MBC Members Report from Cllr Claudine Russell

Dated: September 2026

Council

The Gypsy and Traveller DPD has been halted and we now remain without a 5 year land supply for the remainder of this council and into the unitary council. The new call for sites for housing was started and sites can now be viewed by looking at;
maidstone.oc2.uk
My concern is that that the call for sites has just been opened, not directed by policy and with the timescale for unitary will not be completed within this council. Everyone who sees large sites near to them will be worried and the plan will not be formulated quickly. A unitary council that is united with Sevenoaks (90% green belt), Tonbridge and Malling (South East water say they can't supply) and Tunbridge Wells (High Weald National Landscape designation) may well pick up the half finished work with far more sites than are needed and seek to use as many of them as possible to overcome the targets that are imposed upon the unitary as a combination.

There continues to be work done on local government reorganisation work streams and warding arrangements by the officers.

My group raised a motion to tackle litter in rural areas and this has been taken on board cross-party and is being discussed at the committee meeting tonight.

Planning issues again are a major feature of my work and I now sit on the Planning Committee as my group increased our numbers on this committee due to a member leaving the Liberal Democrats and joining the Green Group on the council.

Overview and Scrutiny

I called in the cabinet decision to close Maidstone Market without finalising their plans for the Lockmeadow and Coronation Square area. O&S agreed with the call in and made recommendations to cabinet to reverse the decision on the closure while they more fully undertook the work as to what they wanted to see in the Market Hall, cost their proposals more thoroughly and then decide the impact on the market. The recommendations are currently awaiting the next meeting of cabinet.

Ward Work

There were a number of issues relating to the prolonged closure of the A229 and I have worked with my county cllr colleague to alleviate some of the traffic issues and have arranged for the litter picking team to go along various lanes that were being used as a cut through to clear up the disgusting amount of litter that was thrown from cars during this time. The verges and most of the verge plants were squashed and some of the lanes degraded badly during this heavy traffic period so I have reported this for restoration.

I have raised the matter of rural postal delays again to Royal Mail and to Katie Lam MP who will also escalate the issue. Many rural residents are not receiving post for a number of weeks and they are missing important letters and appointments.

As always, if you need my help, please do not hesitate to email me at
claudinerussell@maidstone.gov.uk