

KENARDINGTON PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting Held on Tuesday 20th April 2021 at
7.00pm
held via ZOOM platform due to Covid-19 Restrictions

Present:

Parish Cllrs: Cllrs S McIntyre, B Hedley, K Ashby, B Zajaczkowski

Borough Cllrs: Cllr M Burgess

KCC Councillor: Cllr M Hill

Members of Public: 0

PCSO: 0

Clerk: A Beach

Minute No		ACTION
531	<p>Introduction by Chairman Cllr McIntyre welcomed everyone and gave apologies for: Cllr Potter, PCSO Kate Richards, Rev. G Halsall, Village Caretaker</p>	
532	<p>Approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on 23rd April 2019 The minutes were approved by Councillors' and will be signed retrospectively by Cllr McIntyre</p>	
533	<p>Chairman's Statement - Steve McIntyre Cllr McIntyre highlighted items from his full report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the Village Picnic he was able to present a well-deserved Kent Association of Local Council community award to Shirley and Richard Gough for everything they do for the village • We have a new website and Facebook page to enhance communication within the Parish and special thanks were given to Brenda Hedley for her hard work to make this happen. • Special thanks were given to Tom Coombes for allowing KPC to use his beautiful garden for the Village Picnic and Ian Woods who provided other additional services for the event. • There were also thanks to the Parish and Borough Councillors and the volunteers who helped with the recent litter pick. <p>A copy of his full report is attached.</p>	
534	<p>Responsible Finance Officer - Annette Beach The Clerk gave a breakdown of the Parish Council's current financial position as detailed in the attached report.</p>	
535	<p>PCSO Report - Kate Richards Unfortunately, the PCSO was unable to attend, but sent the attached report, explaining that all crime in Kenardington was very low.</p>	

536	<p>Borough Councillors Report - Mick Burgess Cllr Burgess explained that due to the unexpected conditions experienced by all over the past year his report was longer than usual, and therefore he would present the highlights.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brexit - During 2020/21 parking for lorries was provided at Dover TAP; Operation Brock; new Sevington site; Manston airport and Waterbrook Truckstop, although some of these are no longer in use. • Covid 19 - The pandemic caused a number of issues for the BC to overcome, supporting residents and businesses financially; co-ordinating support services whilst ensuring normality wherever possible continued. • Tenterden - Was named the UK's third best High Street in a national survey by retail experts Harper Dennis Hobbs and ranked higher than any other in Kent. <p>A copy of his full report is attached.</p>	
537	<p>Village Hall - Brenda Hedley With the hall being closed for most of the year there is not a great deal to report. Financially, we are in a positive position following two business grants from Ashford BC to cover the loss of our normal receipts and the waiving of Business Rates for the year. The intention is to use the grants decorate the hall and install broadband and increase use to a wider community.</p>	
538	<p>St Mary's Church - Rev Graham Halsall Unfortunately, Rev Halsall was unable to attend, his report was presented by the Clerk. Cllr McIntyre suggested we should invite him to join a meeting in the near future. Report attached.</p>	Clerk
539	<p>County Councillor Report - Mike Hill Cllr Hill also explained that due to the unprecedented conditions over the past year he will also present the highlights.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Covid 19 - has affected all residents and KCC had to be resilient and work closely with all our partners to ensure. • Public Health - the team worked closely with the NHS and Public Health England helping to ensure sufficient PPE equipment was available for staff and the setting-up of numerous testing centres around the county. • Child and Adult Social Care - KCC stepped in to help care providers with financial support to ensure these important vulnerable groups were supported throughout. <p>The full attached report gives the full details.</p>	

540	Village Caretaker Report - Yvonne Osborne Our Village Caretaker Alf Mather was unable to attend but the attached report was sent on his behalf.	
541	Questions from the Floor None received.	

The Chairman thanked everyone for joining the meeting and closed it at 8.25

DRAFT

Kenardington Parish Council (KPC) Annual Parish Meeting

Chairman's Report 2020 to 2021

20th April 2021

Introduction

It has been a privilege to chair KPC this year. Throughout challenging circumstances presented by the COVID 19 pandemic we (KPC) have worked hard to retain business continuity. We have worked together with the community in pursuing strategies such as improving communication, initiating community events and improving public safety always with the aim of making Kenardington a better place to live.

Key achievements this year

Improving communication - we have initiated a new website and Facebook page to enhance the means of communicating with the local community. A big thank you to Brenda Hedley for leading on this work and making it happen. We have retained the traditional leaflet drop as an important means of communication particularly for those residents without digital technology.

