

**COUNTY COUNCIL**

**Thursday 19 September 2013**

**Question by Roger Truelove to  
Mike Hill, Cabinet Member for Community Services**

How is the Olympic Legacy progressing in Kent?

**Answer**

In March 2013, Kent County Council launched *Kent County Council and the Delivery of Olympic and Paralympic Legacy – The actions that Kent County Council will take to ensure legacy from the London 2012 Olympic Games up to 2016 and beyond*. Highlights of delivery to date include

- £2 million secured from the national legacy sport programme for our community grassroots sports facilities.
- The fourth biennial Kent School Games, which inspired the National School Games, will begin again this autumn, reaching some 30,000 young people across 35 sports and will continue to be run every second year.
- 81,000 more adults in Kent are undertaking 3 X 30 minutes sessions per week of sport and active recreation than when London won the right to stage the Games in 2005.
- A bespoke KCC led Kent schools legacy programme, which uses both local and countywide leadership to deliver arts, sport and personal development programmes linked to the Olympic, Paralympic and Commonwealth Games.
- Kent Greeters. Co-funded by Kent County Council has seen 170 Greeters supporting some 21 events and welcoming 9,300 visitors.
- An Implementation Plan of the Kent Volunteering Charter has been worked up by the County Council alongside Voluntary and Community partners, and started being rolled out from summer 2013 to mark One Year since the Games.
- Developing the 2014 Kent Year of Arts focused around young people as a response to the Cultural Olympiad.
- Kent now has a Safety Advisory Group across every district and Medway, all operating to a common template which is a significant achievement directly attributable to the Games.

**COUNTY COUNCIL**

**Thursday 19 September 2013**

**Question by Angela Harrison to**  
**Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Education & Health Reform**

With the recent change in sponsor for the Sheppey Academy, can the Cabinet Member for Education & Health Reform tell me how this will affect the learning needs of the children there now and in the future?

**Answer**

The lead sponsor for the Isle of Sheppey Academy has changed from Dulwich College to Oasis Trust (known as 'Oasis') which is a UK-based Christian registered charity founded by Reverend Steve Chalke in 1985. Dulwich College will remain as co-sponsor. This change of sponsor has been brokered by the Department for Education's Academies Division, which has direct responsibility for the Academy. The change will mean that the Academy will be led not by a single sponsor with limited involvement in state education but by an organisation which has developed into a family of charities now working on five continents and eleven countries around the world, to deliver housing, education, training, youth work and healthcare. Oasis provides services for local authorities and national governments, as well as self-funded initiatives aimed at providing opportunity to people across the globe. This is in line with current government thinking that Academies will benefit from 'chains' of academy groups better than single sponsors.

Kent County Council has a good working relationship with Oasis, which is committed to working in collaboration with all schools on the Isle of Sheppey to improve the education opportunities and outcomes for all children, young people, their families and the wider community on the island.

The Isle of Sheppey Academy still requires significant improvement and Kent County Council's joint discussions with Oasis indicate a determination on their part to achieve much better outcomes in the immediate future for the young people attending the school.

**COUNTY COUNCIL**

**Thursday 19 September 2013**

**Question by Colin Caller to**  
**David Brazier, Cabinet Member for Transport & Environment**

Was an assessment made of the impact on the air quality, noise, health & wellbeing of the residents of Chalk, Riverview Park, Westcourt, Shorne West and surrounding area before it was decided to firstly; submit a preference for Option C variant and secondly make this submission conditional on moving the junctions joining the A2/M2 further westward.

**Answer**

The Council's response to the Department for Transport (DfT) consultation on the corridor options took into careful consideration the air quality and noise assessment work conducted for all corridors by the DfT. It also took into account the Environmental Impact study commissioned by the County Council in 2012 which included an assessment of noise and air quality impacts on a wide range of environmental receptors likely to be affected by the corridor options. Kent County Council did not independently carry out air quality, noise, health and wellbeing assessments on impact on residents of Chalk, Riverview Park, Westcourt and Shorne West as part of the authority's decision making in relation to its preferred crossing option. However, this project is being led by the DfT and we fully expect the Department for Transport to carry out detailed assessment of these impacts as part of the next stage of development work once a preferred corridor option has been identified.

