

05/07/2022



HOT OFF THE PRESS

Only this morning, missing my original editorial deadline, I received an email from the Local Government Boundary Commission. They amended the proposals, which were put forward by MBC.

Their revisions are due to many of you commenting initially. The current proposal is to retain the North Downs Ward in its entirety but to merge it with Harrietsham and Lenham. It looks like a step in the right direction.

There are two concerns remaining:

- The representation, or lack of, of residents in the smaller communities: Will an elected councillor heed to the smaller communities' concerns when the bigger issues in Lenham are the real vote winners?
- And secondly, from a candidate's view, such large ward by area is simply too big to be campaigned on, especially in all-out elections as of 2024

The current revision is not the final decision and there will be heated debates to be had in the months to come.

I shall address this issue further in my next newsletter at the beginning of August. The next public consultation can be found here: <http://consultation.lgbce.org.uk/have-your-say/32722> and closes on 28 September 2022.

MBC acquire first site for delivery of 1000 affordable homes

Cllr David Burton's new executive leadership team has set out the ambition to acquire 1000 houses under MBC ownership and control, which will be reserved for Maidstone people at affordable rents.

In a great first step to delivering the extra 1000 affordable homes for Maidstone residents Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) has just completed the purchase of the former Springfield library site on Sandling Road.

Being able to provide affordable housing for local people is vital. That's why MBC are pursuing the acquisition of sites to build our own. The secondary benefit of this is that we will tackle sites that are not generally brought forward by the private sector, so we will also achieve regeneration and district improvements at the same time.

More affordable housing in Maidstone for local people is one of the top priorities for the Conservative Leadership Team. We will make sure that those who may not be able to afford to buy or rent privately have the opportunity to live in one of the 1000 affordable homes we plan to provide.

Residents' Survey

The 2022 Residents' Survey will be launching on Friday 1 July and will run until Monday 29 August. The Survey will ask residents what they really think about Maidstone and the results will impact all of MBC's services; from biodiversity to community safety, from financial inclusion to waste management and more. Please spare some time and participate: <https://maidstone.gov.uk/home/primary-services/council-and-democracy/primary-areas/consultations>

Road Works

Hardly a community meeting passes by without roadworks and the state of the roads being mentioned.

Firstly I must explain that the District Council (Maidstone) has NO highways responsibilities whatsoever. As such I have not legal powers to address your concerns. All highways matters fall in the remit of the County Council (Kent / KCC).

However, before pointing the finger at my KCC colleague Cllr Prendergast, I also must explain that the M2 Junction 5 improvement works are a national infrastructure project, which is being directed through National Highways, formerly the Highways Agency and later Highways England, which is a government-owned company charged with operating, maintaining and improving motorways and major A roads in England. As such, KCC too has only limited influence here.

Also, as this is a National Highways endeavour, they are exempt from S106 contributions. S106 contributions are only applicable to house-building, as the developer's contribution to counteract the negative impacts of their housing development. Often used to improve the road infrastructure. As the junction-works are a national infrastructure improvement, S 106 contributions are not applicable.

All is not bad however. National Highways are in regular communication with Stockbury Parish Council to work with the community in order to alleviate the impact of the works on the community. You may find more information in the Stockbury Observer for updates on the works. For specific enquiries please contact the Parish Council.

And now for some entertainment.....

Wine Tasting

One Maidstone, the Business Improvement District for the town centre, is bringing a brand-new event into the area that will honour Maidstone's status as the County Town of the Garden of England.

In a celebration of Kentish viticulture 25 local vineyards and wine producers will be showcasing their wares at an event on Saturday 16 July. Running from 10am to 5pm visitors will have the opportunity to sample their choice from up to one hundred different wines. Additionally, visitors can meet the growers and find out more about the horticultural practice involved and the process undertaken to create the wines on show. Exhibitors will include some of the most prestigious vineyards in the region including Chapel Down, Balfour Hush Heath Estate, Simpsons and Biddenden Vineyard, amongst others.

The event will be hosted in the historic Sessions House, the iconic County Hall building

The Wine Weekend is a not-for-profit event and visitors can redeem the value of their £15 entry fee against sampling and purchasing with any of the exhibitors. thewineweekend.co.uk Facebook and Instagram @thewineweekend

Family Fun Treasure Trail

The Heart of Kent Hospice will organise a free Treasure Trail on Sunday 3 July, starting at Lockmeadow Entertainment Centre.

<https://www.hokh.org/support-us/events/family-fun-treasure-trail/>

And Finally.....

Kent Community Rail will organise a Heritage Event at Hollingbourne Station on 6th August 2022. Put this community event in your diary for a variety of heritage themed attractions and hopefully promoting some local businesses and groups.

We are very much hoping that the community station project might be ready to open by then. In any case there will be plenty of food & drink.

PATRIK GARTEN
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