

COUNCIL UPDATE 8.2024

COMMUNITY SAFETY UNIT

The Group met on 1st August. Key issues included.

- UK Shared Prosperity Fund has offered £30k of capital funding to be spent by 31 March 2025.
- Flytipping reports are being investigated including New Street, Flour Mills car park and Charing racecourse.
- A police new officer has joined on 3rd July covering the south urban wards under a mutual swap with Folkestone.
- Eat Well; Spend Less roadshows are now more demonstrating healthy lifestyle and cooking, not just access to benefits.
- The benches outside HSBC have been pointed to as a ASB hotspot. It is not as simple as just removing the benches as this could cause displacement of the issue and the seats are well used.

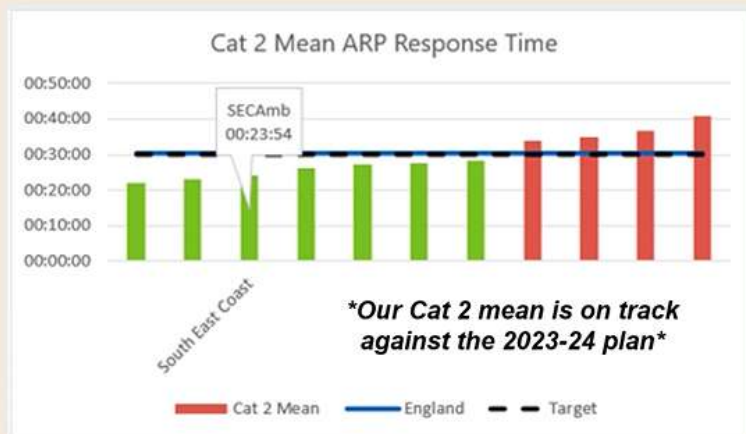
SOUTHEAST AMBULANCE SERVICE (SECAMB)

The Governors meeting was held on 1st August.

- Calls / attendances are up 7% year on year.

ARP Response Time Benchmarking

NHS
South East Coast
Ambulance Service
NHS Foundation Trust



Category 2: Emergency calls such as stroke

ARP: Ambulance Response Programme

Data provided for February 2024

- The triage system is geared to the service you need but defaults to dispatching an emergency ambulance. It is built on a national system and cannot be adapted locally.
- Community First Responders (CFRs) are volunteer members of their community who are trained to respond to emergency calls in conjunction with SECAMB. They respond in the local areas where they live and work so can attend the scene of an emergency within a few minutes. They can offer lifesaving first aid further increasing the patient's chances of survival. SECAMB currently has more than 400

CFRs spread across Kent, Surrey and Sussex and northeast Hampshire. CFRs attend roughly 20,000 emergency calls per year of which were categorised more than 10,000 are categorised as life-threatening including more than 1,000 of which are cardiac/respiratory arrest calls. Applications to become a CFR are made online, through the NHS Jobs site at <https://www.jobs.nhs.uk/>. CFRs are being upskilled to be falls trained and are carrying raiser chairs, currently 180 CFRs are falls trained.

- By 2029 there is forecast to be a 12% increase in aged population out of a population that is forecast to grow by 120,000. SECAMB assured us that this growth is considered in SECAMB's new 5-year plan. This plan is due to be published on 13th September so the new housing numbers announced in July will need to be incorporated to the estimates of population growth.

FEATHERBED LANE

I have reported fly tipping of these two fridge freezers in Featherbed Road on 2nd Aug, adding to the sofas and mattresses reported on 26th July (ref 21182035).



The fridges were removed quickly but replaced with a bag of household refuse which I reported (21312827). The sofas are on private land and will not be dealt with by ABC but I have asked ABC to contact the landowner.



SEVINGTON IBF

I had the following Kanda Consulting, a planning advisor on 2nd August.

