

Report of June 2024, for Marden & Yalding Ward Parishes –

Actions during the month for Maidstone Borough Council have been limited by the late-May calling of the General Election, and Officers respecting 'purdah' on decision-making, but also three Councillors are standing in the Maidstone Constituency, including two Cabinet members. Quasi-legal Committees such as Planning and Licensing have continued, as has the Overview & Scrutiny committee (chaired by Cllr. Russell), but no Advisory committees (PACs) or formal Council meetings have been held. The Cabinet has been meeting informally and with Officers, to plan and agree the scope of its programme for 2024/25, which is expected to be presented at Council on 17th July.

As well as being appointed vice-chair of the Planning Committee, I was appointed to the Cabinet in mid-June (whilst on holiday!), as the Member with responsibility for Climate Transition & Nature Recovery. I am still coming to terms with my 'key focus' matters and 'specific responsibilities', but will be attending my first PAC on 8th July, presenting some proposals on Biodiversity, natural Flood Management, plus Solar Panels and Climate Adaptation of Council buildings for Councillor scrutiny and comment, before taking these to Council for approval later in the month. Two of my new Cabinet roles are as MBC's representative on Upper Medway Drainage board (UMIDB) and on Kent Flood Risk Committee, at which I will be able to utilise my career experience in water engineering.

In wider 'community' terms, MBC announced on 1st July that there is now a new 'flock' of Shaun the Sheep and his friends in town, which children (and adults!) can follow on a walking trail – details on www.shaunheartofkent.co.uk. And there will be a Summer Series of performances in Jubilee Square on Saturdays from 10am-2pm for six weeks, and also concerts in Brenchley Gardens on Sundays 3-5pm... all free to view, details on the Council website. These were initiated by Cllr. Russell earlier.

I personally attended further on-line Training on Biodiversity Net Gain (MBC), Retro-fit for Buildings (KCC) and Parish responses to Climate Change (national, NALC), and chaired the (south Maidstone rural) Parishes Environment Group in Sutton Valence on 26th June, with 9 Parish Councillors present.

Parish Matters – Yalding Enterprise Park: Cllrs. Summersgill & Couch attended a meeting with MBC Planners and the Developer's representatives on 25th June, to look at the next Phase of the YEP scheme, pending a further submission for Planning. They will also be visiting the Site on 9th July.

Hunton Bins – A special Parish/Residents' meeting was held in June, at which the MBC Director responsible for the SUEZ contract explained the problems and what was being done to correct them. Cllr. Russell attended this, and the village 'bin day' has now been switched to Mondays from 1st July.

Marden SpeedWatch – I have been nominated as Co-Ordinator for this (I'm already that in Hunton), pending finding a further volunteer to fulfil this role. We all need to have training (or re-training) in the Parish's equipment usage, but it will start in Marden soon to add to other local SpeedWatches.