Faced with challenges of an increasing and ageing population, the budget-holding GP-led NHS West Kent Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) says primary health care is “extremely fragile in some areas”.

A key change will see GP practices scaled up to work in clusters or federations (four clusters have been formed by GPs for Maidstone Central, East Maidstone, Weald and Malling) with many providing a much wider range of treatments and services.

In addition, local care hubs could be based in larger buildings to deliver a range of services that do not need a hospital setting but serve a population bigger than GP clusters.

Surveys and consultations showed the public supports hubs - main concerns were about time and distance to travel, especially by public transport.

The CCG wants to close gaps in services with poor outcomes, especially for long-term conditions and frailty.

Local hospitals are not always best to care for the frail, but services outside hospital are not always able to cope. Every day more than 1,000 people are in Kent hospitals who could be elsewhere if services were available.

The CCG is particularly concerned about cancer care – late diagnosis in particular – and access to services and poor outcomes for mentally ill. The CCG says the local care model also needs to:

- Educate the population to monitor, improve and manage their own health and promote self-care.
- Co-ordinate and integrate health and social care services.
- Provide an easy access service – an alternative to A&E attendance.
- Provide short-term care on hospital discharge for independent living in own residence.
- Avoid referrals where possible with easier specialist opinions for GPs.
- Position mental health staff consistently in all care settings to direct and support care for patients.

The CCG recognises it has to increase capacity in several areas and overcome current high levels of staff vacancies, turnover and skill shortages.

By Dennis Fowle

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It’s a Website should make you money, not cost you money”
RESIDENTS have voiced concerns about plans for nearly 100 houses and flats on two car parks in Maidstone.

The schemes would include 47 units on the Union Street East site, currently a long stay car park with 51 spaces, and a similar number on the nearby Brunswick Street car park, which has 66 spaces. The estates would include allocated parking spaces for residents as well as gardens and landscaping.

The two proposals were outlined by Maidstone Council officials at public meetings after they were approved by the policy and resources committee. A planning application has not yet been submitted.

But local residents are angry, arguing that parking problems are already at crisis level and the proposals will make matters worse. Lisa Ben, of Tufton Street, said that she and her husband, Gregory, travel by bus because if they move their vehicle, they will not be able to park near their home when they return. She said: "We pay £50 a year for two resident’s permits – one for us and one for visitors, but we have to go everywhere by bus. When people come to stay, they have to pay to park in the car park and walk into town, even though we have paid for a permit. There are not enough spaces now – where will all the new residents park?"

Michael Lowe, pictured with Lisa, said only one space was allocated to each house and there was one space for every three flats. He said: "It’s completely insane. The general concern is that there is a woeful lack of parking allocated. If there was one space per flat and two spaces per house it might be more manageable. They just don’t care about the quality of life of local residents.”

MBC spokesman John Foster said: "Following the public meeting...we are aware of the concerns of the existing residents regarding parking. MBC is considering ways of mitigating the impact of the new housing development on existing reported parking pressures in the N4 parking permit area.”

Parking fears as plans for flats are announced

Reynolds ban
A MAIDSTONE driver who failed to provide a specimen of breath for analysis has been barred from the road for 30 months and placed on a curfew.

Oliver Reynolds (36), of Bargrove Road, admitted failing to provide a specimen on July 13. He was sentenced at Mid Kent Magistrates’ Court to 56 days in prison, suspended for 12 months, banned from driving for 30 months and given a three-month curfew to remain at home between 10pm and 6am daily. He must also pay £85 costs and a £115 victim surcharge.

Wilko job woe
JOBS at discount store Wilko in Maidstone could be lost after the chain posted an 80% downturn in pre-tax profits.

Almost 4,000 staff are employed by the group and Wilko management is looking to make reductions in in-store numbers, blaming Brexit in part for the slowdown.

Art exhibition
MAIDSTONE artists are being celebrated in a one-day exhibition at The Barn in Broad Street, Hollingbourne, from 2-6pm on September 3.

A quarter of proceeds from sales will be given to the Hollingbourne Meadows Trust.

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Road widening ‘not solution’

A PLAN to tackle growing congestion on the A274 Sutton Road in Maidstone has already met with opposition.

Work to widen the road at its junctions with Willington Street and Wallis Avenue will start in February. But many say the £1m cost and seven months of work would be better spent by the county council taking traffic away and on to a south Maidstone relief road from the A274 to the A20 via Leeds and Langley.

Cllr John Barnard describes the road widening as an unnecessary “plaster to patch a far larger problem.” He said: “There has always been concern and widening the road is not going to make much difference.”

“If I thought it was a good scheme I would say we have to go with it, but I think the money would be better spent on a relief road.”

He has been contacted by dozens of people who live on the Sutton Road slip road that runs parallel to the A274 who say squeezing three lanes north and south into the available space will carve up the lanes north and south into the A274 who say squeezing three lanes north and south into the available space will carve up the lanes north and south into the A274 who say squeezing three lanes north and south into the available space will carve up the lanes north and south into the

“buffer for years – bringing traffic "nose close" to their homes. The county council says landscaping and acoustic fencing will address the “understandable concern” about noise in Bell Meadow and Sutton Road.

But Cllr Barnard says: “The road widening will completely remove the green buffer that has protected properties in Sutton Road, leaving residents staring straight at the traffic and homeowners on the other side in Bell Meadow in the same position.”

Park Wood councillor Matt Burton said: “I use Willington Street regularly and it is a nightmare at peak times. “There is a lot of damage to pedestrian railings from vehicles and widening the road here will help. Obviously, the longer term solution will be a (Leeds-Langley) relief road.”

The county council says that with the full cost of the road widening available from Government and developers, the scheme offers an opportunity to improve journey times on the strategic A274, which is notorious for peak time traffic delays.

The cash will also provide dedicated turning lanes and upgraded traffic controls into Willington Street and Wallis Avenue, as well as the creation of bus laybys to improve traffic flows. However, it concede that vegetation and a number of mature trees will need to be removed to accommodate the widened junction.

In response to criticism expressed about the alleged inadequacy of the scheme, a Kent County Council spokesman said: “Junction improvements on Sutton Road address the existing congestion and future growth in the surrounding area.

“Without these improvements, the junction will be over capacity immediately and congestion will worsen.

“This project is part of a package of schemes within the Maidstone area to tackle existing congestion and is funded through the South East Local Enterprise Partnership.

“Without this funding, it would not be possible to make these important changes to the junction at this location.”

“KCC is committed to assessing the need for a relief road and continuing to develop the business case for future financial bids.”

For more information on the Sutton Road (A274) improvement project, visit www.kent.gov.uk/suttonroad.

Where will A274 traffic go?

CONSERVATIVE Shepway borough councillor Marion Ring lives in Westmorland Road and says she and her neighbours are concerned about the loss of trees and where traffic will be diverted while the seven months of A27 work is carried out.

She said: “This is a very, very big project and I’d like to know where the county council intends to divert traffic. Northumberland Road is already a rat run for vehicles cutting across the estate to avoid traffic hold-ups. They simply aren’t up to this, particularly the volume of traffic we are seeing today.”

Cllr Ring was among many to put her question to KCC representatives at a public exhibition about the scheme at St Martin’s Church, in Northumberland Road, as Downs Mail went to press.

Police are investigating the alleged thefts and criminal damage to signs put up by supporters of the WILLact pro-relief road pressure group.

WILLact founder Jenny Sutton (right) has urged others to contact Kent Police if they are victims of vandalism.

Kent Police have appealed for witnesses to the alleged offences.

Don Wright claims “Support the Relief Road” signs commissioned by WILLact and some posts stolen and dumped on Willington Green. WILLact supporter Mr Wright, who lives in Willington Street, said: “This is theft of a sign which has been placed on private property, and, certainly in the case of the dumped, of littering. I believe that both actions carry some form of punishment by the authorities.

“I’d ask those responsible to use the appropriate channels if they have an objection, and not to resort on 01622 604100, quoting reference YY/268/17, or call Kent Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

Cllr Matt Burton and John Barnard address the “understandable concern” about noise in Bell Meadow and Sutton Road.

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Dancer Tilly’s date with Billy

A TALENTED teenager has been wowing audiences during a tour of the hit musical Billy Elliot.

Tilly Cook (13) played to audiences throughout the UK and Ireland after being chosen to dance in the show, which also visited Germany.

The youngster, who came home in July after touring since last September, played the part of Tracey Atkinson, one of the pupils in the ballet class which the lead character joins.

Tilly, a pupil at Sutton Valence School, was previously on the West End stage for a year when she played Hortensia in the musical Matilda at the Cambridge Theatre.

Her mum Mandy, who runs Mandy Ellen Performing Arts Studio in Earl Street, Maidstone, said: “She has had a fantastic time. The day she finished in Matilda, the Billy Elliot company flew her to Scotland and she then went on tour with them. They are the two best shows that a youngster can be in.”

“I took her to see Matilda when she was nine. She sat there and said: ‘I want to be in that show’. She auditioned for it three times before she got the part. It was her dream show and she was determined to be in it. It shows that dreams can come true – you can achieve them.”

Tilly, who has been attending her mum’s stage school since she was five, has been continuing her studies while away. Mandy said: “It has been a wonderful experience for her. She is very level-headed and has really worked hard with her school work. They are very well-tutored while on tour and her school has been very supportive.”

“She is a very clever girl and has managed to get all A and B grades. She has been working non-stop for two years and now she is going to have a well-earned rest.”

Roots ‘ruining path’

A MAIDSTONE resident fears that tree roots have continued to damage his garden wall and path, even though the sycamore was cut down a year ago by the borough council.

Keith Madlin noticed cracks in a section of the brick wall after moving into his house in Woolley Road three years ago. The wall is leaning and the cracks have spread to his concrete garden path, which he dug up to prove that roots from the tree on the other side of the wall were causing the problem.

Pensioner Mr Madlin asked the council for cash two years ago to replace the 12ft section of brickwork and path and has refused to accept a lower figure suggested by the council’s insurance loss adjustors.

He said: “When I moved in, the tree was touching the building and the cracks were there. The tree was trimmed over a number of years and was cut down about a year ago, but Mr Madlin is concerned that new growth has sprouted from the stump. “I am not happy with the council; I want the stump removed,” he said. “While that root is still there, I cannot even build a new wall. I dug down 2ft under my path and the loss adjustor saw there were three different roots.”

Borough ward Cllr John Barned has taken up the matter to press for a speedy settlement for Mr Madlin. He said: “There are many problems with large trees in this area.”

A spokesman for Maidstone Council said: “The tree was removed at the occupier’s request and a stump left. It was explained to Mr Madlin that a small amount of regrowth from the stump was to be expected; however, this would eventually stop with continued moving and the roots would not continue to grow.”

“Since large trees were removed the ground also needs time to settle. We understand that an insurance claim is being pursued.”

