

## KCC HTC ATM Report 2021

It has been an honour to serve Hythe as Kent County Council representative for the last eight years. For the last two of these, of course, I have taken on a 'twin-hatter' role by virtue of also serving on Hythe Town Council.

I will keep my KCC report brief and mainly focus on local items.

As for every council around the country, it has been a challenging and unprecedented year at KCC. Local government was thrust into the centre of the Covid-19 response, particularly the Public Health teams, and I think local government as a whole, at all levels, has really risen to the challenges – something that I hope will be recognised by central government going forwards.

KCC – and Hythe Town Council, plus individual councillors, of course – have sought to support our town's **Covid-19 Community Support Hub** throughout the last year. I have *nothing but praise* for all of the staff at AgeUK and Oaklands GP surgery, led by Cleo and Stephen respectively, plus all of the volunteers and other organisations, such as the Salvation Army, that have pulled together.

The way that our community has responded, in terms of support for the most vulnerable residents and then for the roll-out of vaccines, has been exemplary. Indeed, it became a model for other areas within the District and beyond, and drew national recognition.

I have continued to work with our supportive local KCC Highways team and, alongside Hythe Town Council, it was good to deliver the **20 mph zone in Hythe**. I do think it is important to emphasise that this is *only the first step*. There is no doubt that too many vehicles are still travelling too fast on our residential roads here in Hythe, with all of the safety implications that this entails.

The 20 mph constitutes a marker that can now be built on. A speed check across the zone will be carried out by KCC to evaluate its effectiveness and should inform next steps. Potential measures include additional signage and traffic calming. It is vital for everyone that we bring down speeds in this crowded part of our town.

Elsewhere in Hythe, on other Highways-related matters, calming schemes were designed by KCC's local highways team at my initiation for **South Road and Twiss Road** (for the latter at the crossing point on the bridge over the canal) but, as is so often the case, the challenge has been to find funding for these. I remain hopeful that they can be delivered and of course they would be subject to full consultation.

It was good that KCC agreed to have **Hythe Library** as one of the county's libraries able to reopen – albeit with a limited service – over the last year. KCC is working towards a full service restoration of its libraries over the next few months.

Finally, on environmental issues...

In terms of **Climate Emergency**, I was pleased that KCC ultimately decided to adopt a zero carbon target, with this set for 2030. There is, of course, a huge amount of work to be done to reach this and it will now need to be factored into all decision-making – I will watch progress with interest.

I will also take great interest in any progress with implementing the **Pollinator Action Plan**, which I instigated with a motion to full council. So too KCC's excellent Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy, which recognizes air pollution as a priority for action. Another major challenge will be to reverse what has been a plateauing or, indeed, a reduction, in recycling rates over the last twelve months.

Finally, in terms of KCC's finances, it was a tough year – of course – albeit with a slightly better than expected final settlement for local government and with a number of ring-fenced Covid grants. KCC decided to increase council tax by the maximum 4.99% and, while I did oppose this, I can fully understand the budget pressures. Nearly half of all KCC's revenue spend is now on adult and children's social care and there is likely to be a lot of demand for a wide range of services as the full effects of the pandemic are felt on people's physical and mental health and livelihoods.

As I am not standing for re-election, I would just add that it has been an honour to serve Hythe in this capacity for eight years, to try to respond to residents' issues and to work with – and now within – the town council in that time.