

COUNTY COUNCIL

Thursday 22 October 2020

**Question by George Koowaree to Michael Payne,
Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport**

Last year KCC spent money cutting down trees along the A28 Chart Road in preparation for the improvement of this road using section 106 agreement funds from the developers of Chilmington Green. After many trees were cut down or lobbed, the developers withdrew the funding, citing not enough houses had been built to justify the commitment of the s106 agreement.

Will the Cabinet Member please explain to Members and the ratepayers why this widening scheme has so far has not progressed an inch as around 150 houses have now already been built?

Answer

Thank you, Mr. Koowaree for your question.

No trees were removed along the A28 Chart Road in 2019. Previously in February 2018, some trees were removed in preparation for starting the Chart Road project in the Spring of that year.

The decision to remove trees was made on the basis that the Chilmington developer would be providing the security bond as detailed in the s106 Agreement. Without a bond in place there is no financial mechanism to ensure that the works are delivered at no cost or risk to KCC and therefore, the public purse. When it was apparent that this was not going to be forthcoming, no further trees were removed. Since that time both Kent County Council and Ashford Borough Council have been negotiating with the developer to find a solution to enable the project to come forward. This has however proved unsuccessful, and we are now expecting that the Chart Road improvements will come forward when the s106 obligation to provide the bond at 400 occupations is reached.

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Question by Trudy Dean to Michael Payne, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport

Can the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport please say what action is being taken by KCC and others to provide a new running noise suppressant surface, and lower speed limits for the A20 between Wrotham and Larkfield to relieve residents from the ill effects of both normal traffic levels and those resulting from motorway diversions, particularly at night?

Answer

I thank Mrs Dean for this question and I am aware that Mrs Hohler has previously raised residents' concerns about this matter.

Mrs Dean will be aware that KCC will shortly be resurfacing a mile section of the A20 between New Hythe Lane, Larkfield and Castle Way/A228 in Leybourne, starting on the night of 19th November for 15 nights and at a cost of £500k. This is on top of £1.65m of resurfacing carried out on nearby roads in 2020/21. Whilst this work is not being delivered for road noise reasons, it will significantly reduce road noise by virtue of it being a new surface.

It is important to note that KCC does not carry out road surface improvement works for noise reasons alone, as that would take vital funding away from renewing roads that have reached the end of their serviceable life. In addition, we do not use surfacing materials purely for their noise-reducing properties. Rather, materials are selected based on ground conditions.

From an asset management perspective the current condition of the other sections of the A20 you mention do not merit action in the short term to renew or preserve the existing road surface, and consequently there are no immediate plans to carry out road surface improvement works here. However, I can say that, as part of KCC's work to produce a five-year Forward Works Programme, officers have identified from detailed condition data and modelling that certain sections of this road are likely to deteriorate to the point where they will need renewal. These sections will therefore likely be included in this programme in the coming years, subject to funding. We expect to publish this programme in the first part of 2021.

In respect of lowering speed limits, our initial view is that the full extent of this location would not meet the national criteria necessary to challenge the speed limit. I am aware that Mrs Hohler is considering using her Members' Grant to fund a route study in the area, and that is perhaps something that affected members may want to be part of. In the meantime, we will continue to investigate and work with others to progress road safety, air quality and noise concerns. You may also wish to know that the Schemes Planning and Delivery team is due to implement a speed limit reduction of 50mph to 40mph from The Hollies to Dover Court on the A20 in the coming weeks, for road safety risk prevention purposes.

Finally, I can also say that KCC liaises closely with Highways England to ensure that the effect of our respective road closures for vital works is minimised so far as is reasonably practicable. The official diversion for any diverted traffic for the Smart Motorway works between Junction 4-6 is via the A228, M2 and A229 with Junctions 5-6 open for local traffic.

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**Question by Ian Chittenden to Susan Carey,
Cabinet Member for Environment**

Waste tyres are becoming increasingly difficult for facilities to dispose of since a ban on their import was introduced by the Indian government last year, following similar bans by other countries. Combustion of a large backlog of waste tyres is the suspected cause of the large fire at a waste tyre facility at Cobbs Wood, Ashford on 15th September, which caused major disruption to local residents and businesses, as well as significant environmental harm.

