

Report of July & August 2024, for Marden & Yalding Ward Parishes –

After the General Election was held, the full suite of formal Council meetings re-started in July although some did not meet during August (as has been the case historically). Cabinet members have, however, been meeting informally with Maidstone Council Officers every week, to plan and agree details of the Coalition's programme for 2024/25 and beyond. An outline of the medium-term strategy for the next four years was presented at Council on 17th July with a mission to ***“Put People and the Environment First”***. The strategy emphasises 4 chief Priorities: a High Quality Place, adapted for the Future; Resilient Communities; Quality Homes; a Fairer Economy for people and planet.

Meanwhile, the Judicial Review (JR) process for the new Local Plan (adopted in March) moves along; the Heathlands (Lenham) process has ended with no effect, but the Lidsing JR continues with an initial written rejection of their appeal now being heard before a second judge in mid-September. In the 'background', MBC officers are already preparing the Supplementary Plans for these two sites.

As the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Climate Transition & Nature Recovery, three projects on Natural Flood Management, Solar Panels on MBC buildings and Climate Adaptation of Maidstone House were scrutinised and approved by Councillors, and have gone forward for implementation. The six-monthly update of MBC's Biodiversity & Climate Change Action Plan is next up for review.

The new 'flock' of Shaun the Sheep and his friends in town has proved to be a great hit (especially with my two grand-daughters), and there is a final weekend with all the 70+ sculptures on display at Lockmeadow, before they are auctioned off – ticketing details on www.sh Shaunheartofkent.co.uk.

The new Green Councillor for Coxheath & Farleigh ward, Claire Kehily, has initiated a monthly residents' consultation at the Good Intent pub in West Farleigh (Sept 10th, 6-7pm), and Mike will be there too, for any residents of Nettlestead, Hunton & Yalding to raise any issues personally. We're hoping to find a venue to do the same thing for Marden and Collier Street residents from October.

And finally, Maidstone Borough Council is carrying out its biennial Consultation for Residents to provide views/comments on living in the Borough, starting next week and for 7 weeks; this will be a chance to state Personal and Parish concerns, and will inform the final Strategy of the new Council.

Parish Matters – Yalding Enterprise Park: Cllrs. Summersgill & Couch visited the Site on 9th July, along with two Parish Councillors and MBC's lead Planner, to discuss the next stages of development which will be going forward for planning assessment. Mike had further discussions with residents in Laddingford, about some issues at Cleavelands, and reached out to UKPN, KCC & MBC about them.

Nettlestead – Mike had discussions with a resident of Nettlestead Green about various issues that have concerned a group of residents there - traffic, nighttime noise and bins, and chased up previous discussions/requests on their behalf. Grace also assisted a resident of Nettlestead having trouble liaising with MBC Housing about the difficult process of re-homing their long-term Ukrainian guests.

Hunton – Bins: the village 'bin day' has now been switched to Mondays, but after generally successful July rounds, some places that had been getting their bins emptied OK were being missed.

Marden – SpeedWatch has been re-started, although more volunteers are needed. Mike has also attended a KCC 'road safety for older drivers' event at Yalding on 29th August, alongside 30 residents.

