

Parish Council Update – March 2017

Free minibus service for residents of Downswood needing to reach their local doctor's surgery

As your local county councillor, I have been working with Helen Whately MP to improve access to health services for the residents of Downswood ever since it became apparent that appointments would no longer be available at the Spires Medical Centre in Chiltern Close.



Working in partnership with a local minibus service, Club Taxis, I will be funding the provision of a mini bus operating on Tuesday and Thursday mornings each week. The provision of this service will be free to residents and the service will be launched on the 7th March 2017 and will initially run until the end of April when it will be reviewed.

Timetable from 7th March to end of April 2017

Day	Time	Pick Up	Drop off
Tuesday	10 am	Spires Medical Centre	Shepway Surgery
Tuesday	10.30 am	Spires Medical Centre	Grove Green Surgery
Tuesday	11am	Shepway Surgery	Spires Medical Centre
Tuesday	11.30 am	Grove Green Surgery	Spires Medical Centre
Thursday	10 am	Spires Medical Centre	Grove Green Surgery
Thursday	10.30 am	Spires Medical Centre	Shepway Surgery
Thursday	11am	Grove Green Surgery	Spires Medical Centre
Thursday	11.30am	Shepway Surgery	Spires Medical Centre

On Tuesday and Thursday mornings, the surgeries will reserve 3 appointments with a doctor lasting 10 minutes each as well as a nurse for patients using the mini bus. If you require an appointment you will need to call the surgery by midday on the day before the appointment. The service provider will call each surgery to get the number of patients which require picking up.

I am delighted to be able to provide this short term interim solution and depending on the outcome

of the election in May, I hope to be able to provide support in the longer term. It is hoped that a new surgery will be provided in the area and I will continue to make the case that this is a necessity going forward.

Pupils from the Oaks, Molehill Primary and Tree Tops Academy learn about democracy

Pupils from The Oaks, Molehill Primary and Treetops took their seats in the council chamber on 23rd February as I presided over proceedings. After first being given a brief history of democracy, the children moved on to their first debate: should school uniform be banned?

Their comments included: “It gives us a sense of community and saves time in the morning” to “there is safety, security and smartness in a uniform” and “It helps identify you when you are on a school trip”.

But those in favour of the abolition felt they should have the freedom to express their own personalities through clothes, and they won the day by 33 votes to 23, using the county councillors’ electronic voting system.

A second debate on homework resulted in a vote for that also to be abolished by 42 votes to 14, and the pupils decided by 52 votes to 3 that their families should be allowed to take holidays in term-time.

However, to the pupils’ great disappointment, I had to point out that the voting process was a demonstration of how democracy works, but that their votes were not binding on their schools.



I was really impressed with the way the pupils became engaged in the democratic process. They put forward some really good, well-thought arguments both for and against the various motions and I hope that their visit encourages them to at least understand how important it is that people use their votes when they get the opportunity in the future.

Molehill Primary teacher Richard Harris said: “The children from all three academies had a great time and learned a lot about County Hall and how democracy works.”

The day was another great learning experience and opportunity for all involved.

Secondary School Places in Maidstone for September 2017

This year more children than ever have applied for a place in a Kent secondary school, making it Kent's most challenging year so far. However, I am pleased to quote that 80% of Kent pupils have been offered their first preference and 11% their second preference. Despite the increase in numbers, it is pleasing that over 250 more children than last year will get their first preference and over 96% will receive an offer from one of the four schools they named.

As your local county councillor, I am happy to provide support and assistance to parents within my division who are not happy with the school their child has been offered. Parents will have until the 16 March to accept or refuse their offer and return waiting list forms. Parents must also lodge any appeals for their named schools by the 29 March. KCC will reallocate places from schools waiting lists sending out a second round of offers on the 28 April. From the 29 April, schools will maintain their own waiting lists and parents can apply to schools direct via the 'In Year Common Application Form' to be asked to be placed on the waiting list.

Annual Residents meetings - Otham Church, Downswood 24th February and Christ church, Park Wood on 3rd March

My first annual residents meeting took place on Friday 23 February where I presented my annual report covering what has been achieved in Maidstone South East over the past year. I was pleased by how well attended it was and the level of debate. Speakers included Helen Whately MP and Tim Read, Head of Transportation at KCC. A wide range of issues were discussed from housing and infrastructure to health and the community. I have also invited the Police and Crime Commissioner, Matthew Scott to the meeting on the 3rd March and I'm delighted that he is able to attend.



At the meeting, I made my views clear on the need for improved infrastructure and the absolute necessity for a Leeds Langley Relief Road. As your county councillor, I recognise the huge benefits this will bring for areas within my division and I will do all within my power to ensure this continues.

Alan Pughsley - Chief Constable Kent Police

On the 1st February I was delighted to meet with Alan Pughsley, Chief Constable at Kent Police to discuss local issues within my division and how these might be addressed. I am following this up in April by joining Inspector Nick Sparkes and the specialist road traffic patrols to see the operational end of the business.

Princess Project Hub Open Day on 10th February 2017

On the 10th February, I was pleased to attend the open day of the Princess Project at the Maidstone United Reformed Church Hall which I continue to support from my member grant. The work they do in supporting mums locally is commendable and makes a huge difference to the lives of the mums and their children.



Parkwood Residents Association Meeting

I attended the monthly meeting on the 7th February where I gave an update on my member grant activity and I always welcome the opportunity to hear about issues which have been raised locally.

County Council Elections on the 4 May 2017

I hope the parishes will do all they can to encourage their communities to vote and participate in such an important democratic process.