. KCC can implement double yellow lines on unadopted roads after discussion (and agreement) with the developer, Crest. It is KCC who adopt the road and so they would only implement what they are happy to adopt in the future. ABC would then enforce whatever KCC are happy with.



BARRY ROAD DRAINAGE

I spoke to KCC highways about drainage water that could not drain from the bend on Barrey Road where it meets Church Road by Wickes and Tapi Carpets. The gullies met criteria for additional flushing works before April 2026 and was investigated by the drainage engineer for the area. I asked that any work is completed quickly as if blocked drains freeze, a difficult road crossing will become even more hazardous. I am pleased that it was completed by 15th November.

FOOTPATH FROM BRIDGEFIELD/FINBERRY

Taylor Wimpey (TW) largely completed the promised footpath from Bridgefield to the “at grade” crossing on the Ashford/Hastings railway by end of October and given the wet weather they have done well. The footpath will later be continued northwards to underneath the A2070 where it meets the existing surfaced PRow into South Willesborough. This further work will be funded by Crest but delivered by TW’s contractors which is logical to keep disruption to a minimum and provide a continuous surfaced route. The route, when delivered, will connect residents at Finberry / Bridgefield to a route northwards into South Willesborough and onwards towards the town centre (via the footway/cycle route passing below the railway line – when not flooded - close to ASDA) as well as towards the Newtown Works. It will help deliver one of the primary ‘improved connections’ objectives for ABC.



KENT & MEDWAY BETTER MENTAL HEALTH NETWORK

The group met on 4th November. Issues of interest included.

- Wild With Wheels CIC discussed how having disabilities can affect mental health and the opportunities the CIC provides for accessible walks in Nature. I was interested in this following the design for the new bridge over the Ashford/Canterbury railway at Crown view not being accessible for those using wheeled assistant and prams. I want to ensure there is no repeat of this if the bridge over the Ashford/Hastings railway is delivered by Crest between Finberry and Park Farm. The group act as advocates in wheeled access. Further details at www.wildwithwheels.com.



- We had a briefing on the work of Imago providing young carers support. As many as 1 in 5 children and young people are young carers in the UK but miss out on the support they need and Imago is trying to fill this gap.
- A new Health Needs Assessment will focus on the needs of unpaid carers in Kent. This will focus on how carer health and wellbeing is supported, preventing carer breakdown (and burnout). Initial results show 5 cohorts that require a 'deep dives focused research' (i) Carers with their own long-term conditions, (ii) Carers in the workplace (including those not in employment), (iii) Parent carers of adults with additional needs, and also young adult carers (18-25), (iv) Carers from diverse communities and (v) Carers after caring.
- We discussed the barriers to people experiencing physical health and disabilities from accessing support services.
- Health Needs Assessments are being carried out to guide older persons to make movement a part of everyday life. This is to promote a healthier more active society reducing the costs of inactivity.
- The Suicide and Mental Health Strategy closed in October, and a consultation report is being prepared, due to be published in early 2026.

FLY TIPPING IN MIDDLE STREET



ABC are currently looking into fly tipping in Middle Street on the corner next to Bright City Church and have an ongoing investigation. In addition to potentially bring a prosecution / fine to any individuals involved, ABC are also looking at ways to discourage this happening. This area is not ABC/KCC land and therefore ABC are not responsible to clear it but has been cleared previously as a good will gesture. ABC are looking at the possibility of putting planters in this location to try and stop people dumping.

COMMUNAL BIN STORES

The Suez crew do not clear waste from communal bin stores (it needs to be moved to a collection point), bulky items or contaminated recycling. Furthermore, ABC have been removing individual black and orange food caddies from buildings and blocks replacing them with one large food caddy / container for all food waste to be placed into.

ABC advise contacting the managing agent to arrange bin store clearance and plans to deliver leaflets to residents. This will explain the situation to residents and the management agent. It is noteworthy that several managing agents for flats do not separate out recyclable waste meaning there is only one collection every two weeks (that being the non-recyclable waste).