"I am writing to you on behalf of our clients, Department for Transport ('DfT'), Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs ('Defra') and HM Revenues and Customs ('HMRC') in relation to Sevington Inland Border facility, in your ward of Mersham, Sevington South with Finberry.

We will shortly be entering into formal discussions with planning officers at Ashford Borough Council in relation to the future of this nationally significant infrastructure project, given the temporary consent, granted in 2020, is due to expire in December 2025. Given the scale and importance of the project, we ...(will be) carrying out full public and stakeholder consultation in the local area.

Please consider this email as an early notification that we will be in touch, over summer, to arrange September meetings/ other engagement activities with all our local and community stakeholders, including yourself as ward councillor, about this important project."

This provides a timely reminder about the work the Council has done to support Sevington Church on securing s106 funding from the DfT and the previous owners AXA/Friends Life. The issue of spire repairs has been discussed with ABC although it is a matter for the diocese. However, a s106

contribution of 186k is due from the IBF which relates to 'Church Works' (CW) and the specification of those works forms the 'Church Works Specification' (CWS). The CWS was intended to ensure that the Church had upgrades to achieve the objective of improving its ability to form part of the industrial / office / logistics Park granted outline planning permission under ref 14/00906/AS and, in so do doing, mitigate the harm to the setting of the building resulting from the park.

The diocese should be consulted on whether a CWS has been submitted; they might wish to update their plans. Put another way, upgrading the interior to facilitate better use by the local community is going to be hampered by being open to the elements!

In addition, two nearby sites have been submitted by the landowners under the Council's "call for sites" for the local plan to 2042. These are shown below and could provide the opportunity for further s106 contributions.



The planning application to ABC for the IBF will not be in the form of the Special Development Order issued in 2020 by DEFRA to the DfT for work to start on the IBF, it will be a conventional planning application. This means that we can ask for conditions including (i) times of operation, (ii) ensuring stationary lorries do not idle their engines, (iii) ensure appropriate signage is deployed to avoid errant lorries seeking to access the IBF via country lanes, (iv) controls over the lighting and (v) protection of the viewing corridor.

KENT & MEDWAY BETTER MENTAL HEALTH NETWORK

The Network met on 6th August. Key issues were as follows themed about mental health, housing and homelessness. There is evidence that many health conditions including cardio-vascular and mental health depends on housing. Excess cold in homes accounts for £1.4bn of costs to the NHS.

- When a homeless application is made an assessment is made on “priority need”. There is automatic priority need which is with dependent children, those under 21 and those suffering domestic abuse. Other cases have an assessment including health and safety – taking a whole picture of if they are “vulnerable”. This is a subjective test in the context of mental health – the homeless need to come to a risk of harm higher than the ordinary person. The model used in Maidstone is different to other districts in Kent as it has a front door for all housing and welfare related issues. This is achieved by having (i) trauma informed spaces, (ii) work with an NHS consultant services and (iii) discretionary accommodation provision – on average there are 30+ in emergency accommodation (in Maidstone) who do not have priority need, they then get ongoing bespoke support to access permanent support. The government code of guidance is at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities/download-this-guidance>
- In Medway a safe space is provided called “The Hive”. It includes showers, IT suite, access to advisors to connect with the correct partner services including access to work, suicide protection service, events that enables those at risk to be with other people and access to food. They have 256 people currently using the service.
- Tunbridge and Malling gave an update on how they are dealing with housing conditions in the private rented sector (PRS). This represents 19% of the UK housing sector and include Houses in Multiple Accommodation and park homes. District authorities are responsible to ensure this provides a safe environment but 11% are damp compared to 2% of owner occupied and 4% of social rented properties and have a lower energy efficiency – 14% are E or below. The key issue for mental health is damp and mould followed by crowding and space (including shared bathroom facilities) including fear of entry by intruders. Issues over PRS should be reported to the landlord in the first instance but Ashford BC team can be contacted on privatesectorhousing@ashford.gov.uk.

