

Tonbridge and Malling Parish Partnership Panel

Thursday, 15 February 2018

Kent County Council Services Update

Key points taken from the Report by Paul Carter, Leader of the Council to Full Council on 7 December 2017 (minutes not yet published).

- Mr Carter spoke of his concern over the **future of three Kent hospitals**, Canterbury, QEQM and William Harvey and the two options currently being proposed for a public consultation by East Kent Hospital Trust; he believes a third option should be developed. The third option would deliver a newly constructed hospital for Canterbury to serve its existing catchment area, currently serving a population of 240,000. The population is projected to rise to 280,000 by 2030. Under the KEOGH published guidance for hospital reconfigurations, particularly relating to the guidance for 'urgent and emergency care', populations in the range of 250,000 to 300,000 would support what is referred to as a medical emergency centre which would provide the following services:
 - consultant led A&E
 - acute medicine and critical care/HDU
 - access to surgical opinion via network
 - possibly paediatrics assessment unit and possibly midwife-led obstetrics.
- Mr Carter urged Health colleagues to include this option prior to any public consultation. KEOGH guidance recommends the total population should be considered rather than look at a situation in a piecemeal way, which in Kent and Medway's case is 1.5m people. This proposition was discussed with partners at a recent Sustainability and Transformation Plan Programme Board and as a conclusion, a meeting will be arranged with health professionals to discuss the possibility of taking this option forward. The Leader of Canterbury City Council, Simon Cook, is very much in support of the third option and has been invited to the meeting.
- The recent announcement in last week's Autumn Budget, which announced an **additional £3.8bn for the National Health Service** was greatly welcomed.
- Mr Carter referred to the much-publicised letter he received from Kent Conservative MPs expressing concern about the **potential diminution in budget and delivery of subsidised bus routes**. Kent County Council (KCC) has not axed any subsidies for bus routes in the past 12 months and the budget remains at £7.5m for 2017/18, although some bus companies have chosen to alter certain routes.
- Bus subsidies are among potential savings currently being considered by KCC in the next February '18 budget. Mr Carter appreciated the importance of these transport arrangements for Kent residents and is progressing a programme that could reduce the list of routes published in advance of a consultation due to start in January 2018. Mr Carter said the list of routes published was premature and apologised for the understandable concern it has caused.

- Mr Carter made a personal pledge to handle the negotiations with the bus operators. He intended meeting with Arriva and Stagecoach as well as smaller bus companies in advance of the consultation to ask if a significant number of routes can be kept without a subsidy, with a view to reducing the impact.
- KCC always planned to look at more imaginative ways to invest in lower cost transport options. To this end Mr Carter intends meeting with taxi companies to explore the 'clip and ride' taxi share scheme to better support rural communities, alongside expanding community mini buses and the Kent Karrier services. An indicative budget has been set for this purpose to show KCC's commitment to its residents, while always being mindful to spend taxpayer's money wisely.
- Additional pressure has been placed on KCC by Arriva and Stagecoach who have increased their prices by up to 3.5% this year, above inflation for the fifth consecutive year. Serious negotiations are needed to try to reduce KCC's current cost of @£40m for commissioned bus services.

In addition, during the County Council Question & Answer session the following question was answered by the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport which relates specifically to the Tonbridge & Malling area:

- Q.** Please confirm that the Council is taking all possible steps to have the Environment Agency implement the agreed improvements to the River Medway flood protection measures in Hildenborough (Flood Defence Fund) and Tonbridge (Leigh flood Barrier) and further confirm that the above joint works remain on schedule for completion?
- R.** The Environment Agency is progressing the Leigh Expansion and Hildenborough Embankments scheme. It has completed the Outline Business Case and is currently working on the Strategic Business Case which are both requirements of the Treasury to secure the government contribution. KCC is also working with them to prepare the Business Case for the Local Growth fund allocation to the project, which will be submitted in the New Year. KCC has also committed its own contribution of £2.5m to the scheme and is currently finalising the legal agreement for this contribution. The scheme remains on track for completion in 2021/22.

A [webcast](#) of the meeting is available.

Lorry Watch

KCC works to mitigate the impact of freight in Kent and has introduced a scheme called Lorry Watch to tackle the issue of lorries using inappropriate rural routes in Kent. The scheme aims to support and empower local residents in areas where issues persist with the through traffic of Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs).

The Lorry Watch scheme is run by local residents. Community volunteers record details of lorries that are suspected of using unsuitable roads or not sticking to the limits and restrictions. Once the information is collected, it is passed to Kent Police who can find the vehicle's registered keeper. If the vehicle is ignoring the legal limits and restrictions, the police contact the company and warn them that if they continue, it may result in formal action.

If there is no limit or restriction but the road is thought unsuitable, Kent County Council will contact the company and advise them to use the [Kent Freight Gateway journey planner](#).

