

KCC Councillor Wayne Chapman Tenterden Division

Town / Parish Council Report July 2026

(Covering Appledore, Biddenden, Rolvenden, Rolvenden Layne, St Michaels, Tenterden, Wittersham, Kenardington, Newenden, High Halden, and Stone-cum-Ebony)

Introduction — July 2026

Welcome to my July 2026 monthly report. This is a particularly significant month for Kent local government: the Government is expected to announce its decision on the future shape of councils across the county, ending months of uncertainty about how many unitary authorities will replace the current two-tier structure.

June was another full month across the division and at County Hall — from the Beating Retreat at Hole Park and a pond restoration visit in Biddenden, to continued KCC action on water resilience, rural broadband and highways, as well as the many meetings had and Committees I sit upon. This report looks back at what has happened through June, and forward to what July and the weeks ahead will bring, including, of course, the Spirit of Tenterden Festival.

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) — Government Decision Expected This Month

This is the single biggest story for local government in Kent in almost 50 years, and the Government's decision on the number and boundaries of new unitary councils for Kent and Medway is currently expected during July 2026.

Following the close of the Government's public consultation on 26 March 2026, ministers and civil servants have been assessing all responses alongside the five business cases submitted by Kent and Medway councils. Five options remain on the table, ranging from a single unitary authority covering the whole of Kent and Medway down to five separate councils.

KCC continues to advocate strongly for Option 1A — a single unitary authority for the whole of Kent and Medway, with three area assemblies to maintain local democratic voice. This option has been independently assessed as £464 million less expensive than the next closest alternative, delivering the fastest financial payback and annual savings of £69 million. Splitting Kent into smaller councils could increase annual running costs by up to £40 million, with the risk of council tax increases or service cuts to cover those costs.

Once the Government announces its chosen model, the following milestones are expected:

- Structural Change Orders — anticipated September/October 2026
- Shadow Council elections — May 2027
- New unitary councils go live — April 2028

I recognise that some individual parish and town councils may have expressed different preferences about which model best serves their local community, and I respect those views. What matters most is that whatever structure emerges, local communities retain a strong voice and that services to residents are protected. I will write to all parish and town councils across the division as soon as the Government's announcement is made.

Full details: www.kent.gov.uk – Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution

Army Benevolent Fund — Beating Retreat, Hole Park Estate, Rolvenden

On the evening of Friday 26 June I was honoured to attend the Army Benevolent Fund Kent Committee's Beating Retreat at the magnificent Hole Park Estate in Rolvenden, hosted by Edward and Clare Barham, a truly special occasion in beautiful surroundings right here within the division.

The Band of the Brigade of Gurkhas delivered a breathtaking performance, joined by the Queen's Regimental Association Corps of Drums and Cranbrook Town Band. It was wonderful to see such a strong turnout, with Mayors from towns across Kent and the Lord Lieutenant of Kent in attendance, alongside KCC Leader Linden Kemkaran and KCC colleagues Jeremy Eustace, Chris Palmer and Richard Palmer.

ABF The Soldiers' Charity supports around 80,000 members of the Army family in 52 countries. For Soldiers For Life. I would encourage all residents to support this outstanding cause wherever they are able to.

Pond Restoration in Biddenden — Site Visit (23 June 2026)

On 23 June I attended a pond sampling site visit in Biddenden alongside Cabinet Member for Environment Jamie Henderson and the Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership team, seeing first-hand the freshwater habitat restoration work being carried out within our division under Natural England's Great Crested Newt District Level Licensing Scheme.

The results across Kent are impressive. More than 400 ponds have been created or restored countywide, with 62% colonised by Great Crested Newts since 2019 – 24% above the national scheme average. Restored ponds are also supporting the return of rare plant species dormant for decades, alongside insects, amphibians and wider wildlife. More than 70 new ponds are planned this coming winter, with opportunities for further landowners to join the scheme from summer 2027.

[Find out more: kentishstour.org.uk](https://kentishstour.org.uk)

Water Supply Outages — KCC's Continued Response

Residents across parts of Kent experienced further deeply frustrating disruption to water supply during June, following on from the late May heatwave failures. Areas affected included Headcorn, Ulcombe, Benenden and Kemsing, with thousands of customers experiencing low pressure or no water at all. This pattern of repeated failure by South East Water is simply not acceptable.

Throughout the June disruption, KCC's resilience teams have remained actively engaged in the multi-agency response coordinating clear public communications, supporting vulnerable residents and health and care settings, and working with the Department for Education to protect pupils sitting public examinations and children with special educational needs. KCC has worked to ensure residents know where to access bottled water and what support is available throughout.

KCC Leader Linden Kemkaran has continued to hold South East Water to account directly, having written to the company's Chairman to demand accountability at the highest level and a fundamental change in approach, describing the pattern of failures as causing profound hardship to communities and serious economic damage to local businesses.