In making this decision the County Council is fully aware that there will be substantial impacts for those communities closest to whichever corridor the Department for Transport decides to take forward at the end of the current consultation process, and as such has made representations to realign the section of Option C south of the Thames to the A2/M2. While this proposed westwards realignment would see increased impact on residents of Riverview over the DfT corridor option, it would see improvements for the residents of Chalk and those closer to the Thames as well as for the residents of Shorne and Higham, through an increased length of tunnelling. In addition, it would significantly reduce the environmental impacts by avoiding Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), ancient woodland, Shorne Woods country park and valuable heritage.

The DfT are expected to make a decision later this Autumn.

**COUNTY COUNCIL**

**Thursday 19 September 2013**

**Question by Mike Harrison to**  
**Mike Hill, Cabinet Member for Community Services**

Would Mr Hill be kind enough to spread the good news of a job well done with regard to the Margate Task Force? Some members may well be aware of this excellent joint working team in a small section of Thanet but others may not, hence my request to the Cabinet Member to bring us an update of its progress. May I also ask Mr Hill if this excellent work can be replicated in other sections of the county?

**Answer**

Members will be aware of the considerable economical, environmental, social and criminal issues affecting some parts of Thanet.

Two wards in particular, Cliftonville West and Margate Central, have presented worryingly high levels of social deprivation, crime and anti-social behaviour which place these wards at the wrong end of national comparative data tables.

There are over 40 different nationalities concentrated in these wards and high levels of “out of county” placements which locate young people, vulnerable individuals and ex-prisoners in a small area, all of which increases risk and places enormous additional pressures on local services.

Despite all the problems there is progress being made. The award-winning work of the Margate Task Force has helped to ensure public services work better together, swiftly respond to the community’s needs and deliver more cost efficient and positive outcomes. Specifically the task force operates a joint office with representatives from 14 agencies including the police, social services, the housing regeneration team, public health and Jobcentre Plus.

Outcomes by the MTF are encouraging. Overall crime in the two wards saw reductions during 2012 /13 greater than in the rest of Kent. There is considerable improvement in the regeneration of local housing stock and street cleanliness. Enforcement laws have been instigated to ensure landlords adequately maintain their properties, planning laws have been modified to limit the creation of new single occupancy flats and direct action has also been taken to purchase and restore several old hotels and convert them into family homes.

One of the key success factors of the MTF has been the colocated and collaborative approach to multi agency working. It is now accepted by those agencies involved that this approach is one of the cornerstones for improved joint outcomes. Similar work is now taking place in a number of other areas and districts across Kent.

**COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING**

**19 September 2013**

**Question by Susan Carey to**  
**Mark Dance, Cabinet Member for Economic Development**

In May 2011 it was announced that five communities in Kent, including Stanford and Lympne in my division, had won funding to help deliver faster broadband. Would the Cabinet Member provide an update on these projects and reassurance that they are proceeding in parallel with the larger scheme to provide superfast broadband for Kent as a whole?

**Answer**

The Community Superfast Pilot schemes, including Lympne and Stanford have been progressed by the Broadband Project Team in parallel with the Kent and Medway BDUK Project. They have been deliberately kept separate from the larger scheme to create a competitive environment in the broadband market in Kent with the intention of letting contracts with local Kent Small and Medium Enterprises.

Regrettably there have been difficulties in processing the procurements and further delays in obtaining the formal approvals from Government in respect of State Aid.

I am happy to inform Mrs Carey however that the relevant approvals have now been obtained, work orders have been placed and construction will commence shortly. I have asked officers from the Broadband Project Team to set up meetings in the Pilot communities to engage with local people during the project roll-outs.

**COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING**

**19 September 2013**

**Question by Trudy Dean to**  
**Paul Carter, Leader of the Council**

Will the Leader of the council agree to request a report to Policy and Resources cabinet committee exploring what action KCC could take to limit the activities of so called Pay Day Loan Companies including:

- banning payday loan websites from its entire computer network, including publicly accessible PCs in libraries and community centres;
- seeking to persuade district/borough council colleagues (through the numerous twin-hatted Members as well as by directly approaching councils) to ban payday loan advertising on billboards and bus shelters;
- publicly promoting credit union facilities as alternatives to payday loan companies; and
- banning all advertising from its property including highway land

**Answer**

Whilst I am strongly sympathetic to the sentiments behind this proposal, this is an area that requires careful consideration. The Conservative administration has been looking at ways to support Kent residents who are suffering financial hardship for a number of years. One example of this is Kent Savers – an independent credit union Kent County Council helped to establish in 2009.