Bringing together the community - we achieved a COVID compliant village event in August 2020 to celebrate VJ Day and belated VE Day. We had great support from Tom Coombes and family who provided their magnificent garden to hold this event. Also, my thanks to the Kenardington Church Warden Ian Woods who provided additional essential facilities. This event provided a great opportunity to present to Richard and Shirley Gough the well-deserved Kent Association of Local Councils community award for services to the community.

Enhancing public safety - a grant from Kent County Council has meant KPC can continue with its Speedwatch project. The purchase and use of specialist equipment will assist traffic calming initiatives to improve the safety of the community. My thanks to Mike Hill and Kent County Council for supporting this initiative with a grant of £2,500. My thanks also to those within and outside of Kenardington who have volunteered to assist with this project.

Improving the environment - KPC recently collaborated with adjacent Woodchurch Parish Council in a day of litter collection action, the cleaning up of nearby roadside verges making our villages better places to live. Also, installation of additional litter bins and dog litter signage is having a positive impact. Again, a big thanks to Brenda Hedley for leading all things "litter collection".

Sustaining families within the community - there's a continued healthy dialogue with Ashford BC and West Kent Housing Association to agree the process for compliance to section 106 agreements concerning tenants with local connections occupying affordable housing in Kenardington.

Looking ahead 2021 to 2022

As the COVID 19 restrictions ease up there are real opportunities to build on bringing together our community. Consulting with local residents and businesses will be key to identifying community needs and what support is available. The Village Hall committee are keen to renovate our local hall, with the idea of offering a diverse multifunctional facility for business

meetings, family get togethers, fitness classes, coffee mornings, band rehearsals etc. This is a good starting point for consultation. The availability of internet via fibre to our community, expected to be in place by July 2021, will be a game changer. I'm grateful to Keith Ashby for his continued lobbying to get this service into the village. This will open up opportunities for local residents and businesses, as well as the conduit to building a closer community.

To conclude....

The pandemic has caused us all to rethink how we go about our daily business. Home working has for some become the norm, and for others there's the requirement to attend the workplace and undertake public facing duties. KPC are eternally grateful to all those who have provided essential services to the Kenardington community during this difficult period; from key workers such as Health Care Specialists and Police Community Support Officers to postal workers, bin collectors and food delivery suppliers. Not forgetting "Alf", our caretaker / gardener who has kept public areas under control throughout.

I would also like to thank all who served KPC this year (Brenda, Keith, Bob and Hilary), and those community spirited residents who want to do the right thing in support of making Kenardington a better place to live. This includes those who voluntarily pick up roadside litter as part of their daily walk, those who make the time to check on the wellbeing of our elderly and more vulnerable residents, and to all those volunteers who maintain the wonderful St Mary's Church and surrounding grounds.

Finally, a big thank you to our Borough Councillor Mick Burgess who has provided continued support and wisdom throughout this year. Also, a big thank you to our clerk Annette Beach who works really hard behind the scenes to make things happen.

I very much look forward to continuing serving KPC and the local community this coming year, in whatever capacity that may be.

Steve McIntyre
Chairperson Kenardington Parish Council
Kenardingtonpc@gmail.com
<https://Kenardington.com>
Facebook: [Kenardington Community Page](#)

Responsible Finance Officer Report - Annette Beach

Annual Report 2021

Since my last report in 2019, Kenardington PC have been able to start rebuilding reserves, at the 2019 year end the working balance was £2,308.02 rising to £8,835.17 at the end of the 2020/21 financial year end.

These reserves have achieved by slightly increasing the precept received from Ashford BC and careful budgeting; and a considerable underspend in 2020 due to restrictions.

Expenditure and Receipts

The total expenditure for the year was £3,541.45 and receipts of £6,624.20. The bulk of the underspend was due to our inability to purchase equipment and set-up a Speedwatch scheme within the village.

Precept 2020/21

Councillors agreed not to increase the precept from the 2019/20 year and it remained at £6,200

Audit

The internal auditor found no problems with the accounts for 2019/20 and the external auditor, PKF Littlejohn, did not receive any questions from Parishioners and accepted the internal audit report.

PCSO Report 2021



Ashford - Isle of Oxney

[View area boundary](#)

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Please understand that these are the figures for your area of Kenardington which also covers Isle of Oxney in the figures.