Kent Water Resilience Partnership

Since its announcement on 28 May, the Kent Water Resilience Partnership, chaired personally by KCC Leader Linden Kemkaran, has continued to bring together water companies, local authorities, regulators and key partners to focus on long-term planning, infrastructure investment, water quality and supply resilience, creating a single forum where the public can see clearly what is being done and who is accountable.

As Chair of the Kent Flood Risk and Water Management Scrutiny Committee, I remain directly engaged in this work. Water companies at times are also called to appear before this committee, to account for their performance, and I will continue to use every available scrutiny mechanism to press for the long-term infrastructure investment that Kent residents and businesses deserve.

If any resident in the division has been significantly affected by water supply failures and wishes to raise the matter formally, please contact me and I will assist in directing your concerns to the appropriate body.

Rural Broadband — Project Gigabit Setback

KCC has raised serious concern with Government following its announcement scaling back the Project Gigabit contract for Kent. The original £112 million contract, awarded to CityFibre in January 2024, was intended to connect more than 50,000 rural homes and businesses across Kent and Medway. Following the Government's announcement, only around 8,000 premises will now benefit, a fraction of what was promised, leaving a further 80,000 Kent premises without any upgrade plan at all.

For rural communities across the Tenterden Division, reliable broadband is essential for modern life, businesses and access to public services. KCC has written directly to the relevant Government minister demanding urgent action, and I will continue to press this issue through my work on KCC scrutiny committees.

[Latest information: www.kent.gov.uk/broadband](https://www.kent.gov.uk/broadband)

Highways and Transport

Highways maintenance across our rural division remains one of my highest priorities. Ringway Infrastructure Services, KCC's new principal highways contractor since 1 May 2026, has now been operating for two months. I continue to monitor performance closely against the new contract's targets and will hold Ringway to account where standards are not met.

KCC's Carriageway Asset Preservation Team has also been active across the county during June, using surface dressing, micro surfacing and asphalt rejuvenation to extend road life and seal surfaces against water penetration, one of the primary causes of pothole formation. Planned preventative maintenance is considerably more cost effective than waiting for road failure.

Tenterden, Appledore Road

Works along Appledore Road continue to progress. Traffic calming kerbside buildouts, pedestrian crossing improvements, speed restriction signage and new street lighting are all at varying stages of completion. Once current works are finalised, the long-awaited full resurfacing of Appledore Road will be formally diarised. I continue to liaise closely with KCC Highways and contractors to ensure works are concluded to the required standard as promptly as possible.

There is a highways closure notice in place for Appledore Road 20th August to 30th August, Collison Place to East Hill, there will be immediate resident access available, for all others please follow the diversion routes.

Newenden, A28 Bridge

The parapet wall repair works at Newenden Bridge remain complete and the bridge is fully open. KCC's more extensive maintenance programme requiring a full closure remains scheduled for June to September 2027, with this lead time specifically designed to allow businesses, residents and the wider community ample time to plan ahead. I will continue to keep all parties fully informed as planning progresses.

Flags on Lamp Posts — KCC Guidance (25 June 2026)

KCC confirmed on 25 June that Highways teams will not remove flags from buildings and lamp posts across Kent unless they pose a safety risk to road users or the public, or obstruct essential infrastructure such as CCTV cameras or road signage. Residents wishing to display flags should seek permission from the relevant landowner, including KCC as the Highway Authority where highway land is involved, and must never climb lamp posts or other structures to do so.

SEND Local Area Inspection — Kent (July 2026)

Following notification on 22 June, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) are conducting on-site SEND Local Area Partnership Inspection visits at Sessions House, Maidstone, during the week of 6–10 July 2026. The inspection will assess how well services across Kent identify needs, provide support and improve outcomes for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. I will update all councils once the report is published.

Kent continues to operate under a Safety Valve Agreement with the Department for Education and is fully committed to protecting outcomes for young people with SEND while managing the Dedicated Schools Grant deficit responsibly.

More information: www.kent.gov.uk – SEND

Kent Trading Standards — Illegal Sales Crackdown

Kent Trading Standards took part in a national day of action in June 2026 targeting illegal sales of counterfeit tobacco and vapes. Residents who suspect illegal sales activity should report it via the Citizens Advice consumer helpline: 0808 223 1133.

Residents are also reminded of the ongoing 'Check Before You Chuck' campaign tackling rogue waste traders who collect waste cheaply and dump it illegally in our countryside and rural lanes. If waste is later traced back to its original source, the original householder can face a substantial fine. Always check a waste carrier is registered with the Environment Agency and request a waste transfer note.

[Check waste carrier registration: Environment Agency Public Register](#)

Staying Well in Hot Weather

With summer weather continuing, KCC's Public Health team is advising residents on heat-related health risks, particularly for older residents, young children and those with underlying health conditions. I would ask all parishes to help ensure that vulnerable residents are looked out for during hot weather periods.