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Pupils ‘valued and respected’

A FREE school in Maidstone with a controversial planning history has received a glowing Ofsted report.

The inspector rated Jubilee Primary School in Gatland Lane “good” overall, and “outstanding” in the key areas of leadership, pupil behaviour, early years provision and academic outcomes.

Much of the praise was for former head Anne Allen and her team, with comments in the report stating: “School leaders, governors and trust members have a clear and uncompro­ mising vision for the school that promotes the achievement of every pupil within a caring community based on Christian values.”

The school is now led by Marilyn Nadesan, its former interim assistant head.

The inspector continued: “Pupils flourish and thrive because they are extremely well looked after in a nurturing environment. “Individual academic, social and emotional needs are carefully identified and supported and pupils make rapid progress.”

In spite of complaints from nearby residents that the school, which opened in September 2014, has caused parking problems, the in­ spector noted that the atmosphere in the school was harmonious and supported by parents.

“Everyone is valued and treated with respect and pupils love coming to school. They are engaged in their learning and demonstrate exem­ plary behaviour.”

The school only fell back on its score for teaching. The inspector noted: “During the autumn term, two teachers new to the school fell below leaders’ high expectations.”

Prompt action was taken to ensure pupils’ achievement did not suffer. This variability means that teaching is good but not outstanding.”

The inspector advised the school to look for opportunities to challenge pupils further and ensure the qual­ity of teaching is outstanding.

“A recent planning application to expand the school to take 420 pupils was refused by Maidstone council due to the lack of playing fields and traffic concerns of residents.”

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Maidstone September 2017 7
MAIDSTONE'S Local Plan “is sound and capable of adoption”, according to planning inspector Robert Mellor’s final report.

Mr Mellor’s 71-page summary offers little different to his interim findings of a few months ago.

A small reduction in housing by 600-900 homes in Maidstone Borough Council’s plan for 18,000 new houses by 2031 is the main change.

A letter from MBC’s strategic planning department states: “The report concludes that subject to main modifications, the Local Plan is sound and is capable of adoption.”

The report takes in the council’s responses to Mr Mellor’s indications after evidence heard at the public inquiry last year.

Mr Mellor said the council had asked him to recommend main modifications necessary to allow the plan to be adopted. Following the hearings, the council prepared schedules of the proposed modifications and carried out sustainability appraisal of them.

Under the sections for ‘housing need and supply’, he says: “The objectively-assessed housing need is reduced and the backing is to be addressed over 10 years in order to smooth the trajectory with a further review of housing needs to form part of the intended review of the Local Plan as set out in the submitted plan but with a target adoption date brought forward to April 2021”.

Housing allocation at New Line Learning and Boughton Lane are deleted because of traffic revenues, Lenham’s house-building is to be determined by the Neighbourhood Plan or in the Local Plan Review and there will be a reduction in housing at the Invicta Barracks site in Maidstone.

Mr Mellor states: “Modifying the policy for the strategic employment site at Woodcut Farm to reduce its impact on the landscape and on heritage assets whilst safeguarding office provision. Modifying policy for employment development in economic development areas in the country-side and for development involving the expansion of existing rural businesses.”

On Yalding, he says: “Remove the residential and employment allocation at the former Tygenta Works in Yalding for reasons of flood risk whilst retaining a policy to allow for other uses that can be shown to be compatible with that location.”

Resident and long-time critic of the council, Keith Young said: “Valuable lessons must be learned from the sad mistakes they have ploughed on with, right up to the final version.”

“All in all, a disgraceful waste of public effort and ratepayers’ money that will wreak havoc on Maidstone for the next 20 years and will begetted far longer as we sink under a blanket of unsustainable new housing, largely where it is not needed at prices the vast majority of homeless or newly working families cannot possibly afford to buy or rent.”

County Cllr Katy Cooke said: “It’s a missed opportunity in the sense that it doesn’t have at its heart an integrated transport strategy for a rail road (for south Maidstone) at the earliest opportunity.”

### News

**Old pounds to help a hospice**

**HEART of Kent Hospice** is hoping to encourage people to donate their old £1 coins to charity before the familiar round pound ceases as legal tender on October 15.

The Coins for Care campaign is asking the public to empty their piggy banks, loose change jars, and look-down the backs of their sofas to support the 1,300 patients with terminal illnesses cared for by the Aylesford hospice each year.

Chief executive Sarah Pugh said: “We depend on the public very bit as much as they do on us, that’s why we hope people will get behind the hospice and make their old £1 coins count.”

Supporters can donate their coins at the Heart of Kent’s 14 charity shops, at the Heart of Flavour café in King Street, Maidstone, or by taking them to the Hospice in Aylesford at the end of each month.

There will also be official collectors at Fremlin Walk on September 9.

**Knife curfew**

A MAIDSTONE man has been placed under curfew for possessing a knife.

Paul James Palmer (53) was sentenced on July 7 at Mid Kent Magistrates’ Court where he pleaded guilty to the offence.

On June 16, Palmer, of St Philip’s Avenue, had a lockable knife in his possession in Maidstone High Street.

He was sentenced to 60 days in prison, suspended for 12 months, with a 90-day curfew to remain at home between 6pm and 7am daily.

He must also pay £85 costs and a £115 victim surcharge.

**Ramblin’ fans brave the weather**

MORE than 20,000 rock fans faced heavy showers with a smile to watch bands including Saxon, Extreme and ZZ Top at the controversial Ramblin’ Man Fair in Mote Park.

This was the first year the event has been held over three days (Friday-Sunday), with four stages offering back-to-back bands, including British country band Stone ‘n’ Seagulls.

It is the third year the festival has been staged in Maidstone.

Music fans travelled to the event from far afield in countries such as Australia, the Orkney Islands and nine women who came from Glasgow specifically to see smooth the trajectory with a further review of housing needs to form part of the intended review of the Local Plan as set out in the submitted plan but with a target adoption date brought forward to April 2021”.

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**A Warm Welcome at Marino’s Hart Street**

If you pay a visit to Marino’s Fish and Chip Shop in Hart Street, you are assured of a warm welcome. You will be greeted by the friendly faces of Aggie Michaelas and his wife Gina. Having run the takeaway for 23 years, up until 2010, the couple have now returned. Aggie has worked in the family business for the last 7 years and now boasts 30 years’ experience in the Fish and Chip trade – he was part of the original Marino’s business, which also had a further takeaway in Bearsted.

The popular takeaway serves traditional fish and chips, freshly cooked to the highest standard on the premises every day using top quality ingredients. As well as all the usual favourites you will find Senior citizens meals priced at £2.99 and kids meals for £3.50 including a toy and a drink.

In addition to the tasty food the excellent standards of cleanliness and top-notch customer service are enticing new customers and bringing back the regulars time and time again.

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Palace weddings are here to stay

WORRIED brides looking to book their wedding at a “fairytale” venue in Maidstone have been assured the historic building will remain available.

There had been fears that when the county council’s lease on the Archbishop’s Palace, owned by Maidstone Borough Council, ended in 2020, civil weddings would be relocated, along with the coroner’s service.

While requests will shift to Canterbury House at the long-awaited Maidstone East regeneration site, KCC has confirmed that the register office will stay.

Shirley Sheridan, service manager for KCC Registration, said: “The plans for the coroner’s service to vacate Archbishop’s Palace have no impact on the use of the building as the County Register Office, so all of these services including weddings and citizenships will continue. It is an impressive building at the heart of Maidstone, parts of which date back to the 14th century, and is one of our most popular venues for marriage ceremonies.”

It does, however, suggest further delay for the Maidstone East regeneration project by KCC, Maidstone Council and Network Rail, if tenants are to move back in to more vacant buildings on the site and comes weeks after a temporary car park was created on the Sandling Road improvement site. It is understood that four property firms are in the running to submit tenders for the proposed regeneration project by September.

KCC says it will be asked to produce a viable masterplan that reflects future trends for retail, housing and commercial premises on challenging town centre sites as this. Network Rail also plans to demolish the derelict pub in St Faiths Street, known as The Vic, to extend its ticket office, alongside other improvements.

Cyclist injured in fall from bike

A MAN was seriously injured after falling from his bike near Maidstone. The incident happened in Smiths Hill, West Farleigh, at about 6.10pm on August 14 and the man was flown to a London hospital by air ambulance.

A police spokesman said: “The 72-year-old, who was riding a black racing bike, fell onto the road and suffered severe injuries. He was taken to hospital where he remains in a serious condition.”

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Vicars join the fun at Picnic

THOUSANDS flocked to the fifth Vicar’s Picnic music festival at Yalding, which kicked off with its own “rocking rev” – a set from the village priest Paul Kish and his band the Devil’s Cut Combo.

As the double bass-playing cleric took to the stage, the crowd parted to reveal heavenly blue skies – the start to two days of toe-tapping sounds, fabulous food, arts, crafts and comedy plus activities to keep the children amused.

Friday’s headline act was from The Jam, with Bruce Foxton, who was as energetic as the days when he and Paul Weller packed stadiums in the 1970s and ’80s.

On Saturday night, headliners The Fratellis got everyone dancing. Among the crowd enjoying the music was soap star Melanie Hill (Coronation Street’s Cathy Matthews), who was visiting friends in Yalding.

This year was the artist’s quarter, where festival launch Matt Chamberlain headed an impressive list of local poets who performed throughout the weekend.

For the scores of campers, the fun continued in the Secret Dunes, with FNUK, Sab Fontaine, Darren Jay and a host of other DJs.

The festival, organised by volunteers, attracted more than 3,200 people to the sleepy Kentish village for a weekend of family fun.

Festival co-founder Dave King said: “Who would have thought that something which started with a group of friends in a neighbour’s garden would now be a multi-quarter, where festival launch Matt Chamberlain headed an impressive list of local poets who performed throughout the weekend. For the scores of campers, the fun continued in the Secret Dunes, with FNUK, Sab Fontaine, Darren Jay and a host of other DJs. The festival, organised by volunteers, attracted more than 3,200 people to the sleepy Kentish village for a weekend of family fun. Festival co-founder Dave King said: “Who would have thought that something which started with a group of friends in a neighbour’s garden would now be a multi-award-nominated event, attracting crowds of thousands?

“We’re proud to say that the Vicar’s Picnic is now firmly established on the festival scene. It’s quite remarkable what can be achieved when a team pulls together – but it wouldn’t have been possible without the hard work of a committed bunch of dedicated villagers and supporters.”

This year’s event was supporting Dandelion Time, the Maidstone-based charity which works with vulnerable children.

Barming Bull in make-over

THE Bull at Barming has reopened after a £425,000 refurbishment by its new owners with dozens of new jobs.

Stonegate Pub Company plans to transform and extend it as part of the pub’s long-term future with the deal between Stonegate and property owners Enterprise Inns the major renovation which was due for completion by August 10.