There is work on the horizon to develop a K&M Mental Health and Housing strategy – the Integrated Health Board has a mental health sub-committee.

GP SERVICES – WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE REFUSED THE RIGHT TO REGISTER

There could be several reasons a GP may refuse your registration. The GP has the right to refuse if the practice isn't currently accepting new patients or the practice only accepts patients living within its practice area, but they must explain why in writing within 14 days.

If you have problems registering with a GP surgery, call the NHS England Customer Contact Centre on 0300 311 22 33 and contact your local

Healthwatch (info@healthwatchkent.co.uk or 08088010102). You can make a complaint by email (for the attention of the complaints manager in the subject line) at england.contactus@nhs.net, by post: NHS England, P.O. Box 16738, Redditch, B97 9PT.

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK CONSULTATION (NPPF)

This consultation is seeking views on the new government's proposed approach to revising the NPPF. It also seeks views on a series of wider national planning policy reforms. It closes at 11:45pm on 24 September 2024.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/proposed-reforms-to-the-national-planning-policy-framework-and-other-changes-to-the-planning-system>

Points to consider:

- First Homes embedded into the definition of Affordable Homes but minimum 25% removed.
- Retains Neighbourhood Planning as an important part of the framework – retains para14 relating to NDPs and the presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- Para 62 removes the flexibility on housing targets for local authorities.
- Para 66 removes requirement for 10% of affordable homes to be for home ownership.
- Para 69 introduces explicit support for mixed tenure sites
- Removes para 77, which offered flexibility on 5-year housing supply to LPAs meeting certain criteria, e.g. recent Local Plan.
- Para 84 introduces explicit support for laboratories, gigafactories, data centres, digital infrastructure, freight and logistics.
- Para 97 embeds the need for early-years and post-16 education provision to be planned for.
- Para 98 (was 100) introduces "*Significant weight should be placed on the importance of new, expanded or upgraded public service infrastructure when considering proposals for development*".
- Para 112 strengthens need for sustainable transport modes to be part of planning vision.
- Para 113: "Development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe, **in all tested scenarios**".
- Para 130 removed, which gave flexibility on density where it would impact on character.
- Green Belt revisions – see later slide
- Para 161 – strengthens requirement to actively consider sites for renewable energy

The Bill will seek to:

- **Provide more resources to hire 300 new planners** – funded through increasing the rate of the stamp duty surcharge paid by non-UK residents.
- **Speed up approvals for new homes** – currently, local planning authorities meet deadlines for minor applications in only 10% of cases, and only 1% handle major applications within the legal 13-week time limit.
- **Modernise planning committees** – the government hopes to increase the efficiency of application processing. This reform is expected to facilitate quicker decision-making, enabling faster project launches.
- **Reform compulsory purchase compensation rules** – to ensure that compensation to landowners is "fair but not excessive", balancing the need for development with the rights of property owners. This is particularly relevant for building affordable housing and essential infrastructure.
- **Increase schemes labelled as Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects** – granting final approval to the housing secretary rather than local councils simplify the process for granting consent to major infrastructure projects - such as hospitals and electricity pylons - needed to supply vital services to new housing.
- **Unlocking Development Sites:** The bill focuses on unlocking more sites for development by improving land assembly processes. This includes uniting separately owned parcels of land, which is anticipated to speed up housing construction and make homes more affordable.
- **Nature Recovery and Development Funding:** The government plans to leverage development projects to fund nature recovery initiatives. This approach seeks to balance environmental conservation with the need for development, addressing both ecological and housing needs simultaneously.

I spoke to the ABC local plan team and NHS Provider Collaboratives (set up by the 6 provider trusts in Kent & Medway) on 7th August to understand how they will liaise with each other during the Ashford plan setting process. One of the key issues to emerge is the number of extra care units required by the Community Health providers to allow step down care for those who could be discharged from the acute Trusts (Westview Hospital in Tenterden is an example). Extra care units form part of the “affordable housing” allocation in the local plan.

