

# Shepway North FOCUS

Liberal  
Democrats  
Maidstone



Caring for our community, our environment and for you

Winter/ Spring 2021

## Vaccination Update

As at the end of January more than 200,000 coronavirus vaccines has been administered in Kent and Medway and this is increasing daily. The Greensand Health Centre surgery in Boughton Lane has become the designated vaccination site for patients from four local practices, including, Greensand Health Centre - Stockett Lane, The Mote Medical Practice, St Saviours Road, Wallis Avenue Surgery and Albion Place Medical Practice.

Lib Dem campaigner Brian Clark commented, *"It is very important that all patients ensure that their contact details are up to date, as not all of those aged over 80 have been contactable. Patients registered with other surgeries should also ensure their details are up to date with their providers, who will be making contact in due course. Greensand Health Centre has done an excellent job of keeping us informed."*

"Vulnerable residents, who do not have support from local friends or family or access to a computer, can seek support in gaining access to food, prescriptions etc, by contacting the **Kent Together helpline by dialling 03000 41 92 92**. Residents in this category that experience COVID-19 symptoms can also **call 119** (a dedicated NHS Covid-19 helpline set up during the pandemic to relieve the pressure on the general **111** NHS helpline).



## Local Campaigners chosen

We are delighted to confirm that two experienced local campaigners have been selected to stand for the Liberal Democrats in the Kent County Council and Maidstone Borough Council elections.



Well-known local campaigner, Brian Clark, has been chosen as Lib Dem candidate for County Council elections for Maidstone South Division (Shepway North and South Wards). Brian attended Oldborough Manor and Maidstone Grammar School. An electronics graduate, Brian held senior technology roles in London and in California. Serving as the postmaster at Loose Post Office for many years, and lives locally with his wife and two children. Brian worked as an active member of the North Loose Residents Association and was elected as the local Kent County Councillor in 2013, a position held until 2017. He is a hard-working MBC councillor for South Ward, a position he has held since 2015.

Brian has initiated many local highways schemes, including road lining works and bollards for safety near Parkway School, a large tree planting scheme along the Sutton Road and additional bus shelters. For several years he has worked on the implementation of junction improvements initiatives along the A229 and A274 corridors and has been involved in defeating several controversial housing developments, and

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creating a 20mph scheme along Northumberland Avenue. He is a Trustee of Hayle Park Nature Reserve.

Most recently, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Brian has been working with local residents and fellow ward councillors, and MBC to set up volunteer support groups across his council ward to help to arrange and deliver prescriptions and food to our most vulnerable shielding residents. During lockdown, he set up a daily rota service, and he is continuing this work as part of Maidstone Borough's COVID-19 Recovery Board most recently assisting with the testing of 10,000 residents on Postcode ME15 following the discovery of the South African strain of Covid-19.

**Local Resident and Campaigner Josef Higson (Joe), has been selected as your Lib Dem candidate for the Maidstone Borough Council elections in Shepway North Ward.**



Joe was born in Lancashire, served five years in the Royal fleet auxiliary, before graduating with a Media and Cultural studies degree and starting his teaching career in Essex. He moved to Shepway in Maidstone in 2008. Joe has worked as a teacher, lecturer or manager, while supporting colleagues as a union representative and holding exam board responsibilities. Joe lives with his wife and has a young son.

Joe commented, *"I strongly oppose the increasing levels of housing development that are pushed down on us, especially when local infrastructure is at breaking point, pollution levels are dangerously high, and our countryside and green spaces are in desperate need of protection. I'm also very concerned about the very poor state of local roads and pathways and I will work closely with local residents, the County Council and the Borough Council to seek the long term improvements which are urgently needed."*

## Government's 40% housing increase now upon us

Having agreed our housing plan just 3 years ago with the government mandating 880 new houses per year, MBC is partway through a review to meet the

Government's latest demand, a further 40% increase in housing numbers (to over 1200 units per year).

The Government has, after considerable pressure from local Councils and Councillors including the Liberal Democrat team, announced that their most recent demand for an 80% increase in housing numbers units may now be lowered. We are continuing to press the Government as hard as we can on this issue.

Councillor Clark said, *"We gave robust evidence-based feedback to the government to oppose the 80% increase for Maidstone. Unfortunately, we will still need to deliver against the Government's original 40% increase in housing numbers or we will forfeit our five-year housing supply, which would give a green light to any of the new sites put forward by developers. We must avoid this at all costs."*

## Lib Dems protect offices from conversions, while Tories seek to side-step planning permission

Alongside increased numbers, the Government is aiming to extend 'Permitted Development Rights' enabling developers to convert more and more commercial premises into small flats without planning



permission, consultation or contribution for roads or schools. In the past this has allowed London Boroughs to buy, unchecked, cheap office space for conversion for their own housing needs. The Local Liberal Democrat group in Maidstone has submitted a strong response to the Government's consultation opposing this and has past success in opposing permitted development.