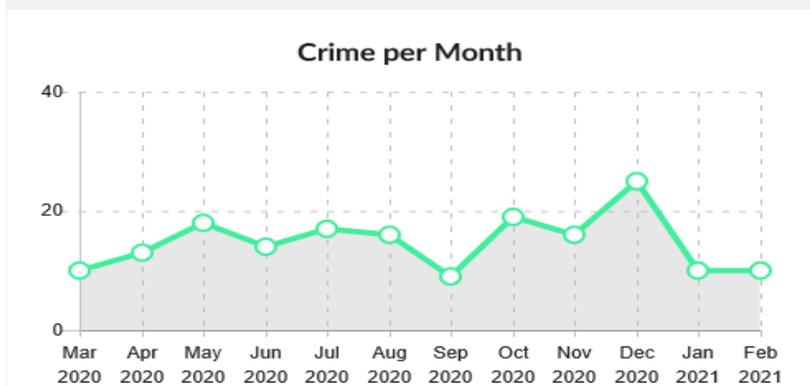
Kenardington crime figures are low and I just ask that if something is happening or needs reporting it is done to the correct channels which I highlighted in my last month's Newsletter.

This year has been a strange and difficult year for many people in our communities in relation to Covid, and we hope that the following year we will see us starting to get back to some form of normality.

The figures that I have put in this report can be found on www.police.uk

Crime levels overview

Crime for last year



Month	Total	Percentage
Mar 2020	10	5.6%
Apr 2020	13	7.3%
May 2020	18	10.2%
Jun 2020	14	7.9%
Jul 2020	17	9.6%
Aug 2020	16	9%
Sep 2020	9	5.1%
Oct 2020	19	10.7%
Nov 2020	16	9%
Dec 2020	25	14.1%
Jan 2021	10	5.6%
Feb 2021	10	5.6%

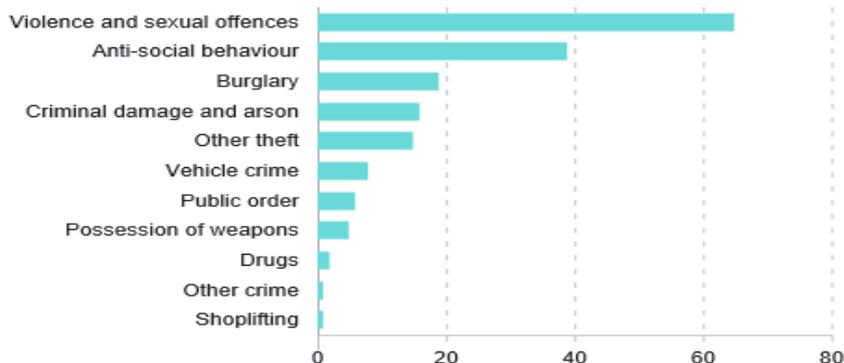
Crime types description

for the last 12 months (from Mar 2020 to Feb 2021)

Latest month

Last 12 months

Last 3 years



Type	Total	Percentage
Anti-social behaviour	39	22%
Burglary	19	10.7%
Other theft	15	8.5%
Violence and sexual offences	65	36.7%
Criminal damage and arson	16	9%
Drugs	2	1.1%
Vehicle crime	8	4.5%
Possession of weapons	5	2.8%
Public order	6	3.4%
Other crime	1	0.6%
Shoplifting	1	0.6%

I apologise that I am unable to attend this evening meeting due to shifts and other commitments. Hopefully as restrictions lift, we can start getting back to normal and we will be able to meet up in person. Please do not hesitate in contacting me if you have any concerns.

Kate Richards PCSO 4605956

Good evening, we all know that the past 12 months have been unique in the history of local government and to describe to you what changes and decisions have had to be made would make this evening a rather long meeting. My report runs to 5+ pages and what I would like to do is to read only a part of each subject and send your clerk the full text for distribution. I hope Chairman you are happy with this idea.

Most of the decisions were passed down from Central Government. The Leader of the Council together with the CEO have been publishing very frequent updates over the year to Parish Councils and others. I have decided that there are four main headings for the past year; Brexit and junction 10a - Covid 19 - Finance and Climate Control plus others

BREXIT & 10a

The main and most obvious outcome for Ashford Borough with Brexit, so far, has been the movement and parking of lorries. Currently, but ever changing, there is parking in Kent at Dover TAP; Operation Brock; New Sevington Site; Manston airport & TAP256 plus of course the regular Truckstop's at Waterbrook; Stop 24 Dover Harbour. All of which has been helped by the completion of junction 10a of the M20.

