

# Council Tax Ups & Downs

This is a cuppa story.  
It's complicated.  
Get a cuppa first!



Our Council Tax bills are made of costs of 3 councils, Kent County, Tonbridge and Malling Borough and West Malling Parish Councils.

This year, the Borough Council is completely changing the basis on which it collects Council Tax from April. Since 1974, people living in the areas outside Tonbridge have all got Parish Councils running such services as street lighting, churchyards and playing fields, which they pay for through their parish rate.

But people in Tonbridge have had those services paid for by the Borough rate which everyone in the Borough pays. This led to complaints that parish residents are paying twice and so the Borough Council made grants to Parishes to partly offset this unfairness.

Because of Government cutbacks, the Borough Council has at last decided to charge Tonbridge residents a fairer share of their costs, So your Borough rate bill will go down. But TMBC are also removing the Parish Grants which in W Malling total a loss of over £16,000. This was used to maintain the churchyard, playing fields, and street lights.

**West Malling Parish Councillors have agreed unanimously that they do not wish to see any lowering of the standards of maintenance on these areas, and so have had to raise the parish rate to cover the loss of grant. The Borough Council says the effect of the Borough rate going down and the Parish rate going up should cancel one another out.**

However, the Parish Council itself has additional costs to meet next year. They will be **investing in** .....

- ✓ a further £20,000 on lower energy, safer street lighting. That buys about five new columns.
  - ✓ creating a pension for our new clerk, and equipping the office with a new computer and desks to replace the current planks our staff are working on.
  - ✓ using a contractor to cut the Macey's Meadow hedge on Norman Road as volunteers are no longer able to carry out this big job.
- These items add up to around £25,000 and will cost residents on average less than 50p per week per household.

The Council is **saving money by** .....

- ✓ Moving into smaller premises.
- ✓ Changing our street lights to LED lamps.
- ✓ Awarding all contracts competitively annually.
- ✓ Supporting volunteer groups who are running parish property at the Village Hall, the Cricket Club, Macey's Meadow and the Twitch Inn much more cheaply than we could do commercially.

We are very lucky indeed to have so many people who are active in making West Malling the great place it is to live. We hope residents will feel the additional cost of under 50p a week is good value for money.

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# headline West Malling Feb 2017

## ACTION TO CUT ST. LEONARDS ST. SPEEDS

Trudy has paid some of her Councillors' Highway Fund for a traffic calming scheme to prevent speeding vehicles spinning out of control on St Leonards Street. There were two more crashes in December.

The traffic calming scheme will include a hatched central island to encourage vehicles to the edge of the carriageway, SLOW markings on the road, and a vehicle activated sign. A new sign will also indicate walkers on the busy crossing between the tower and the park.



Big Blue Signs ....gone!

### Making the Green ... Green again.

Trudy has also paid for the huge blue weight restriction signs on the green opposite the former Startled Saint to be moved. They blotted out the village sign and were on the wrong side of the road anyway. She explained "There used to be cottages on this plot, but now, with the attractive town sign and bulb planting, this area should make a pleasant entrance to the town instead of being cluttered with road signs. "There are still a few to be moved ....."



### Railway Bridge repair

Our photo of the missing stones from the High Street railway bridge parapet got some action ... It has now been repaired. Pity they posted huge signs on it at the same time. Why?

### BOOST FOR SPEEDWATCH VOLUNTEERS



Local people using Speedwatch equipment to reduce speeding and pinpoint offenders will soon benefit from new equipment bought jointly by KCC and Trudy's Highway Fund. West Malling, East Malling and Larkfield will then have a machine each. New volunteers are receiving training in all three parishes. If you are concerned with speeding in your road, join in.

The data is used by Kent Police to locate offenders, and by KCC to find places where traffic calming is needed.

### HIGH ST, GETTING BIRD BOMBED

Richard Selkirk has asked the Borough Council to take action on the pigeon flock which is making a mess of the pavement by the zebra crossing each day. We suspect they have been moved on by the restoration work on Arundel House. He has also questioned why the scaffolding is still in position, inconveniencing pedestrians when no work appears to be going on.

### Sliding around? Salt bins needed?

Following the recent icy conditions, please use the Grumble Strip to let us know where new sites for salt bins are needed.

### All weather cafe for Manor Park?

KCC is getting estimates for glazing the Green Cafe in Manor Park following Trudy's offer to put some of her Community Fund towards the cost.

### Ryarsh Lane Level Crossing

We understand the rail authorities want to remove the level crossing at the western end of Ryarsh Lane because accidents there cause disruption to their timetable. Trudy has written to the responsible officer to point out that it is an important local footpath and ask if it could be replaced by a pedestrian bridge. This might also help connect any new car park on the north side of the track with the shops and businesses in the town. It would also stop train hoots!

Make sure you get your copy of our email Bulletin

Email Trudy on [trudy.dean@kent.gov.uk](mailto:trudy.dean@kent.gov.uk) to be added to the circulation list

## Grumble Sheet

If you have any grumbles, ideas, or want to give us your views, please use this space.

Please return to:  
**West Malling Lib Dems,**  
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Name.....

Address.....

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**CAN YOU HELP DELIVER  
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# Aylesford Newsprint Latest

Trudy Dean writes;

Many people are concerned about the amount of traffic which might come from the Aylesford Newsprint site if it is redeveloped for modern businesses which may employ many more people and generate more traffic than the former highly automated paper mill. One possible solution being suggested is a left in - left out entrance from and exit to M20 direct from the site.