Focus editor **Joe Higson** said, *"Last Autumn, following a successful Lib Dem led campaign, an "Article 4" directive was established to protect 14 of our best office buildings from permitted development conversion to housing. Sadly, the government's new proposals are poorly considered and undemocratic. If*

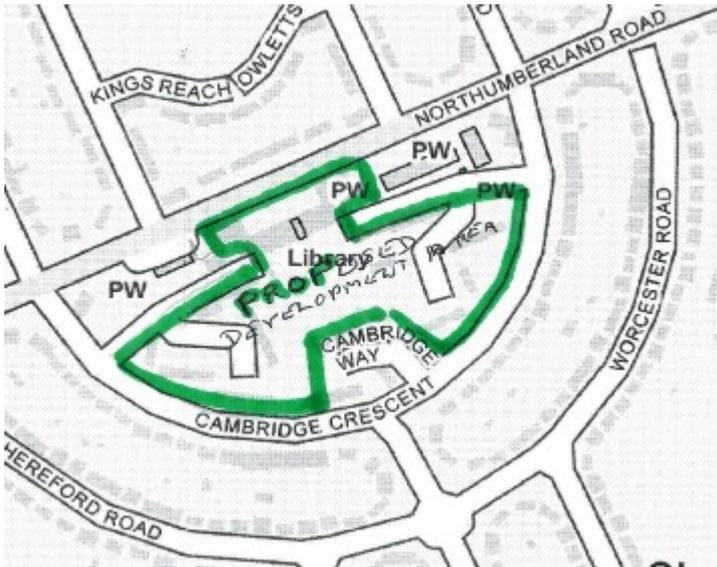
*enacted fully, they would remove what little remains of local residents' ability to influence planning decisions, while giving even more power to developers".*

## New Houses and Retail units proposed for Shepway.

Golding homes have recently met Councillors to discuss a proposal to demolish 116 housing units between Cambridge Crescent and Northumberland Road, including the existing retail units on Northumberland Road and replace them with 250 housing units and new retail units.

**Joe Higson** said, *"Golding Homes are in the early stage of this proposal but residents can expect a full consultation, including public meetings, to explain the scheme and we will keep residents informed via our Maidstone Liberal Democrats Shepway North page of Facebook as it progresses.*

Please send us your thoughts on this initiative.



## Lib Dems gain cross party support to improve Sutton Road / Willington Street junction

Lib Dems on the Maidstone Joint Transportation Board have been calling for major improvements to key junctions to the south of the town to help address serious local traffic congestion and increasing air pollution.

In the January's Joint Transport Board meeting, members finally agreed to progress four junction

improvement schemes along the A229 Loose Road to allow them to go forward to final design and contract procurement stage with a target date for the start of construction during the summer of 2021.

As a member of the Board, **Brian Clark** successfully proposed bringing back a scheme along Sutton Road at Wallis Avenue and Willington Street which would offset the impact of housing at Langley Park (using funds collected from developers). This turned around a decision not to progress with junction improvements due to "insufficient benefit" of a "lesser scheme" championed by Conservatives.

## Tree planting in Shepway North goes from strength to strength

It is five years since Brian Clark used his devolved budget to plant 24 mature trees along the Sutton Road corridor from the cemetery to the shops. The trees are thriving, and his initiative has formed part of one of the most significant tree planting programmes in Shepway North in recent times including replacement of numerous verge trees at Park Way, Cranborne Avenue, Marion Crescent and at Cumberland Green (where the closed road section was completely reconfigured).

Recently, Cllr Clark worked with MBC colleagues and children from Oaks Academy to plant a thicket of 1000 mixed native trees in Mangravet Park along with large native Oak, Hornbeam and Rowan "feature" trees donated by local charity "Kent Men of the Trees".

Cllr Clark commented, *"When KCC cut back funding for replacement trees I made replacement of valued trees a priority, but since becoming a trustee at a local nature reserve, my work has continued to a variety of planting schemes including native trees and wildflowers to improve bio diversity, reduce pollution and improve air quality in our area"*



### Reporting Highway Faults

Don't forget you can still report highway faults including potholes, blocked drains, faulty street lights,



Pot Holes?



Lights Out?



Street Name Plate Damage?

dangerous kerbs or overhanging shrubs blocking a public footway, to Kent County Council using their 'Report a problem' link under the 'Roads and Travel' section on the main Home Page or in an emergency ring **03000 418181**.

If you don't get action within the stated time contact Brian or Joe.

### Can you help the Local Liberal Democrats win in Shepway North.

Local Liberal Democrat Councillors have a good reputation for working hard for residents all year round, not just at election time.

This year in **Shepway North** we are fighting for both the **Borough Council and County** seats to represent the area. For obvious reasons there will be less face to face contact, but we will still keep you informed using our Focus where safe to do so, by telephone and Social media. Please let us know if you can help for a few hours a month in Shepway North Ward with the following:

- Delivering Focus (when safe to do so)
- Helping with clerical work, preparing letters for residents,
- Displaying a window or Garden poster at election time.
- Attending social and fundraising events when rules allow.
- By joining the Liberal Democrat Party.

**Please contact Brian or Joe if you can help them in any way.**



**Elections Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> MAY 2021  
YOU WILL HAVE 3 BALLOT PAPERS**

- **Maidstone Borough Council** -
  - **Kent County Council** -
  - **Police & Crime Commissioner**-
- 3 Times to VOTE**

**LIBERAL DEMOCRAT**

**Why not ask for a Postal VOTE.**

### CONTACT US



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