

COUNCIL UPDATE 10.2024

HOUSING AND MENTAL HEALTH

I met with Housing Association Community Trust (HACT) on 1 October to discuss the housing needs for those with serious mental health issues. They have been commissioned by the Integrated Care Board (ICB) to support the system in understanding the opportunities, key issues and priorities toward greater collaboration with housing, with a particular focus on:

- Understanding how housing and housing related support issues impact length of stay in hospital and flow through clinical pathways, toward reducing delays for those clinically ready for discharge – 25% of those in an acute hospital setting are ready for discharge but there are no adequate “step down” accommodation.
- Understanding how housing needs are currently identified, recorded and addressed across mental health care pathways as part of the housing needs assessment that is required as part of the local plan for future housing needs for Ashford.
- Understanding the choices made in selecting housing needed and the impact these choices have on the existing community and its residents in the proximity following issues raised with existing housing stock.

The meeting was following reports of the nature of housing used for those needing support for mental health issues. Mrs Thatcher brought in 'Care in the Community' but there was a lack of thinking as to who the 'care' was being provided by and became subtitled 'Care by the Community'. Community Care including preventative care (Community Nursing) requires more staff of all types who are mobile (be it cars, bikes or public transport) to travel. This benefits those in urban areas and not those who live in rural counties who are unable to drive.

HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The committee met on 2nd October. The Darzi report into the future of the NHS sets out the importance of digital offering and the committee learnt about the steps being taken to implement this. It includes a proposal that paper records held separately by acute trusts, GPs and specialist London hospitals are combined. Integration with KCC records for adult social care and looked after children is still some way off.

The Committee declared the proposed changes to adult autism service was not a “substantial variation”. Although there are 4,100 on the waiting list for treatment following a rapid increase in demand following the pandemic which was driven by the social and environmental changes increasing increased awareness, the service offering was expected to be enhanced so patients have direct access to support rather than having to go through specialists. It

was noted there are substantial variation in access, experience and outcome for different groups of patients.

We asked to see the review community hospitals by the ICB following a temporary closure of Sevenoaks Hospital. We expressed doubt that the closure in Sevenoaks was temporary and believed the better view was that it would be permanent following a fire audit carried out by Kent Fire & Rescue.

ACUTE HOPITAL DISCHARGE

The Prevention Team at Warwickshire Fire & Rescue Service provide a Hospital to Home Service transporting patients home from hospital in Warwickshire. They take patients home who would normally go home with family, private transport or those who are ambulant and don't necessarily need an ambulance to get them home. How it works is the Hospital's will give Warwickshire Fire & Rescue a call to transport a patient. There is a criterion that needs to be met before calling out the team. Once home, the settling-in service would be carried out. I have asked for this to be explored in Kent Fire & Rescue.

COMMUNITY SAFETY UNIT

The unit met on 3rd October.

- There is funding for "don't smoke or vape" signs in Ashford. It was agreed the raised area outside Park Mall where the new play area is going (near Starbucks) was an ideal site. The results of a vaping survey carried out by KCC is expected at the end of October. This play area is planned to be launched on 23rd November (the same day as the Carnival of the Baubles).
- The next "Eat Well; Spend Less" event is on 21st November at Repton Connect. Funding for these events continuing has been confirmed to Sept 2025.
- Briefing notes has been issued to schools to try and dissuade pupils accessing empty buildings including the Flour Mills. Significant measures have been taken including cameras on site and renovation may even start in 2025. Kent Fire and Rescue are attending regularly and are looking to carry out an exercise on site. ABC licencing enforcement are looking at options.
- Sk8side funding for Bockhanger ran out in August and they are exploring opportunities for future funding.
- A women's safety event is being held on 10am to 1pm, 5th November at Willesborough Baptist Hall including self-defence classes. A similar event is planned in Kennington on 28th November.

VICTORIA PARK

I was delighted to see the container and post markers in Victoria Park finally operational for Parkrun on Saturday 4th October. I had had several meetings with officers to speed up the process. It is fair to say that delays were inevitable, and it took over 6 months to deliver but finally we did it!