ASHFORD HEALTH ALLIANCE

The Group met on 4th November and focused on “Aging Well in Ashford” which enables people to age well and live a good later life. Work in Ashford includes putting together a submission on becoming accredited to join the UK Age Friendly Network to an Innovation Fund. There are 8 domains:

- Outdoor spaces (gym equipment, wide pavements)
- Transport (training for staff, transport schemes)
- Housing (heating, shower bars, trusted tradesperson)
- Social Participation (community cafes)
- Respect and inclusion (slow tills, community planning)
- Civic participation and employment (volunteering and age friendly employers)
- Communication and information (accessible formats)
- Community Support and Health Services (One You shop)

Work needs to be done on establishing the baseline of what ABC have already supported in the town. A directory needs to be created mapping all activities.

Faversham is becoming an age-friendly town and will deliver:

- Make walking and cycling easier through the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) and the Faversham Hopper Community Bus.

- A statement in the Faversham Neighbourhood Plan ensures residential schemes include a mix of accommodation for an ageing population and working towards Dementia Friendly Accreditation.
- They will launch an Age-Friendly survey using a template from the Centre for Ageing Better, to better understand the needs of ageing residents.
- An audit of dropped kerbs and benches is underway.
- There are plans for a regular newsletter aimed specifically at those over 50, which will be available in various formats.

The east Kent District Health Alliance has £30k of funding per district. Canterbury is using funding for neighbourhood work in one (Heron) ward, in Folkestone it is used to improve transport to health services and in Thanet is used on mental health. Ashford needs to identify its priority for the money.

SOUTH CENTRAL AND SOUTHEAST AMBULANCE SERVICE

Key themes have been raised on the Group Model intended to be rolled out for South Central and Southeast Ambulance Services included:

- Workforce impact and job security, including terms and conditions
- Operational restructuring and scope of practice
- Commissioning and funding, including 111 and Patient Transport Service (PTS)
- Training, education and career development
- Digital strategy and data sharing
- Governance and legal considerations
- Fleet, procurement and infrastructure
- Patient safety and equity of care
- Environmental sustainability
- Difference between a group and a merger
- Cross-border operations and dispatch
- Leadership structure and group governance
- Cultural change and engagement (internal and external)
- Impact on external partnerships (including Isle of Wight)
- Audit, research and quality improvement
- Timeline and roadmap

A website has been set up to cover key issues <https://scseamb.info/>

FINBERRY LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT

I met with Crest and KWT on 5th November to discuss expectations for ongoing management of the grassland and wetland areas. The requirements are with Church Commissioners for England (CCE) to manage it for 15 years with methods for delivering management to be agreed with the Kent Wildlife Trust (KWT).



The floodplain meadow. The habitat will be managed in the most part through grazing (e.g. by cattle, sheep and horses). Advice will be taken from KWT on the most appropriate livestock and grazing regime to be adopted. The area will be monitored on a yearly basis and any areas of scrub encroachment within the wider habitat will be removed.

Agricultural Land – Arable Farmland with Field Margins. Arable farmland will continue to be managed as it is at present with margins managed to maximise their value for wildlife. This may involve rotational cutting of the parts of the margins immediately adjacent to the crop and parts of the margins closer to the field boundary. This would help to create a useful mix of grassland structures and help to provide habitats for arable birds and invertebrates.

Species Rich Grassland. The species rich grassland areas will be managed using a mowing regime that will help to maintain their nature conservation interest. The regime may alter to allow the regular mowing of footpaths through the species rich grasslands, whilst only mowing the remaining areas of grassland once a year (in late summer after the wildflowers have set seed). Watercourses Management will involve the cutting of marginal and aquatic vegetation. The watercourses will be monitored on a yearly basis, and the cutting of bankside vegetation will be undertaken as required. If water voles colonise the watercourses in the future the use of these methods will help leave sufficient food and cover for this species and will allow them to carry on living in these areas.

Captains Wood has been managed by Crest and work on the path maintenance has recently been completed. Long term management will be with HML but while the southern edge (Block B6-B8) is undeveloped (work will start shortly) coppicing will be carried out before handover to HML by Crest. An Atkins long term management report (dates from 2015) needs to be reviewed so Crest's responsibility to get to the Wood the point that HML can take on long term management is clear.

