

Report for Sellindge Parish Council Meeting 10 September 2024

Whilst KCC's consultation on priorities for its 2024/25 budget has now closed there are several other consultations of interest including the Local Transport Plan for Kent. I was pleased to see it identifies the Alkham Valley/Spitfire Way junction that serves Hawkinge and Folkestone as a priority for improvement. This is often the location where any cross-Channel delays start to spread across our district. As with previous Local Transport Plans much that it covers, such as the restoration of international rail services at Ashford and Ebbsfleet and the Lower Thames Crossing rely on others – Rail Companies, Government, Developer Contributions etc. but KCC has a good record at working with others to get the previous Transport Plans delivered. You can comment on as many or as few items as interest of you. You can take part in this consultation and others currently open including one about the main Folkestone library and one on SEND (Special Education Needs & Disability) education through registering at Let's Talk Kent <https://letstalk.kent.gov.uk/>

The 14 council leaders of KCC, Medway and the district councils have written to the new Government to take urgent action to reduce the risk of disruption when the EU's new Entry Exit System checks are introduced later this year. The letter also covered the problems we already face whenever there is disruption to cross-Channel traffic.

There's a big push to recruit new foster carers here in Kent. Foster carers are paid and receive support; it's a fulfilling role and a vital one. More information on becoming a foster carer can be found on LAfosteringSE.org.uk or by calling 0300 131 2797. To give you some idea of the scale of KCC's responsibilities, at the end of March 2024 there were 1,460 children in care from Kent families and an additional 480 Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children also in our care.

I'd like to thank those who take part in Community Speedwatch in this parish and for the special effort made for the Day of Action on 26 July that saw 105 sessions across Kent including one in Sellindge and four in Lyminge. I was able to take part in one of the sessions that day and two others in the last month including one with a Kent Police officer who sees the real difference regular Speedwatch sessions has on speeding through communities.

KCC's most recent full council meeting was on 18 July where one of the papers was the Annual Performance Report. There's much of interest in it including progress in reducing our carbon emissions from our own buildings and services which is now down to 11,477 tonnes (it was 45,270 tonnes in 2015). The progress continues as KCC's new solar park at Kings

Hill on the site of a former pig farm is now fully operational and will generate around 3 million KWH of electricity a year off setting our carbon emissions by another 621 tonnes a year. KCC won £5m of government grant towards the £6.5m cost of this project and it will produce renewable energy for the next 30 years reducing both KCC's energy costs and carbon emissions.

We will know more about the Government's plans for expenditure after the October budget but they have already confirmed in "*Fixing the Foundations*" that they will not implement the cap on social care costs that was agreed by the previous government. This reform, which would have combined a cap of £86,000 on lifetime care costs with a more generous means test, was due to be implemented in October 2025. With so many of us living into frail old age, more families are being expected to meet care costs and it's a shame to see this attempt to share the burden more fairly will not going ahead as planned.

The KCC Director of Public Health is urging us all to take the opportunity to be vaccinated against 'flu and against Covid 19 this autumn. More groups of people are eligible for free jabs and I listed the main categories in the September newsletter.

Susan Carey

Member for Elham Valley, Kent County Council