In late September Defra informed us that the Sevington Inland Border Facility (IBF); the area at Sevington which the government purchased is being designated a Border Control Post and that the Borough Council will become responsible for carrying out various port health controls on behalf of the government. This is in conjunction with other agencies such as the Animal and Plant Health Agency and security all of which are employing local people when possible.

Temporary use of Civic Centre to house our new Ashford Port Health service staff is due to go live from April and the Council has made great strides in recruiting staff. From 8 March there will be 50 staff to induct, train and bring up to speed, with a further 50 staff to be recruited between now and July. It has become evident that we will not be able to do all of the training. Currently they do not have a permanent home for these staff until a new building at Sevington is handed over to us by Defra in June (subject to the build schedule going to plan). As a result, the decision has been made to temporarily accommodate the Port Health service on level 3 of the Civic Centre. This will be done in a Covid secure way and we will be applying measures such as splitting the workforce into bubbles to reduce the number of staff in the building at any one time, to keep both Port Health Staff safe as well as the services who are still operating from the building.

COVID

Residents will no doubt have been keeping a close eye on developments regarding the spread of Coronavirus (COVID - 19), especially in light of Public Health England (PHE) confirming the first case in Kent on Monday 2 March 2020

On 17 March 2020 ABC was represented on the Kent Local Resilience Forum (LRF) and are attending the weekly Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG) meetings. This is the group that brings together all the key players i.e., Kent Public Health, NHS, KCC, Ambulance Service, Police and the districts. The SCG are in contact with a wider network of resilience forums which link into central government. The chair of the SCG is the KCC Director of Public Health. These meetings take place on Thursday mornings and are attended by one of the senior officers. The SCG is supported by the LRF Tactical Coordinating Group (TCG) where ABC are also represented. As the name implies, their responsibility is to implement the strategic decisions of the SCG. The TCG meetings take place on a Tuesday morning are serviced by our duty officers. Both groups are

addressing a huge array of issue in what is a dynamic and changing situation. Members of both groups are in daily contact in order to implement agreed actions.

As far as ABC is concerned, the same arrangements were put in operation but focusing on our own communities. The Ashford Critical Emergency Response Committee (ACER), is providing strategic direction. It too is meeting on a weekly basis and is supported by the Ashford COVID-19 Task Group. This is an officer group with all of our key services represented which reports to ACER. The Chief Executive is in contact with her counterparts across Kent in order to share information and undertake dynamic risk assessment.

Officers have worked tirelessly in the sensitive and difficult area of reducing the number of rough sleepers in the borough have been able to take advantage of new Government funds to further support rough sleepers during the coronavirus outbreak

On Monday 15th June 2020, the Reopening High Streets Safely Fund provided the council access to an allocated fund of up to £116,814 to put in place measures to establish a safe trading environment for businesses and customers, particularly in high streets. So, it was disappointing that a second national lockdown had to be introduced. Concerned by the rising numbers of COVID-19 cases across the country, the Government's response to control the spread of the virus is to return to the mantra that underpinned the first lockdown - stay home, protect the NHS, save lives. Subsequently we had our third lockdown which we are now very carefully coming out of. Most of the arrangements that I mentioned at the beginning of this pandemic are still operating, others have been stood down but with easy access to restart if necessary.

FINANCE

Ashford's reputation as the best location to start a business was been confirmed by data. There were 1,635 business start-ups based in the borough in 2019, more than any other district or borough in Kent. With a 9.5% increase in company formations in 2020, according to the Centre for Entrepreneurs and Companies House, Ashford is best placed to continue seeing a growth in start-ups year-on-year

Research showed tourism growing in Ashford in 2019; Figures released by Visit Kent show that the tourism industry in Ashford was worth £311m to the borough in 2019, before the devastating impact of the coronavirus pandemic. The latest Tourism Economic Impact Study says the borough welcomed 4.7m visitors 2019, with £20m spent on average in the local economy each month in 2019, as a direct result of the region's tourism and hospitality industry. As we are all aware these figures have taken a terrific hit due to the pandemic. Everyone in these industries is keeping their fingers crossed that Covid will continue to subside so they can open up again.