On site landscape areas are now the responsibility of HML. This is within the service charge and covers about 100m from Goldfinch (north) and the area south of the proposed community centre which includes newt/reptile mitigation areas. The precise terms under which HML maintains is unclear and Crest will investigate.



QUANTOCK VILLAGE GREEN

I had the following update on the application. The landowner has raised concerns as to the precise nature of the user evidence and the degree to which it occurred specifically on the application site (as opposed to surrounding areas).

The determination of Village Green applications is a quasi-judicial function of KCC, for which the only right of appeal is by way of Judicial Review in the High Court. In the case of contested village green applications, the courts have commended the holding of an independent local inquiry and indicated that the Commons Registration Authority 'should proceed only after receiving the report of an independent [legal] expert'. The holding of a local inquiry provides residents with the opportunity to have their say, whilst also affording the landowner the opportunity to test that evidence.

KCC's view, based on the evidence available, is that it would be appropriate in this case for a local inquiry to be held, subject to the approval of KCC's Regulation Committee Member Panel in December.

COMMUNITY SAFETY UNIT

The Group met on 6th November. Key issues included.

- 16 ASB reports in October (lowest since February) – no significant spike in demand for Kent Police over Halloween, there is an ongoing focus on drug taking during the nighttime economy.
- 5 further community surveys completed including one in Wye.
- 105 Fly tips in October, with 30 investigations.
- 12 stray dog reports with 5 taken to kennels.
- 2 arrests for Rogue Traders carrying out unnecessary work.
- There has been an increase in shed break-ins in the urban area, advice is available on how security can be improved.
- The bollard in lower High Street is being inappropriately removed during the Tuesday and Thursday market allowing access to motorised traffic when it is not permitted. I asked for details on who is responsible for maintaining bollards given the history of bollards in Sevington.
- McDonalds in Eureka has joined Ashford Partnership Against Crime (APAC); there are plans to try and reinvigorate Shop Watch meetings as take up is low generally in east Kent.
- The rough sleeper count was on 5th November, numbers TBA. 274 in Temporary Accommodation (18% due to domestic abuse).
- The streetlights around the entrance Stanhope have been damaged by catapults meaning the area is dark and ASB issues are arising; KCC streetlighting have been advised. There are also issues with the streetlights in Bowens Field.
- £8,400 of funding is available for spiking kits etc. Applications must be in during December and spent by March 2026.
- A new national App ("WalkSafe") product giving a safe (lit) walking route is being launched in County Square and Asda on 25th November.
- Flag raising is a national issue creating tension points with some members of the community. There are acute pockets driven by local people galvanising support on social media; there is a strategy to monitor the situation outside the Holiday Inn where events have reduced in frequency. Anybody feeling unsafe should contact Kent Police / ABC CSU or Kent Wardens.

BIODIVERSITY TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The group met on 10th November. Key issues included.

- Using the 0.5% salary cost Apprenticeship Levy to be directed towards creating an apprenticeship in biodiversity to help plug the skills shortage.

- Investigating weeding regimes which do not involve glyphosates.
- Increase resourced in surveys into birds, reptiles, amphibians, bees, fungi and other indicator species (dung beetles, swifts, common frogs and brown birch bolete – autumn mushroom).
- DEFRA are producing Priority Plans for National important sites (e.g. Hothfield) which may attract funding from the National Development Plans.
- Local Management Plans (LMP) such as that for the area surrounding Finberry, can be developed in conjunction with the Biodiversity Team at ABC, like that developed for ABC owned land at Victoria Park. The advantage of this approach for developer owned land is that the LMP can sit under a borough wide Landscape Strategy and Biodiversity Plan. The advantage for this for the CCE is they don't have to worry about developing the LMP, just pay ABC for developing it.

STONESTREET SOLAR: THE NEXT STEPS

I attended the Aldington PC meeting on 10th November to hear about the options going forward.

“Option One” is to note that the Development Consent Order leaves details on construction management and similar details to ABC. This will require ongoing engagement with the developer and ABC planning team. It will give the opportunity to ensure the solar development is least disruptive. It was noted that the development has not been constructive in its dealings with the Community Liaison Panel.