IBF PLANNING APPLICATION

I had a meeting with DfT, DEFRA, JLL and Kanda Consulting who are DfT's planning advisor in connection with the IBF in Sevington. The meeting on 7th October was ahead of the DfT applying to make the IBF use permanent. I attended public consultation events on 19th & 26th October, and I had a site visit on 25th. Its status is that it has a temporary planning consent under a Special Development Order until 31 December 2025. The issues I raised included:

- Long term assurance over the non-development of the land east of Highfield Lane is required. This is required under ABC local plan which prevents the coalescence of Ashford with its surrounding villages.
- The landscape management plan for the field is required to be implemented as there is a lack of planting to shield the village from the impact of lighting. A repeat of the excessive growth of ragwort and thistles is to be avoided. It can be relevant if the Biodiversity Net Gain calculation falls within the red line boundary of the application. The advantage of it being with the red line is that it counts as on-site BNG gain; if it is outside the red line, it is off-site BNG. There are differences in how on and off site BNG are calculated and where they can be applied (off site gains can be sold and could be used away from the area - possibly outside Kent). The BNG gain to date at the IBF only (excluding the field to the east) is 78%.



- 12m columns for the lighting units is not desirable given the buildings used on site. Operations on site are limited (the pictures below were taken on Friday afternoon) so the question is whether the site is oversized and there needs to be a way of shutting down lighting on those swim lanes which are under used (if ever used).



- CCTV coverage outside the IBF to be reviewed and ensure it is not excessive.
- Landscaping is required in the viewing corridor and other actions required to ensure its long-term prevention of development. Other planting should be considered in areas of the car parks to soften the impact.



- The frontage on to the A2070 link road is poorer than expected with less planting. Many of the trees lant around the IBF have died.
- S106 contribution has been provided to Sevington Church as envisaged. It was delayed by the long-term lease granted to National Power Network, but this is now resolved. The next step will be a

Church Works Specification submitted by the diocese to the Borough Council.

- Information boards were agreed by AXA / Friends Life to explain the Cold War Observation Bunker and other archaeological finds along with the Biodiversity Strategy.
- The DfT should explore long term improvements to connectivity by extending the PROW from Blind Lane to the village shop in Mersham.
- HGV access via Kingsford Street and Church Road Sevington remains problematic including right hand turns from the A2070 when lorries access the IBF from J10 – better signage is required.
- There are issues with idling engines on site and EV charging points should be explored.
- KRF have mooted plans for the IBF to be used as a Brock overspill, but the DfT are cool on the idea.
- At the moment the Trade Operating Model (TOM) established by the old government (with plant and seeds & sanitary and phytosanitary checked at the IBF in Sevington) is in existence and DEFRA etc are still operating towards that. They are unsure on live animal checks which were due to start in October 2024 and are “waiting for a steer” from the new government. Any change is “like turning around an oil tanker”. The reason why live animal checks have been postponed may have something to do with the contractors (ISG) going bust and the buildings planned to be used are not fully finished.
- KCC have a draft post excavation report on the archaeological works undertaken for the Sevington IBF site in 2020, it is not finalised and as such still not in the public domain. I will press the DfT on this because the report is important for KCC to consider the new application. KCC are also pushing for a report on the archaeological works done on the adjacent Sevington landscape area as this area also revealed significant archaeology. Unfortunately, the post excavation work for this side was put on hold and has only just been given the green light to proceed so a post excavation report on this is only expected in March next year, which may be after the formal Sevington IBF application. ABC needs the key information needed to ensure informed decisions can be made. KCC have discussed the preservation in situ and landscaping for the Bronze Age barrow. It will be tremendously beneficial to disseminate positive information about the important archaeology found as part of this major scheme through local interpretation measures.
- There are reports of the spread of invasive Goats Rue from the site.



It seems to have colonised from the IBF all the way down the M20 to junction 11. Apart from its tenacious nature – this plant can regenerate over several seasons – it is toxic to ruminants with the potential to induce a build-up of excess fluid in the lungs, cause blood pressure, paralysis and eventually death.