Setting up a Lorry Watch. Anyone can set up a Lorry Watch. To do this, follow these steps:

1. You will need at least two volunteers for your Lorry Watch team. They must be aged 18 or over. Parish Councils or other community groups can be good places to find volunteers.
2. Contact Lorry Watch by emailing freight@kent.gov.uk or on 03000 41 81 81 to discuss the idea, after which the necessary equipment will be delivered to you together with safety information and instructions on how the scheme works.

Kent and Medway Business Fund

KCC is offering 0% loans between £50,000 and £500,000 to small and medium sized businesses in Ashford, Canterbury, Dartford, Dover, Gravesham, Maidstone, Medway, Sevenoaks, Shepway, Swale, Thanet, Tonbridge and Malling and Tunbridge Wells.

The scheme aims to deliver investment to business across Kent and Medway and is funded by loan repayments from our previous Regional Growth Fund schemes (Expansion East Kent, Tiger and Escalate).

Pre-applications are now open for the Kent and Medway Business Fund.

Follow the link to find out more on who can apply and how to apply to the [Kent and Medway Business Fund](#)

Kent Fostering - Open your Heart

KCC urgently needs people to provide children and young people with loving homes. KCC is recruiting 200 new foster carers and urgently needs to fill the remaining 120 vacancies. For more information please contact 03000 420 002 or visit <http://www.kentfostering.co.uk>

Kent Public Health Observatory (KPHO) <http://www.kpho.org.uk/>

KPHO provides public health intelligence through data collection, analysis and interpretation. Its library, based in Sessions House, Maidstone, gives access to knowledge, resources and evidence to support public health and social care.

Non-members are welcome to use the library for reference and study purposes, although there may be a charge for this facility. You can also subscribe to its weekly e-bulletin and receive a weekly summary of what's new with links to new reports, policy and resources organized by topic.

Fact and Figures about Kent

The Kent County Council Strategic Business Development & Intelligence Unit provides regular monthly updates on unemployment in Kent and other facts and figures, including area profiles, economy and employment data, population and census data, equality and

diversity data, children and young people' data, land and property data, energy and environment data and deprivation and poverty data. Visit: [Facts and Figures about Kent](#)

KCC Highways – report a problem on the road or pavement

KCC Highways, Transportation and Waste welcomes feedback from its customers and has designed a fault reporting tool so that residents can quickly and easily let us know about any problems on the roads and footways or about any equipment such as streetlights, that may not be working.

If you wish to report a fault visit: www.kent.gov.uk/highwayfaults

From here can be viewed all known issues, any planned works, report multiple issues, upload photos as well as track any existing enquiries. Residents can still call to report any complex or urgent matters on 03000 418181 and speak to one of KCC's trained highway specialists.

KCC Combined Member Grant Scheme 2017/18

KCC's Combined Member Grant scheme is open with £22,000 available to every County Councillor to fund both community and highway projects in their electoral division. Tonbridge & Malling County Councillors between them have a total of £154,000 to allocate in 2017/18.

For more information on the Combined Member Grant scheme, please contact your local County Councillor or Anne Charman, KCC Community Liaison Officer.

KCC also produces a monthly publication 'Inside Track' which provides information on funding opportunities at a county and national level. For a copy of [Inside Track](#) or information on other funding opportunities visit: [Community grants and funding](#)

Consultations - have your say, your views count

You can view all KCC consultations online at:

<http://consultations.kent.gov.uk/consult.ti>

Signed up to the KCC Consultation Directory yet? It only takes a few minutes to register and gives a full list of closed, current and planned consultations and provides an opportunity to feedback on local services and policies. It enables KCC to contact residents when an activity is due to take place or to receive feedback for a particular consultation or involvement activity when it is published on KCC's website.

Please note:

- there are separate lists for [Traffic Regulation Orders](#) and **Start of Works Notices** and for [Public Rights of Way Notices](#).)
- to view and comment on planning applications that the County Council determines please visit the [planning application site](#).

Current consultations:

Homelessness Support Service for Vulnerable Adults in Kent

22 January 2018 to 4 March 2018

KCC funds homelessness support services for vulnerable young people (16-25), adults who are over 18 and offenders who need additional support. Currently, those services can be categorised as either 'supported housing', 'floating support' or 'rough sleeper outreach'.

KCC would like to hear your views on the proposals contained within the consultation document, which refers to plans for those 18+ and your thoughts on how we might improve the future delivery of homelessness support for vulnerable adults in Kent. Your views will be used to help shape the future of these services after October 2018.

For more information or to respond to this consultation please visit: [Homelessness Support Service Consultation](#)

Improving Access to Tonbridge Station - Revised Design

16 January to 12 February 2018

In December 2016 KCC carried out a consultation on a design to improve access to Tonbridge Station. It has used the feedback from this consultation to revise the design on which it is now seeking your views.

Tonbridge Station is the busiest station in Kent with over 4.4 million customers expected to have used the station in 2016/17.

Working with Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council, Network Rail and Southeastern, KCC aims to improve the space available for customers at the station, provide more room for pedestrian movements, encourage further take up of sustainable transport and to link the design to the recently improved High Street.

This scheme will be using funds secured from the Local Growth Fund of £500,000 allocated by the South East Local Enterprise Partnership.