“Option Two” will operate alongside Option One but is for Aldington PC to submit a Judicial Review (JR) application to the High Court. A JR cannot challenge the DCO planning decision itself due to its “urgent and critical need” but can find reasons why the process was flawed; legal advice has been taken, and reasons have been identified. This will stall the process for up to 8 months and may be successful. The estimated costs are £53k which Aldington PC are expected to contribute £20k, Mersham PC £5k and the community (through a tax efficient crowdfunding campaign through CPRE) £23k. But for now, all that is required is making an initial submission to the Courts to test whether a JR would be accepted; the costs of this are expected to no more than £10k (Mersham share TBC). The downside of a JR is that an “adverse cost order” may be submitted against the claimant but that would be Aldington PC and this is expected to be capped at £10k but could be higher.

17 Mersham residents were present of which 12 supported this course of action, including me. The reasons for supporting is (i) lack of engagement with the developer, (ii) legal advice supports there are grounds for a JR, (iii) JR would delay the potential start date and felling towards solar developments many change and could give an opportunity for a community based developer to come forward (these are supported by the Office for Net Zero).

ASHFORD BC CABINET

The Cabinet met on 13th November. Key issues were as follows.

- Postage costs are overbudgeted by £25k so second class will now be used unless first class is required by law.
- Pym House (sheltered housing in Charing) is no longer used for Ukrainian refugee accommodation and can now be used for Temporary Accommodation of those presenting as homeless.
- In housing there is a £100k saving of costs running the “Lifeline Service” (a pendant emergency alarm for the vulnerable) when it was transferred to a new contractor. It was previously managed internally by ABC through its monitoring centre.
- 55 Mabledon council homes development is due to spend £1m by end 2025/26. This project was initially delayed due to issues with nutrient neutrality; however, these have now been resolved. As such planning consent is now complete, and a contractor has been engaged, with “Start on Site” expected this calendar year. The scheme includes 20 2/3-bedroom homes with a planned completion date of Summer 2027.
- The Medium-Term Financial Plan for ABC for the two years until Local Government Reorganisation is being used as the initial draft of the 2026/27 budget. Government funding is expected to be flat, a saving strategy is developed to cover the financial deficit, although **this will not be fully implemented until it is supported by the successor authority** and **Council Tax will increase by the amount permitted under current capping regulations, 2.99% which would represent an increase of £5.79 per “Band D” per annum**. Should any further increase be permitted if capping regulations change, then increasing the amount further should be “strongly considered”. (The Local Government Association and Councils continue to lobby government to increase the £5 limit to £10). Other assumptions include interest rates to fall to 3.75%, 4% pay rise for staff and inflation 2.83% (but rate is still stubbornly high at 3.8%).

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

The 5 models proposed were discussed on 13th November.

- **3 Unitaries:** Meets Government’s criteria for reorganisation with the greatest savings potential through economies of scale (recurring annual savings £40.2m to 49.7m), lowest one-off implementation costs (by £3.3m) and shortest estimated payback period. It has strong local accountability ensuring services reflect community needs with broadly balanced populations aligned to local identities and creates unitary councils with the capacity to deliver and meet the needs of changing populations. It has support from the county’s largest public sector partners, strengthening opportunities for place-based service development alongside social and health care integration and transformation, and wider public service reform. It allows for pan-Kent service provision and limits the costs of other public

sector partners by reducing their requirement to realign. It forms a strong basis for future devolution.



- 4 Unitaries (Option 4B):** This option aligns with government guidelines by ensuring no single authority is disproportionately large, avoiding scenarios where one unit is nearly double the size of another. It accommodates planned and projected population growth across the region, with each new authority expected to exceed 500,000 residents during the lifetime of their Local Plans. It ensures a fair distribution of key economic indicators such as levels of deprivation and fosters the conditions for sustained economic development. It supports councillor-to-electorate ratios within accepted ranges, enabling strong local governance and effective democratic representation in each area. Savings about half that of the 3 unitary options with a longer payback period to cover the implementation costs.