A new project is called Home First and supports early discharge from acute hospitals and is jointly funded by Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust and KCC into extra care facilities. The average length of stay in these facilities is 18 days, nine per cent are discharged with family support only, with just three per cent to residential care and 6.5 per cent referred to KCC adult social care for a package of ongoing care, much lower than those discharged direct from an acute trust. It tackles the issue of “bed-blocking”.

There is also the question of the number of homes owned by KCC for Children in Care and those in need of Adult Social Care. There is a record high of more than 151,630 children living in temporary accommodation in England, which includes people living in hostels or bed and breakfasts, an increase of 15 per cent compared to the end of March last year. ABC needs an approach to tackle this crisis with the powers and resources needed to address the shortage of affordable housing for Children in Care where “family style” homes are needed rather than large residential children’s home. I promised to consult with colleagues at KCC to understand the number in Ashford as this will contribute towards the housing need assessment for Ashford.

CHANGES TO WHH ROUNDABOUT

I have been asked to look at the changes to the WHH roundabout. These were funded by the developers at Crown View to improve access to J10 from the new development. This work has added proper pedestrian crossings but with no warning signs or light signals to warn drivers so crossing three lanes of traffic has been reported to me as a challenge for fit people let alone the hearing or visually impaired. Many drivers are not aware of pedestrian rights often ignoring those waiting to cross - even ignoring vehicles with blue flashing lights to or from the Hospital. The amendment to the layout was required by Planning as part of the Conningbrook development. Now that the scheme has been built, as a matter of course, another Safety Audit will be carried out.

CHURCH ROAD

The “No HGV” sign has been knocked down again (presumably by a HGV). I reported to Kent Highways (ref 824512) and it was fixed within a couple of days.



Before



After

KINGSFORD STREET THISTLES

I invited Sojan Joseph MP to see the problems that uncontrolled weed growth is creating for properties in Kingsford Street on 13th August. This issue arises because the DfT who own the IBF have failed to implement a biodiversity management plan in the field east of the IBF (they call this Sevington East Field, but we call it the High Field). The issue has gone on now for 2 years. It was hoped that Sojan would refer the matter upwards to his ministers who can arrange for property stewardship of the site including hand weeding of the ragwort.

The DfT instructed an ecologist to inspect the field and this work was carried out on Wednesday 12th June and Friday 14th June. The DfT have received the ecologist's recommendations and have also reviewed the Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) that sets out the department's responsibilities under the planning agreement. The ecological assessment found thistle to be present on the field alongside ragwort and the DfT recognised the importance of addressing these issues as soon as possible. Unfortunately, due to the presence of nesting birds which was confirmed by the ecologist, and the need to protect these habitats during their nesting season, they are unable to proceed with work to remove the thistles until August.

The DfT met with an ecological specialist at the end of June to explore if there is a way of safely clearing at least the perimeter of the field from thistles and ragwort for resolving this as soon as it is safe to do so once the risk of nesting birds is no longer present. The DfT fully understand they are required by The Weeds Act to clear the weeds but are also legally bound to protect the birds under The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981.

They advised that a firm plan for works is in place for August, so that work can begin as soon as possible under these guidelines but have since advised this may now not be until September: Tuesday, 3rd September, an ecologist will visit the site to ensure work can go ahead without impacting nesting birds. Assuming that is the case, on Wednesday, 4th September - Thursday 5th September there will be 2 days of work to address 1) the thistle issue at the Highfield site and 2) trimming of hedges on Highfield Lane. Please note that these works will be carried out by two tractors with front flails and a hedge cutter operative.



Summer 2023



Summer 2024

FINBERRY BUS ONLY NORTHERN LINK ROAD

Although new No Entry signs have been ordered by KCC for the bus only link road from Avocet Way to Damara Ave (which is dependent on a successful TRO). Enforcing the bus only restriction is dependent on a successful outcome to bus restrictions being put in place at Bluebell Road bus gate at the eastern end (Finn Farm Road) – they need to be shown as effective in preventing abuse and financially viable.