Creating 30 new jobs, the firm says its commitment guarantees the pub’s long-term future with the deal between Stonegate and property owners Enterprise Inns the perfect solution for the venue.

The pub will focus on premium products including craft and cask beer, a spirit emporium and fine wines alongside seasonal, quality food with daily offers. The garden is also set for a makeover.

Simon Longbottom, Chief Executive for Stonegate Pub Company said: “The acquisition of The Bull adds another gem of a pub to our estate.

“We are hugely excited about the development of this pub and are confident the transformation will be a hit with locals and visitors alike.”

School hits library target

WATERINGBURY CE Primary School is celebrating after raising the £15,000 needed to replace its library roof and windows less than 12 months after launching a major capital fundraising appeal.

The school in Bow Road successfully bid for £81,000 funding from the Diocese of Rochester and the rest of the money was raised by the school community, village organisations and local businesses. The cheque for £2,500 was handed over by the Friends of Wateringbury Primary School from fundraising events organised by parents.

Plans are now being drawn up for the project, which will also include better heating ventilation, lights and furniture. It is hoped work can start before Christmas.

Headteacher Chrissy Crawford-Usher said: “We are thrilled to have reached our target to quickly. Local businesses have supported us with substantial donations and even the children have helped with fundraising initiatives. It’s been a real community effort. This project will ensure the library continues to inspire children to love reading.”

Perfume thief spared prison

A WOMAN who shoplifted beauty and electrical items worth more than £500 from The Mall in Maidstone and drove while disqualified has been spared a prison sentence.

Amie Rose-Marie Frankham (28), was sentenced on July 5, 2017, at Mid Kent Magistrates’ Court.

She pleaded guilty to driving while disqualified, driving without insurance and shoplifting.

On August 30, 2016, Frankham, of Eccleston Court, Maidstone, stole perfume, beauty items and electrical items valued at £507.42 from a shop in The Mall, Maidstone.

On March 16, 2017, she drove a Ford Fiesta in Woodside Road, Maidstone, while disqualified and with no insurance. Magistrates sentenced her to 60 days in prison, suspended for 12 months, and ordered her to carry out 100 hours of unpaid work in the next 12 months. She must also pay a £210 fine, £170 costs and a £145 victim surcharge.
Crack leads to closure of bridge after impact

TESTON Bridge near Maidstone has been shut, amid fears that a large section is about to crumble and fall into the River Medway.

Kent Highways officials have closed the crossing after a vehicle hit one of the main sections.

Teston Lane is now likely to be out of commission until Sunday, September 3, with a number of diversions in place.

Motorists will be able to go via Tonbridge Road, Bow Road, Maidstone Road, Hampstead Lane, Benover Road, High Street, Yalding Hill and onto Lower Road.

The bridge is a busy crossing over the Medway from Coxheath and into Tunbridge Wells and Maidstone, and the closure is likely to have major consequences for road users.

Sailing group, the River Medway Boaters, was among the first to draw attention to the closure. Members Tweeted: “The river is being closed to all boats this afternoon due to a large section of the bridge in danger of falling into the river.”

News of the closure sparked an immediate response on social media. Maureen McNamara posted on Facebook: “How did that happen? At Yalding, the lorries frequently hit the bridge and it has to be rebuilt, but I have never heard of this one being clunked, was it an impact that caused it?”

Gareth Ve wrote: “I don’t know why the local council don’t put six feet, six inch height barriers, which would stop 99% of unsuitable vehicles using it.”

Tony Lavelle said: “It has happened before. Looks like the damage is to the parapet not the supporting arch. Maybe it wasn’t repaired to a good enough standard last time.”

In September 2016, Teston Bridge was shut after it was hit by a vehicle, leaving a hole in the side of the structure.

MP’s thumbs up for caring

MAIDSTONE MP Helen Grant has welcomed a new “stay at home” service for the elderly, admitting that she would like to live in her own home for as long as possible into her old age.

Helen praised the scheme of home-call care assistants offered by Bluebird Care in Maidstone.

She said: “It’s really made me think about how I would like to be cared for in the event that I need additional support when I get older, as I would certainly want to remain in my own home for as long as possible.”

Helen made her comments after visiting Royal Air Force veteran Geoffrey Kellam.

The 88-year-old, who took part in the Berlin Airlift of 1948-9, has had the support of live-in care assistant Shawlene Chance since July.

Having lived in Maidstone for 60 years, Geoffrey wanted to stay put, even though his family grew concerned after he had several falls.

Geoffrey said: “It is reassuring for me and my family to know that someone is always here. She keeps the house clean, looks after me and I enjoy the company of having her around.”

Your Community Website

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- **Business notice board** – advice, support and networking opportunities for local businesses
  - **Business directory** – contact your favourite tradesperson and service provider wherever you are

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Drink driver’s fine and ban

A DRUNK driver from Maidstone has been given a three-year ban and £1,000 fine.

Raymond Massey was sentenced on July 4, 2017, at Medway Magistrates’ Court where he pleaded guilty to drink driving.

On April 29, 2017, the 65-year-old, of Perryfield Street, Maidstone, drove a Ford Focus in Palace Avenue, Maidstone, and gave a breath test of 46mg of alcohol in 100ml of breath. The legal limit is 35mg.

Massey was given a three-year disqualification. Disqualification can be reduced by 273 days if he completes a course approved by the secretary of state, the cost of which will not exceed £250.

Brothel boss jailed for role in sex trafficking

A MAN who trafficked women into the UK to work as prostitutes at a brothel in Maidstone has been jailed.

Maidstone Crown Court heard how 35-year-old Romans Drulia (pictured) was investigated by Kent and Essex Serious Crime Directorate after it became clear he ran brothels in Rochester, Gillingham, Chatham and Maidstone between April 2013 and October 2015.

Brothel boss Romans Drulia was jailed for sex trafficking

The court heard that Drulia worked in an organised gang, advertising jobs online as a ploy to force victims into the sex trade. He helped traffic two Lithuanian women into the UK but forced them to work as prostitutes or risk being harmed.

Their passports were seized and they were forced to pay rent on the brothel they were living in.

Drulia, of no fixed address, took a substantial cut of their earnings and held the UK before he could be arrested but was picked up trying to cross the border between Poland and Germany in February 2017.

He was sentenced to four and a half years at Maidstone Crown Court on July 31 after admitting two counts of human trafficking for sexual exploitation, six counts of controlling prostitution for gain, and four counts of managing a brothel for prostitution.

Detective Sergeant Jason Booth said Drulia was involved in a network that “cruelly and unscrupulously exploited women”.

He added: “The victims were offered hope of a new life with better prospects but instead they were forced to illegally work as prostitutes.

“Outside of their home countries, there was no one around to support these women and that was a vulnerability that Drulia exploited for financial gain.”

The victims have now returned to their families.
THE possibility of handing over the management of smaller country parks to community groups or wildlife charities is being considered by the county council.

It is just one vision of the future set out in the Kent Country Parks Strategy, which looks at how the county council will protect and manage these public assets over the next four years. Goals include increasing visitor numbers from last year’s 1.6m, as well as off-peak use, through partnerships with organisations, schools and health service providers.

It also wants to enhance the ability of country parks to pay for themselves, suggesting that some smaller sites, with few facilities, are not best placed to contribute as the square on budgets continues.

The county council currently manages nine principal sites: Teston Bridge Country Park (pictured), White Horse Wood, Thornham Manor Park, Ford Park, West Malling, Brockhill Country Park, Hythe, Grove Ferry Picnic Site, Canterbury; Trosley Country Park, Medway; Peggotty Bay Country Park; Shorne Woods; and Lullingstone Country Park, at Eynsford, with five smaller sites, including one at Blue Bell Hill.

In its strategy document, which is out for public consultation until September 11, KCC says: “Some of our sites have more potential than others to deliver a quality country parks experience, deliver health outcomes, increase visitor numbers and generate income.

“For example, some of the smaller sites don’t have a car park or basic visitor facilities such as toilets. This doesn’t reduce their local importance but we feel that they may benefit from being managed by local community organisations or wildlife charities.

“Therefore, we will consider alternative management arrangements for some of our smaller countryside sites, with any changes to management arrangements dependent on securing appropriate safeguards regarding land management standards and continued public access to these valued community assets.

“Any proposal would also be subject to public consultation.”

To comment on the document go to www.kent.gov.uk/countryside-parksstrategy, email alternative-formats@kent.gov.uk or call 03000 421553.
A MAIDSTONE hospice has appointed former deputy chief constable of Kent Police as its chairman of its board of trustees.

Jim Barker-McCardle, pictured, has been given the role at Heart of Kent Hospice, in Aylesford, where he has been a trustee since October 2016.

Mr Barker-McCardle retired from policing in 2013 after 31 years, during which he served as deputy chief constable of Kent Police, deputy chief executive and chief operating officer of the National Policing Improvement Agency and chief constable of Essex Police.

His stepfather spent time at the hospice and Mr Barker-McCardle was struck by the “caring and cheerful” atmosphere there.

He said: “Although this was some years ago, I remember thinking that Heart of Kent wasn’t what I imagined a hospice to be. It wasn’t at all like a hospital and the atmosphere was lovely, caring and really cheerful, which I know seems a strange thing to say in the circumstances.

“I feel privileged to be part of such an extraordinary and wonderful place. It is the most uplifting environment to be in and, all day, every day, extraordinary people do extraordinary things to help and treat extraordinary people.”

On being appointed as chair of trustees, he added: “It is wonderful working with and learning from a team of highly-skilled and dedicated colleagues and volunteers.

“There are major challenges ahead, not least raising the funds, year on year, to keep providing outstanding patient care. We have many supporters, but need many more, and we need everyone living in our catchment area to know more about what we do and how we are funded. I look forward to helping make that happen.”

Chief executive, Sarah Pugh said: “We are delighted that Jim has been appointed to the role. His contribution to Heart of Kent Hospice has been hugely appreciated since he joined the charity last year.

“He becomes chairman at a challenging time and I am sure that his considerable skills, experience and expertise will ensure he makes a positive impact on the charity, and I look forward to working with him.”

He takes up the position with immediate effect and will serve for a term of five years. His new role opens up a trustee position, and the Hospice welcomes applications.

Anyone wishing to be considered for the position is invited to contact annie.bubb@hokh.co.uk for further information or have an informal chat with Sarah Pugh, chief executive.

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Brian Stroud (pictured) has been with the company since the beginning and became Managing Director in 2008. Since taking over, Brian has moved the company to plush new offices that boast a modern workshop that Apple itself would be proud of.

Brian said: “We pride ourselves on a quality service, and we always have, as a result we have a very loyal customer base. With the popularity of Apple products growing rapidly in Maidstone and the surrounding area, we want to let people know that there’s no need to travel all the way to Bluewater or pay for parking at Fremlin Walk just for someone to help them with an Apple computer problem. We boast the fastest repair turnaround time in the area averaging just 48 hours compared to our nearest rival at one week.