- “KCC model” of 1 unitary** with 3 assemblies that would follow the same boundaries as first model above. Rooted in a vision for better outcomes through financially sustainable, community-rooted, and digitally enabled public services. It is supported by the design principles agreed across Kent and Medway - resident-centric, integrated, data-driven, financially resilient, and future-focused. Provides long-term financial resilience of local government in Kent and Medway. No risk of creating councils that will fail in their duties to Kent and Medway residents.



- **“Medway” model with 4 unitary authorities (Option 4D)** that do not always follow existing district boundaries, with some areas split between unitary authorities. Its boundaries are carefully drawn to reflect Kent’s natural growth and transport corridors, such as the M2/A2, Thames Gateway, M20/HS1 and geographic landmarks, ensuring that each council is both functional and recognisable to residents. It ensures coherent service delivery, preserves historic civic centres and cultural assets, maintains partnerships across health, policing, education, and voluntary sectors, and creates a robust platform for a future Kent & Medway Combined Authority. It is premised on the strong belief that efficiency arises from integration, simplification, and accountable local government. Together, these features make Option 4D the most balanced, future-ready model for Kent.



- **5 unitary (Gravesham, Medway north of the river, Dartford together; Swale and Medway south of the river together, Faversham, Canterbury, and Thanet together; Ashford, Folkestone & Hythe, and Dover together; Maidstone, Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge & Malling, Sevenoaks together).** This option puts capacity and support where it is most needed. There are four discrete regions within the County that have specific population needs (North, East, Mid and South Kent) - be that in terms of life expectancy, wider health determinants, skills attainment or economic factors - and one region (West Kent) which has less acute needs. It structures the new Unitary Councils in a way to

match this need, with more agile Councils in those four areas to support communities through greater democratic representation. Boundaries align with health, education, skills and employment geographies to improve outcomes for local people. This model therefore ensures tailored local focus whilst maintaining strategic coherence.



ABC Council met to select an option on 27th November and voted in favour of the Medway Option 4D (18 out of 47).

Timeline:

- Jan - June 2026: Statutory government-led consultation (around 7 weeks) on unitary options
- Sept - Dec 2026: LGR legislation prepared and laid
- May 2027: Shadow unitary elections
- May - Dec 2027: Any transitional legislation needed is prepared and laid
- April 2028: New unitaries go live

FLY TIPPING

I reported fly tipping on Cheesemans Green Lane on 18th November; it was cleared within 2 days.



PARK MALL

I attended the ABC planning meeting on 19th November, representing and speaking on behalf of the Central Forum. Concerns were raised about:

1. The temporary car park being a waste of resources given its short-term nature.
2. The detrimental effect on the conservation area (particularly St George's Square listed Tank).
3. Lack of direct walking routes and risk to pedestrians from traffic on Castle Street which will be used as the main route from the new car park.
4. Lack of detail on what follows the "meantime" use as a carpark (although residential mixed use was mentioned).
5. Concerns over the look and maintenance of the hoardings

What drove the decision to approve was the desire to remove the financial burden on the Council that Park Mall has become.

PARISH FORUM

The Parish Forum met on 24th November. Key issues included.

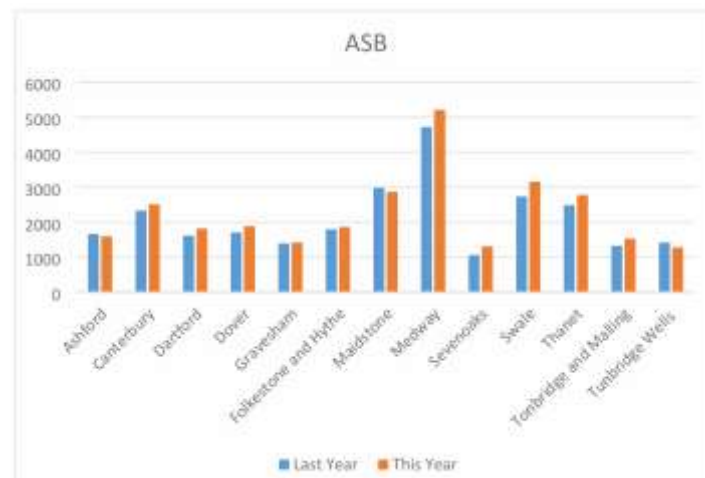
- Superintendent Peter Steenhuis covered the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee. He stressed the need for "intelligence led policing" this means raising issues with the Police through signing up to My Community Voice and reporting issues into Kent Police, Crimestoppers, Neighbourhood Voice and the Community Safety Unit. Beat Officers do not have access to Facebook and Kent Police only post out, ***their role is not to monitor social media.***
- The NHS spoke about their financial pressures. For the first time people have waited 72 hours in A&E at the William Harvey. The focus on how the service will keep people as well as possible for as long as possible, keeping them in their own homes. This is in terms of diet, exercise, sleeping and how they understand their health. Hospitals account for 50%+ of the £7bn Kent and Medway health budget. Increased elements of the budget will be redirected into neighbourhood health, GPs and community health services including the voluntary sector.
- Same day access appointments are available at New Hayesbank Surgery but a call is still required to the surgery in the morning to secure a place in the afternoon – ***it is not a "Walk-In" Clinic.***