It is very unclear what the effect of this might be. For instance, it might encourage rat running by traffic avoiding the A20 or Maidstone traffic jams. But in order for Highways England to even think about this, KCC as Highways Authority needed to push them into exploring the option.

I asked a formal question at County Council (a bit like PM questions) to encourage them to do so. KCC confirmed that it is pressing Highways England to explore this option. **However, they got the reply that Highways England are opposed to the idea. They say it does not meet their safety guidance on the distance between junctions to allow for weaving traffic. They also say that it would mess up their plans for a smart motorway operation, due to open next year, between junctions 3 and 5 at Aylesford. This is where variable speed limits are used to increase the capacity of the motorway and traffic can be instructed to use the hard shoulder.**

I pointed out that TMBC will not oppose the application on highway grounds unless they get a clear statement of opposition from KCC Highways as well. The Cabinet Member replied that he 'could not interfere with the professional judgement of officers'. *Trudy Dean*

## Lavenders Rd shuts for Water Main work

South East Water have applied to close various local roads for water mains installation. A short section of King Street and the link road to High Street near K2 flooring is to be closed at various periods between Feb 6 and 21st. There may be hold ups on the High Street. This work was delayed from before Christmas because of the possible effect on Christmas trade. Lavenders Road is to be closed from 6 March for up to three months from the bypass to number 41 to allow water mains installation. Given the importance of this route and the long diversions involved, Trudy has pressed for the work to be completed in a shorter time.

## No Buggies Please!

David Thornewell and Trudy met rail authorities at New Hythe Station in January to explore ways of making the Strood bound platform more accessible for mobility vehicles and buggies. Currently, the steps are a major barrier. Trudy writes "We hope to get this improvement as part of any development of



## Developer blocks Hermitage Lane junction improvements.

Developers Gladmans have submitted a planning application for over 800 houses for land adjacent to Hermitage Lane. KCC is still trying to buy a strip of this land to enable an extra carriageway to be built to return the junction to smooth flowing traffic. Gladmans have an option to purchase the land and are blocking the sale.

Trudy has written to KCC and said that this junction is causing so much misery that KCC should obtain the land by Compulsory Purchase Order.

## Not a Dry Eye in the House

On Sunday 19th March at 3pm at Mote Hall, Maidstone there will be a concert to the memory of Jeffrey Vaughan Martin. Jeffrey was the first conductor of Malling Community Choir, who will be taking part. The programme features soloists, choirs, and orchestras inspired by Jeffrey, including a filmed contribution from percussionist Dame Evelyn Glennie. Ticket proceeds will go to the Jeffrey Vaughan Martin Bursary Fund to support promising young instrumentalist musicians.

Trudy writes "Jeffrey was an eminent Kent musician when he agreed to undertake the risky business of conducting a 'fun' Community Choir. He set us the highest of standards, developed the choir to over 100 singers and inspired great affection. It promises to be an extraordinary concert. There won't be a dry eye in the house." Go to the WMCC website for ticket details.

## Churchfields

The developer of the former Church Centre has reached agreement with owner Mr Garrard to lay a temporary road across the Manor Farm field to the rear of the site to avoid construction traffic having to use Churchfields.

### Churchfields Parking

A door to door survey by West Malling Parish Council shows that Churchfields residents are mainly in favour of a residential parking permit scheme being introduced there. Residents voted against the idea over a year ago, but restrictions in Offham Road and the High Street Car Park charges have resulted in non residents trying to park there.



## County Roads in "Managed Decline"

Over the past decade, Kent County Council have been fully aware that, unless they took action, the condition of our highways would deteriorate rapidly. Previous warnings from Lib Dem councillors, and also from highway officers, were ignored in spite of money being available at the time. Only 3.5 % of the County Council's budget was spent on road maintenance, which was not enough to avoid further deterioration. As a result, both roads and footpaths are getting worse. A recent report says the backlog of highways maintenance work will increase from £584m to £691m by 2026 and the backlog on our public footways from £83m to £128m by 2026. It suggested that ten years from now over 1 in 10 of Kent's 'A' roads could be in very poor condition as a consequence of this neglect.

## Parish Council Keeping in Touch

The Parish Council is considering Richard Selkirk's proposals for the Parish Council to issue a fortnightly email newsletter, and councillors to man stalls at the Farmers Market and Surgeries at the Library. Tell us what you think.

### New Car park Cycle Racks

Cycle racks are to be installed in the shoppers' car park on a trial basis. If they are not used, they will be removed.

### Another Parking Consultation for Norman and Offham Road

TMBC has begun another consultation on minor changes to parking arrangements in Offham and Norman Road to fine tune the parking bays laid down last year. The consultation documents can be found on the Borough Council's website.

## More traffic wardens welcomed

The number of vehicles using the Shoppers High Street Car Park behind Tesco continues to be well below last year, although not as severe as previous months. In the December survey of shops, 8 out of the 10 respondents said that charging in the car park is still affecting their business. The Borough Council is to increase the number of parking wardens it employs for the whole Borough from 8 to 9 and possibly more in future. WMPC wants the income from the High Street car park to be used for a dedicated traffic warden in West Malling to solve parking offences once and for all.



## HOSPICE VISIT

Trudy visited Heart of Hospice in January to see a reclining chair and cutlery adaptations she paid for to enable people to remain independent as long as possible. The Hospice also provide many therapy sessions for day clients and do home visits. Don't suffer alone.



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