However, the Bluebell Road accommodation bridge has not yet been adopted as public highway by KCC. KCC are doing everything in their power to contact, and work with the developer of the site to ensure that this process is fulfilled with no further delay, but unfortunately they are struggling to get a response. Various necessary remedial works were identified for Taylor Wimpey which are preventing adoption by KCC: lighting spec to the

satisfaction of KCC's lighting team was identified as an issue that seemed to be holding things up.

KCC cannot proceed with the ANPR cameras on the bridge until the developer gives agreement for cameras to be introduced on this land. Once cameras are agreed, installed and shown to be successful on Bluebell Road, they can be extended to Finberry, allowing a bus service to start, subject to Stagecoach providing it.

Sackville Crescent and Beaver Road are expected to commence Moving Traffic Enforcement on Monday 2nd September 2024. In line with the legislation, any vehicle committing a first offence at an individual site, will be issued with a warning notice which provides full information for the driver to inform them what has occurred and how to avoid a penalty in the future. Any further offence at the same site will result in the issue of a Penalty Charge Notice.

ESSELLA ROAD

I have reported the missing finger plates at the footpath over the railway in Essella Road (ref 825289)



Osbourne Rd side



Essella Rd side

REPTON AVE

Is looking very smart after the wear created to the surface near Waitrose has been repaired.



ELWICK SQUARE

I have asked for the painting of the zebra crossing near the cinema to be refreshed by adding it to my Highways Improvement Plan. All the crossings around Elwick Square are getting faded.



RSPB

The RSPB have launched a “Nature Prescription” for their site in Dungeness. I attended a launch event on 20th August.

Why Nature Prescriptions



- More aware of and more scientific evidence to support that nature benefits our health and wellbeing:
 - improve mood
 - reduce feelings of stress
 - help people to feel more relaxed
 - improve physical health
 - improve sleep quality
 - reduce loneliness
 - improve confidence and self-esteem
- As nature nurtures us, we will start to value and want to look after nature more and be inspired to take action to protect it.
- **The link between nature and wellbeing, along with the need for us to look after nature better than we are, is what inspired RSPB Nature Prescriptions**



Photo credit - Ben Andrew (rspb-images.com)

There is no human wellbeing without nature's wellbeing

The purpose was to better understand how GP practices (mainly working with social prescribing link workers, health and wellbeing providers and dementia support workers) in Ashford can provide this support. Most prescriptions are for anxiety and depression but covers a whole range of other patients and are only available for those over 18 years. In essence it a permission to spend time out of their normal activities.

Details are at <https://community.rspb.org.uk/ourwork/b/rspb-england/posts/nature-prescriptions-england>

CENTRAL ASHFORD FORUM

The Forum met on 20th August to discuss with ABC Officers the various Town Centre regeneration sites. They included:

- Swanton House. This is an ABC Property Development Company asset; it has planning consent and once the archaeological survey is completed demolition will take place.
- The Elwick Road development is dependant on a Nutrient Neutrality solution by the developers which is Stanhope.
- Old B&Q site needs to go back to planning as the fire regulations have been updated. A major change to planning will be delayed by the Stodmarsh Nutrient Neutrality mitigation.
- Brompton will be decided at the Planning Committee in October following changes to the scheme. A possible issue is the parking for the staff.
- Old Odeon Cinema. This is owned outright by the Council (freehold) since 2018. The previous schemes were not developed due to the loss of parking but now has the potential to be a real community hub. The condition of the building is poor but the frontage could be retained

(which is in the conservation area) although the auditorium is expected to be demolished. There are no firm plans at the moment.