CLIMATE CONTROL

In Jan 2020 in order to support this initiative, it was proposed to offer ten free tree saplings to each parish, as an incentive to participate in this project. In return, ABC asked each parish to provide simple data, size and number of trees for example on the tree stock held within land owned by each parish council. ABC itself is in the process of planting 6,666 trees by Aspire at Chilmington and across the Borough

A CLIMATE ADVISORY COMMITTEE has been set up by ABC and is continuing to meet virtually as have all the other committee meetings of the ABC since the start of the pandemic. Not only does this help to control the spread of the virus, but also reduces the amount of travel required by about 95% and therefore the emissions are less as well which helps the climate agenda

TENTERDEN

Tenterden among UK's best town centres and has been named the UK's third best high street in a national survey by retail experts and analysts Harper Dennis Hobbs. The research looked at a thousand shopping areas across the country, considering several factors. These included the availability of essential stores, the vacancy rate and how well the area's shops meet consumers' needs to come up with the final league table. Tenterden rose to third in a year where shopping local became more important as we were all encouraged to stay at home to protect ourselves and others against the coronavirus pandemic. The town ranked higher than any other in Kent.

CENSUS

Census 2021 to be held on 21st March, will provide a snapshot of modern society which everyone will benefit from. Households across Ashford borough will be asked to take part in Census 2021 this spring. I would like to stress how important it is for us to know who lives in our borough so that ABC can make sure our services are tailored to the residents. The census, run by the Office for National Statistics, is a once-in-a-decade survey that will record the most accurate estimate of all the people and households in England and Wales.

REFUSE Collections

During the bank holiday periods, recycling and refuse collections may take place on different days. Residents can **look up** their bin collection day, download their collection calendars and report missed collections.

COUNCIL HOUSING

The Housing team is working with new process for dealing with enquiries from members and also our MP, which will run as a pilot for six months. This is to ensure that the enquiries on housing issues are tracked and responded to in a timely manner. This will also allow each enquiry to go to the correct team leader for investigation. When this pilot is finished and successful, hopefully the plan is to roll it out to the rest of the borough.

PARISH COUNCIL GRANT

The ABC Overview & Scrutiny Budget Task Group highlighted the need to consider a one-off grant to those parishes disproportionately affected by the proposed removal of Council Tax Support Grant. A one-off grant passed by full council which is to be funded in 2021/22 from the Service Contingency Reserve now that the 2021/22 budget has been approved. This new grant is based on the 2021/22 Council Tax Base and Council Tax Support Claims within the area, and looks to compensate parish councils disproportionately impacted by the removal of the CTS grant, by limiting the additional cost per Band D equivalent to 0.75 pence. A list of new grant allocations proposed is totalling £20,140. The Cabinet approved the allocation of £20,140 as did full council from the 2021/22 Service Contingency Reserve to fund the new Parish Council Transitional Grant as scheduled.

Calculation Methodology There is an example sets-out the calculation methodology used to target those parish Council's most disproportionality impacted by the proposed removal of the existing Council Tax Support Grant and the proposed funding under the new scheme, which if the Clerk does not have a copy, I will forward to her to pass on to anyone interested.

Example of new grant calculation Parish Council 2021/22 Tax Base 752 A Previous CTS Grant £4,669 B Previous CTS per Band D Equivalent £6.21 $C=B/A$ Limit impact to 0.75p per Band D Equivalent £564 $D=A*0.75$ New Grant Allocation £4,105 $E=B-D$ Example where no new grant will be applicable as previous CTS grant supported less than 75 pence per Band D Equivalent. Parish Council 2021/22 Tax Base 491 A Previous CTS Grant £204 B Previous CTS per Band D Equivalent

£0.42 C=B/A Limit impact to 0.75p per Band D Equivalent £368 D=A*0.75 New Grant Allocation
£0 E=B-D

Kenardington St Mary's Church Report 2021

Since commencing duties as Rector of the enlarged Saxon Shoreline Benefice, Kenardington has impressed me as a parish church worthy of a future. All other churches in the benefice are now on the same service schedule as previously. Sadly, a variety of factors have not made that possible at St Mary's and worship has not commenced since the reopening of churches as part of the easing of lockdown programme (on Easter Day).

That being the present case, I am working hard in trying to secure a niche place in the deanery and parish for worship to continue and prosper, though any future planning needs support from those who would wish it too so. We will hopefully see the new Prentice Room window installed in early May. If that is the case then it will be dedicated as part of a service of Evensong on Ascension Day, 13th May, probably at 7.00 pm. This is yet to be confirmed. In addition, the benefice of seven other churches will be joining St Mary's for a united service on Sunday 30th May at 10.30 am. All are welcome.

