

## **COUNCIL UPDATE DECEMBER 2020**

### **HIGHWAYS**

1. Parking restrictions are being worked up by KCC for Thompson Road, Barrow Hill Cottages and Quantock Drive. The schemes went out for consultation at the end of October.
2. I reported the broken flag on the Willesborough-bound bus stop on Mace Lane. Stagecoach advise that a replacement will be fitted but they are running a smaller team post Covid-19 lockdown, so repairs like this are taking longer than they would like. Stagecoach prioritise anything that's safety critical and are currently focussing on updating timetable displays.
3. Drainage issues arising from recent wet weather which has caused roadside flooding at Broad Oak, are being taken up with Kent Highways and Transport.
4. Work has been completed on The Pasture to repair the dip in the road near to manhole covers which was causing noise, vibration and disruption to residents.
5. I have asked for speed investigations on Sir John Killick Road as speeding is now a problem as it links into Spindlewood End.
6. I have asked KCC to investigate tree ownership around Loudon Court / Lockholt Close as they need coppicing to avoid root damage to nearby buildings.
7. Further traffic surveys were carried out during the week commencing 12 October 2020 on Bybrook Road. Scheme design for traffic calming should be available shortly.
8. Remedial work is due to take place on the footways in Western Ave, Sackville Crescent and Godington Road.
9. I have asked DfT for a completion date for work to build the new car park at St Mary's Church Sevington, hopefully it will be ready for Christmas services.

### **SEVINGTON & WATERBROOK FREIGHT BORDER FACILITY**

We only had 14 days to respond to the DfT's consultation on the HMRC Border Freight Facilities in Waterbrook and Sevington. For the record here is my response:

The following points are necessary for sustainable delivery of Sevington and Waterbrook Facilities in Ashford.

#### **Parking and Access**

- A hotline number to be set up (similar to what was used during CTRL construction) to report lorries parking to wait their entry time at Sevington / Waterbrook in adjoining rural roads. ABC can assist with parking enforcement and have a strong track record of working with KCC and DfT on this, the areas where there are enhanced restrictions on lorry parking in Ashford should be extended to all roads in Sevington.

- Highways England to bring forward the “Bellamy Gurner” Scheme of traffic lights at the McDonalds/Orbital roundabout. The trigger point for this is 500 occupations at Finberry which Crest are close to, and now needs to be urgently delivered with additional lorry movements in the area. This is of most relevance to the Waterbrook site.
- Freight vehicles to use the A2070 only to access the Sevington Border Facility, not Church Road which must be for staff car park access only. ANPR to be located at Church Road car park to enforce. Signage will be required in A20 in Mersham and surrounding roads. Particular care is needed to ensure no adverse impact on access and egress to the William Harvey Hospital, 111 Contact Centre and SECAM “Make Ready” Centre.
- The DVSA to have additional enforcement powers to ensure that vehicles use only the proscribed route to enter Sevington and Waterbrook beyond October 2021 to cover the full 5 years of operation.
- Deceleration and acceleration slip roads to be considered for the A2070/Church Road exit to avoid accidents from the increased traffic usage from the Sevington staff car park. Routes through the staff car park should be designed to ensure congestion at shift change over dates is avoided.
- Staff parking will be required at Waterbrook, the adjoining roads cannot cope with the number of staff required.

### **On-site Activity**

- A system of marshals on each site to ensure lorry engines do not idle and sufficient electric charging points must be provided for refrigerated lorries (is 20 really enough at Sevington and 7 at Waterbrook?) New generation “whisper” generators are proposed, rather than noisy diesel generators, but embedded mains connection would be preferable. All lorries arriving on site should immediately turn everything off once marshalled to parking.
- Neither Border Facilities are to be used as a rest area, lorries which need to spend rest time due to tachograph rules to be directed to the Truck Stop in Waterbrook. Three separate postcodes to be provided from the Royal Mail for the Sevington & Waterbrook Border Facilities and the Truck Stop so that drivers know which site to go to without disrupting local traffic.
- The office buildings on site at Sevington to be ground floor only, addressing concerns over height and setting near to St Mary’s Church, Sevington. The sheds used for checking vehicles should be no higher than the VOSA site in Waterbrook and as far away as possible from listed buildings in Church Road / Highfield Lane.
- Sophisticated containment cells are required for drainage at both sites and the design must address the “Stodmarsh” pollutant issue which Stour Valley developments need to address. If filters get blocked there needs to be a timetable and commitment to fix this quickly. If there is a spill, we must have confidence that the system will protect the environment.
- On-site lighting at Waterbrook and Sevington to be angled downward to ensure there is no adverse impact on nearby properties and ensure it complies with ABC’s dark sky policy. 12m high lighting columns are not acceptable.

