

10 October 2023 report for Sellindge Parish Council meeting

On 20 September I attended the feedback session on the Barrow Hill (Phase 1B) stage of Otterpool Park Garden Town held at Westenhanger Castle. There are clearly opportunities to resolve present problems such as HGV traffic from Link Park going through the village and traffic speeds along Barrow Hill as well as provide access to new facilities for existing communities. I hope people will continue to engage to help shape the new community and facilities being created.

Work to bring this year's spending in the problem areas of Adult Social Care and Special Educational Needs school transport is under way as well as work on next year's budget. Inflation has hit KCC hard and we don't expect to raise council tax in line with inflation so we must make savings. The situation with Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children is still being heard in the courts but interim rulings make all arrivals in Kent our responsibility which is an enormous challenge for a single council.

On 05 October I chaired the official launch of Making Space for Nature which is the name we've given to the project which will create a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Kent and Medway. The Government has appointed KCC as the Responsible Authority for this work and allocated us a special grant to get the job done. Over the next 20 months we'll be mapping existing sites that are important for nature and identifying how these can be made better, bigger and more linked. Landowners and farmers will be involved as well as the organisations that care for nature in our county. There will also be opportunities for individuals to have their say throughout the process and (in 2025) a public consultation on the completed strategy. The strategy will then be something that, just like the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, will have influence in the planning system. The Government expects this to be a strategy that can be implemented so how best to finance the land that is designated for nature also needs to be addressed. There's a dedicated website and I'd encourage you all to take part in our first survey.

makingspacefornaturekent.org.uk