

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

After the slight (holiday) hiatus of August, this month has been a busy one for the main business of the Borough Council, with both Cabinet and Council meetings on Wednesdays 18th & 25th, as well as the other Committees and sub-groups. The new Council's forward Strategic Plan was published in outline form, and is still being discussed in detail with Officers, before then considering the results of the Residents' Survey (see below) and finalising details for further confirmation. At Cabinet, motions to consider reducing the voting age to 16, and a Nature Recovery Declaration, were debated, along with updating the crime enforcement policies and also three corporate property acquisitions (two of these for potential Council housing, part of the 1000 new homes policy set by the previous Council). I missed the Council meeting on 25th, due to an illness, but three Motions were brought forward by Councillors on Kent Farmers/Growers, the Greensand Ridge designation and Israel/Palestine.

In addition, the Borough issued its biennial Residents Survey on 6th Sept, and this is currently doing the rounds of various organisations and Parishes, in order to get as much feedback as possible from communities, businesses and industry. Individuals are encouraged to fill the Residents Survey in (<https://letstalkmaidstone.uk.engagementhq.com/resident-budget-survey-2024>), and final date for return is 20th October; there is even a Prize Draw for everyone who responds... **please contribute!**

As well as being appointed vice-chair of the Planning Committee, I am getting further into my Cabinet role as Member with responsibility for Climate Transition & Nature Recovery. My twin focus this month has been on the six-monthly Update to the Council's Biodiversity & Climate Change Action Plan, which goes to Committee on 1st October and then, hopefully to Cabinet for approval; this is the long-term plan, started in 2020, to move the Council to a 'net zero' position by 2030. My other focus has been on the third annual Eco-Hub in town, in the Mall (lower level, next to ex-Wilco); this will run for two weeks from 26th October to 9th November, with Repair Cafes on those two dates and plenty of informative adult- & child-friendly events on midweek days throughout the fortnight.

In wider 'community' terms, it was good to see how much the flock of Shauns raised at Auction for the Heart of Kent Hospice (£265k), and there are further town events going on in the Autumn, including the second Literary Festival. Check for events: <https://www.visitmaidstone.com/whats-on>

I personally attended the annual Tree Wardens meeting in Loose, where KCC and the Tree Council talked about their schemes for tree planting, one of which is a research project in ParkWood that we visited, and I'll be at the (south Maidstone rural) Parishes Environment Group in Hunton on 2nd Oct.

Parish Matters – Yalding. Have been liaising with residents in Laddingford over continuing issues

Collier Street – Helped the PC to get new Public Safety posters for the play area renewed/printed

Hunton – Yet more/new Bin issues, now seemingly resolved, and Police liaison over a car incident

Marden – Attended PC meeting with Residents about the Copper Lane site and footway 'access'

Nettlestead – Further useful liaison with KCC and MBC over certain issues in Nettlestead Green