The continuation of support from Saxon Shoreline Early Music Kenardington will continue and a series of concerts is planned with an October reboot, should circumstances permit, and dates are looking far into 2022. This promises so much to look forward to. I am grateful for the efforts of Dr Stephen Coles, Artistic Director, and his enthusiasm for both the project of Early Music in the area and the profile of the church in particular. Efforts are currently being made to explore the installation of not one but two early church organs, to complement the choral schedule, solo performances and congregational worship. We look forward to that development, should it succeed. A meeting with the Diocesan Organ Advisor is imminent.

I would find it difficult to answer questions on any of the above as my time here has been so short, and opportunities so limited due to the Covid restrictions to date. I must say, however, that I have experienced the warmest welcome across the benefice of churches, the community of Hamstreet in which I live and the increasing number of people I meet in my capacity as Rector, and resident. I look forward to growing community involvement and supporting the cause of this church in new and prevailing directions. There is a lot of potential, though dare I say more potential than assistance at the present moment.

Rev. Graham Halsall - Rector

KCC Parish Council Update – March 2021

This report provides an update on some of the work Kent County Council (KCC) has undertaken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic over the past twelve months.

It is almost a year since the country went into a national lockdown in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic and the restrictions and measures put in place to control it have had an impact on virtually all aspects of life. From the start of the pandemic, Kent County Council (KCC) has needed to respond to a huge number of unprecedented challenges, urgently adapting how it works and working with our partners to find new ways to continue to provide our services and meet people's needs across the county.

In the summer of 2020, the challenge for KCC shifted from that of immediate response to starting to address the economic and social consequences of COVID-19 and planning a route to recovery. The period from October 2020 to early January 2021 was characterised by a much larger upswing in COVID-19 cases than in the first wave. The County Council's focus had to switch again, and huge efforts were put into contact tracing activity and asymptomatic testing as well as supporting the county through another lockdown. The detection of the 'Kent variant', resulted in a period of intensive partnership work as authorities took action to minimise its impact.

The County Council's five crucial actions for responding to COVID-19 are:

- Reminding residents of the importance of adhering to rules and guidance;
- Developing widespread testing, both for people who are symptomatic and symptom free;
- Effective contact tracing; and
- Explaining and enforcing rules for businesses.
- As far as possible continuing to deliver public services to our residents.

Delivering with our partners

The Kent Resilience Forum (KRF) is a multi-agency partnership to plan for and respond to emergencies. It includes representatives from key local public services and facilities such as Local Authorities, Police, Fire, NHS, Environment Agency and many others. Kent County Council is a lead agency within the KRF. From March 2020, KRF's strategic command structures were activated to oversee vital workstreams to respond to the pandemic as it took hold. This enabled partners to be able to leverage in support locally and from Government and apply a programme management approach to what were diverse tasks and responsibilities. This included the convening of Cells and workstreams.

Whilst the Districts were leading on the co-ordination and provision of Community Hubs, KCC added resilience and capacity to the process by developing the Kent Together webpage and phone line. As of 28 February 2021, 5944 requests have been made to Kent Together.

The Kent Support and Assistance Service (KSAS) has worked with the districts and other statutory partners to provide discretionary support in the form of supermarket vouchers, school uniforms, white goods, school meal vouchers, and much more.

The voluntary and community sector (VCS) has played a central part in supporting individuals and communities during the pandemic. In the early stages of lockdown, the decision was taken to award £200K to Kent Community Foundation's (KCF) Emergency Fund. This was in recognition of the need to provide support to VCS organisations facing financial difficulty due to lost income. In December KCC launched a Strategic Recovery Fund to provide grants to the VCS to support adaptation and recovery post COVID-19. 145 applications were received, and it is hoped that all eligible applications can be funded.

Impact on Business

The economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been severe: the UK economy contracted by around 11.4% in 2020. Within this, the sectoral impact has been diverse, with 'shutdown sectors' in hospitality, retail and the creative arts especially badly hit. The Government's emergency response has been substantial. It is likely that total Government financial support to businesses in Kent and Medway amounted to around £2.5 billion in 2020. This is in addition to payments made to employers to retain staff furloughed under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

In August 2020, Kent and Medway Economic Partnership adopted the Kent & Medway Renewal and Resilience Plan. The Plan sets out principles to support the county's recovery and outlines workstreams through which activity is being driven to support business and jobs.

Public Health

KCC's Public Health team have been working closely with the NHS and Public Health England (PHE) at both local and regional level since the beginning of the pandemic. Public Health consultants have provided expert advice on response and recovery planning and work closely on a daily basis with NHS colleagues to address regional issues across the health system. Consultants were involved in the initial rollout of vaccinations to health and social care workers (particularly in care homes) and are now working with partners to address vaccine uptake.