I would be happy to request a report exploring a range of potential options and their impact to the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee for a future meeting.

**COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING**

**19 September 2013**

**Question by Jim Wedgbury to**  
**David Brazier, Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment**

Will the Cabinet Member please tell me how we deal with Ragwort on our land?

**Answer**

The responsibility for the control of Ragwort rests with the occupier of the land regardless of who the occupier is. There are no special requirements for highway authorities to control Ragwort on highway land. The majority of reported cases of Ragwort are on land adjacent to public highway and in private ownership.

The 1959 Weeds Act empowers Defra to serve control notices to landowners where there is a problem. However, the Act does not make it illegal to have Ragwort on land or require occupiers to automatically control it.

The Ragwort Control Act 2003 exists to create a Code, "How to Prevent the Spread of Ragwort" (Defra 2004), for managing Ragwort. Under the Code it is the landowner's responsibility to assess whether action should be taken to prevent the spread of Ragwort by assessing the risk to livestock or to land used for feed production.

The Code does not seek to eradicate Ragwort, recognising that it is important for wildlife. The County Council follows the Code when managing roadside verges. When Ragwort on highway land is assessed as high risk we control it through a combination of herbicide treatment (Glyphosate or Citronella) and traditional methods (hand pulling or cutting) depending on the stage of growth. When we are treating high risk areas we take a proactive approach and will aim to extend the treatment to cover adjacent medium risk areas when resources allow. Treating and removing Ragwort over and above the current best practice I mentioned, would be unfeasibly costly.

**COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING**

**19 September 2013**

**Question by Lee Burgess to**  
**David Brazier, Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment**

I would like to know what steps KCC are taking to ensure this Government continues to maintain adequate sea defences around Kent's north coast, given the previous plans showed considerable areas vulnerable to 'managed retreat' including large amounts of Grade A agricultural land and several residential areas. Also what help is available to private landowners seeking to safeguard their own land against coastal erosion.

**Answer**

Whilst KCC has no direct responsibility for the management of coastal erosion (this lies with the district authority and, where there is risk of flooding from this erosion, the Environment Agency), it is still a matter the authority takes seriously especially considering the extent of coastline the county has. The policy for the management of the North Kent coast falls under two Shoreline Management Plans (SMP) - Medway Estuary and Swale and the Isle of Grain to South Foreland.

The Environment Agency is responsible for coordinating the Medway Estuary and Swale SMP, while Canterbury City Council fulfils this role for the Isle of Grain to South Foreland plan, in all cases the plans are delivered in partnership between district authorities and Environment agency via the South East Coastal Group.

SMP's set out the long term policy framework for the next 100 years, determining whether the line will be held (i.e. defended in some way) or whether a policy of managed realignment or no active intervention will be applied. These policies were arrived at following a large scale assessment of the risks associated with coastal processes and the assets impacted by these risks. KCC, along with the north Kent local authorities and other stakeholders, were involved in the development of these plans which were published in 2008. Maintenance of sea defences on the north Kent coast will be in line with the policies of this plan.

Unfortunately experience has shown that there is little help for private landowners seeking to safeguard their own land against erosion outside of the defences provided for by coastal strategies; this is especially the case where protection would go against the SMP policy.

KCC, in partnership with the Environment Agency, have an EU funded project "Coastal Communities 2150" which aims to assist communities at risk - this includes communities on the Isle of Sheppey. In addition, KCC has contributed up to £3.28m towards the construction of a £21.7m flood defence scheme which will reduce the risk of tidal flooding to 488 homes and 94 commercial properties in Sandwich, including Discovery Park. KCC have also committed to £1.36m for maintenance, following construction.



**COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING**

**19 September 2013**

**Question by Rob Bird to**  
**Mark Dance, Cabinet Member for Economic Development**

After several years in the doldrums there are signs that the housing market is picking up and, with housing demand outstripping supply in much of Kent, house prices are now forecast to continue rising in the coming months.

It has been difficult for many would-be first time buyers to get on the housing ladder. KCC working together with district councils has taken steps to assist first-time buyers. However, these measures risk fuelling increased house price inflation putting properties further out of the reach of future home-owners.

Does the Cabinet Member for Economic Development agree?

