Green Party Councillors' Report of **JULY/Aug 2026**, for Marden & Yalding Ward Parishes –

Council meetings continued in July with Full Council on 1st July, then Cabinet on 22nd; there were no formal meetings in August and the next Cabinet is on 16th September, with full Council on 30th. The Council confirmed withdrawal of the Gypsy & Traveller DPD (see last month's report for details), and confirmed some earlier Cabinet decisions. The meeting on 22nd July had a full Agenda, which covered a Public Space Order for catapults (not enacted), the final report on the VAWG (Violence against Women & Girls) consultation, with confirmation of a budget spend to continue the work and several financial items on forward strategy/budgets and also the usage of last year's small surplus.

There were also items on remedial works to the Cremators, an Article4 proposal for certain large units in the town centre, distribution of CIL (Community Infrastructure Fund) levies to eight schemes (including the Puffin crossing in Nettlestead) and an item on the re-development of Lockmeadow's open spaces and market hall. This last resolution was 'called in' to Overview & Scrutiny Committee, mainly because of concern about loss of the regular markets while a new Operator was being found; that Committee met in August and returned the proposal to Cabinet for re-examination next month.

Democracy & General Purposes Committee (on 29th June) had discussed details of the 'shadow' operation of the proposed Town Council, which will come into being on 1st April 2027 (with formal elections in May 2027), and Council agreed its constituent Members on 1st July and its initial budget. No decision has been made about Parish Council elections happening next May instead of in 2028, at the same time as Unitary & Town Council elections; Cabinet/Councillors have no say in that decision.

We heard from Central Government in mid-July about the future make-up of Kent for Local Government Reorganisation in April 2028, which confirmed Maidstone as being part of a West Kent grouping with Sevenoaks, Tunbridge Wells and Tonbridge & Malling Councils. There is a lot of 'internal' Officer discussion going on at the moment about the processes and Committee make-ups to manage the period up to elections for the 'shadow Council' (May 2027), and it will be interesting to see how the 16-strong Councillor overview group (2 from each of the 4 Boroughs, plus 8 from KCC) will be operated. A lot of these political 'decisions' will emerge in early September, and Central Government is expressing a need for urgency and Action (with some, but not enough, funding!)

Event Updates for Newsletters/Sharing with Residents:

There is now a weekly Farmers' Market on Jubilee Square, by the Town Hall, every Saturday and the final Bandstand event in Brenchley Park on Sunday 6th September. Coming up this month are a series of Heritage Open Days in town and around from 11-20th, including a 150th anniversary Flower Festival at the main church, events at the Museum and a Carriage Museum tour on Saturday 26th (Mike went on the first one earlier this year, and the national expert gave an illuminating walkround tour). Maidstone's Literary Festival is on again this year, from 1st to 11th October in several venues.

www.visitmaidstone.com/whats-on/events-calendar for full details of September & October events.

Consultations: Hopefully, Residents completed the Survey which closed on 30th August. There are no open Consultations at the moment for MBC, but there is one on the KCC system about their Minerals Plan (which includes the contentious site for removal of ancient woodland at Oaken Wood)

- https://letstalk.kent.gov.uk/draft-of-the-kent-mineral-sites-plan-2026 - Kent Draft Mineral Sites Plan (including Oaken Wood) - closes 5th October

Parish Matters –

Collier Street – An enquiry about the PSPO sign for the Play Area; current one expires in October.

Hunton – We continue to await details of the proposed polytunnels along Lughorse Lane, by Clockhouse Farm. Queries received about traffic along Lughorse Lane (being related to a PlanAp in Yalding) and missed Garden bin collections (due to a closure on East Street, but also an earlier error). A strong response from residents to the idea of closing the Hall as a Polling Station next year.

Marden – A fair bit of correspondence about closure of access alongside a site along Battle Lane, being addressed by the KCC councillor now. Lots of requests for advice about responding to the PlanAp put in for the 'Copper Lane' site's full design details (Parish Council has sent in a Rejection at end of month); KCC Highways and Flood/Water Management have put holding objections in, so far. Nothing heard in August about the Plain Road 'hostile' PlanAp for 115 houses, which is still being considered by MBC. Parish office has finally received the legal paperwork to progress solar panels on the public toilet roof! Grace is supporting a resident with SEND student and issues with school.

Nettlestead – The funding for the Crossing was approved by Council, so next steps are with KCC.

Yalding – Mike has been contacted by residents of Laddingford about potential new caravans down Claygate Road & Darman Lane areas, but YPC confirm that Planning Enforcement have been involved with at least one Site. A new PlanAp for advertisement boards for 'The George' former PH has also elicited some comment, as there is Enforcement action occurring in parallel. Grace called in a PlanAp for 26/500120/FULL Land West of Maidstone Road in Paddock Wood, which YPC had also done.

Borough Councillors Grace Couch & Mike Summersgill – 30th August 2026

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