We look after many local businesses with our popular ‘Maintenance Service Packages’ that offer 24/7 support from our on-call Apple Engineers. This ensures your entire Apple infrastructure is in safe hands, minimising down time when things go wrong.”

Brian and his team welcome any enquiries you may have and look forward to welcoming you to the MCS workshop for all your Apple needs.
Sevenoaks bridge, Tunbridge Wells and raises between £300,000 and £500,000 annually for Maidstone Hospital. MAIDSTONE Hospital League of Friends is looking for a volunteer Finance volunteer needed – to work collaboratively while allowing them to maintain their unique identities and relationships with their own patients. Clusters will offer extended hours, urgent care services, teams of nurses and allied health professionals, co-ordinated care, back office and estate efficiencies, – and support sustainable and resilient general practice.

The CCG will prioritise and consider investment in new premises for:
- existing practices where there is a substantial population need;
- new practices where merger or population growth would support a new list of more than 6,000 patients;
- The CCG must meet national NHS targets for 2019 with urgent GP care appointments available on weekdays from 8am to 8pm and Saturdays and Sundays at times to meet population needs.

Currently 54 of the 60 practices in Maidstone and West Kent offer some extended hours outside the core periods (9am-6.30pm Mondays to Fridays), with 11 offering weekend appointments on line, with immediate access to personal health records (with patient consent).

Staff on the 111 helpline will be improved, so that more patients get expert advice on apps to monitor health.

The CCG wants the urgent care system to be intuitive, helping people to make the right decisions.

**GPs’ offer of support to pool services**

By Dennis Fowle

THE key change will concern GP practices, which will be supported to “co-operate, collaborate and combine” across seven “clusters”.

Clustering practices is seen as critical to integration of out-of-hospital care – forming a bridge between services available at individual GP practices and those in local care hubs or hospital care.

The CCG says: “Strong and resilient general practice is the bedrock on which our local care plans are being built and these are essential to serve the majority of health needs.

“We will support our general practices to co-operate, collaborate and combine by encouraging practices to work together to deliver services at scale and will support practice mergers where this makes sense for the practices and population.”

The 60 West Kent practices have already formed into seven clusters covering:
- Central Maidstone (7) – population 52,506
- East Maidstone (11) – population 61,116
- Weald (15) – population 46,781
- Malling (6) – population 64,874
- These are in addition to Tonbridge, Tunbridge Wells and Sevenoaks.

The CCG says it supports greater opportunities for practices to work collaboratively while allowing them to maintain their unique identities and relationships with their own patients.

Clusters will offer extended hours, urgent care services, teams of nurses and allied health professionals, co-ordinated care, back office and estate efficiencies, – and support sustainable and resilient general practice.

The CCG will prioritise and consider investment in new premises for:
- existing practices where there is an identified population need;
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Using best technology for booking appointments on line, virtual (but secure) consultations, online assessment and diagnostic systems and advice on apps to monitor health.

**What the changes will mean**

THIS is what patients should expect from the changes, says the CCG, chaired by Dr Bob Bowes of Tunbridge Wells:
- Turned-up services for treatment and care at home after leaving hospital when medically fit – “your own bed is the best bed”.
- Health and social care professionals working on a team, with immediate access to personal health records (with patient consent).
- Using best technology for booking appointments on line, virtual (but secure) consultations, online assessment and diagnostic systems and advice on apps to monitor health.
- Timely appointments with the right professional.
- Care for you as a whole – physical and mental health.
- Regular monitoring for complex health conditions.
- More support from voluntary and charitable organisations.
- Better access to health improvement advice and services to help improve and manage own health and reduce risk of serious illness. Surveys showed patients wanted to improve their own health, particularly losing weight and taking exercise. Maintainers were: weak power, lack of time and pre-existing medical conditions.
- Quality hospital care when needed – and more care, treatment and support out of hospital.

**Community beds are staying**

WEST Kent CCG sees not only a need to retain beds in community hospitals, but plans more to absorb growth in the next 10 years.

It says: “There is strong evidence that a patient should not be assessed as urgent, we need to ensure there is an integrated approach to their care, particularly emergency medical admissions to hospital, involving hospitals, community, primary and ambulance services through joint service planning and sharing clinical information across different agencies.”

From April 2019, the NHS 111 helpline will be improved, so that more patients get expert advice on the phone, avoiding travel for appointments. Staff on the 111 service will also book both GP appointments and the new urgent treatment centres in Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells hospitals.

The CCG wants the urgent care system to be intuitive, helping people to make the right decisions.

**Finance volunteer needed**

MAIDSTONE Hospital League of Friends is looking for a volunteer with a financial background to become its new treasurer.

The role requires someone with a knowledge of PAYE and pensions, and skills using computer-based finance applications.

The League of Friends was established in 1983, has 120 volunteers and raises between £300,000 and £500,000 annually for Maidstone Hospital to buy items and equipment to benefit patients.

Anybody who would like more information about the role is asked to get in touch with Jacqui Featherstone on 01622 224781.
FEARS that services in Maidstone Hospital – notably A&E – could be seriously reduced under the evolving NHS sustainability and transformation plan have been allayed.

Dr Bob Bowes (pictured), chairman of the key fund-holding body, the GP-led NHS West Kent Clinical Commissioning Group, says there will be a “gradually-led evolution”, rather than dramatic change.

The wide-reaching plan for Kent and Medway aims to provide more care outside main hospitals. This could reduce many outpatient appointments involving travel to Maidstone or Pembury.

Kent and Medway Transformation Partnership (all local NHS organisations, KCC and Medway Council) also wants to make best use of hospital specialist staff (in short supply in many specialties) and reviews bringing services currently provided at different sites together to improve patient outcomes and staff skills.

NHS organisations must re-budget all expenditure, but this is unlikely to impact heavily on key services in Maidstone Hospital because of major reconstructions when trauma orthopaedics, women’s and children’s services were re-organised as the new Tunbridge Wells-Hospital opened.

The greatest uncertainty is location of these specialist larger stroke units between Kent’s seven acute hospitals to provide high quality 24/7 care in the first days after a stroke, with a target of two hours from stroke to clot-busting treatment one of the key priorities.

Maidstone’s unit is relatively new and performs well, though currently not against all areas it is measured. Evaluations continue and decisions are expected next summer, after public consultation.

Dr Bowes quelled fears about reducing services in Maidstone’s A&E. He said hospital A&Es were very busy now and capacity was required for an increasing and ageing population. “Maidstone has nothing to fear,” he emphasised.

Another priority is to reduce pressure on Kent hospitals currently accommodating 1,000 people not receiving hospital treatment and who could be looked after elsewhere with the right care and support.

Liaisons increase, especially with Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust, to encourage home or community care to prevent hospital admissions.

A review will be held of services in Maidstone, Tunbridge Wells, Medway and Darent Valley hospitals, with health professionals and patients helping to identify services that could be provided from a smaller number of sites to improve standards and save funds. One recent example is dermatology.

Another key aim of the plan is an integral improvement in mental health and support. Dr Bowes said there were serious financial challenges and “mone
ty tightness is now causing strain.

“We will be looking to cut back in areas we don’t consider provide value for money. People talk about NHS inflation being 4%. Our budget for growth is only 1%. This is particularly difficult after we have already made a series of significant economies in recent months.”

Watchdog praise for surgery

A SUTTON Valeo GP surgery has been rated as outstanding by health watching, the Care Quality Commission, in its latest report.

Cobtree Medical Practice, in Southborough, received an unannounced comprehensive inspection.

It was rated as outstanding in three categories for providing caring, well-led and responsive services, and as good in two sections for its safe and effective services.

The report said that all of the 39 CQC comments made were positive about the surgery, 22 used the words care or caring when talking about the staff and a third of the patients used terms such as outstanding or exceptional to describe the practice.

The CQC praised the practice for its open culture in which all safety concerns raised by staff and patients were highly valued as integral to learning and improvement.

“All opportunities for learning from internal and external incidents were maximised. The practice shared learning from safety incidents with other practices on a regular basis,” said the report.

Chief Inspector of General Practice, Paul Steve Field was impressed with how the practice worked closely with other organisations and with the local community in planning how services were provided to ensure they meet patients’ needs. For example, a child-themed fun day was held, which had doubled the child take-up of flu vaccines.

He said that the practice implemented suggestions for improvements and made changes to the way it delivered services as a consequence of feedback from patients and from the patient participation group (PPG). For example, the centre had held a public meeting about a proposed merger of practices with the support of the PPG.

The practice had good facilities and was well-equipped, while feedback from patients about their care was positive and consistently better than local and national levels. There was also continuity of care, with 95% of patients seeing their GP of choice compared to the national average of 89%.

The centre, which is run by Dr Michael Heber and Sara Bullen-Galley, with Dr Sun Long Wong, posted on its Facebook page: “We are proud to announce we have been awarded for the second time, outstanding. Thank you to all our terrific team at Cobtree and especially our PPG group who supported us on the day.”

Care hubs to ensure access to specialists

LOCAL care hubs to serve populations bigger than GP clusters will be opened to ensure that a critical mass of services, with interdependency, can be delivered on a “safe, cost-effective and sustainable basis”.

The hubs will also be used by clinicians and other professionals as required by local areas including pathways for the vulnerable (frail, mental illness, long-term conditions, dementia). One aim is to reduce outpatient patient work in hospitals.

West Kent CCG says initially it has worked with key health providers currently commissioned to define the characteristics, culture and environment and the potential range of services to be delivered from a hub.

Then it will work with a wider range of stakeholders including KCC and boroughs and district councils and the voluntary sector to identify shared opportunities between health, social care and public health.

The aim is to use where possible existing buildings easy to access by the public.
THE dying wish of a man from Coxheath has been fulfilled by his family, with the presentation of medical equipment to Maidstone Hospital.

John (Pete) Lewis (pictured, inset) spent the final 14 weeks of his life on the John Day Ward before he died last September at the age of 82.

Last week, his wife Ann and his sons Gary and Scott presented the team with three drugs trolleys used to take medication to patients.

The family say the care Mr Lewis received on John Day was “second to none” and it was his father’s wish that staff should be thanked.

Gary Lewis (53), from Coxheath, said: “Dad loved the banter with staff, we can’t thank them enough for their support, dedication and professionalism.

“John would have been delighted to know that we have been able to give something back to the staff that will help them each day and benefit patients, too.”

Neil Salmon, manager of John Day Ward, said: “We would like to say a huge thank you to John’s family present staff with the drug trolleys.

John’s family present staff with the drug trolleys was John’s dying wish

Gift to a hospital ward was John’s dying wish

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**THINNER’S A WINNER IN WORKTOPS**

Louise Milliken explains the benefits of Origina® for a stunning new look...

