

## Green Party Councillors' Report of **March 2026**, for Marden & Yalding Ward Parishes –

In a busy period within the Borough Council before Easter, the Cabinet Meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> March dealt with ten 'business' items for approval; the next Cabinet is on 15<sup>th</sup> April, with the Full Council now meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> April. The latest Cabinet agenda included updating/new Policies on Bulky Waste charges, Housing Payments, Empty Homes and an Asset Management Strategy for the next three decades. The Council Tax Reduction Scheme for lowest earners is now in effect, as Council Tax bills are issued. The third quarter Budget update revealed an increasing 'surplus' on this year's Budget, now over £0.5m, and there were also motions on River/Nature restoration, Invicta House (Art.4 direction) and an expression of interest in Kent becoming a Foundation Strategic Authority (the step below a Mayoral Authority). We are still waiting to hear from Central Government about the future make-up of Kent for Local Government Reorganisation in 2028; a decision is expected in July, but recent government decisions on other Counties caused concern in some areas that what Boroughs have proposed may not be agreed... The mayor-making Council event will be on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> May.

Other Committees continue through April, with Policy Advisory Committees (PACs) from 1<sup>st</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup>, Overview & Scrutiny on 13<sup>th</sup> and Planning on 22<sup>nd</sup>. As there are no elections in Maidstone this May, there is no suspension of Council business, although there is some restriction on 'political' decisions.

During March, Mike also attended meetings of the Rochester Bridge Trust and the Upper Medway Drainage Board, where he is an MBC representative on both. RBT is part-funding some re-tiling (wood shingles) work on Hunton's ancient Church, amongst other charitable donations within its geographical remit – this was agreed before Mike took up his role there! Mike also attended the opening of a new STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Maths) teaching hub at Kings' School in Rochester on 2<sup>nd</sup> March, which is available for public education events as well as school use. RBT is also inviting secondary schools across Kent to apply for engineering and maths-related funding, with grants for two years of up to £10,000 – by 1<sup>st</sup> May ([www.rbt.org.uk/eesp](http://www.rbt.org.uk/eesp)). UMIDB is looking at assisting some restoration work on old stream paths and 'ghost ponds' in Collier Street and other sub-catchments, to help mitigate flooding, through its Conservation and Nature Resilience Fund.

The Council completed its Citizen's Assembly, consisting of four sessions of powerful conversations of ground-breaking citizen deliberation on Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). Residents came together with national and local experts, advocates and academics to explore some of the most difficult and important issues facing our community. The outcomes will be used to move straight into shaping our approach to making Maidstone safer for everyone. Some of the insights were shared with Councillors attending 'Active Bystander' training in March, and the interest from local and national organisations in the recommendations feels incredibly positive. Cllr Couch is also meeting with the Police and Crime Commissioner in April to discuss the 'Words Matter' reporting guidelines, which police forces are being encouraged to adopt. These guidelines provide clear information on how Police external communications teams should avoid victim-blaming language in their reports and use language that centres on the actions of perpetrators and encourages greater respect toward victims/survivors.

## Parish Matters –

**Collier Street** – Mike attended the Parish meeting, and sent in detail about a Planning amendment.

**Hunton** – Liaison continues with residents over construction work adjacent to Lughorse Lane, and a forthcoming PlanAp for polytunnels. The recent Parish meeting covered several Road Safety aspects and consultation on The Square access; Mike reported back from the Police/MBC ‘Cluster’ meeting on 10<sup>th</sup>, which was attended by clerks from Nettlestead & Marden, but not by other Ward Parishes.

**Marden** – We received a couple of residents’ concerns about the unsolicited housing proposal (by GladMan Developments) for 115 homes off Plain Road; we are formulating a reply, but Mike’s position on MBC Planning Committee means he should not directly state his opinion. Nothing more has been received about the ‘North Marden’ development proposal, after the local invitation-only meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> February, and no news has been heard for a while about the Copper Lane housing development. A fly-tipping incident on Tilden Lane was resolved, one of several locations/lanes that MBC Waste are investigating. Cllr Couch supported a resident looking for reassurance regarding the implementation of the fast-track process within the Housing Assistance Policy for MND diagnoses.

**Nettlestead** – The Pelican Crossing did not come up at the March Joint Transportation Board (JTB) meeting, and Mike contacted the Chair, who confirmed it is with KCC for discussion at July meeting.

**Yalding** – We were disappointed that MBC’s argument against the Developer’s Appeal about (...not..) putting solar panels on the next phases of warehousing at YEP was dismissed; Grace had submitted a strong argument to the national Inspector, but Planning ‘rules’ took precedence. Mike also chased up a couple of Planning enquiries about a second Appeal for housing (three units) on Vicarage Lane. Cllr Couch has raised the issue of regular fly-tipping on Mill Lane with the relevant MBC team (again), but is pausing support for a resident pursuing noise complaints at the Boathouse with the Council, until the nature of the future/new tenant’s business is understood.

## **Updates for Newsletters/Sharing with Residents:**

### Medieval Fayre at Brenchley Gardens on Saturday - 11<sup>th</sup> April

The gardens (and the adjacent Museum) will have traditional crafts and skills being demonstrated (in costume) from 11am to 4pm, no charge. Find out more on [www.visitmaidstone.com/whats-on](http://www.visitmaidstone.com/whats-on).

Also happening all over town venues over the May Day Weekend is [Maidstone Fringe](#) musical festival, and there is a fun fair in Mote Park at the same time (and also the weekend before).

### ‘Drive Electric’ - 17th April

Drive Electric is coming to MidKent College Maidstone, Friday 17 April, 10am–2pm. Join it for a fun, informative day exploring the future of transport with a huge range of electric vehicles, expert advice, live demos and plenty more. “Whether you're a business, resident, student or just EV-curious, this event is the perfect chance to learn, ask questions, explore opportunities and see how electric transport could work for you”. Find out more and book:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/drive-electric-tickets-1976717838266>

### Maidstone's 'Big Day Out' - 13th June

MBC is inviting everyone to get out and enjoy our amazing parks and open spaces, and to be part of the first community-led 'Big Day Out.' Being held on Saturday 13th June, this (second) one-day festival is celebrating outdoor areas to be found all across the borough. Parishes are encouraged to host events on their green spaces as part of the celebration, and/or publicise neighbouring activities.

To find out more about the Maidstone Big Day Out, please visit the website: <https://bigdayout.info/>

→ Maidstone River Festival also returns on Saturday 25th July

Borough Councillors Grace Couch & Mike Summersgill – 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2026

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