

Green Party Councillors' Report of January 2025, for Marden & Yalding Ward Parishes –

In a busy period within the Borough Council, high-level discussions on the Budget for 2025/26 and the implications of the new Corporate Strategy (and the medium-term Financial Strategy to 2030) continued; these were 'signed off' by the Cabinet and reviewed by Overview & Scrutiny Committee (for finalising and approval at Council on 19th Feb). Matters continue to be being complicated by the new Government, as it seeks to introduce significant Planning changes (with more housing numbers) after 'consultation', and also sorts out how & when it wishes to create single Authorities (with Mayors) in County areas – but no final decisions have emerged as to whether there will be County elections this May in Kent, so plans for next year's spending may or may not change!

At Cabinet on 22nd January, in addition to these financial matters (and fixing the tax base for next year), it was agreed to propose and extension to the Kent Downs National Landscape to include the Greensand Ridge, to refresh the local history gallery at the Museum (significantly funded by Trusts), and to progress with the former Postal Sorting Office building project design/tender work stage.

Mike's focus has been on discussing our building decarbonisation schemes and solar installation projects with various Officers, but chiefly on finalising the mid-term update to the Biodiversity & Climate Change Strategic Plan so it can be thoroughly refreshed and re-assessed for its final five years; this is due to go to Cabinet in March. I have continued liaising with four Parishes about small parcels of land that MBC own and may have potential for thirty years of natural biodiversity gain management (including one in Yalding), and approved a grant for 110 trees in Nettlestead Green.

While there were few events in January, there will be a lantern parade festival in town on Friday 7th February; see details at <https://onemaidstone.com/event/light-up-maidstone/>. And as part of the national 'Green Week', Maidstone is organising a 'Big Day Out' on 14th June; see www.bigdayout.info

Parish Matters –

Collier Street – nothing to report, and we both missed the recent monthly meeting due to holidays.

Hunton – Liaison continues over potential pre-Condition submission construction activity on a large 'agricultural' site, and recent changes to planning consent are being contested by residents. Worked to erect Flood Warnings signs on 6th January, in combination with the Chainhurst Warden, and then chased KCC Drainage about evident blocked culverts (some have been blocked since 2022 & 2023).

Marden – Mike has been involved again in chasing Southern Water over sewer plans and approvals, after the Maynards manhole overflowed again on 5th January. At last, a Plan has been provided...

Nettlestead – very little to report; noted that the Hop Pole PH was boarded up early in month.

Yalding – Mike attended the Parish meeting on 21st Jan. The Repair Café event in March is gaining strength, and Mike purchased a steam iron for them to use (I'm hoping to find out what it is for?!). Mike also visited the Crest Nicholson exhibition about new homes at Paddock Wood on 24th Jan.

Borough Councillors Grace Couch & Mike Summersgill – 4th February 2025

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