

## **KCC Member Report to Parishes in the Sandwich Division - November 2022**

Last week **the Leaders of Kent** Council, including Kent County Council wrote to the **Home Secretary** expressing their concern about the pressure on Kent infrastructure and services because of asylum dispersal arrangements. I have circulated the letter with this report as I thought Councillors may wish to read the full document. I have spoken to most parishes recently about the increase in unaccompanied asylum seeking children numbers, including a large Albanian cohort who are not automatically entitled to asylum and the difficulties that gives the KCC. I was able to join the Dover MP Natalie Elphicke and DDC Cabinet Member for Community Ollie Richardson to meet the Immigration Minister, Robert Jenrick, last Friday (4<sup>th</sup>) in Dover to talk directly about those issues.

Kent County Council (KCC) is asking for views on its updated **Minerals and Waste Local Plan**. The plan sets out the policies against which all planning applications for waste management and mineral extraction are decided by KCC. The consultation, available at [www.kent.gov.uk/mineralsandwaste](http://www.kent.gov.uk/mineralsandwaste), will run for six weeks from today [24<sup>th</sup> October] to 5<sup>th</sup> December.

**The Highway's gritting teams** are getting ready to hit the road again after working hard to prepare for the winter season ahead. Staff at Kent County Council's highway depots around the county have been rolling out practising the routes they will cover in the months ahead.

Last year, the crews regularly covered 58 primary main road routes using 9,160 tonnes of salt. It was also the first year where, working with partner organisation Amey Consulting, KCC introduced a data model to ensure roads are kept safe for drivers in winter. Using historical information, teams were able to plan the most efficient routes by looking at road surface temperature sensor readings from previous years. This approach will be used again this year and ensure the primary routes most likely to ice over continue to be the ones that will be treated, reducing the amount of unnecessary gritting.

Salt bins will also be refilled to enable residents to make their own neighbourhoods safe, if an unexpected cold snap should occur.

People hosting Ukrainians as part of the **Kent County Council (KCC) Homes for Ukraine Scheme** are set to receive more money every month as part of a county-wide increase. The Government continues to set host payments at £350 per accommodation, but KCC has decided to increase this to recognise not only the generosity and kindness of Kent hosts, but also the challenges they currently face from increasing costs in energy, the price of food and rising inflation.

KCC has taken the decision to increase the payments after fears many people wouldn't be able to afford to extend their current six-month agreements as winter approaches and the cost-of-living bites. The increased payments will begin at the end of October and will continue until March 2023, when the current Government scheme ends. This applies to existing hosts who are already in receipt of thank you payments, and new hosts who complete all the checks satisfactorily going forward. There is also a separate hardship fund available to those who may need extra financial support in order to continue to provide accommodation for Ukrainian guests. For those hosts who have supported their guests for more than 6 months, the council will also pay an additional £500 in March 2023 in recognition of their continued support during these difficult times.

So far 3871 people have been matched with 1642 hosts in Kent, which is more than any other county in the UK. 2927 Ukrainian guests have already arrived and a further 944 are still expected, with approximately 2-3 new arrivals every day.

A new **Mental Health Friends handbook** for young people has been launched at this year's **Big Mental Health Conversation, held as part of Mental Health Week** in October. Almost 130 school students, aged 13 to 16-years-old, joined mental health providers for the event at the County Showground in Detling.

The Big Mental Health Conversation gives young people an opportunity to share their experiences of mental health support in the county. As well as taking part in a variety of workshops, including mindfulness with alpacas and African drumming, they were invited to take part in conversations with mental health professionals about the support that is available.

The new handbook provides young people with advice on how to support their friends, including how to start a conversation, what to do when a friend is struggling and safety information. The [new handbook, available as an A5 printed brochure or as a PDF](#) was developed by young people who are members of the Kent Youth County Council Mental Health Campaign group.

Look out for **Share the Warmth** which is a Kent-wide campaign to encourage residents to help their friends and family save energy and stay warm at home. Launching on 7th November, the campaign will direct people to an online platform where they will learn how to implement five important energy-saving measures. The platform will then encourage people to share this advice with loved ones who might struggle to access this energy-saving information or take the actions suggested to reduce their energy bills. The SharetheWarmth website will go live on 7th November.

Finally **What happens to Kent's waste?** I know that in the past residents have been very interested in the destination of the recycling that they diligently separate. The latest in a series of short films providing tours around Kent's key disposal infrastructure, has been released. The films describe what happens to

waste we receive from Kent's households. This most recent film, shows how paper and card is recycled at the Smurfit Kappa paper recycling mill in Snodland.

Last year, Kent recycled nearly 30,000 tonnes of paper and card. All the videos can be found on the KCC website at the following link:

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/environment-waste-and-planning/rubbish-and-recycling/howwe-recycle-your-waste#tab-4>

**Sue Chandler**

**6<sup>th</sup> November 2022**