**Answer**

Simple answer Mr Bird - No. But let me explain.

LAMS (Local Area Mortgage Scheme) is a more modest local response than the Government proposals under Help to Buy. LAMS is only available to first time buyers and aimed in part at supporting the local housing market and economy. It has so far in Gravesham and Tunbridge Wells generated 41 mortgages. It would in total if adopted across all 12 Districts in Kent generate not more than 800 direct mortgages, capped by local authorities to reflect local housing market conditions. It is our view that these numbers and this approach would not have any significant impact on property prices.

The development industry has welcomed the Government Help to Buy equity loans launched in April 2013. These loans are open to both first-time buyers and home movers on new-build homes worth up to £600,000. From launch to 16 August 2013 we have been advised that 282 Help to Buy Equity Loans had been agreed in Kent. From January 2014, a Help to Buy mortgage guarantee is expected to be available, based on a deposit of 5% of a purchase price of up to £600,000. However, we are still awaiting full and final details of the Government scheme and how it will operate.

Lloyds have this week advised that given the nature of Help to Buy and similarities with aspects of LAMS that they believe it would be prudent that the rollout of LAMS is paused while we await details of the Government's scheme. This decision does not impact on the existing LAMS schemes in Tunbridge Wells, Gravesham and Shepway. We will however keep this matter under review.

**COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING**

**19 September 2013**

**Question by Martin Vye to**  
**Graham Gibbens, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services & Public Health**

Will the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services & Public Health inform the Council whether, at a time when KCC is becoming more dependent on the voluntary/not-for-profit sector for delivery of key services, it will continue to give financial support to voluntary sector support organisations, such as Councils for Voluntary Service, that play a vital role in developing the capacity of the voluntary/not-for-profit sector to deliver those services?

**Answer**

The voluntary sector has a key role in the provision of services and it is important that they are supported as efficiently as possible. To ensure this, officers have reviewed the local sector support to understand the return on investment that they provide to adult social care. This has confirmed the support is valuable to the wider voluntary sector, primarily to smaller charities, however only approximately half of these provide services to vulnerable adults. Additionally, many larger voluntary sector organisations that deliver key services to vulnerable adults are not affiliated with CVS's or Volunteer Centres, and in some cases see them as competition.

However I recognise the role of smaller organisations within their communities and the value in supporting them and developing community capacity. Consequently, officers are looking at how adult social care can best commission support for:

- volunteering,
- community capacity development
- and a specialist service to support the professional development of the sector to deliver key services.

This support will be commissioned through an open procurement process so the available budget delivers the desired outcomes outlined in *Facing the Challenge* of moving to becoming a commissioning authority, focussing resources on where they can have the biggest impact and better relationships with providers. This will help support the development of a financially sustainable sector over the longer term.

**COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING**

**19 September 2013**

**Question by Roger Latchford to**  
**David Brazier, Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment**

I would like to start by saying that I enjoyed the Aviation Briefing on the 10 September and it was clear that the presenter was on top of his subject. As Aviation is a major interest to me and the future of Manston in particular it is obvious that the expertise supplied may have been sourced externally.

I have seen the KCC Presentation under the Airport Study recently completed by Sir Howard Davis and it mentions that the services of a Consultancy Specialist were retained. Can I ask if that is a fact?

**Answer**

I am pleased to hear that the Member felt the Briefing on Aviation on 10 September was a useful and informative session. The presentation was delivered by Mr Joseph Ratcliffe, Principal Transport Planner - Strategy, within the Council's Planning and Environment Division. Mr Ratcliffe has coordinated KCC's submissions to the Airports Commission chaired by Sir Howard Davies, input for which has been supplied by officers from across the organisation with use being made of a range of external information sources and reports. There have been 8 submissions to the Commission from KCC to date.

Your question relates to the retention of Specialist Consultancy services in support of these submissions. In order to assist with our analysis and provide independent technical expertise, KCC commissioned research from the specialist aviation consultancy, Alan Stratford and Associates Ltd. This work supported KCC's response to the Commission on firstly, 'proposals for making the best use of existing airport capacity in the short and medium term' and secondly, 'proposals for providing additional airport capacity in the longer term'. Our submissions therefore in part, contain extracts from the consultant's reports. I would emphasise however, that all recommendations given to the Airports Commission in our submissions were those of KCC, and not necessarily those of Alan Stratford and Associates Ltd. Copies of the two reports by Alan Stratford and Associates Ltd can be provided if required.

**COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING**

**19 September 2013**

**Question by Dan Daley to**  
**Paul Carter, Leader of the Council**

During the formulation period of the Core Strategies and Local Development Plans of Borough and District Councils – all of which are now coming to a crucial point in the process, there have been many changes in Government Guidance concerning the methodology of approach to housing number projections. The most recent of these has notably been the National Planning Policy Framework of March 2012 and yet another amendment as late as 5 September 2013.

This latest Guidance calls for yet more house building to be the primary objective and for this to be cross boundary between Planning Authorities.

All of this development is necessarily going to call upon the County to provide the infrastructure in terms of roads, schools and other sustaining support for it to be deliverable.

The Leader has several times in the recent past said publicly that now was the time for the Government to be told firmly that this state of affairs cannot continue and that the Local Voice is being ignored, even though there is great play made that Localism is the most important part in recent legislation.

Could the Leader please give some indication of the measures he has in mind to lead this stand against the overbearing attitude of Central Government and advise how we may stand firmly behind him in this enterprise?

**Answer**

I strongly believe that “planning” is not the key issue in getting more homes built in this country in the next five to seven years. It is the financial capacity of house builders and their low appetite for risk.

At September 2012, planning permission was in place for around 35,000 dwellings in Kent but development has yet to start.

I welcome the new government guidance suggesting cross boundary co-ordination is encouraged between planning authorities. Bring back the Kent Structure Plan!

I also believe the housing numbers within the old South East plan were realistic for Kent and any enforced increase by national government is unproven.

My final concern is the inability of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to deliver anything like the necessary contribution to infrastructure in areas where house prices are below average and the viability of schemes is consequently marginal. Even in the

buoyant years, Kent County Council's document 'What Price Growth?' identified a shortfall of £10 billion for the necessary infrastructure to match growth.

National government seems to have a misconception that the Community Infrastructure Levy will provide the solution to this shortfall. Yet this lever is unlikely to bridge the gap even in affluent areas with good viability, let alone those where some districts are considering a zero rate CIL to improve the chances of getting development started.

The County Council has a statutory duty to provide essential key infrastructure such as adequate school places and new roads. There is a very concerning risk of a significant shortfall developing, which will create substantive problems in the future.

I will continue to lobby that government for solutions.

**COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING**

**19 September 2013**

**Question by Robert Brookbank to  
Jenny Whittle, Cabinet Member for Specialist Children's Services**

General Medical Practitioners in my division have expressed to me their continuing concerns about the delays occurring when referring vulnerable young people with Mental Health problems for assessment by a specialist. Waiting times of 20 weeks are not unusual.

During this period these vulnerable young people are open to abuse by their peer group and can come under the influence of undesirable elements in society leading then into drug taking or participation in anti-social behaviour. Can the Cabinet Member inform me what action she is taking to rectify this situation?

**Answer**

As the Chairman of the council's Health Overview Scrutiny Committee, I'm sure Mr Brookbank is aware that General Practitioners, through their Clinical Commissioning Groups, are themselves responsible for jointly commissioning the Children & Adolescents Mental Health Services and provide the significant majority of the funding. The CCGs contribute £14m each year compared to KCC's contribution of £1m for the children in care element of the services. If GPs' have concerns about access to these services they are well placed to address these within their CCGs.

That said, improving services for children is important and I am pleased to say this is taking place. CAMHS are now provided by Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust who have been doing this for just one year. At the time of taking over the contract, the Trust inherited significant waiting lists for specialist and targeted services particularly in west Kent, which they have been working to reduce.

The waiting time in Dartford and Gravesham for referral to assessment for the specialist service has come down from 53 weeks in October 2012 to 8.5 weeks in June 2013. This specialist service works with children and young people with complex, severe and/or persistent needs. The targeted service works with children with moderately severe problems and the waiting list for this has also reduced from 48 weeks to 27 weeks in June 2013.

Referrals to CAMHS are triaged on a daily basis to check for emergency and urgent referrals. Young people who are referred as an emergency are assessed the same day. Young people deemed to require an urgent assessment are seen within 10 days. Routine referrals are screened weekly.

Additionally, regular monitoring arrangements are in place to ensure that the significant improvement in performance continues.