- Newtown. Restoration of the building fabric of the locomotion sheds is underway with site preparation having completed. A new planning application is required but this is not thought to be subject to nutrient neutrality. The Forum requested a site visit.
- Woolgrowers. This is a Borough Council housing stock asset and a planning application is expected in due course but will be restricted by the nutrient neutrality issue at Stodmarsh. A proposal is that this could be linked to the Civic Centre.
- East Hill Flour Mills. The scheme may now be developed as office accommodation because any residential development would require a nutrient neutrality solution. No planning consent may not be required due to its existing consented use. A green island on the site would be beneficial.
- Park Mall. The Council owns a long leasehold on the site and the freeholder will need to be involved. The shopping centre is coming to the end of its life with significant voids that are costly to maintain. A development plan is required soon ideally as mixed use residential led scheme linked into the town centre reset. The potential is to open the connectivity to the residential the other side of Somerset Road to draw them into the town centre. It is a key priority project for the Council which is currently in the assessment stage. The development would include the Edinburgh Road (and Park Mall) car parks and is on the edge of the conservation area.

Other issues discussed is the need to improve car park signage and promotion of the ease of access to town centre parking. A town centre play area is essential for the town centre, in the meantime a "Play Train" will be developed/installed near Park Mall entrance. The Forum requested that a Shop Front Policy was required out of the new Local Plan. An update for Piper Products was requested.

EAST KENT MENTAL HEALTH TRANSFORMATION

I met with representatives of the NHS Mental Health Services on 21st August to understand progress on the east Kent Mental Health transformation which was rolled out in early 2024. The change is to provide a single point of access to enable access and signposting to the correct services. National guidelines require 21 in-bed facilities per 100,000 of population but east Kent only has 17 now so an expansion is required.

The traditional route to access mental health support was by a GP referral to the Community Mental Health Team which is a multi-disciplinary team from Occupational Therapy to psychiatrists. The problem has been that GPs were often referring patients who are not unwell enough. The new arrangement is a single point of access to Mental Health Therapy to triage those who need low

levels of support including Talking Therapy allowing the Community Health Team to support those who need intensive care.



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0333-091-0414
Text 'KMTALK' to 88802

We listen, it's our mission.

BOWENS FIELD

I have reported the fly tipping near the new footpath on Bowens Field (Ref 21345216).



GODINTON ROAD

I plan to send a letter to residents giving them an update when the cameras on Sackville Crescent are up and running. In the meantime, I can advise that

there was not enough support for the speed reduction for it to be taken forward by KCC. I have asked officers to advise whether a additional passing place on Godinton Road would reduce speeding as drivers seek to get to the end of the long stretch of parked cars. The problem is that cars tend to speed to get to the end of the row of parked cars and an additional place where cars can pass would ameliorate this (it is thought).

There will be a reduction in traffic using Godington Road from 2 September when the cameras are expected to be operational. This is because private hire vehicles will be banned from using the bridge into Carlton Road; just hackney carriages will be permitted.

There should be a further communication in the Autumn when things get clearer.

KCC PLANNED LOTTERY BID

KCC are planning a Lottery Bid with Take the Jump. They are engaging with Parish Councils to incorporate climate action into their actions as collaborative as possible. Examples include advice on walking and cycling routes (improving connectivity to Ashford from Finberry), repair cafes (at the intended Finberry community centre), community gardens (maybe as part of new allotments in Finberry) and energy efficiency in the home (e.g. ABC water regulators).

What is Take the Jump?

[Take the Jump](#) is a campaign that encourages people to take meaningful and impactful climate action through six (lifestyle) shifts or “Jumps”.

The six jumps are focused on reducing the environmental impacts of consumption and deliver 27% of the change needed to secure 1.5°C of global warming.

Take the Jump has reached over a million people worldwide and we are keen to build a positive, wider movement of climate action in Kent.



