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## Maidstone Rural West Residents' Update 2023/24

*Dear Resident,*

It has been my privilege to represent you at County Hall for the last three years.

The third year has been even more challenging than the first two, as you all are aware, the impact of the war in Ukraine, the high level in inflation, the cost of living crisis and the resultant rises in service, delivery and unit costs have required KCC to undertake some radical financial cuts. The 2023/24 budget was the most challenging yet, as can be read in the KCC Auditors report.

The continuing refusal of Central Government to equitably fund Adult and Children's Social Care has been the most frustrating part of seeking to bring back a budget deficit and also ensure that the services both vulnerable adults and young people receive meets their immediate needs.

Within Education here are equal challenges from the increase in Home to School transport and the rising cost of SEN (D) EHCPs; and given a grant from the government to cut our costs, they seem to be growing higher than ever.

I am fortunate to have been on both the Governance and Audit and Scrutiny Cabinet Committees this last year and both committees have been able to significantly challenge the Cabinet Members on the decision they have made.

For the financial year 2023/24 I was allocated a Members grant of £3,600 and I have been very careful to allocate some funds to support a wide range of projects, for vulnerable groups. In the coming year 2024/25, quite rightly the grant continues to be £3600.

At the current time, I am working closely with:-

- a) Nettlestead Parish to try to reduce the speed limit through the village
- b) Coxheath Primary School to reduce the speed limit to 20 mph term time, outside of the school
- c) Loose Parish Council and Loose Amenities Association to develop a 20 mph speed limit through the village.

I sit on two cabinet committees, (a change from last year) which gives me a broad section of work to complete, these:-

- 1. Scrutiny Committee
- 2. Audit and Governance Committee

I would like to pay tribute to the Leader of KCC, Mr Roger Gough, who leads by example and continues to fight for our residents at both a local, regional and national level.

I list below the exact details of the Members Grant to show complete transparency.

<b>Communities</b>		
<b>Applicant</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Yalding Parent and Toddler Group	Replace tables and games equipment for the children	£1200
East Farleigh Parish Council	Playground refurbishment	£1000
Hunton Wanderers Cricket Club	End of Season Renovations 2023	£300
Loose parish Council	Safety in Loose: 20mph	£408
Yalding Youth and Community Centre	Front Door Replacement	£300
Hunton & Linton under 5's Pre-School	New Garden Playhouse	£300
Highways – Barming Bollards	Road Safety	£300

As a Member of the County Council, I welcome contact with residents, support groups and local business. The Member Grant will always be available to assist vulnerable groups, be they of any age and if I can be of further assistance to you, please do not hesitate to be in contact with me.

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