Would the Cabinet Member for Environment please commit to an urgent review of the arrangements for waste tyre storage and disposal in Kent to ensure there is no repeat of this situation?

Answer

The Cobbs Wood fire was clearly a significant incident and is subject to investigation by both the Kent Fire & Rescue Service and the Environment Agency. The Environment Agency is the body responsible for assessments, permits and exemptions for storage of items such as waste tyres. This is covered by the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Waste tyres have been banned from disposal in landfill since 2006 but they can be recycled and indeed are recycled here in Kent. There are several reputable Kent companies that can take this type of waste.

Kent County Council itself accepts waste tyres from Kent householders at our Household Waste Recycling Centres and the flytipped tyres, which are usually from HGVs, which the Kent districts bring to us for disposal. Both types of tyres go to Kent companies for recycling and are usually shredded for use in children's play areas, not stored.

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Thursday 22 October 2020

**Question by Rob Bird to Clair Bell,
Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health**

Up till now, Kent appears to have been spared the worst effects of the second wave of Coronavirus which is regrettably hitting other parts of the United Kingdom very hard. However, Kent clearly needs to be prepared for much more difficult conditions in the coming weeks. Clearly effective test, track and trace systems are critical to dealing with any sharp escalation of Covid-19 cases in Kent. The Housing, Communities and Local Government Minister, Robert Jenrick, has recently said that the Government will be “making use of local councils to do contact tracing”.

Would the Cabinet Member please advise what steps are being taken by KCC to ensure we have robust and effective contact tracing systems in Kent? In her reply, will the Cabinet Member also please advise whether specialist facilities in Kent could be used to improve the test, track and trace processes?

Answer

Test and Trace has been commissioned nationally by government to support this phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, and is designed to ensure test positive cases of COVID-19 self-isolate for the 10 days and close contacts are identified and advised to self-isolate for 14 days as per current guidance.

In Kent the local Public Health England team which covers Kent and Medway have been doing local contact tracing and working with Kent County Council Public Health since the pandemic started, and this close working and liaison continues on a day by day basis. The role of the local Public Health England team is to provide public health advice on COVID-19 cases associated with vulnerable institutions such as care homes, risk assess outbreak situations and, working with those institutions and partners, ensuring the correct mitigations are put into place.

The KCC Public Health officers are now working together with officers from other directorates in the council to implement a local track and trace system. This local system will continue to be an element of the national Test and Trace system, and is the same that other Local Authorities have implemented, particularly those already with enhanced local public health measures. It will utilise the experience of the Kent Together helpline and use call handlers who will contact those people that the Government Track and Trace system has not been able to contact who are Kent residents.

Once contacted, the advisors will be able to give advice on isolation and testing, establish close contacts, upload details to the National Contact Tracing system, and signpost to assistance available elsewhere in the county e.g. financial assistance for people self-isolating. This is in addition, but aligned to the work that officers do with PHE on outbreak control and support to the system on Covid-19.

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Thursday 22 October 2020

Question by Ida Linfield to Clair Bell,
Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health

The Department for Health and Social Care issued a letter to all local authorities on 13th October, instructing them to identify a sufficient number of care home facilities known as 'hot homes' to accommodate Covid-positive patients being discharged from hospital.

Given that 16th October was the target date for identifying such sites, could the Cabinet Member please provide details of the hot homes which will be set up in Kent, and detail within the answer what arrangements there are for ensuring the safety of the care workers and other staff in these establishments?

Answer

The Department of Health and Social Care published the Adult Social Care Covid-19 Winter Plan last month, which requires the local authority to produce a Winter plan, in partnership with the CCGs and other partners by 30 October. The plan must cover discharge arrangement, additional capacity, infection control and provider business continuity.

On 13 October 2020 a further letter required Local Authorities to set out potential Designated Settings for winter discharge of Covid-19 positive patients. This information was to be shared with CQC to enable them to complete the registration of the setting and to ensure compliance with the Infection Control Protocol.

On Friday 16 October we submitted a potential 7 sites, with over 100 beds across Kent for CQC (Care Quality Commission) to review. This was a joint submission with Medway Council.

The proposed sites and anticipated bed numbers has been shared with CCG colleagues and they are in support of the numbers and potential settings. The settings will be formalised after CQC has conducted its inspections. Therefore, at this current time we cannot identify which homes will be taking part.