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

I attended the Ashford BC Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 25th November. Key issues included.

- We had an update on community safety; Ashford remains one of the safest areas in the county, with low levels of recorded crime and

reductions in key categories such as serious violence and anti-social behaviour.



- There are currently six Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) within the borough (three are gating orders, and three are linked to specified locations and particular behaviours - Conningbrook Lake, Singleton Lake, and Ashford Urban). In this reporting period, a total of 11 Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) were issued. These breaches included urinating, nuisance vehicles, and foul language in a public place.
- Kent Police have issued 20 Community Protection Warnings (CPWs) and seven Community Protection Notices (CPNs). These were for a variety of ASB matters including nuisance motor vehicles, street drinking and aggressive begging. They obtained a Criminal Behaviour Order (CBO) against a prolific shoplifter. Kent Police have utilised dispersal orders under Section 34 of the ASB, Crime and Policing Act 2014 on three occasions.
- Housing service successfully obtained one partial closure order for a three-month period, and this was successfully extended for a further three months. The court agreed these to safeguard the tenant who was being cuckooed and being taken advantage of by so called friends. Additionally, they obtained two full closure orders in Newtown Green for a three-month period.
- A total of 22 joint community surveys have been conducted across the borough.
- eScooters has been a constant focus as a top concern for the public. Over 50 have been seized across the district since the start of the summer with the vast majority of these in the town centre.
- The Enforcement Team investigated 209 reports of fly tipping. Eight CPWs were issued in response to environmental crime offences across the borough. Two FPNs were issued to individuals for failing in their householder duty of care after their waste was fly tipped. 14 vehicles were intercepted and checked for appropriate waste carrier licences.
- Since the start of the 2023/24, the Council received 54 planning applications for commercial developments of various scale and size.

These include applications for outline planning permission, full planning permission, approval of reserved matter and variation or amendment of conditions. Of these 34 have been permitted, 4 refused, 7 withdrawn, 1 was disposed of undetermined and 7 remain live undetermined cases or at appeal. ***The start of 2023/24 is April '23 so that's 54 applications over 36 months, less than 2 a month.***

- To enable ABC to have up to date information on the quality of council homes and assurance meeting Decent Homes Standard, Ridge consultants carried out a full stock condition survey. Ridge surveyed 80% of properties, with the remaining 20% being carried out in-house. As of 25th October, 92% of our properties had been surveyed, with the remaining due to be completed by end of 2025/26. The survey identified 76% of homes meet Decent Homes standard. Most of the work required relates to insulation and heating and condition of key components such as windows and doors (vital to get this right given the cost of heating). The survey identified significant investment is required over the next 10 years in upgrading kitchens, bathrooms, roofs and windows. Data is being co-ordinated on how this compares to housing association and private sector properties.
- Revenue generated through the Border Control Post:

Q2 2025	Achieved Income	Est Available Income
July	1,304,751	1,693,321
August	1,054,064	1,689,579
September	1,273,792	1,870,107

Despite the reset with EU, the clear message is that ABC are being asked to carry on as normal as nothing has yet been changed and keep implementing the Border Trade Operating Model (BTOM) and carrying out controls until any legislative changes are developed and implemented. Actual income is 69% of available income. A deep dive will be required on the impact of this income shortfall during the 2026/27 budget review.