- Stay in the shade during the hottest part of the day (11am–3pm)
- Drink plenty of water and stay hydrated
- Check on elderly neighbours and relatives
- Keep rooms cool by closing blinds and curtains during the day

[NHS guidance on coping with hot weather](#)

MenB Vaccine — Offer for Young People

KCC Public Health has announced that thousands of young people in Kent will be offered a two-dose MenB (Meningococcal B) vaccine ahead of autumn 2026. I would encourage all eligible young people and their families to take up the offer when contacted.

Community Safety

Residents are encouraged to report suspicious activity to Kent Police via 101 (non-emergency) or 999 (emergency). Anonymous reporting is available through Crimestoppers.

www.crimestoppers-uk.org

Looking Ahead

Kent County Show – Friday 3 to Sunday 5 July 2026, Detling Showground

The 95th Kent County Show takes place from Friday 3 to Sunday 5 July 2026 at the Kent Showground, Detling, Maidstone, ME14 3JF. Organised by the Kent County Agricultural Society, this is the region's flagship celebration of farming, food and rural life, with livestock, equine and showjumping competitions, vintage vehicles, the Festival of Food, the Living Land Village and the Kent Young Farmers' Clubs marking their 80th anniversary this year.

KCC will have two separate stands at the Show throughout the weekend. The KCC Trading Standards stand will be on hand with advice for residents on avoiding rogue traders and scams, well worth a visit if you have any questions. Separately, the main KCC stand will be staffed across the weekend by Cabinet Members from various departments attending on different dates, all of whom would be very pleased to meet residents, discuss any issues or concerns, or simply say hello. Do please pop by and say hello yourself if you are at the Show. KCC is also funding free shuttle bus services to and from the Show from Maidstone and Sittingbourne throughout the weekend, to ease congestion on local roads. Full details and tickets are available at: www.kcas.org.uk

Spirit of Tenterden Festival – 3–5 July 2026

Now in its sixth year, Tenterden's biggest free community celebration returns to the Recreation Ground: Friday 3 July (2pm–10pm), Saturday 4 July (10am–10pm), and Sunday 5 July (11am–5pm). Live music, real ale, street food, craft and artisan stalls, family entertainment, a display arena, children's activities and the popular dog show — all run by volunteers, entirely not for profit, and completely free to enter. I will be attending on behalf of the division and look forward to seeing as many of you there as possible.

Appledore Classic Car Show and Village Fair – Sunday 19 July 2026

Now in its 41st year, Appledore's popular Classic Car Show and Village Fair returns on Sunday 19 July 2026, one of the largest classic vehicle events in the South East. Expect a fantastic display of classic cars, motorcycles, steam engines and military vehicles, alongside local bands, children's activities, food and drink stalls, craft stalls and an autojumble. The event is run entirely by the volunteer Management Committee, with all proceeds supporting the maintenance of the Appledore Recreation Ground. A wonderful family day out and well worth a visit.

Hole Park Gardens, Rolvenden – Summer Opening and History Tour

Hole Park Gardens in Rolvenden, where I attended the Army Benevolent Fund Beating Retreat in June, reopens for its summer season every Wednesday and Thursday throughout July. On Thursday 16 July at 10:30am, owner Edward Barham is hosting a special 'History of Hole Park' guided tour of the estate, a lovely opportunity to learn more about one of the best-known gardens in Kent, right here in our division.

Save the Date: Biddenden Tractorfest – Saturday 15 and Sunday 16 August 2026

Looking slightly beyond July, Biddenden Tractorfest returns to Holden Farm, Sissinghurst Road, on Saturday 15 and Sunday 16 August 2026, 10am to 5pm each day. Now in its 12th year and run entirely by volunteers with the support of the Kent County Agricultural Society, the event features around 300 vintage tractors, steam engines and classic vehicles, alongside falconry, a fun dog show, arena demonstrations, craft exhibits and stalls from local businesses and charities. Early booking is strongly advised, as tickets are capacity-limited and have sold out in previous years. Full details and tickets: www.tractorfest.co.uk

Parish and Town Council Meetings

I make every effort to attend parish and town council meetings across the division and to place a report item on your agendas each month. If you would like me to attend your next meeting, present on a particular issue, or have any items you would like me to address, please contact me in good time. I greatly value the direct dialogue with local representatives and residents.

Reporting a Problem

For issues with highways, footpaths, street lighting, bins, and many other problems, please report them in the first instance via the KCC website: www.kent.gov.uk – [Report or track a problem on the road or pavement](#)

How to Contact Me

I am always happy to hear from residents, parish councillors, community groups and businesses across the Tenterden Division. Please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Cllr Wayne Chapman

KCC Councillor — Tenterden Division

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