Safety of the workforce is of paramount importance and will be a key component of the CQC registration process and adherence to Infection Control measures.

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Thursday 22 October 2020

**Question by Dan Daley to Michael Payne,
Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport**

The 'Kent Access Permit' is set to be rolled out from government from 1st January 2021 for Europe-bound freight vehicles travelling through the County.

Could the Cabinet Member please advise what arrangements KCC will put in place to ensure that hauliers based in Kent and other parts of the UK will be able to avoid any cross-Channel related congestion and continue to make deliveries within Kent in a timely manner

Answer

KCC is working as part of the multi-agency team preparing for the EU Exit developing a traffic management plan to manage Europe-bound freight vehicles travelling through the County. All freight heading to the Port of Dover and Eurotunnel will be restricted to the designated routes. All hauliers based in Kent and other parts of the UK not crossing the short Straits will be able to use the contraflow on the M20 to avoid Brock and continue to make deliveries within Kent.

In addition to ensuring companies delivering within Kent are not greatly impacted, KCC has arranged for Local Haulier Permits (LHP) for many companies in the county that do have to cross the short Straits. The original intention of the LHP was to allow companies with more than 5 HGVs based in East Kent (Canterbury, Thanet, Dover, Ashford & Folkestone and Hythe) to go straight to the ports, without having to travel to the back of the Brock queue. This has now been extended to include those companies based in and around Faversham, and to include those that have any number of HGVs that will cross the short Straits. The LHP will be a highly visible A4 sheet of card with a unique reference that applies only to the vehicle(s) from the applicable companies. The permit has a hologram printed to ensure that it cannot be copied.

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**Question by Antony Hook to Michael Payne,
Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport**

If the former Manston Airport site is required to house thousands of lorries, this will lead to large processions of lorries heading along the M2. We know that when the M2 is congested many drivers attempt to find alternative routes, such as the A2.

Can the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport please detail what measures will be taken by KCC, itself or in conjunction with any other agency, to ensure that towns and villages located close to the M2, such as Faversham, do not face gridlock?

Answer

It is not necessarily inevitable that the Manston Airport site will be used for Dover bound freight. In the event that it is called into use, all Dover bound freight using the M2 will be restricted to use Lane 1 only. This will minimise the impact on other users of the M2 which in turn will reduce the impact on surrounding roads. There will be regular patrols on M2 by Kent Police, DVSA & Highways England in order that this is enforced.

In addition to the additional traffic management measures on the M2, traffic on the local roads will also be monitored closely. KCC will ensure that the Highway Management Centre (HMC) will have increased resource during this time to monitor traffic and manage flows where possible. The HMC will be in constant communication with the Brock control room. Furthermore, the HMC, together our communications team, will frequently update local media to inform of any delays if and when they occur.

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Thursday 22 October 2020

**Question by Dara Farrell to Roger Gough,
Leader of the Council**

With regional and local leaders being increasingly engaged by Central Government on local Covid tiering measures, what steps will the administration take to ensure Opposition Leaders are kept informed of discussions and given the opportunity to share their views on proposals?

Answer

It is important that any decisions around lockdown, whilst urgent, are fully and frankly discussed to ensure that a broad range of views are contemplated and included.

In August, we established our own local lockdown approach utilising the urgent key decision process and applying the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) (No.3) Regulations 2020. As you know, the Urgent Decision process involves local non-executive Members and opposition Leaders. We are waiting to see whether there will be any further guidance or regulations from central government following the discussions about local lockdowns over the past week and then the General Counsel will be instructed to update our own approach, which can be shared with non-executive Members and Opposition Leaders.

A key factor in any decision will be the determination and advice of our Director of Public Health and given recent discussions elsewhere, he has impressed on me the importance of us all working across the County to achieve consensus and protect our residents. The success or otherwise of any future restrictions if they are required will be led by ensuring that the steps put in place are reasonable, proportionate and reflective of the local reality – and that they are seen to be.

As part of the review mentioned above, we will be looking at how the Director of Public Health can share initial concerns with local Members, opposition Leaders and our colleagues in other tiers of local government who may all have information that needs reflection in any decision. This can then be captured in a final advice that will form the basis of a key decision under our governance and the current regulations.