- There is environmental damage with the amount of litter by the roadside. It's evident to see just outside the main entrance of the IBF on the opposite side of the A2070 the actual amount of litter mainly involving plastic bottles filled with a liquid. The IBF should have a duty of care to ensure that the surrounding areas are free of litter.
- At a separate meeting with Southern Water on 25th October SW reported that they were still tanking waste from DEFRA away from the site rather than using the foul water sewerage system. I was surprised given the environmental cost of using tankers. At the public meeting on 26th Oct the DEFRA team assured me that the waste was not being taken to Bybrook so does not contribute to the nutrient neutrality / phosphorus issue at Stodmash SSSI. I have asked where it is being taken into the Beult?

0.5 Local/ Wider Benefits



KCC BUDGET

This time last year, KCC were facing a £45m overspend but it turned out to be “only” £9m. The areas of pressure in ASC, Children’s Services and SEND are travelling in the right direction. 2025/26 budget will still be challenging but

resilient if the saving programme is delivered. County Councils face a cumulative spending gap of £54bn over the next 5 years.

FINBERRY COMMUNITY BUILDING

I had a meeting with ABC officers on 7th October when we discussed the options for the community building. Crest have delivered “starter for ten” 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 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.

ABC are investigating with Crest the options for heating the building and a meeting will be arranged with Ashford Volunteer Centre to discuss management options.

KENT WALKING AND CYCLING GROUP

The group met on 8th October. The discussion was centred around how KCC’s KCWIP (Kent Cycling and Walking Implementation Plan) can link into the Borough’s strategy. Below are the criteria used by KCC to assess the prioritisation I proposed that the KCWIP should be given weight in planning decisions.

Route numbers vs Prioritisation

Initial sift

Cycling Sift

- ▶ Origin/destination cluster context
 - ▶ Population density
 - ▶ Employment density
 - ▶ Encouraging mode shift
 - ▶ Reducing child obesity
 - ▶ Improving accessibility
- ▶ Desire Line/Kent wide context
 - ▶ Supporting strategic growth
 - ▶ Improving health and wellbeing
 - ▶ Left behind neighbourhoods
 - ▶ Improving road safety
 - ▶ Improving air quality
- ▶ Cycle demand
 - ▶ Current cycle demand (PCT)
 - ▶ Future year cycle demand (PCT)
 - ▶ Anticipated flow demand

Walking Sift

- ▶ Walking zone attributes
 - ▶ Train stations
 - ▶ Bus stops
 - ▶ Education institutions
 - ▶ Other destinations
 - ▶ Improving road safety
 - ▶ Supporting strategic growth
 - ▶ Improving air quality
- ▶ Walking zone socio-economic context
 - ▶ Population density
 - ▶ Employment density
 - ▶ Reducing child obesity
 - ▶ Improving air quality
 - ▶ Improving accessibility
 - ▶ Encouraging mode shift
 - ▶ Improving health and well being
 - ▶ Left behind neighbourhoods

Prioritisation

- ▶ Those used in initial sift plus
 - ▶ Stakeholder support
 - ▶ Public support
 - ▶ Cost
 - ▶ The public transport connection
 - ▶ The education connection

There are two new routes for Ashford, a route to Charing (from Ashford) in pink and to Folkestone shown in olive.



144 NEW HOMES AT WATERBROOK

This application was considered at the ABC planning committee on 9th October. The site is 200m from Finberry at the end of Brambling Ave. Here is what I said.

“My comments are not related to the fact that new homes are being delivered, I welcome many aspects of the development including that 15 of the dwellings will be affordable, a mix of two- and three-bedroom homes, albeit they are shared ownership rather than rented. Having a new developer involved in Ashford for the first time is most welcome as it shows confidence in our town.”

My concern is with the destruction of the woodland alongside the east Stour and adjacent to Cheesemans Green Lane. This is required to create a wetland as part of the applicant’s nutrient neutrality strategy which is intended to ensure there is no adverse effects on the Stodmarsh Special Area for Conservation.

The number of trees being removed is not specified; it refers to the removal of one group of Category B (moderate quality) trees and the part removal of one group of Category B (moderate quality) trees and one Category C (low quality) group of trees. This is 1.48ha of woodland but only 1.12ha of new planting is proposed.