### **Boundary & Site to the East of Sevington**

- The footpath across the Sevington site will be diverted towards Church Road which should become an amenity, perhaps something along the lines of the old fishing lakes in Eureka Park, managed by Quadrant. The design should allow subsequent occupiers can build on the initial DfT scheme as far as they can.
- The site east of The Sevington Customs Border Facility to be designated as a green buffer area as part of Ashford’s Local Plan and work to be started immediately with ABC/KCC to identify ownership / management options for the site in conjunction with the Parish Council. By designating the land to the east of the Sevington Border Facility and managing it sustainably, it will give residents confidence that DfT are serious about carbon offset, wildlife habitat protection, visual and noise impact minimisation for Mersham and nearby ANOB, and to replace trees lost in construction of the Border Facility/J10A. This can set the scene for how the rural areas of the Borough will be protected as we move into the new planning

regime set out in the Planning White Paper. DfT to inform ABC who is responsible for taking forward discussions with DfT to achieve this.

We have had a series of very helpful Stakeholder Engagement meetings, including one with the Minister on MS Teams. These discussions are integral to get community buy-in and enables the Border Facility to be delivered sustainably. Emerging activities on site and detail have been adjusted to take into account of the feedback received. This is welcomed, and I would like to thank the Team for engaging in discussions.

## **LAND ACQUISITION BETWEEN HIGHFIELD LANE AND BLIND LANE**

Ashford Borough Council's Cabinet received a petition from the Village Alliance promoting the creation of a green buffer zone between Sevington Inland Border Facility and Mersham. This was debated at the Full Council meeting 15<sup>th</sup> October 2020 when it was resolved that:-

*'the site to the east of the Customs Clearance Border Facility be considered for designation as a green buffer area as part of the next review of the Local Plan. Work should also be started by Council Members and Officers, with the Department for Transport (DfT) to identify ownership and management options for the site, in conjunction with the Parish Council.'*

The Council has written to the DfT and Mott McDonald to explain that they wish to secure the delivery of the green buffer zone and the transfer of land at the earliest opportunity, particularly as it has potential to tie in with site restoration post-top soil removal and would secure a positive legacy for the community from the project. I met with Grant Shapps (Secretary of State) on 22<sup>nd</sup> October and raised this with him. It was noted at the meeting that the land is needed for soil storage for up to 12 months or until the soil is sold.

The following work streams will be commenced as soon as possible.

- Explain in detail why the DfT should sell the land to ABC and how this can be reconciled with the DfT's fiduciary duty to maximise return from its assets. This can include carbon offset, wildlife habitat protection, visual and noise impact minimisation on Mersham and nearby ANOB, and replace trees lost in construction of the Border Facility/J10A but may need to be quantified.
- Create a vision for the site explaining what the community would like to see created including how it will be managed, what public access there would be and who will cover the costs.

A budget, dedicated officer time and scrutiny process will need to be agreed including a clear timetable so that all stakeholders can be consulted.

## **HOLIDAY MEALS**

Kent County Council provided supermarket vouchers for food during October half-term for families whose children are eligible for free school meals. One £15 voucher was available for each eligible child to ensure they are able to

feed their children outside of term time. It is hoped that Government funding will be provided to cover the Christmas holidays.

The Kent Together helpline remains open for any other Kent resident who needs support with food, collection of medication and prescriptions and other urgent needs during the pandemic, 24 hours a day. You can get help by visiting [www.kent.gov.uk/kenttogether](http://www.kent.gov.uk/kenttogether) or calling 03000 41 92 92.

## **COUNCIL TAX 2020/21**

Kent County Council is facing its toughest financial challenge for many years – greater even than any it faced during 10 years of austerity. Coping with the demands of Covid-19 has required a huge increase in spending and has come at the same time as reductions in its income from council tax and business rates. KCC is now looking ahead to its budget for 2021-22 and is launching a countywide consultation running until 24 November 2020 asking residents about their preferences on the tough decisions the council will have to consider in order to balance its budget.

The government has traditionally set a maximum limit for council tax increases without holding a referendum and assumes KCC will increase it by that amount. Last year this limit was 2% and the government has not yet confirmed what this limit will be for next year. An increase of just under 2% would add £24 per year (or 46 pence per week) to the KCC element of the bill for a typical band C property and take the total KCC element of council tax to £1,225.12 (or £23.56 per week). Such an increase would raise £14.4million towards the council's rising costs.

At the moment, the government has not yet confirmed whether councils will be able to continue to levy an additional charge for adult social care costs. A 2% increase would raise a further £14.4million to be spent on adult social care services and increase the KCC element for a band C property by a further £24 (or 46 pence per week). This would make the final estimated band C bill, after the social care levy, to be £1,249.12. The document and questionnaire can be found at [www.kent.gov.uk/budget](http://www.kent.gov.uk/budget).

## **COLD WEATHER SERVICE**

Public Health England's cold weather alert service, operated by the Met Office, is moving to a new, upgraded platform. Current and new users must register their email address with the new system by the 1st November. Due to compliance with GDPR, it is not possible to subscribe current users to the new system automatically. The service began on 1 November 2020 when the old current distribution list was retired and the service will only be delivered to those who have signed up via GovDelivery. Visit here to register <https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKMETOFFICE/subscriber/new?qsp=PHE>

## **COBBS WOOD**

A useful “all-party meeting” was held on 19<sup>th</sup> October to bring residents concerns over dust, noise and smells during the summer to the EA, KCC and ABC. The meeting was helped by the amount of emails and the extent of residents' concerns including those that are unable to open their windows; some with concerns for asthmatic family members to others who are fed up enough to consider moving. Numbers count!