The question rightly recognises the important role of all elected representatives in Kent. However, that isn't just the right to receive information but also comes with an expectation that all involved will work on a cross-party basis to achieve that wide-ranging consent that is as I have said, necessary to ensure that public health measures are accepted and sustainable to support the implementation of the local measures that are agreed. I am supportive of the early sharing of information with local Members, opposition Leaders and District/Borough colleagues but on the basis that I have set out in the hope and expectation that we can come together to work collectively for Kent residents' best interests. This will include supporting the implementation of restrictions if they are determined to be necessary.

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/health/coronavirus#kenttogether>"

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Thursday 22 October 2020

**Question by Karen Constantine to Michael Payne,
Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport**

Can the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport explain whether or not KCC will grant Ramsgate Town Council permission to install a simple gate to stop cars and lorries during the pedestrianised times, at the entrance to Harbour Street, Ramsgate?

Answer

KCC shares the Town Council's objective to facilitate a solution to the long-standing issue of vehicles contravening the restrictions in Harbour Street and has been working with Ramsgate Town Council for over a year to assist them in this regard. In July last year it was agreed that a bollard could be installed subject to Ramsgate Town Council funding and Thanet District Council monitoring it from their CCTV room.

Ramsgate Town Council has recently requested a gate rather than a bollard and we are waiting for the Town Council to provide an acceptable and robust method statement detailing how Town Council will operate the gate and allow access for security cash collections, emergency vehicles and emergency utility works. They will also need to demonstrate there is popular support from local businesses and residents and have public liability insurance before the relevant permissions can be given by KCC. The Project Manager has been in communication with the Town Council regarding all information necessary for this project to proceed.

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Thursday 22 October 2020

**Question by John Burden to Peter Oakford,
Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services**

At the February 2020 budget setting full County Council meeting the Labour Group submitted an amendment that took money from senior officer away days and consultants, to spend on front line youth services, so that every district and Borough could have 4 nights of a dedicated detached team of youth workers. This was accepted on a cross-party basis with unanimous support, the Communication team even had a press release ready and released at the time of the vote. Given that your own consultation "How to address the budget gap" came back with respondents choosing to spend an extra money on Education and Youth Services, and that other jobs and roles have been recruited to during lock down and the covid response can the Cabinet Member assure me that the lack of recruitment and implementation of this decision thus far is not a sliding back from this commitment and the unanimous Council decision to remove away days budgets and consultants costs and is signalling a premature cut to universal open access youth services, despite Government and National Youth Agency guidance to support our open access in house and commissioned youth work and youth centres and our young people come February's 2021's Budget?

Answer

The budget amendment made by the Labour Group at the February budget setting meeting proposed saving £0.5m from a reduction in "cross directorate budget for conferences and meetings at third party venues".

At the time the budget amendment was agreed we made it clear that we do not have a separate budget for external room hire and the budget being referred to was actually primarily for long and short term leases of operational buildings and rents. The majority of this spending is for operational purposes including the provision of mobile classrooms in schools and facilities hired for operational purposes such as Corner's public enquiry courts, totalling around £6.7m last year. It is therefore very misleading to suggest that the council spends vast sums on hiring external venues for away days. As part of responding to austerity the council has significantly reduced this type of expenditure and continues to do so to protect funding for front line services.

In accepting the amendment we agreed to find the funding needed to finance the investment in youth work and this position has not changed.

KCC's position continues to be in line with the National Youth Association published guidance from 15th June which was updated in September which states "We advise all non-essential group meetings are closed or delivered digitally (Facebook, Google Hangouts, WhatsApp group call, for example). Acute youth work support is essential and should continue. More socially based youth work support (drop-in youth club etc) should cease".

KCC have continued to support universal and targeted youth provision throughout lockdown. Our in-house and commissioned services are still functioning, and we have opened 8 youth hubs (2 per area) to support targeted work with UASC and more vulnerable children. However, due to the pandemic, we have not returned to a centre based universal offer and as the majority of young people are adhering to the ever increasing restrictions our outreach is more targeted in its approach. We continue to have a fully staffed in-house resource, who without the centre based provision have increased capacity to undertake targeted 1:1 and outreach work. No decision has been made to amend the base youth budget as set out in the amendment but given the global pandemic that has taken place since the budget was set it has not been possible to recruit, induct and train a universal outreach team at this time.