**Origina®** is the fancy-sounding name TREND Transformations applies to its kitchen worktop and bathroom surfaces. It’s beautiful, tough, durable and much thinner than other materials like granite, marble, engineered stone or solid synthetics, but equals or exceeds them in technical performance terms. To prove it, TREND Transformations offers an unrivalled lifetime material warranty. So, with the millionth Origina® already installed worldwide, what makes this distinctive material a winner in the kitchen and bathroom?

**LIGHTWEIGHT** – Origina® is at least two-thirds lighter than other materials, so needs less reinforcement and can be installed vertically and horizontally.

**SLIMLINE** – produced and fully-sealed only a quarter of an inch thick, it fits right on top of existing surfaces without adding depth or substance.

**TOUGHER** – the slimline profile doesn’t compromise strength and, unlike granite slab, Origina® survives the dropped bowling ball test without breaking.

**LASTING** – TREND Transformations’ Origina® retains its luxurious good looks for so long, it is guaranteed against a lifetime of wear and tear.

**EASYCARE** – unlike granite, marble and engineered stone, which need regular sealing and maintenance, Origina® just requires a wipe over with a damp cloth.

**RESISTANT** – Origina® is certificated to be highly resistant to liquids, chemicals, scratches, impact and burns and is harder than natural materials.

**GREENER** – made using a high percentage of recycled content like post-consumer glass and recovered granite and quartz, Origina® is green by design.

**AFFORDABLE** – Origina® is fitted over existing worktops and other surfaces, making it cheaper, easier and less disruptive to install, with less waste.

**VERSATILE** – fit it on top of worktops, vanities or wash stands, on floors, stairways and pool surrounds, as splashbacks, shower liners and panels.

**BEAUTIFUL** – made with Italian granite, quartz or recycled glass, it’s beautiful in black, refined in earthen tones, brilliant in white and bold in primary colours. But perhaps the biggest appeal of TREND Transformations Origina® is that it will be measured-up, made off-site and installed by our factory in Tunbridge Wells. What’s more, the expert, factory-trained fitters ensure a consistently high standard of workmanship and provide final proof that thinner’s a winner.

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Find us online at: trend-transformations.com/maidstone

Maidstone September 2017
**Scent leaves a bad smell**

ROGUE traders are selling fake or stolen perfume in Maidstone.

Kent Police and Kent County Council Trading Standards are warning shoppers not to buy from a group of men in the towns centre at lower than retail prices.

Inspector Rashedi Cumberbatch of Maidstone’s Community Support Unit, said: “If something seems too good to be true, it probably is.”

“You may be buying stolen or counterfeit goods. Buyers will often find that their purchase turns out to be poor quality and this may make the product unusable.”

Clive Phillips, ACC trading standards operations manager, said: “If you buy an item from a stranger whatever they are selling will have no traceability, so the goods could turn out to be stolen or counterfeit. In addition, you will probably be unable to contact the seller again if you have any complaints.”

“We always advise the public to purchase from a legitimate outlet. If you think you have been sold counterfeit goods, or if you suspect somebody is selling fake goods, call the Citizens Advice consumer helpline on 0345 04 05 06.

Alternatively, report it to Action Fraud online or call 0300 123 2040.

If you suspect you have been sold stolen property call Kent Police on 101.”

**Drink driver**

A MAIDSTONE man was banned from driving for 18 months after he administered ketamine to charge a vehicle and being drunk and disorderly.

Tomasz Franczak (38) was sentenced at Maidstone Magistrates Court on August 9.

Magistrates heard that Franczak, of Dover Street, was drunk and disorderly in Angel Lane, Tonbridge. He was also in charge of a Minda zeta and gave a breath test of 10mg of alcohol in 100ml of breath. The legal limit is 80mg.

He must carry out 150 hours of unpaid work and must pay £85 costs and an £85 victim surcharge.

Commenting on the move to create specialist roles, Superintendent Tim Cook, head of Kent Police’s Strategic Partnerships Department, said: “The PCSO role is critical to delivering a first class service to our communities, particularly for the most vulnerable. To further protect the people across Kent, from September 12, PCSOs will become dedicated to supporting these groups.

“Work is on-going to recruit PCSOs into any vacant roles at the earliest opportunity and where the areas covered by PCSOs after as a result of the changes, our communities and partner agencies will be informed accordingly.”

Cllr Richard Ash, a former borough representative with Maidstone council is among a growing number of parish councillors concerned about “no shows” by PCSOs at their meetings.

He told fellow parish councillors in Bearded that the Kent Association of Local Councils advised him PCSOs must attend one in every three meetings. A PCSO has not attended meetings in recent months.

Superintendent Tim Cook said: “PCSOs remain at the heart of community policing and work at times of the day when they can provide the most effective service to the public.”

“PCSOS will attend community and parish council meetings whenever possible, but this will be subject to other competing operational demands.”

If “they are unable to attend, any issues can still be raised via parish council clerks, with whom the PCSO has frequent contact.”

**Battery thefts**

THREE men, including one from Maidstone, were arrested and dozens of batteries were recovered by police after stopping a vehicle on the M25 in Weavering.

Patrols halted the van on Friday, August 13, after suspecting it was overweight. A number of batteries were found inside, which have since been linked to thefts from mobile phone masts in West Kent.

Two men, a 32-year-old from Maidstone, and a 33 and 35-year-old, both from Sevenoaks, were arrested on suspicion of theft.

All three have been released on bail until Tuesday, September 8.

**A SPATE of motorcycle thefts has prompted a warning from Kent Police.**

The force is reminding bike and moped owners to park their vehicles securely after reports of thefts in the south Maidstone area.

Between 8.30pm on Sunday, August 13, and 10pm on Monday, August 14, a Honda WW 125 motorcycle was reported stolen from an address in Wellingborough Road. They are seeking leads to help solve the crime.

Police also received a report that a Yamaha WR 125X had been stolen by two people from a front garden in Highcroft Green on 2.45am on Monday, August 14. It was later found burned out in Park Wood Walk. Two teenagers were also reported to have stolen a Honda CB125F motorcycle from Cumberland Avenue at 4.45am on Monday, August 14. They were described as wearing a hooded top and a black jacket. The motorcycle was abandoned nearby.

A Sinnis Harrier moped was also reportedly stolen from a driveway in Quarry Road between 2am and 2.15am.

Inspector Rachael Cumberland, of Maidstone Police’s community support unit, said: “I would urge motorcycle and moped owners who cannot park in a garage or other building to secure their motorbikes and moped to an anchor point in the ground.”

Anyone who can help can call Kent Police on 0345 40 40 40, quoting reference Y725820/17, or Kent Criminalstoppers on 0800 555 111.

**Discover new board games**

PCSOs are invited to ditch their Smartphones for “an evening with the experts” to rediscover the latest coffee table treasures at Maidstone Museum.

The Games Night on Thursday, August 31, follows the success of the museum’s first games event in July.

Leading board game publishers Thames and Kosmos are sponsoring the evening, which ties in with the Museum’s Game Plan: Board Games exhibition, which runs until October 1.

Joanna Drage, from the sponsors, says the first games night at the museum attracted a wide audience: “The players varied from grandparents looking for games to play with their grandchildren to millennials mixing with middle-aged parents.”

The museum will be open from 6-9pm. The event is for over 18s only. Tickets are £5 per person and can be booked online at www.maidstone-museum.org, or simply turn up.

**PCSO changes leave cover ‘spread thinly’**

THE latest changes to Maidstone’s Police Community Support Officer network has sparked fears for a community presence in the future.

The introduction of specialist PCSOs, with dedicated responsibility for domestic abuse, vulnerable adults, youth engagement and the exploitation of missing children is understood to have spread the service even more thinly.

An email from Kent Police to parish councillors, who have long expressed concerns about frequent staff changes and the infrequency of officers attending their meetings, read: “The changes to the policing model means Kent Police has gained some specialist PCSO roles and these changes do leave a temporary shortfall of PCSOs to manage the district demand.”

It is a service that has faced increasing pressure since the introduction of the uniformed civilian model in 2002. In 2010, 16,814 PCSOs were employed in England and Wales, but three years later, in light of budget cuts, this had slipped to 15,820 across a division the district demand.”

Work is on-going to recruit PCSOs into any vacant roles at the earliest opportunity and where the areas covered by PCSOs after as a result of the changes, our communities and partner agencies will be informed accordingly.

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**News**

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**Owners warned after thefts of motorbikes**

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Award Winning Bearsted salon celebrates its 10th Year

SO Hairdressing of Bearsted is celebrating its 10th birthday and there is certainly plenty for the award-winning salon to celebrate.

Since it launched in 2007, the salon has continued to grow and expand and has marked its special anniversary year with a complete refurbishment this spring. The bespoke salon has been given a bright, fresh and modern look, with a welcoming and comfortable feel.

Not only has the popular salon gone from strength to strength in the past 10 years, it has also scooped a whole host of accolades and titles, including UK Creative Colourist, and a finalist for the L’Oreal Colour Trophy, winning the Southern Region final.

With a team of top-notch stylists, So Hairdressing has built an enviable reputation for its first-class friendly service and creativity by providing a VIP treatment for every client.

Despite its success, it continues to strive for excellence; the salon continues to develop and keeps pace with the demands of its ever-growing client base. The talented team continues to expand and the salon is currently investing in providing ongoing education for all its staff to ensure they are up to date with all the current trends, styles and techniques, as well as state-of-the-art products.

The salon now offers more services than ever, including barbering with a range of men’s bespoke barbering services available, including shaving.

Also among the new services on offer to give that all-important “red carpet” look are Easilocks hair extensions, as used by the celebrities, as well as an amazing new product range from America, R&Co, which is also a favourite with the VIPs. And it doesn’t stop there – for ultra-glossy hair, the new Keratin straightening system is also available.

So Hairdressing continues to give a great education to future hairdressers and the next 12 months will see the launch of a new in-house training academy.

As it celebrates 10 years at the top, So Hairdressing is poised for even more success in providing its customers with world-class hair treatment.

To experience So Hairdressing for yourself call today on 01622 739001.
LEARNING FOR LIFE

National Service for career-minded teenagers

FANCY giving your CV a Bear Grylls boost? Well, signing up to the National Citizen Service could be just the thing. It provides a unique opportunity for 16 and 17 year olds to have fun building their work and social skills with fellow teenagers through activities such as abseiling, water rafting, kayaking and community projects.

The National Citizen Service has been running since 2011 and is backed by the Government, which means it costs participants just £50 or less to take part, with bursaries available on a case-by-case basis and extra support for young people with additional needs.

Jessica Roberts attended the NCS in Sittingbourne and used her musical talents to stage a gig for pioneering stem cell treatment in America for a neighbour with cystic fibrosis.

She said: “I found the course a huge boost to my self-confidence and a great way to meet people of my own age… the community project was a real opportunity to bring something of yourself to the party.”

