

Notes on comments and motions at KALC AGM meeting November 19th 2022 at Ditton Community Centre

Roger Gough, Leader at KCC, talking about their response to the cost of living crisis:

Kent Support and Assistance. <https://www.kent.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/care-and-support/benefits/home-essentials-in-a-crisis> . In the Summer, they launched a fuel voucher support scheme. It was closed in a week after receiving 4000 applications.

They are bringing forward voucher schemes. There is work on digital exclusion. They have launched Refer Kent. <https://www.kent.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/information-for-professionals/referkent> . It aims to do active referrals rather than signposting. A great number of scams have appeared. They are looking to set up a Parish Winter Scheme. There will be limited funds but it will be parish based, unlike the Covid Winter Grant Scheme.

The Barnet Graph of Doom. This looked at growing cost areas. Adult and child care continues to grow. KCC reckons on a £60 million overspend this year rising to over £100 million next year. Hampshire is expecting their gap to be £200 million per year. Council tax cap now up from 3% to 5% but this still leaves a large gap. Each 1% rise raises £16million.

John Rivers, president of KALC asked to be reassured that they would continue to receive their £16,000 grant from KCC.

Roger Gough suggested that there might be collaboration between KCC and KALC in project working groups.

I asked the following question in advance and repeated it in person to open the discussion:

In view of the fact that the cost of living crisis has at its roots, the unwise policy of over dependence on foreign suppliers for fossil fuels and that use of these fuels also adds to climate change, I should like to ask what measures are being taken to ensure to reduce such dependence in Kent.

Answer: KCC is committed to net zero operations. They are switching to LED lighting. They are going to shrink their estate. Roger Gough sees them having a community leader role. KCC will continue to support EV charging. Solar Together scheme. <https://www.kent.gov.uk/leisure-and-community/cost-of-living-support/household-energy/solar-together-kent> . 2050 is the target year for Kent and Medway to get to net zero. They looking to have electric buses. Nature based solutions. Urban heat. Cool Towns project in Margate? <https://www.cooltowns.eu/best-practice/helping-make-margate-a-cooler-greener-place> . How do we get there? "Laser part of commercial services". Looking to set up a working project group with KALC

Complaint from Borough Green about value for money from KCC. Asked when they would be moving to a unitary council system.

Answer. Children social care is a big invisible cost. Roger Gough is open to the idea that structures need to change. He nonetheless believes that Kent still needs to have an overall authority. Kent is a peninsula where roads and transport have to be thought of as a whole.

Question from a Canterbury Parish about funding for roads. Will there be funds available?

Question about school transport. Re "Outdated legislation" remark.

Answer. KCC spends a great deal more on school transport than other authorities. This is complicated by the county's selective education policy. A key area for possible collaboration between KCC and KALC.

Matthew Scott. Police and Crime Commissioner:

We now have more than 4000 officers for the first time. Will be recruiting 195 officers for local work from Uplift scheme.

<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s105611/PoliceUpliftProgrammePaper.pdf>. They are now charging 27% more people.

There are no plans to abolish PCSOs.

Victim Voice. Most women and girls suffering violence do not report it. www.kent-pcc.gov.uk

Online reporting forms are treated the same way as 101 reports. They still have some police stations with front counters.

Victim's Right of Review if police action not taken forward. Call 101 or website.

If the same type of incident occurs 3 times or more in 6 months it is possible to activate the Community Trigger.

Restorative Justice if the perpetrator agrees.

Not sure whether an incident is a crime or who is responsible? Search "Ask the Police".

Question from Sevenoaks. Complaint that police will not come when shoplifters are caught, especially in one particular supermarket.

Answer. The police should come and there is a responsible officer.

Question about the successful prosecution rate. Matthew Scott said he would find the answer.

Question about speeding enforcement. Asked about usefulness of Speedwatch.

Answer. 90% of persons identified do not speed again. Reports help police identify hot spots to send the mobile speed ticketing van.

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From the stalls round the hall:

Kent Resilience. <https://www.kentprepared.org.uk>. They are no longer focusing on particular threats, e.g. flooding, but aim to deal with unknown hazards as well as known ones by adopting a “Generic approach”. They are also teaching young people what to do in emergencies. Duke of Cornwall Community Safety Award. www.kentprepared.org.uk/youth-resources . Said to be an ideal free group activity. Easy to access and deliver. Suitable for all ages from 5 to 18 years.

Alternative supplier for playgrounds and surfacing. Costs sounded similar to what we have been paying. Wiltshire based with local agent. Swedish supplier. www.redlynchleisure.co.uk

KALC AGM

Re the Action Plan. Chris Fribbins asked that KALC work with the parish councils in Medway. Answer was that KALC was working on it.

Motions:

Teston Parish Council. Re traffic impacts of planning applications. Asked that KCC Highways come up with a definition of ‘severe’ impact that they would be prepared to defend at appeal. Extended to cover Medway.

Kennington PC. Asked for an advice note on the powers available to local councils to support action to alleviate poverty.

Walmer Town Council asked that JTBs be made more effective as consultative bodies on transport matters. KALC's plan is to do this centrally through KCC.

Motion from Swale Area Committee. Lobby to reintroduce the culled bus services or at the very least review the services for the most vulnerable communities (rural)

Motion from Swale Area. KALC recommends to government that it adopts a policy of 100% water neutrality in new developments. Somebody asked if it was possible. It was explained that it was about requiring that aquifers be re-charged.

Ringwould with Kingsdown Parish Council. Lobby for amendments to the Planning Act should be made to ensure that a change of use should be required and applied for prior to second homes being used solely as holiday lets and/or Airbnb holidays. Some discussion about the word ‘solely’ but it was left in.

All motions were carried, either unanimously or by large majorities.

Tom Shelley
November 20th 2022