

Report of September 2025, 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, albeit certain actions/publicity had to be postponed due to election ‘purdah’. At Cabinet on 17th, ‘my’ Nature Recovery Fund proposals were debated and passed, putting wheels in motion to expend £0.5m over the next 30 months on community-led projects that will seek to improve our land and rivers for nature and for climate change amelioration. There were also items approved on Headcorn’s Neighbourhood Plan, MBC’s Property Disposal Policy, a quarterly Financial Update (looking positive for us), and three motions from Council in July for further discussion/vote.

Next month, the Council meeting scheduled for 1st October will now be on Monday 13th, as the results of the North Downs by-election may slightly vary the make-up of Council committees. There is an extra Cabinet meeting on 14th (as well as the scheduled monthly one on Weds 22nd), to cover the latest documents related to the Lidsing and Lenham Heath ‘garden community’ proposals.

As well as monthly meetings of the Planning Committee, Mike is getting more involved with the Upper Medway Drainage Board (where he’s one of two MBC board members), and with County flood risk aspects (led by KCC and Kent Resilience Forum), plus talking to Weald farms. Grace has been looking at ethical council investments at Audit Committee and has joined the KCC Prevent Advisory Group.

In seeking opinion, the Borough closed its consultation on Unparished areas on 30th, which shouldn’t change our Ward much, if at all. Details on these, and other current/new consultations on smoke-free zones and littering/fly-tipping, can be found: <https://letstalkmaidstone.uk.engagementhq.com/>

In wider ‘community’ terms, coming up in October are LitFest (4-11th at various venues), celebrations for Black History Month, and Halloween events at Kent Life and Leeds Castle from 18th. Local Artist Tony Hart has a retrospective at the new Creative Arts hub on Gabriel’s Hill (near the lower entrance to the Mall) from 11th Oct – 8th Nov. ... Check for events: <https://www.visitmaidstone.com/whats-on>

Mike attended, and thoroughly enjoyed, the Weald of Kent Ploughing Match near Headcorn on 13th (talked to small businesses from Yalding, Boughton, Staplehurst & Hunton about the Rural Prosperity Fund, being promoted by MBC) and also went to the (rural) Parishes’ Environment Network event in Boughton Monchelsea on 24th Sept, exchanging ideas with Hollingbourne & Chart Sutton councillors.

Parish Matters –

Collier Street – Attended the PC meeting on 1st September, as did Grace & the KCC Ward Councillor (for the first time) – no new actions arose from that.

Hunton – Attended bi-monthly meeting of PC, as did Grace. Liaison with new KCC Highways officer. Sadly, I attended two funerals this month, of a local farmer/neighbour and the ‘Lady of the Manor’ – both of them filled Hunton Church with residents and, for the latter one, a Duke and minor Royals.

Marden – Attended Parish meeting on 9th, which was to inform Residents about the briefing given to Ward & Borough Councillors by the Developers of the potential housing site north of the railway; as of 29th Sept, no further details have been made public on this. Attended a meeting with Residents' Group on a rural 'problem' site on 18th, along with Katie Lam MP – chasing MBC officers for updates. Promoted a MBC roadshow at Memorial Hall on 4th, which was advising rural businesses of potential grant funding – followed this up with emails and repeat publicity on several village Facebook pages.

Nettlestead – Following discussion at the Parish meeting and with Residents, Mike visited the location of a retrospective PlanAp and sent a message to the planning Officer about concerns.

Yalding. Mike has been in email discussion with Developer and Residents about potential drainage design issues, after the presentation by Fernham Homes in August; we noted recent Parish detailed response to MBC Planners. Contact with Kenward Trust regarding options to fund solar panels.

The Boathouse music license application has now been withdrawn; Grace is speaking to the Pub Licensing Administrator to discuss the use of TENs licenses which are causing issues with neighbours, plus some separate parking concerns. For info - *"The site is earmarked to transfer to our tenanted estate and if the tenants wish to re-visit a licence change in the future, then that will a decision for them to take."*

Borough Councillors Grace Couch & Mike Summersgill – 29th September 2025

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