The shortfall is proposed being made up by planting around the adjacent lorry park. I do not accept that planting adjoining the lorry park will provide sufficient compensatory habitat due to the recreational pressure from the new residential development. Light spill, lorry noise and vibration from the lorry park is expected to reduce the use of the new planting by the displaced wildlife.

It is a great shame that we are losing 1.48ha of established and mature woodland, the new planting elsewhere will take years to develop. Whilst I accept that the nutrient neutrality is necessary the need to have it on-site is causing an unnecessary destruction of established woodland and a better option is off site mitigation. This application highlights the potential damage that we can see being done to well established mature countryside to protect Stodmarsh. Valuable though Stodmarsh is – is it worth the cost to our environment in Sevington?”

The application was granted and, for interest, the developer will be Mulberry Homes, not Crest. Hopefully by having another developer on a nearby site, Crest will up their game on the community centre etc. The only change to the

submitted application was that an environmental management plan was required to be delivered when 25% of homes are occupied not 75% as originally proposed. This means the woodland will be lost. However, any works within 10m of the river watercourse must go through the Environment Agency, so something might be objected to regarding the tree removal at the stage of submitting a Water Framework Directive (WFD) assessment. If I was a developer, I would say why make it difficult for yourself and battle all of this, when they could provide off-site mitigation, especially when there is a field next door to the site that is underwater for a lot of winter that would suit very well and not require habitat removal.

WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY

Freedom Leisure hosted a special event on World Mental Health Day, 10th October, at The Stour Centre. The event, Strength in Mind brought together Olympic and Paralympic athletes to inspire and empower students from Years 11, 12, and 13 in the Kent Area. I was very impressed how the athletes shared their personal journeys, focusing on critical topics such as mental health, setting and achieving goals, the importance of sport for well-being, and personal development. With mental health becoming an increasingly important topic for young people, especially considering the challenges they face, this event was a timely opportunity to highlight the positive impact that sport and resilience can have on overall well-being. This event will inspire the students and provide a unique story of how professional athletes are using their platforms to promote mental health awareness and personal growth in the next generation.

PARISH FORUM

The Parish Forum met on 15th October. The first session was climate action in Ashford.

- The local area energy plan is a project to develop a digital map of the borough showing the buildings and the fuel they use to give a map of what needs to be done where and when. It includes loft insulation and heat demand so helps the council target properties that need a plan to support. When funding becomes available it will support the council in accessing the support e.g. for solar panel campaigns from the orientation of the rooms.
- The NHS refers patents with respiratory issues so they can access energy advice from the council on grants available to improve their homes.
- ABC are decarbonising their own assets – e.g. a solar facility at Stour Centre car park.
- The feasibility for a heat network is being developed for an area of the town. This is particularly important for areas dependant on oil heating.
- Grants are available for village halls – including bike racks, maybe for Mersham Village Hall?

The second session was on health and wellbeing.

- The key issue is delivery of “extra care housing”. This can constitute step down accommodation to relieve bed blocking at the acute hospital settings.
- Active Kent and Medway have offered a meeting to KALC to explain what activity groups are available in Ashford Borough. This can help tackle the issue of exclusion from these group. Taster sessions are a good way to access groups locally.
- The UK Prosperity Fund funds Ashford’s “Eat Well, Spend Less” roadshows which are now focusing on healthy living. Locations for future events are being investigated.
- A new platform called “The Joy Platform” is being commissioned by the Integrated Care Board and KCC which will enable access to activities and groups for the purpose of GP social prescribing.

COMMUNITY WARDEN SCHEME

Following the public consultation last year on the Community Warden service, the decision was taken to implement a new service model and geographical allocation policy for the Kent Community Warden Service.

Work was undertaken in Spring 2024 to implement the new team sizes for the service. KCC are retaining a presence in each district but will be targeting the service in specific wards. Working within only specific parts of a district allows the service to retain their valued proactive community-based approach. Where capacity and time allows, the community wardens may undertake referrals outside of these areas.

