

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

After the busy October, this month has been a similar busy one dealing with finalisation of the LGR Option that MBC have chosen for local government re-organisation (see below), and (for me, in my new Cabinet role covering Finance and Corporate matters) the initial moves towards next year's budget setting, albeit in the absence of knowing how much central government funding will now be provided, due to the Budget being a month later than usual. We shall be putting forward 2026/27 Fees & Charges to committees, and to Cabinet, during December without knowing exactly what the Local Government Finance settlement will be (promised the week before Xmas, but not certain!). We have to get Council Tax bills out in March to a fixed timescale, so there will be some shortening of 'usual' timescales and decision-making during Jan/Feb on how much next year's Council Tax rises.

Moves towards LGR (local government reorganisation) continue, and a flurry of letters is coming out to Council leaders from Labour ministers, including some distinct changes on Local Plan timings and on new Planning requirements (albeit the Planning & Infrastructure Bill is still not promulgated by Parliament) – one significant aspect, for Marden especially, is the statement from the Housing Minister that any blocking of applications for over 150 houses near a 'well-connected' train station will have to be notified by Councils to Government, and could then be called-in for a 'central' decision – this will particularly apply "*where a planning committee intends to refuse it contrary to the advice of planning officers*".

At the Cabinet meeting on 19th and after a full Council discussion on 17th, Maidstone has agreed upon supporting a three-grouped option for LGR in Kent, joining us in with three adjacent West Kent boroughs. Other options have been put forward to central government, including four unitaries and a sole one (promoted only by KCC); a decision on what Kent will look like is to come in the New Year.

The annual Parish Conference was held this month, and was hopefully useful in communicating MBC matters from Officers. A public consultation regarding Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) is open, please respond; Grace has already circulated the consultation link and poster and we are both encouraging participation via local community groups/education settings etc. The subsequent 'Citizens' Assembly' style community discussion on VAWG is also now [open for applications](#).

SPDs on Lidsing & Heathlands garden settlements are now published and out for Consultation, as is also the Gypsy & Traveller (GTT) Reg. 18b consultation + Call for Sites (<https://maidstone.oc2.uk/>). And lastly there is also another Survey/consultation out, about the creation (or not) of a Town Council: <https://online1.surveypoint.com/interview/41f29ed5-8b99-44ef-9ce3-b6ce2712a0b2>

A Christmas donation hub has been opened in Chequers Mall last week, collecting for a number of local charities. Two MBC sites have recently been designated as Local Wildlife sites: the pocket nature reserve on Buckland Hill and the "Veitch Land" alongside Blue Bell Hill & Boxley Warren.

The upcoming Council meeting on 3rd December has a Motion of 'no confidence' in the Council Leader being tabled by two Councillors from this part of the Borough. This is an unprecedented 'political' move in generational memory for MBC, and it remains to be seen whether this is an isolationist or a popular twist in local politics – certainly, being now often the 4th party nationally in current national voter intention terms (a place perennially occupied by the Green Party up to this Summer), and also now being just a minority group in Kent County politics' terms seems to have

caused 'concern' within local Conservatives. After that motion is debated, Council will hopefully be hearing from the (continuing) Leader as to progress on various matters in the Borough, and receiving Questions from Members and Residents, plus considering a second Motion (by the same two Conservative Councillors) requesting a planning constraint (an 'Article 4 Direction') be placed upon Invicta House in County Square, following some concerns that KCC may wish to sell it for housing – previously this constraint had been applied to other office blocks in the town centre, but the last MBC administrations had then let the Article4's lapse, allowing such conversions to housing in town.

As well as his Planning Committee duties (missed this month due to holidays), on 28th November Mike and four other MBC Councillors & Officers attended the finalisation of the KCC-led County-wide 'Making Space for Nature' report that was a major part of his previous role on Cabinet for Climate & Nature, and this central government (DEFRA & Natural England) initiative will set the scene for years to come about enhancing and improving our natural environment, particularly for protected and endangered species – local Farmers from this Ward were very evident in the 200+ attendance, and Marden Wildlife gave a very well received talk about Nightingale & Turtle Dove activity in the area.

Please check upcoming events, especially at Xmas on: <https://www.visitmaidstone.com/whats-on>

Parish Matters –

Collier Street – Mike attended Parish meeting where there was a detailed discussion about the Play Area equipment, and two residents have been contacted for advisory 'help' (we have just had a six month closure at Hunton, for play equipment repair). Grace attended her old School's history event.

Hunton – A PC meeting missed, but Mike had mail about highways/drainage concerns and PlanAps.

Marden – Discussion about protections to the Low Weald landscape has continued, with a resident speaking at Planning Committee. An Injunction (after Enforcement action) has been confirmed for unauthorised development at a site near the Beult, and Mike has meetings at Stilebridge & Tilden Lanes on 1st December concerning power supply issues, fly-tipping and possible site enlargement.

Nettlestead – Mike attended the Parish meeting, no other Councillors there, and met the new Clerk.

Yalding. Mike called-in another application in a serial submission about housing on Vicarage Road; it was pleasing to see this rejected by Planners, albeit there may be another Appeal. Much less pleasing were the results and unsatisfactory discussion/debate at Planning Committee on 13th on 'The George' applications, mostly after the event (Mike was away on holiday, and the internet feed from the Town Hall was disrupted for Grace, who had lobbied PlanComm members to no success).

Have both been invited to provide feedback/visit the site for a proposed solar farm in Laddingford, and Grace has provided pre-app advice to Mill Place Farmhouse. On-going communication between resident at The Glebe/First Point/Katie Lam - YPC are looped in; Grace is monitoring as similar issue on private estate management/adoption and 'unfair' Parish precept has been raised in Marden, but essentially our MP is best placed to take this forward as it's a legislative issue, not Borough Council?

Borough Councillors Grace Couch & Mike Summersgill – 30th November 2025

Emails: michaelsummersgill@maidstone.gov.uk, gracecouch@maidstone.gov.uk