

Kent County Council report 14 February 2023

There's some really good news to start with. KCC has been successful in its bid for a Levelling Up project and has been awarded £45m by the Government for access improvement to the Port of Dover. The works are designed to improve the fluidity of traffic with security checks moved further into the port, a doubling of the border control posts, more room created to deal with the freight traffic away from the normal road network and a new exit route. This should help relieve some of the problems caused to the whole of Kent but especially our part of East Kent. The size of the grant is far larger than anything KCC could afford to fund itself and the project is expected to be delivered within the next two years.

KCC has now voted through a balanced budget for 2023/24 with a council tax rise of just under 5% which is less than half the rate of inflation that's had to be met over the last year. We will also be making savings, some of which will impact on our discretionary services. As uncomfortable as this will be the alternative is to have Government commissioners take over, remove even more discretionary services and put council tax up by 15% as is happening in Croydon.

One of the ways we will make savings is by reducing the number of buildings from where we run our community services. The consultation on this is open till 23 March and you'll find it at letstalk.kent.gov.uk/community-services-consultation. Please read what's proposed and have your say. (If you sign up to letstalkkent you will be advised of all consultations and you can also sign up to the residents' e-newsletter on www.kent.gov.uk which includes news about when policies and proposals are open for comment.)

There's been a national survey and Kent has emerged as the local authority that recycles more food waste than any other part of the country. According to the report by AEG, 59% of councils collect food waste separately allowing it to be recycled and Kent tops the league for the amount of food waste we recycle. Kent's food waste is processed at Blaise Farm near Maidstone and turned into biogas and fertiliser. It costs less to dispose of food this way rather than turn it into energy at the Energy from Waste plant at Allington where all non recyclable waste is sent. Our audits of household waste show that there's still plenty of food in the residual waste (green lidded) bins and it's often still in unopened packaging. Reduce, re-use and recycle (in that order) helps our environment so thank you for using the right bin for each type of waste as it really makes a difference.

Susan Carey

Member, Elham Valley, Kent County Council