Testing of symptomatic and asymptomatic individuals is key to managing infections. The Testing Cell provides leadership in all aspects of testing, including the setting up of ten Local Symptomatic Testing Sites (LTS), two Regional Testing Sites (RTS) and the direction of Mobile Testing Units (MTU) where needed. There has been additional testing arranged for care homes where outbreaks are suspected. Asymptomatic testing for COVID-19 was initiated in December and with initial military assistance, 24 sites have now been set up across the County using Lateral Flow Devices.

KCC and partners have worked together to understand the impact of the pandemic on both public mental health and mental health services. Advice and support have been provided on KCC's website and a 'One Stop Shop' for mental health information has been developed with partners. Suicide prevention work has been enhanced through monitoring and modelling of risk. Vulnerable groups have been identified and offered psychological and emotional support including for those with existing mental health problems, carers and frontline workers. Support for people who have been suddenly bereaved has also been commissioned.

Adult Social Care and Strategic Commissioning

Adult Social Care, along with other KCC frontline services took immediate steps in responding to the unfolding challenges associated with the COVID-19 crisis. The Directorate worked tirelessly to ensure that there was appropriate support in place for all providers, including the distribution of much needed Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

As care providers in the county came under financial pressures as elsewhere, and to help maintain the resilience of the local market, KCC stepped in and responded with practical financial support by making two payments totalling £13.5 million, to all residential, nursing, homecare and supported living and supporting independence providers, (including providers located outside Kent) looking after people placed by the council.

Children's Social Care

Throughout the pandemic, keeping vulnerable children safe and supported has continued to be a key priority. Integrated Children's Services have adapted their service provision as required and in the early stages of the pandemic made thousands of calls to vulnerable children and young people to check on their welfare as well as maintaining face to face visits where needed. Since September, routine face to face visits have resumed across all children's social work and early help units, taking care to follow infection prevention and social distancing measures.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the pre-existing pressures on the county to receive Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC). KCC was forced to take the difficult decision in August that it was unable to accept new arrivals until a solution could be found by the Home Office to fairly distribute the children to other councils. As numbers of new arrivals dropped going into the winter, and some young people were transferred, these duties were resumed on 7 December.

Schools and Education

KCC has provided information, advice and support to schools throughout the pandemic to assist them in adapting with the changing circumstances. There has been a constant dialogue between KCC and Headteachers. KCC has offered a wide range of support to help schools and families adapt to home learning. KCC has helped to allocate IT devices to vulnerable Kent children through the Government's IT devices initiative to support remote learning.

The pandemic and necessary restrictions have had a significant impact on the lives of children and young people and providing emotional and mental health support is an important priority. HeadStart Kent is an existing scheme that offers a wide range of advice, information and toolkits to parents, staff and schools to improve the emotional and mental wellbeing of children and young people.

Since the start of lockdown, KCC and partners have developed a virtual youth offer, delivering a range of exciting and innovative activities to young people and helping them stay connected to other young people.

Community Wardens

During the past 12 months of the pandemic, the KCC Community Warden Service has been reprioritised to support the most vulnerable in our communities, working alongside the Community Hubs. Community Wardens have supported between 3,600 and 4,500 vulnerable individuals during the lockdowns. This is in addition to their role of providing information, advice and guidance to their communities on the frequently changing/evolving COVID rules. It is anticipated that the demand for the Community Warden Service will increase as restrictions begin to ease and the warden role begins to broaden out again, as the associated issues with

public spaces reopening and a return to group gathering will require close multi-agency working to resolve.

Trading Standards

Since March 2020 Trading Standards has been given additional responsibility for the enforcement of the Regulations covering the restriction and closure of businesses, to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Over 4,000 referrals have been received from the public covering issues such as scams, fake PPE, and prohibited shops trading. The service is providing advice and guidance to the public and businesses on COVID-19 restrictions. The service is tackling the proliferation of COVID-related scams and financial abuse by implementing a social media and digital plan to inform and help protect residents and businesses.

Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) and Waste

Social distancing measures and a booking system have been installed at the HWRCs, to provide a COVID-safe environment for employees and residents.