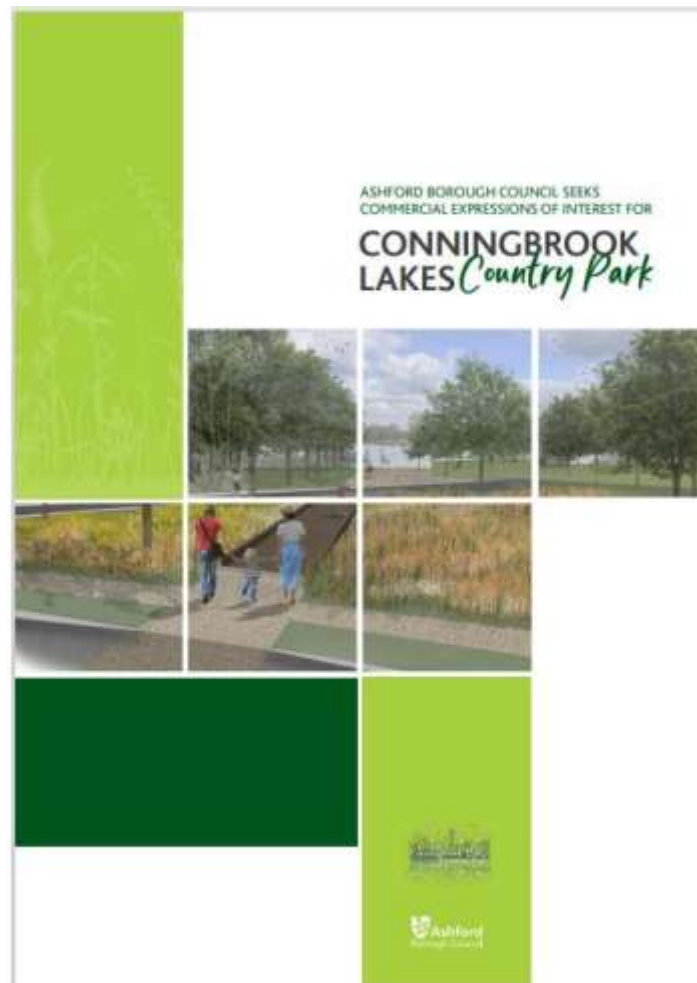
KCC identified the communities where the need for service is highest and where they have the potential to make the greatest difference. Going forward KCC wardens will be covering Bockhanger ward.

During the course of our work to allocate wardens to communities, KCC have become aware that some parish and local councils would welcome the opportunity to explore the possibility of retaining or introducing a Community Warden in their area using their own funding sources to resource this. KCC have developed two potential models which may help those councils explore the possibilities open to them; a direct employment model and a sponsorship type model.

CONNINGBROOK LAKES

Ashford Borough Council are undertaking a “soft market testing” exercise to determine interest in being part of, and helping to fulfil, the vision of Conningbrook Lakes Country Park. The Country Park is at the beginning of its journey to become a high quality, successful, attractive destination where

people choose to visit - designed to integrate housing into the country park sensitively to retain the tranquillity, habitat and nature conservation value of this important location. ABC have secured funding under Section 106 to make improvements at Conningbrook Lakes. To ensure this funding is spent effectively, ABC went out to the market for interest from 21st October until 22nd November in developing the site and any opportunities to help build and grow the offer there. The “soft market testing” will help to determine current interest but any proposals will have to be mindful of the Country Park to ensure the site retains the tranquillity, habitat and nature conservation value which it is renowned for.



STROKE SERVICES

Mechanical Thrombectomy treatment for Kent and Medway patients is to be temporarily moved from Royal London to Barking, Havering and Redbridge, from 19 October until the end of December 2024. Mechanical Thrombectomy is an innovative procedure where a catheter is used to remove large blood clots from arteries that cause acute ischaemic strokes, significantly reducing the impact the stroke has on the patient. Only 10% of patients who experience stroke each year would be suitable for a Mechanical Thrombectomy interventions, but for those patients the intervention significantly reduces their level of disability following their stroke.

The Mechanical Thrombectomy scanning device (bi-plane scanner) used at the Royal London has become increasingly unreliable and is now putting patients at risk because of the level of failures and repairs it is requiring. The service is therefore being suspended whilst more permanent repairs/ replacement work is being undertaken.