The NCS takes place outside term-time, with teens able to sign up for the part-residential experience either in the spring, summer or autumn. Each programme includes experiences that focus on personal and social development, including leadership, teamwork and communication skills. Teens spend a week at an outward bound facility, and a second week living away from home, typically at local university halls of residence, learning how to be self-sufficient.

THE NCS programme was designed and piloted in 2009 by social integration charity The Challenge, which remains the largest provider of the programme. It was formally announced in 2010 by then Prime Minister David Cameron as part of the Big Society initiative and was launched officially in 2011.

When the scheme was launched critics expected it to be an unpopular and unsuccessful non-military version of national service. Subsequently, however, it achieved cross-party support at Westminster. After the 2015 election, the programme was continued under the Conservative government. In October 2016, Mr Cameron, who had resigned as Prime Minister, became chairman of the NCS Trust’s patrons’ board. In the 2016 Queen’s Speech, it was announced that the scheme would be made permanent through a National Citizen Service Bill.

A spokesman for the scheme said: “Not only do participants have the chance to give something back to their community, but the NCS also helps with job, college and university applications – NCS is now recognised by UCAS and so taking part is a sought after addition to any CV.”

To find out more information about NCS or to sign up to NCS visit NCShyde.co.uk or call 08001979010. Like it on Facebook.com/ncs, follow it on Twitter #ncs or subscribe to NCShyde channel on YouTube.

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- Thursday morning tours from 8th September
Book a place on 01622 752490

24 Maidstone September 2017
LEARNING FOR LIFE

Jane Holland-Roe, from Kent County Council’s Community Learning & Skills programme, bangs the drums for apprenticeships....

APPRENTICESHIP programmes have evolved since the early days of craft-based training and are no longer vocational training programmes just for boys and young men.

Many occupations now offer a variety of modern apprenticeship programmes and they are a great way to enter into a number of well-paid occupations.

They no longer confine themselves to the traditional areas of manufacturing and construction but also in health care, transportation, ICT, Law, engineering media and business administration, as well as numerous others.

In contrast to historical apprenticeships, modern programmes are open to both men and women and the variety of occupations has something to suit everyone.

Modern apprenticeship programmes provide both on-the-job training and classroom instruction, allowing apprentices to earn wages while learning a professional trade or occupational skill.

Apprentices usually start by taking on simple tasks and progress to more complex tasks as time goes on.

At the end of the programme, the apprentice receives a certificate of completion and can achieve full-time employment.

In general, modern apprenticeships can take between one and four years to complete, depending on the level of the programme, the apprentice’s ability and the industry sector.

For example, an Intermediate level 2 apprenticeship usually takes around 12 to 18 months and an advanced level 3 apprenticeship around 24 months.

On completion, you can continue to train for an advanced, higher, or degree level apprenticeship, or a related vocational qualification. The variety of apprenticeships available in Kent alone is testament to the success of the current programme with many apprentices being given full-time employment after completing the training.

CASE STUDY

Hayley Forsdyke, who works in a business administration for the NHS Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) in Ashford started her apprenticeship in January.

Hayley’s reasons for applying for the apprenticeship with CCG were that she had always been interested in working for the NHS, but it meant she could learn about the organisation, whilst building skills and knowledge in her own role.

She said: “Apprenticeships are definitely worth it, it’s a great way to learn and work at the same time.”

CASE STUDY

James was eager to find an apprenticeship as he was aware of the learning opportunities that it brings, more so than a full-time job. He was originally interested in finding a mechanics apprenticeship, but his keen interest in the military attracted him to the role he saw advertised at the Maidstone army supplies shop, Lower Stone Street, Semma4.

James had helped out there as part of a course a year earlier so was already familiar with the organisation and staff.

In a short time, say his employers, he had become confident and his product knowledge “immense”.

He hopes to stay on once his apprenticeship has finished.

He added: “My friend was recently thinking about applying for an Apprenticeship and I told him to go for it.”

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Open Evening 2017
Wednesday 27th September
4.30pm - 8.00pm

At New Line Learning Academy, in Maidstone, we pride ourselves on providing a supportive and positive environment that inspires our students to achieve success. We encourage academic success while pursuing individual goals and ambitions. You are warmly invited to take a closer look at the broad curriculum and inspiring facilities we have to offer at one of our upcoming open events. Our Open Evening takes place on Wednesday 27th September and our open mornings, which are by appointment only, are between Monday 25th September and Friday 29th September. We look forward to welcoming you.

www.newlinelearning.com
Part of Future Schools Trust

Cornwallis Academy
Ambitions for All

Open Evening 2017
Wednesday 20th September
5.30pm - 7.30pm

At Cornwallis Academy, in Maidstone, we have a clear commitment to the highest of expectations and achievement for all, with an excellent team of committed staff and outstanding facilities. We invite you to experience the broad and engaging education we have to offer at our Open Evening on Wednesday 20th September. We also look forward to welcoming you on one of our open morning tours, which are by appointment only, on September 26th, 27th and 28th, between 8.45am and 10.30am.

www.cornwallisacademy.com
Part of Future Schools Trust

Maidstone September 2017 25
Heart of Kent Hospice is encouraging people to save up their old £1 coins to donate to the charity before the familiar round pound ceases to be legal currency from 15 October 2017.

The campaign, coined Coins for Care, is asking members of the public to dig out their piggy banks and loose change jars, search their wallets and purses, and scour the backs of their sofas to help support local people with terminal illnesses.

According to the Treasury, people have already returned 800 million of the old £1 coins and by mid-July there were more new coins in circulation than old ones. Which is why Heart of Kent Hospice is encouraging people to start collecting now.

According to Sarah Pugh, Chief Executive at Heart of Kent Hospice: “£4 in every £5 we spend on caring for people with terminal illnesses comes from the generosity of our local community. We depend on them every bit as much as they do on us, that’s why we hope the public will get behind the Hospice and make their old £1 coins really count.”

Supporters will be able to save up their pounds and donate them either through one of Heart of Kent’s 14 charity shops, at Heart of Flavour Café, in Maidstone, by bringing them into the Hospice in Aylesford, or taking them to official collectors in Fremlin Walk on 9th September.

Companies can also take part by encouraging their employees to come together to start collecting up the round pounds. Whether at home or work, supporters can visit www.hokh.org for more information and to download a collection label.
Maidstone  September 2017 27

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Maidstone  September 2017 27
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Pervert jailed for ‘appalling’ abuse

A "PREDATORY" sex offender from Maidstone responsible for the systematic abuse of three children has been sentenced to 32 years in prison.

Marty Waller, pictured, repeatedly targeted his victims between 2000 and 2012, committing offences which included rape.

Waller (35), formerly of Westmorland Road, Maidstone, was arrested on January 25, 2016, after allegations were made to Kent Police.

An investigation revealed he had also preyed upon other children.

Appearing before Maidstone Crown Court, Waller pleaded guilty to nine charges including indecent assault, indecency with a child, and sexual activity with a child.

He was sentenced on July 28 and will be subject to a sexual harm prevention order and also placed on the sex offenders' register indefinitely.

Detective Constable Emma Connor, of Kent Police's Public Protection Unit, said: "Waller is a predatory paedophile, who subjected young children to horrific appalling abuse and used their fear to ensure they complied with his demands."

"I would like to thank the victims, who have been incredibly brave to come forward and give evidence against Waller. Sadly, they will no doubt carry the mental scars of his crimes with them for a long time but I hope they will be able to live their lives under it."

"Successful convictions such as this are just one of the reasons we urge anyone who has been a victim of sexual abuse to contact the police. It is never too late to report any sexual offence and we will always treat any information with the utmost confidence."

Police nab drivers on drink or drugs

KENT Police have nabbed more than 170 drivers who were under the influence of drugs or drink.

Officers arrested 171 people during a crackdown in June.

The annual campaign targets those who put themselves and others in danger by driving vehicles on roads despite being over the legal limit of alcohol or after taking controlled drugs.

The campaign coincided with the start of the summer, when there is generally an increase in traffic passing through the county.

Over the month, officers across Kent arrested a total of 142 people for either driving or being in charge of a motor vehicle in excess of the prescribed alcohol limit, and 29 for being unfit to drive through drugs.

Chief Inspector Peter Stenhouse from Kent Police's Roads Policing Unit (RPU) said: "I am pleased that our officers have been able to step up a number of irresponsible drivers from potentially causing harm on Kent's roads."

"Drivers should never get behind the wheel if they have had alcohol or are under the influence of controlled drugs as they significantly increase the chances of harming themselves and others. Getting a drink or drug driving conviction could cost you your driving licence, and perhaps even your job, but worse still you could be responsible for causing someone serious injury or death."

"There is no safe amount of alcohol to have in your system when driving, so if you plan to have an alcoholic drink you should make alternative arrangements to get home."

Kent County Council Road Safety Team Leader Vickery Harvey said: "Just one drink can increase the chances of having a crash, sometimes with tragic consequences for you, anyone you hit and their families. Likewise with drugs – it's not just illegal but it will impair your driving ability.

"Both substances make it difficult to concentrate, to react in an emergency, to perceive accurately what's going on around you and to judge properly the best course of action to avoid disaster. The message is simple - if you're drinking, don't drink and don't take drugs."

The summer drink and drug driving campaign ran from throughout the month of June.

Ironbutt Stephen does the double in Spain

Local bands to join star acts

Talented performers already signed up for the two-day family event at Kent Life Heritage Farm, near Maidstone, include bands who have supported the likes of Reef, Reverend and The Makers and The Fratellis.

The artists complement the headline acts already announced, with Starsailor, Toploader and Newton Faulkner all taking to the main stage on September 9 and 10.

"Successful trips, the challenge some-
The contract with Maidstone’s litter wardens will cease at the end of this month. It follows a meeting with Kingdom Security, a company recently featured in a Panorama investigation into bonus payments that saw wardens in the town briefly suspended before being allowed to return to work. Maidstone Borough Council – which hired the private firm – was blasted by critics after Downs Mail revealed Kingdom derived most of its cash by targeting smokers in Maidstone. The statement read: “Maidstone Borough Council and Kingdom Security have come to a mutual decision not to extend the current contract. Kingdom Security has been providing enforcement services in relation to littering in the borough since 2011 but this will cease at the end of this month (August).” The decision was made following a meeting held on August 1. The council’s head of environment and public realm, Jennifer Shepherd, said: “When our contract began with Kingdom our focus was very much on targeting littering and irresponsible dog ownership. This has been very successful at reducing littering and encouraging people to use litter bins and act responsibly. Our focus has to change and adapt to new challenges we are seeing in the borough. Now the contract with Kingdom is coming to an end, we will work to ensure we continue with our enforcement service in a way which is flexible but meets the needs of local residents. All options will be explored and that includes tendering for a new enforcement contract or bringing the service in-house.” Kingdom’s methods came under close scrutiny in the BBC investigation and led to furious criticism from locals who questioned MBC’s moral responsibility for taking 50% of the fine cash. Warden work to return in-house MAIDSTONE Borough Council will in future be using its own wardens to issue litter fines as well as tackling antisocial behaviour, street drinking, begging, dog-fouling. They will operate the MBC Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) initiative and will not receive performance bonuses. A spokesman said: “We’re looking at new ways of enforcement and the specific areas they will cover following the cessation of the Kingdom contract. The PSPO will operate in conjunction with the police. “In-house officers will continue to enforce and issue FPNs for any litter and dog fouling breaches until such time a decision is reached in terms of long term enforcement. Revenue will continue to be generated and reinvested into the cleansing service. The date is to be confirmed but we anticipate we will see enforcement of the PSPO from September 2017. They will continue with litter and dog fouling enforcement duties from August 31 until a final decision on future enforcement. “The team of in-house officers is employed directly by MBC and will not be part of any performance related payment schemes.”