All three main companies on Cobbs Wood are now fully aware that KCC and the EA are putting them under close scrutiny, something that they have not been able to do up until September because of the Covid-19 situation. EA are to arrange visits and follow-ups including considerations of dust monitoring equipment at site boundaries for Spring 2021 and review of existing Dust Management System with view to imposing improvements. KCC planning to audit of activity against consent and update conclusions

Advice is to keep up the telephone complaints and email KCC setting out your specific concerns and complaints, phone the EA hotline on 0800 807060 and email your complaints to [planning.applications@kent.gov.uk](mailto:planning.applications@kent.gov.uk).

The contract at the Household Waste Transfer Centre (HWTC) on Cobbs Wood has robust compliance and competency obligations including performance indicators. KCC Waste Management have a strict inspection regime who routinely visit the site both announced and unannounced to ensure that all compliance with Permit and Planning conditions are being adhered to. They also work closely with the EA and regular meetings are held between KCC Officers and local agency staff to have early warnings of any issues. The site has automatic doors which shut during tipping and bulking, a dust suppression system is in place and the site operates under an odour management plan. Any waste which is liable to have more odour is moved out of the Transfer Station within 24 hours, i.e. food and residual. KCC ensures there are additional resources/haulage during seasonal fluctuations when excessive waste inputs (e.g. post-Christmas) occur. These procedures used by KCC to manage its contractors at the HWTC in Cobbs Wood should be extended to private operators.

## **PANORAMA LETTING POLICY**

The Central Forum was provided with a summary of the letting policies for the two new blocks of flats purchased by the Council in October 2020 which are being completed over the winter. There are 109 flats and the Council will use the Kent Sustainable Communities Protocol to ensure the policy reflects the local community and manages the impact. For the first time in Kent, the policy will be to target key workers. Anyone with a history of ASB or rent reviews may not be successful in securing a tenancy. A 12-month introductory

tenancy will be offered. A full-time neighbourhood housing officer who will work from a ground floor flat which will audit tenancies and can assist with social care provision.

**BYBROOK-BOCKHANGER COMMUNITY FACILITY BUSINESS PLAN**

A business plan has been developed to create a community facility which:

- Supports demands from population growths and demographic changes,
- Mitigates impact of economic shocks,
- Ensures financial sustainability of public services,
- Supports growth and sustainability of business rate growth, and
- Promotes collaboration between authorities across Kent.

**LIBRARY WINTER OPENING HOURS**

Kent Libraries Winter Opening Hours from 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2020

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Ashford	10 - 4	10 - 4	10 - 4	10 - 4	10 - 4	10 - 4
Tenterden	10 - 1 1.30 - 4	10 - 2				

**E-SCOOTERS**



There have also been reports of youths riding these new E-Scooters, but they must only be used on private land. They are not to be used on any public path or road at any time. These e-scooters are currently classified as Personal Light Electric Vehicles (PLEVs), so they are treated as motor vehicles and are subject to the same legal requirements – MOT, tax, insurance and specific construction. Because they don't always have visible rear lights or a number plate, they can't be used on the road. They must only be used on private property, otherwise PCSO's can issue a section 59 which enables them to

give the owner of any vehicle a warning saying should they be caught riding their vehicle again in an antisocial manner (including the e-scooters being ridden on paths and roads) in the next 12 months they can be seized.

### **URGENT TREATMENT CENTRES (UTCs)**

The NHS is introducing urgent treatment centres (UTCs) across east Kent as part of a national requirement to deliver same day minor illness and injury care via UTCs. These centres are required to deliver against a national specification with clear quality standards that cannot be delivered through previous minor injury contracts.

In Ashford, the new UTC at WHH replaced the minor injury service run by a number of GP practices on 1 November. This UTC offers patients more services than the existing arrangements and cover both minor illness and injury, as well as being open 24 hours a day.

Under this change, patients will still have access to their local GP practice at the weekend and evening as extra appointments are available. These were introduced a couple of years ago and will continue across all Ashford practices. This change reduces demand on A&E as the UTC is equipped to diagnose and deal with many of the most common urgent conditions that people might otherwise have attended A&E for.

Appointments at a UTC can be booked by calling 111 which means patients will not have to wait once at the centre. This booking system will ensure Covid-secure services.

**Paul Bartlett**  
**Mersham, Sevington South and Finberry ward & Deputy Leader, ABC**  
**Ashford Central Division, KCC**  
**Grosvenor Hall Ward, Kennington Community Council**  
**01233 500667 or 0773 929 3502**  
**[paul.bartlett@ashford.gov.uk](mailto:paul.bartlett@ashford.gov.uk) or [paul.bartlett@kent.gov.uk](mailto:paul.bartlett@kent.gov.uk)**