For patients, the initial pathway of care will remain the same – upon suspicion of stroke they should be seen at a local Hyper Acute Stroke Unit (HASU) who will liaise with the Mechanical Thrombectomy centre. I have asked for an update from the NHS when the HASU will be open at the WHH.

LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY

Councillors had a briefing on 17th October.

How will LNRS inform nature recovery?



Statutory role in forward planning



Spatially identify the most value existing, and potential, areas for nature – land use planning



Functional strategy in development management



Biodiversity net gain strategic significance (delivery)



Link to Environment Land Management schemes and other grants



Direct investment, financing and funding

Action and investment directed to areas of greatest need and benefit.

Losses and impacts directed away from most valuable assets.



The local plan for Ashford must now include how nature recovery can be accommodated and include sites that needs to be preserved for nature. It will help ABC inform decision on where development takes place. A development map will be created to show areas that could be of benefit for biodiversity gain.

What's next....

- Mapping being revised.
- Priority species being identified.
- Strategy being drafted.



The plan is due to go to public consultation in mid-January, at which point the public will be able to view the draft strategy in full and have one final opportunity to comment on it before it heads for publication.

CENTRAL FORUM

The Forum met on 21st October to discuss progress on the market in the town centre. It was concluded that there is much going on already in the town – the monthly makers markets at the Bandstand / Park Mall are looking to expand. There are separate traders in the Lower High Street.

The first step is for funds to expand the monthly makers market to expand in front of Barclays (without taking out any disabled bays) and into Middle Row / Bank Street (where there are parking spaces which will be lost). A Service Level Agreement including reporting of activity is being entered into as the Council has funded 20 new gazebos. Shop owners nearby are supportive.

Once more traders are attracted to the Lower High Street, signage can be put up to encourage footfall towards the Lower High Street traders. The Council is looking toward aesthetics to the traders can operate on a 6/7 day a week basis with “permanent” gazebos. This will encourage more traders to come in, once it is a regular event.

GREEN SOCIAL PRESCRIBING GROUP

This KCC Group is exploring the benefits from green and blue spaces to develop health and wellbeing benefits and met on 22nd October. The issues covered included mapping sites where outdoor spaces can be accessed plotting green social prescribing areas. Government standards require a minimum of 15 minutes access time these sites and this needs to inform the

new local plan in Ashford. Since 2020 local plans must have more ambition and actions to access natural green spaces. This includes access to public rights of way.

Ashford BC produced a Land Mapping Report in 2021, and the work now required to map out accessible green spaces could be built into the next steps of the Commission's work.

Loneliness is one of the greatest public health challenges of our time. 20 per cent of GP consultations are for non-medical issues, such as social isolation, housing and finances. The new digital platform (Joy Connect) to refer patients to a range of community and voluntary groups is rolled out. It will allow GPs, nurses and social prescribers to refer to a directory of services and then automatically add to the patient's record, saving time and improving accuracy. By improving signposting, the platform aims to connect patients with the right support more quickly. A self-referral option, called Joy Marketplace, allows residents to find and access local services independently.

Financing green spaces was discussed – we learnt that £600m of gift aid is unclaimed each year and community fundraising clearly needs to “up its game” in accessing this support.

BIODIVERSITY TASK GROUP

The Group met on 24th October. The Group was formed to ensure that all the Borough environmental actions are aligned with all Council policies – (i) Landscape development and management, (ii) planning and built development and (iii) engagement and education.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) of 10% applied to developments more than 1ha from Feb 2024 and for smaller sites from April 2024 (with an exemption for areas < 25m² and “householder” applications such as extensions). The mechanism to secure the gain through habitat enhancements must be maintained for 30 years.

The calculation of the BNG 10% gain starts with the baseline. Brownfield can be highly valued depending on how long it has been left and overgrown it has become; farmland less so if nitrate use has been high.

THANET INTEGRATED CARE HUB

I attended a briefing on this project on 24th October. The Urgent and Emergency Care Team at the Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother Hospital created an opportunity for partners to discuss how closer working could help improve patient care. Partners included Thanet GPs, emergency care clinicians and geriatricians. The NHS agreed about the need for proactive as well as reactive care and the greater role that community multi-disciplinary

teams could play. GPs stressed how much they want to support hospital avoidance. Overall, there was consensus to work differently, and we all agreed how closer working will really help patient care. If successful I will ask the approach to be adopted in Ashford.