Libraries and Registration Services

During the closure of libraries, work was quickly undertaken to develop and promote digital library services and enable easy online joining so customers could gain immediate access to e-books, audiobooks, e-magazines and e-newspapers. Use of these resources has increased by 94%. A varied programme of virtual activities has been delivered throughout the year. As the initial lockdown eased, Home Library and Postal Loan services returned and a new book service 'Select and Collect' was developed for people to get books without having to enter a library. When possible, use of computers has been provided where essential. A phone befriending service was quickly established from April for vulnerable libraries customers. The LRA service is proposing a phased recovery programme that will see the service take sensible, safe steps over the next three months. LRA's recovery closely reflects the Government's roadmap: Essential library PC use resumes from 15th March and the reopening of libraries for browsing and study space commences from 12th April.

In March 2020, all Registration services were suspended with the exception of death registrations. As key workers, the Registration teams across the county have delivered 16,247 death registrations since 1st April 2020, a 26% increase on last year's figures. Face to face birth registration appointments were re-established in June, working to clear the backlog of 4,000 outstanding births. Socially distanced wedding ceremonies were introduced in July, although from November's lockdown only emergency ceremonies were allowed to continue and birth registrations were again suspended. March 2021 sees the return of face-to-face birth appointments and ceremonies (from 29th March)

The Archive search room will reopen in April for bookable appointments.

Country Parks and Public Rights of Access (PROW)

KCC's Country Parks were able to stay open throughout the pandemic, with only a brief 6-week closure of the car parks during the first lockdown. Individual Parks have been between 50% and 220% busier than normal. PROW have experienced up to a tenfold increase in users on certain routes. Both Parks and PROW attracted a considerable number of new users across the year, which reflects the value of these local assets particularly in contributing to the wellbeing of our residents during this challenging time.

Coroner Service

There has been a significant increase in numbers of new death referrals to the Coroner Service. Straight forward inquest hearings have been conducted virtually, but a substantial backlog of more complex inquests (with or without a jury) has developed. Existing court facilities were not COVID-19 compliant for jury cases and so an additional venue was established. The increased workload is expected to continue through summer 2021 and may run into the next winter period. Courts have resumed a full timetable to address the backlog.

The new variant of COVID-19 put significant pressure on the NHS and in turn, its mortuary capacity, creating some delays from point of death to releasing the deceased into the care of a Funeral Director. In response to the escalating death rates in December, Aylesford Temporary Place of Rest (TPoR) was set up to provide additional capacity to support the hospital mortuaries across the County. It was mobilised within 48 hours and for the first six weeks of 2021 and the facility held between 130 and 200 deceased at any one time. Over the course of its operation, KCC has closely monitored and responded to the NHS Trust and funeral directors' needs for chiller, bariatric and freezer provision at Aylesford TPoR. Modelling analysis indicates that, by mid-March, hospitals will be back within their mortuary capacity and Aylesford TPoR will no longer be required.

Transport

The Department for Transport (DfT) allocated the County Council £1.6m for Emergency Temporary Active Travel schemes in June 2020 to encourage walking and cycling. The aim was to create safe spaces for these activities to continue the significant growth they experienced during the first lockdown. Due to the deadline imposed by DfT and the prospect of losing significant inward investment in the County, twenty-four schemes were implemented in the first tranche without it being possible to undertake the usual public consultation. Subsequently a number of these schemes were dropped in response to the feedback received about them. However, the majority remain in place and KCC was successful in gaining a further £6.4m for larger, permanent schemes for the second tranche of the programme, which are now the subject of full public consultation and engagement in order to implement them successfully.

Buses

The Public Transport team have supported bus operators to adapt to reduced demand and new restrictions. This has included supporting them to develop new cleaning and operating processes to keep users safe and adapting network provision to changing demand over the last year. KCC has supported bus operators with continuity payments to keep the network stable.

Michael Hill, OBE

Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services and

Local Member for Tenterden

Caretaker Report for Kenardington Annual Parish Meeting 2021

I am sure that Kenardington residents have appreciated that Alf, our Caretaker, has worked as normal all through the pandemic. He has been tested regularly and has now received his first Covid19 vaccination. He has kept his usual eye out for residents' welfare and has always kept his distance.

Alf has carried out all his regular duties, grass and hedge cutting and strimming. He has reported that he has put in to Highways several requests to have the blocked drains cleared on the Appledore Road. Some have been done, some still require further attention. A drain at the rear of the bus shelter in The Wish is blocked and he is still chasing some action on that.

Grips have been maintained and the first application of weed killer has been applied.

Yvonne Osborne, Clerk to Wittersham Parish Council & Caretaker Scheme Administrator.