FINBERRY COMMUNITY BUILDING

I had a meeting with ABC officers on 22nd August when we discussed the options for the community building. Crest have delivered draft plans for the “plain vanilla” building as required by the s106 from Finberry– a 19m x 12m box plus three tennis court and a MUGA. A second option (not yet designed or costed) is a 3G pitch – synthetic turf, “next generation” astroturf - in place of the tennis courts / MUGA using additional s106 from Park Farm, Bridgefield

and Conningbrook. ***The Parish Council will be asked for its views on these options.***

A further consideration is who operates the building. Specifically, ***the Parish Council will need to set out its preferred role*** but will need legal advice from ABC on charitable or Community Interest Company options. If trustees are required, what would their legal responsibilities be? Several models exist elsewhere in the Borough such as Repton Connect, and I hope to arrange a further meeting with ABC to understand the protocol that will be put in place to avoid any risk of the long-term loss of community buildings such as happened recently in Kingsnorth Recreation Centre.

I also had a meeting to discuss a potential operator option for the new Finberry community building at Finberry on 8th August. This operator runs the Well in Hythe Road and could be invited to present to the Parish Council on 4th November.

KENT LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN

I attended the consultation event on 22nd August. I asked about the J10a local traffic enhancements referred to in the plan. This refers to helping traffic from Hythe Road to get onto the junction due to the volume of strategic traffic that joins and exits the junction from the M20. At this stage it's just an issue that needs addressing as a local priority rather than a developed scheme proposal. The consultation ends on 8 October.

NHS INTEGRATED CARE PARTNERSHIP

The Partnership met on 27th August. Key issues included.

- The Medway Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2024 to 2028 was agreed that provides a high-level framework for improving health and wellbeing in Medway. The strategy is used to inform commissioning across the health and care system with 4 main themes: healthier, longer lives for everyone, reduce poverty and inequality, safe, connected and sustainable places, connected communities and cohesive services. The next step will be to roll out to Kent.
- The Partnership supported the development of an Integrated Work and Health Strategy for Kent and Medway. The purpose is to integrate work and health support for people with health conditions and disabilities so they can start, stay and succeed in work. It will map existing provision and ask what needs to be different for people with long term conditions and disabilities with the aim of improving a coordinated offer. There will be expert advice and connections to support the development and delivery of a strategy. A costal strategy to improve access to employment will be launched in the autumn and the area it covers includes Ashford.

- The Care Quality Commission will visit KCC on 13th September to assess the work done in Adult Social Care. The formal notice issued by Government to improve Special Education Needs has been lifted. The KCC budget setting process has started and has includes consultation on Council Tax, reduction in services and ideas for cost reduction.
- Local Plans were discussed which will impact demand for health services. Resources are key to the NHS Kent and Medway delivering the right level of services including expansion of GP and dental services. Communication between the 6 Trusts in Kent and Medway and the Local Authorities needs to be coordinated through the ICP via the Kent & Medway Housing Group. The ICP acknowledge they need to play a bigger role in s106 agreements.
- A three-year strategy is being developed for the support needed for those with learning difficulties and autism. Cedar House hospital in Barham has been closed. It provided assessment and treatment in a low secure environment for people with a diagnosis of learning disability and autistic people, including those who have a forensic history, those requiring positive behaviour support, and complex mental health needs. All the patients (bar one) have been transferred to community placements. We heard from experts by experience about barriers to diagnosis, information and advice. More supported living housing is required for autistic adults with severe learning difficulties near their families. Work is required to improve financial security. High functioning adults need access to more part time working at a professional level.

SOUTH ASHFORD COMMUNITY FORUM

The Forum met on 29th August. Key issues included.

- The Forum looks forward to hearing how Kent Police's week of crackdown on e-scooters has yielded results.
- The Local Plan to 2042 is hoped to include policy issues on Houses in Multiple Occupation and the right to extend homes without consent. Both are thought to have impacts on available parking in the area.
- Seating is proposed neat the new access path to Bowens Field.
- A new defibrillator has been installed at the Riverside Café.

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