BYBROOK WASTEWATER TREATMENT WORKS

Alan Dean and I had a tour of the site to see the work carried out to reduce odour and discharges into the Stour. Southern Water (SW) are planning £8-9bn of upgrade works across the 5 counties they operate in their next 5-year plan. This is up from £4bn from their last 5-year plan. I have asked how much will be spent in Ashford.

Recent activity in Kent includes (i) work by the “Clean Rivers and Seas” team to reduce/delay overflows into swales by creating new wetland channels, (ii) new lids on the tanks into which waste is discharged into, (iii) minimising “miss-connections” where sewerage is discharged into surface water systems and (iv) better control of methane discharges which enables better energy recovery. A real time reporting system has been created where discharges into rivers and seas are reported publicly.

We were impressed with the efforts Southern Water have made to resolve the odour problems at Bybrook. We discussed the opportunity for residents to see the improvements for themselves in the spring and the site manager and his colleagues were very happy for this to happen as they want to be transparent in their dealings with residents and accept that there were problems previously.

One issue is that SW are not a statutory consultee to new housing planning applications and if developers are granted consent, SW must connect the new homes into the WWTW system. They are working with developers to ensure that design minimises the impact.

One notable issue is that “flushable” wet wipes are not truly flushable – only biodegradable products should be flushed.



CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

The Panel met on 29th October at KCC. We discussed children in the care of KCC that come to attention of the police and the youth justice system. Cookham Wood has ceased to be a youth offender institution – most have moved to Feltham. This, and other pressures on the adult secure estate, has resulted in “Operation Safeguard”. This means that children subject to a youth detention order (remand in custody) will now remain in the youth estate until their 19th birthday (previously 18th birthday). This is to relieve pressure on the adult estate.

Since August 2023, Kent Police implemented “Outcome 22” which is an out-of-court non-dispersal in place of Informal Community Resolutions, youth cautions and “no further action”. It is used where the risk of reoffending is expected to be low by intervention – it reduces the criminalisation of children (children in care are disproportionately represented in this group). Outcome 22 is a deferred prosecution and non-compliance with the support offered may result in prosecution. The support provided involves engagement with preventive and diversionary work. Children in care are a priority group for Outcome 22 avoiding them to be criminalised although it is desirable if all children have this opportunity as it avoids entering the youth justice system. The authorities are “on the verge” of assessing the effectiveness of the trial.

The Oasis Restore Secure School (and Children Home) has opened in Medway and is open to children from Kent, a small number have been placed

there with a second stage starting in January 2025 – no children from Kent have been placed there to date.

INTEGRATED CARE SYSTEM SYMPOSIUM

The Symposium was held on 31st October at the Gurdwara in Gravesend. Following the Budget on 30th, the area has £7bn a year to spend on public health between Medway Council, KCC and Kent and Medway NHS. The theme of the day was prevention of poor health particularly in the light of losing winter fuel payments with the winter approaching. The Household Support Fund is now extended for 12 months.

Kent has become the first Marmot Coastal Region in the UK which creates additional pathways into education and work (worklessness is a major contributor to poor health). Housing affects health including if the housing is located near work and transport opportunities as well as how they are heated and ventilated to prevent mould.

ABC are developing integrated support settings such as Farrow Court “HomeBridge” to deliver a wider range of services from the NHS. It will ensure the residents are better connected, receive better diabetes advice including eating alone better and greater access to exercise. Care support at the HomeBridge is 10 hours a day for patients stepping down from acute hospital stays.

Reducing and delaying the need for social care is key. An example of preventing the need for social care is how Kent and Medway have developed a region wide care record in targeting high blood pressure. The project shows who has been treated well and those have been treated badly to identify the inequalities. GPs and the NHS Community Trust have the results enabling them target health checks through One You Shops and outreach in the community.

Faversham TC are running a research project to try and identify how the future health and care service needs of their population should be met. Its purpose is to create a clear guidance for Swale BC planners and policy makers as they consider the future development of the town. Specifically, they spoke on tackling the problem of obesity in school-age children.

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