- Householders within the River Stour Catchment with old or poorly performing septic tanks will be replaced free of charge to help protect Stodmarsh SSSI. The initiative, delivered by National Rivers Consortium targets properties whose existing systems discharge excess phosphorus and nitrogen into Kent's waterways. These nutrients are a major cause of water quality decline, leading to algal blooms, loss of wildlife habitats and tighter regulations on new housing developments. Any new development must fully offset its nutrient

impact before it can be approved which has left many housing schemes delayed or on hold.

- Average void period for council homes between tenancies is 63.62 days due lengthy delays in asbestos testing, certificate (Landlord Gas Safety Record/Electrical Installation Condition Report) processing, pest infestations and waste clearance. Work is in hand to reduce this time.

ABC AUDIT COMMITTEE

The audit committee met on 26th November. Key issues included.

- The auditor believed that the Council has completed its housing stock survey but only 92% of our properties had been surveyed; they were advised accordingly.
- The auditors require, "the Council to address overspending." But said it "lacks a strategy to find relevant savings". Management response, at Cabinet on 13th November was "a saving strategy.....will not be fully implemented until it is supported by the successor authority". not delivering savings is risky; although the MTFP projects a £1 million surplus over the 5-year plan period, but this is partly dependant on Port Health income (we heard about the deficit on projections by a third at O&S), there are also homelessness and Stodmarsh pressures. In addition, there was a surprise capital loss in 24/25 of £0.7m following the closure of the UBS Multi Asset Income. There are therefore risks to MTFP without implementing a savings strategy and the recommendation was "to recommend the Council develops a savings strategy and a plan for implementation".
- Maintaining a substantial level of short-term borrowing entails substantial risk if the Council postpones securing fixed rates in expectation of declining interest rates. In the event of a rapid increase in rates, the Council could be obligated to accept less advantageous terms.

KENT ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS - ASHFORD AREA COMMITTEE

The committee met on 26th November. Below is the report from Ashford Police.

Since our last update in September there have been some significant developments in our local neighbourhood policing delivery. We have now been able to expand (double) our rural beat officers to balance with those based in the urban wards and town centre. Your new rural officers – PC Hopkins and PC Picton join PC Laker and PC Hobday in tackling rural crime and ASB issues. They will be getting to know their wards and making contact with their key stakeholders over the coming months.

We have continued our efforts to improve attendance at your parish council meetings and appreciate those that have responded to our request for future dates, which greatly assists with our planning. If there are specific requests for our attendance (and any associated questions) to a future meeting then please let us know as soon as possible so we can do our best to accommodate this.

The two significant periods of risk for ASB – Half term and Halloween did not produce significant demand with relatively few reported incidents across the district. Halloween had all Neighbourhood Teams on duty and overwhelmingly the observation was people enjoying the activities both organised and other being respectful to the community.

Our focus on tackling drugs in the district continues with several warrants conducted on addresses, significant seizures of cannabis and arrest made. More recently the Neighbourhood Task Force made a large seizure of class A drugs and weapons from an address in the South Urban area of Ashford.

Arrests have been made in connection with two rogue trader incidents where vulnerable victims have been targeted for unnecessary work being charged way in excess. Advice is always to check credentials to those providing services and not to agree to cold calling approaches.

The Neighbourhood team have been working alongside the Rural Task Force, Sussex Police and supported by our Specials Constabulary and other Police resources tackling rural criminality. Many vehicles were stopped and several arrests made for a variety of offences ranging from drink and drug drive to Possession with Intent to Supply Drugs.

We have also conducted a fly-tipping day of action with Ashford Borough Council Enforcement Officers where several sites of interest were visited and stops made on waste carrying vehicles.

We have been running specific activities around Safer Business Action Week and tackling knife crime. Engagement with businesses and visible patrolling occurred across our retail hub areas including the Outlet and Tenterden.

We also ran our Project Vigilant during this week with plain clothes officers deployed supported by uniformed officers. Several interventions and arrests for retail offences were made.

The focus on tackling retail crime and providing reassurance patrolling in our public spaces will continue as we embark on the Christmas period.

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