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**Drink driver's two-year ban**

A DRUNK who drove his Vauxhall Corsa while more than three times the legal alcohol limit for driving has been banned from the roads for two years.

Thomas Matthews was sentenced at West Kent Magistrates’ Court on August 1, 2017, when he pleaded guilty to drink-driving.

On June 21 this year, the 34-year-old of Belmont Close, Maidstone, drove a Vauxhall Corsa in Belmore Road, Maidstone, and gave a breath test of 116mg of alcohol in 100ml of breath. The legal limit is 35mg.

Magistrates banned Matthews from driving for 24 months and ordered him to carry out 200 hours of unpaid work in the next 12 months. He must also pay £85 costs and a £5 victim surcharge.

Disqualification can be reduced by 14 days if he satisfactorily completes a course approved by the secretary of state.

**Slavery case**

A UK and overseas investigation will see three stand trial in Lithuania over “slave labour” allegations relating to a company in Maidstone.

It follows an investigation by Lithuanian authorities, supported by Kent Police, into the alleged trafficking and exploitation of men who worked as chicken-catchers for a Kent-based company.

Kent Police carried out a warrant at a property in Maidstone in October 2012 in partnership with the Gangmasters Licensing Authority and UK Human Trafficking Centre (UKHTC) and identified more than 40 men as potential victims.

A man and woman from the Maidstone area, both aged in their 50s, who ran the business are now to stand trial, along with a 53-year-old Lithuanian man.

A date for the trial at Klaipeda Regional Court has still to be set.

**Beering guilty**

A MAIDSTONE man who stole almost £1,000 from his employers has been spared prison.

Peter Mark Beering was sentenced on August 3, 2017, at Medway Magistrates’ Court where he admitted seven counts of shoplifting from stores in East Malling, West Malling, Ditton, Borough Green and Maidstone.

A SERIAL shoplifter who targeted businesses in and around Maidstone has been sent to prison.

Daniel Elliott James Cook (20) was sentenced on August 3, 2017, at Medway Magistrates’ Court where he admitted seven counts of shoplifting from stores in East Malling, West Malling, Ditton, Borough Green and Maidstone.

Magistrates sentenced Cook to 196 days in prison. He must also pay £594 compensation.

**Care home plan approved**

PERMISSION has been given for work to start on another £70m health care development on a large commercial site off the M20 in Maidstone.

The borough council has approved details for a 75-bed care home, with facilities for 75 beds, patients leaving hospital but not ready to return home.

The 4,200m building (see artist’s impression above) will form the latest part of the £90m development jigsaw on the Kent Medical Campus, that has already received outline approval from Maidstone Council.

Access to the building, to the right of the main site, will be via a new 45.5m road called Golds Pond Way, which was opened by the Mayor of Maidstone on August 9.

This will also serve the new £85m Gypset Health Care development, currently taking shape, and links to the New Cut Road roundabout.

**Shoplifter jailed by magistrates**

A SERIAL shoplifter who targeted businesses in and around Maidstone has been sent to prison.

**If you are looking for something to get the kids out and about in the school holidays and in the autumn, look no further than Maidstone.**

**Free sport sessions for fans of football, boxing, American football, archery, cricket and gymnastics are on offer for boys and girls aged five to 18 in Tovil, Sheppway, Park Wood, and Marden.**

Sessions are provided free of charge thanks to Kent Sport, which is backed by the county council, and Gilding Vision (the community arm of Maidstone housing association Gilding Homes).

Coaches and equipment come courtesy of Kent Community Cricket, Charlton Athletic Community Trust, Olympus Boxing, Pegasus Gymnastics Club and American Football Development Ltd.

This is the second year the Get Active initiative has been available, with venues including Tovil Community Centre in Bannister Close, Sheppway Recreation Ground, Cumberland Avenue, Heather House, Bicknor Road, Pegasus Gymnastics Club, Farleigh Hill, and Park Wood Recreation Ground.

Sessions run from now until October 20 at venues in Maidstone and over the summer holidays at The Cockpit, Cranham Square and the football ground, in Patten Lane, Marden.

Nicola File, sports projects officer for Kent Sport, said the programme was now in its second year and was likely to increase its participant numbers this year on 2016.

She added: “The scheme is essentially there to provide more local opportunities for local young people with the activities we have to offer.”

“Last year, we had 504 young people take part in the project and its activities and this year we reckon we are on course to match, if not better, those numbers. All the activities are completely free.”

For more on what’s available, visit: www.facebook.com/CatActivesGold or call 07872 417912.

**Libraries setting book challenge**

CHILDREN are invited to solve a mystery by turning the pages of a confidential crime file this summer at Kent’s libraries.

It is all part of the Summer Reading Challenge, for children aged four to 11, promoted by the national Reading Agency.

Youngsters who visit a Kent library will receive a folder, which introduces the mystery and the Animal Agents trying to solve it.

The challenge runs until September 16, with the answers to be claimed by reading half-a-dozen books, for which your child receives a sticker, for their Animal Agents folder, to solve the mystery.

Successful library detectives receive a certificate and a medal (while stocks last). Other Animal Agents’ themed incentives and activities will be running at Kent libraries across the summer.

Lindsay Prestage, from KCC’s libraries, said: “The summer reading challenge gets three-quarters-of-a-million children into libraries, nearly 18,000 last year from Kent, and we hope to beat that.”

Details at www.animalagents.org.uk.

**Keep children busy at summer activities**

**Care home plan approved**

**Shoppin...**
Call for the SPECIALISTS

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Call for the SPECIALISTS
SUPPORT for former soldiers and reservists in Kent is among the best in the country – earning the county council an award from the Ministry of Defence (MOD).

The Employers' Recognition Silver Award comes just six months after Kent County Council (KCC) earned the MOD’s bronze award for its efforts to meet the specific needs of ex-service personnel.

KCC’s Armed Forces Champion is county councillor Richard Long, who is a reservist himself. He says he is delighted by the recognition, adding: “We are one of the largest employers in Kent and a very military friendly employer, strongly supporting the employment of service leavers and veterans, with plans to develop further positive recruitment support to service spouses and partners.”

Kent County Council signed the Kent Armed Forces Community Covenant in 2011 and offers 150 days paid leave to its reservist staff. It also works with Royal British Legion industries to employ disabled military personnel and gives help with school admissions, employment, health and housing.

Mr Long said: “Kent has not just signed the covenant but has actively sought and found ways to make it a reality in Kent.”

Canon Peter Brunnvalo, KCC’s Armed Forces Champion Richard Long (third right) with KCC chairman David Brazier (centre) and guests at a celebration event for reservists and their families. The ceremony was followed by a free lunch at the Sea Cadet Centre in Sittingbourne.

Kent’s award for helping forces

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Obituaries

Henry Beerling
HENRY Beerling (99) lived in Loose from 1941 until this year. He worked in the local area as a sales representative for Brooke Bond Oxo and in the motor industry moving on to managing importers, a specialist coffee business located in Market Buildings, Maidstone.
He finished his working life working in the wine department at Waitrose in Allington. Henry was born in Fulham, London and lived in that area and in Wimbledon before moving to Loose. With his wife of 52 years, Sylvia, he brought up his daughters Linda and Wendy.
Daughter Wendy said: “When my father moved locally he was able to continue working for Brooke Bond Oxo which moved him to local territory in his sales work and he covered the area all around Maidstone. His previous employment had included time in the RAF and as a London bus driver. My father could always see the lighter side of life and loved talking to people and having a joke. He and my mother took up ballroom dancing in their 50s and bowling after my father retired. He played at Clare Park on the Tonbridge Road and played short mat bowls in Park Wood. He was also a keen gardener and enjoyed a loving friendship with her until the end of his life.”
In his younger days, Henry had been an active supporter of Fulham FC and continued as an armchair fan to the end of his life. He played at Clare Park on the Tonbridge Road and played short mat bowls in Park Wood. He was also a keen gardener and enjoyed a loving friendship with her until the end of his life. He leaves his daughters, grandchildren Oliver, Jay and Craig. His eulogy noted he “considered himself a lucky man to be married to the love of his life for over 70 years.”
Evelyn Edwards
THE death has been announced of former Coleshill shop manageress Evelyn Edwards (68). Born in Sittingbourne as Evelyn Austin, she marries Trevor Edwards and was mother to Gemma and Gary. Evelyn lived and worked in Coleshill from 1998 to 2007, managing The Paper Shop on Heath Road. She lived above the shop, which is now the home of Angels Funeral Directors. After leaving the shop, Evelyn returned to Sittingbourne. Amongst the tributes paid to Evelyn, her husband has noted her kind and caring nature. Evelyn leaves her husband, children and grandchildren Tea, Adam and Ramusan.
Eugenie “Jenny” Marsh
THE death has been announced of Eugenie “Jenny” Marsh (68) formerly of Fairfield Close, Maidstone. Jenny who died at the Alngoing Way Nursing Home leaves a daughter, eight grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.
Doug Cope
THE death has been announced of Doug Cope (68) who died in his sleep at home. His eulogy noted he “considered himself a lucky man to be married to the love of his life for over 50 years.”
David Woolfries
DAVID Woolfries (77), of Union Street, was known locally for the five years he spent fighting for compensation from Maidstone Borough Council after his step-daughter, Julia Kingsley, slipped and fractured her arm after tripping at a bus stop on King Street, Maidstone. The event occurred after changes to the kerbs and road lay-out in the area and David Woolfries’ claims about the lack of safety in the materials used and the re-design of the area were at the centre of arguments.
David took up the case because Julia has profound learning difficulties. During the time he spent campaigning and fighting for compensation, there were significant changes, including the painting of yellow lines and the replacement of a granite lay-by with asphalt.
David worked as a draughtsman and was married to Julia’s mother, Joanne. He died suddenly, shortly after giving evidence in the case against Maidstone Borough Council and before a verdict was returned. His work in the case is likely to be taken over by a friend.
Tony Law
THE funeral of Tony Law (64) of Chart Hill Road, Chart Sutton, made local headlines when he was carried on his final journey in the bucket of a JCB digger.
Tony had planned the event himself after being diagnosed with stomach cancer and worked out the details with his son, Roger. Tony’s passion for large machinery led him to spend his working life from the age of 15 working in plant and he had been surrounded by the same trappings that made his funeral such a unique event.
Carried into Vinters Park crematorium in the bucket of a machine lent by Diggerland in Medway, Tony’s coffin was adorned by friends wearing hi-vis jackets bearing the words “Tony Law’s Last Ride.”
Tony, whose wife Barb died 10 years ago, leaves two children, seven step-children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.
John Gower QC
JOHN Gower QC (91) sat at Maidstone Crown Court and was known for his compassion and humanity.
After a career in the Royal Signals, he was called to the bar in 1948 and served as a QC from 1967, starting his work as a circuit judge in 1972.
After ten years in East Sussex, John worked locally and sat as a deputy judge for three years after 21 years as a judge. He became known for a distinctive opening remark when passing sentence: “Now is the time for you to be punished.”
His son Peter sits as a judge in Croydon.
Doug Taylor
THE death has been announced of Doug Taylor (72) of Loose. Doug was born and brought up in Maidstone and moved to Loose in his teens.
After working as a watchmaker for Norman Carter’s on Week Street, Doug worked in telecommunications and civil engineering for the CPO (later British Telecom). He oversaw the development of their infrastructure throughout the area.
Doug was married to Pauline for 50 years and was father to Mark and Jade. Mark said: “Dad had a great deal of enjoyment from the many interests in his life and was certainly one of life’s doers. He had a life-long involvement with the Loose Swiss Scouts, which he joined as a boy and was still fundraising for them to the end of his life.”
“He had an allotment in Loose and loved spending time there, especially the social side of being an allotment holder. Throughout his life Dad combined his practical skill with a natural artistic ability, he was always making and finding things and was a prolific artist. “We’ve had contact with people from all parts of his life and indeed there have been many tributes paid online.”
In one tribute paid on the site, former colleague Gary Fincham said: “Great guy, it was a pleasure to know you.”
Doug leaves his wife, children and grandchildren Callum and James.
Loose