Visit [Improving Access to Tonbridge Station](#) to have your say or participate in the [online forum](#).

KCC news

To view the latest news and releases from KCC visit KCC's Media Hub at <https://kccmediahub.net/>

Recent media releases

Kent County Council calls on government to support highway maintenance

KCC is calling on the government to make changes to road maintenance budgets warning the current system could lead to a 'rapid spiral of asset deterioration'.

KCC is on course to secure its highways maintenance budget in the face of diminishing government funding by receiving a 'band three' in funding. The rating, from the Department for Transport (DfT), means KCC will receive £26.6m this year rather than £25.2m in its current band two rating.

As government funding in general continues to dwindle and KCC faces extra pressures on its finances, the current condition of the road network equates to a maintenance backlog in the region of £630m.

The amount given to Kent from the DfT's Incentive Fund, if it remained at band two, would reduce by £2.3m in 2019/20 and £1.4m in 2020/21.

Kent County Council has a highways network valued at around £25bn with 5,400 miles of roads, 3,900 miles of pavement, 250,000 drains, 1,595 bridges, 125,000 streetlights and 500,000 trees.

The issue was discussed at the Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee on Wednesday, 31 January and a [webcast](#) of this meeting is now available.

Kent County Council continues to protect frontline services

KCC is approaching the start of another financial year facing an immense challenge in setting the council's budget. In the coming financial year, KCC has a budget gap of £113m out of the council's net budget of approximately £1bn.

Savings of £53m are needed as government funding reduces by £45m, coupled with the rising demand for services, particularly for children's and adult social care and linked to inflation costs currently rising at more than 3% per year.

To date, unlike many other councils, KCC has avoided making significant cuts in frontline services. It continues to make savings through efficiencies and service transformation but is fast reaching the point where frontline services are now threatened.

However, since it announced its budget consultation in September 2017 for the coming financial year 2018/19, there have been two significant announcements made by the government.

Firstly, that the government has accepted the Kent and Medway bid to become a Business Rate Retention pilot scheme in 2018/19. Working with the 12 district councils, Medway Council and the Kent Fire and Rescue Authority, the innovative bid will potentially deliver £5.6m of additional resource for the county council for the coming financial year.

Secondly, the provisional local government settlement for 2018/19 announced by the Secretary of State in the House of Commons included an increase in the amount authorities can raise in council tax by 1% without a referendum (worth £6m to KCC).

However, this announcement must be balanced against the disappointment that the provisional local government settlement did not include an extension of the Transitional Grant worth £5.3m.

KCC is therefore joining county councils across the country in proposing to raise council tax to protect and deliver the services it believes its community deserves.

In 2018/19 it is proposed council tax will be raised by just under 5%, adding £52.30 to the annual charge of the average band C household in Kent.

As a result, KCC is proposing to:

- Substantially reduce the saving proposed on subsidised bus travel from £2.25m to £0.45m by looking at smarter, more responsive ways to deliver these services. There will be conversations with parish councils and communities on how this can be delivered and an additional investment of £500k to fulfil these ambitions.
- Continue the £8.7m subsidy provided through the Young Persons Travel Pass
- An additional £7.5m capital investment in maintaining Kent's roads, including pothole repairs
- Protect Kent's most vulnerable children and adults with a total increase in the budget of £16m.

The budget will be finalised at the County Council meeting on Tuesday, 20 February 2018.

KCC 'disappointed' at delay of planned Thameslink service to Maidstone East

Kent County Council is extremely disappointed at the recent announcement by Govia Thameslink Railway of their decision to delay even further the start of the planned new Thameslink service to Maidstone East.

Once again Maidstone has been put to the back of the queue, with a delay of a further year from December 2018 to December 2019.

Kent County Council has been determined to have a branch of Thameslink services terminating at Maidstone East, and has campaigned over several years, with other councils and rail travellers' associations, to get the planned terminus for Thameslink services transferred from Tunbridge Wells to Maidstone East.

Kent County Council has always regarded this new service as a critical enhancement in the overall capacity in Kent's rail network, with the stops at West Malling (for Kings Hill), Borough Green & Wrotham, and Otford (for passengers from the wider Sevenoaks area) being essential to re-balance the travel flows between mid-Kent and the City of London. Furthermore, even the existing Thameslink service from Sevenoaks via Bat & Ball will now be truncated at Blackfriars for the period May 2018 to May 2019, further reducing the availability of through rail services between Kent and areas north of London.

Kent County Council will be writing to the rail minister to express its frustration at these further delays by the Department for Transport.

For more information on any of these subjects please contact:

Anne Charman, KCC Community Liaison Officer
anne.charman@kent.gov.uk or 07717 665893

*KCC's **Community Liaison Team** covers all 12 district council areas in Kent supporting local County Councillors in their role as community leaders and administering their grants. The team works closely with partners from the public, private and voluntary sectors, to help ensure Kent's residents and local community groups are kept well informed about KCC's services and are given the opportunity to influence decisions.*