Vice-chairman Charlie Hollister was proposed, seconded and accepted as vice-chairman.

Police report The PCSO was unable to be at the meeting but sent a list of reported crimes. The deputy clerk said filming had been seen in the play area, which had been reported to the PCSO, along with the registration numbers of cars involved, by a member of the public. Criminal damage was reported to the fencing in the car park of the King George V playing field. The youths had been seen on CCTV a drives had been reported to the police. A child on crutches had been knocked over by a dog (not on a lead) on the playing field.

Sales Water An email had been received from Southern Water saying that no further works were planned. It was agreed to write to Southern Water and request a summary of work completed over the last five years.

Busbridge Road White lines had been put down in Busbridge Road and a member of the public felt that motorists would steer clear of the lines and erode his property. It was agreed to email him to say there was nothing the council could do as this had been sanctioned by Highways Services.

Rockin Robin A complainant had been received about the noise from Rockin Robin in Campfield Farm, Haute Hill. The deputy clerk had directed the park's owner back to the council’s noise enforcement. SMART There were about 25 volunteers for the Speedwatch scheme. With training and obtaining the necessary equipment it was hoped the scheme would be up and running by September.

Logo design The designer had come to the area to receive a quote but had not yet got back with any designs.

Defibrillator There was concern about having the defibrillators in the telephone box, including in a box in Heath Road. It was suggested that the council had a contribution.

Right of way The planning committee updated the parish council on information received about the state of the footpath at Walnut Tree Lane and Copper Tree Court and issues regarding concrete retaining walls and barbed wire. The path had been viewed and there were no blockages. The committee had agreed to look at permitted development rights and would decide a response by round robin.

Brooks Field There was a potential risk with barbecues being used on Brooks Field. There had also been a complaint about the broken gate and the amount of litter being left. It was agreed to erect temporary signs on the gates to state “No Barbecues” and asking visitors to take their litter home, and to look into the cost of permanent signs regarding restrictions.

Tovil

Bench It was agreed to donate £60 towards the cost of a bench for the YMCA Pre-School.

Planners A letter had been received from a resident congratulating the council on the beautiful flower displays.

Newsletter Cllr Abigail and Susan Hogg presented a draft newsletter. Advertising charges were agreed at £25, £20 and £15, depending on the size of the advertisement. Printing costs were £90. Memorial It was agreed not to erect a memorial to the man who died at Crispbrook Meadow.

Foliage It was agreed that the foliage overhanging the right of way from Newchurch Road onwards was not enough of a problem to warrant parish council action. Deanna Goman, of the Valley Conservation Society, offered to cut back the overgrowth where necessary.

AN entrance gate to the church in Week Street was damaged. A house was broken into in Cooling Close. Enquiries were ongoing.

A second Yamaha bike was taken in Wheeler Street.

A property was broken into in Milton Street and a handbag and keys were stolen. The keys were used to steal a Mini Cooper from the address.

In Salisbury Road, two men were seen breaking into a parked Ford Transit van and stealing tools. One was described as about 6ft tall, of slim build with short dark hair. They then ran off without paying. They are about 30, short with dark hair. Carl Chambers, of the Valley Conservation Society, offered to cut back the overgrowth where necessary.

In Tombridge Road, a cycle was stolen from a communal area of a property. A vehicle parked in Tombridge Road was broken into. The offender was disturbed and ran off.

A Peugeot RCZ was keyed while it was parked in a car park in Upper Stone Street. Three Peugeot cars parked in a dealership’s yard in Mill Street were vandalised, damaging paintwork, tyres and fittings.

A Ford Fiesta was keyed in a car park at Palace Avenue.

Someone broke into a building site in Melville Road. Pots were stolen when a garden was broken into in Old Loose Hill.
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On the Road
Welcome to the health revolution

I WELCOME major plans to revolutionise local health care. I see them as a new dawn of care – and I wish well to NHS and social care as they press on with this very big task.

Most of us are close to our own GPs, and they are at the forefront of changes. With an increasing and ageing population, they now face growing challenges, and budget-holding NHS West Kent Clinical Commissioning Group (led by doctors) is looking for answers without impacting on valued relationships with patients.

I was surprised to see such a strongly-worded article against the BBC and clear right-wing political bias. Just as Mr Fowle disagrees with an opinion he perceives as political bias on the BBC, I do not expect to see political bias in the local free paper. I do not expect to see such a strongly-worded article against the BBC and clear right-wing political bias.

In the greater Maidstone and Malling area, our GP practices have been grouped in four clusters and they are encouraged to work together in many ways. Ultimately, this should lead to practices opening for longer hours on more days. Most practices will continue to operate from their established premises, but I see a time when many will group in a larger building with more specialised staff offering a much wider range of services. This also helps GPs manage their working hours without overloading themselves.

There will also be care hubs serving populations larger than the GP clusters, providing services not requiring a hospital setting. More community (rather than acute) hospitals are planned. Maidstone misses out altogether currently, so there should be good news here. Your NHS 111 phone calls will be more effective too, offering expert advice and appointments with GPs and urgent treatment centres.

An important aim is to ensure the NHS provides a more patient-oriented service to patients involving health and social care in hospital, the community and our own homes.

It is also reassuring to learn from the local NHS that its current sustainability and transformation plan does not include serious changes to services in Maidstone Hospital and that our treasured and busy A&E has a secure future.

But the government is looking for efficiencies so as to tackle the huge NHS budget. I watch with interest as these promised improvements are reconciled with the local budget.

Getting the hump

As a motorist I hate speed humps and now that most distinguishing warning marks on the road have worn away locally I abhor them. They have become difficult to identify in daylight – and just about impossible at night.

Several times, I have been the driver accused by passengers as they are jolted around the car. Yet I am driving carefully, considerably and well within the speed limit.

They now become dangerous to drivers and passengers. Unless KCC improves or replaces them, they will become dangerous to drivers and passengers.

I have now become a day to cherish

I support sensible traffic calming measures. Speed humps are not one of them. They damage vehicles and my car springs need more attention than ever – and they are costly to remove.

I support sensible traffic calming measures. Speed humps are not one of them. They damage vehicles and my car springs need more attention than ever – and they are costly to remove.

Bias a personal matter

I was writing in response to Mail Marks as the Downs Mail is the August 2017 edition of the Downs Mail. It relates to the article entitled “BBC doesn’t deserve licence fee.”

I was surprised to see such a strongly-worded article against the BBC and clear right-wing political bias. Just as Mr Fowle disagrees with an opinion he perceives as political bias on the BBC, I do not expect to see political bias in the local free paper.

I thought the purpose of the Downs Mail was to inform local people of local issues, not provide political opinion. I know that the BBC has strict guidelines on providing political balance and if reporting facts is perceived to be political bias then it is a personal matter for Mr Fowle, not one for the Downs Mail.

I think Mr Fowle, as president of the Downs Mail, should remember that a licence fee-funded operation like the BBC is not a public service, licenced to conceal its bias and left-wing agenda. But this is not a public service, licenced to conceal its bias and left-wing agenda. This is not a public service, licenced to conceal its bias and left-wing agenda.

Surprisingly, the remarks were not because of the elitism, nepotism or the fact that it is run by, and for the benefit, of the BBC. No, Mr Fowle was irate because of the elitism, nepotism or the fact that it is run by, and for the benefit, of the BBC. No, Mr Fowle was irate because of the elitism, nepotism or the fact that it is run by, and for the benefit, of the BBC.

They have now become dangerous to drivers and passengers. Unless KCC improves or replaces them, they will become dangerous to drivers and passengers.

It leaves me wondering where Mr Fowle has been all these days, let alone a newspaper, but I do have to strongly agree with sentiments expressed by your columnist in the last issue of Downs Mail about the BBC.

It is not always obvious to those who control its charter that the BBC’s news output is no longer fulfilling the brief, then it ought to be up to the relevant government department to intervene.

The national news coverage is not so much skewed to being pro-Labour as how it treats the subject matter it reports.

It will get prominence on the BBC if the item is anti-Trump, anti-May, anti- Farage, anti-Brexit, anti-Tory, pro-SNP, anti-DUP, pro-EU, anti-British, pro the climate change lobby, pro-gay rights or anti-church.

Too many items, no matter how isolated, are given a negative Brexit reference or spin.

Foreign news will get precedence over domestic stories. Some bulletins are 80% international news.

I will not say if any of the above reflects my opinions or not, but I do expect the BBC’s flagship news programmes to report in a neutral, fair and balanced way.

As a motorist I hate speed humps and now that most distinguishing warning marks on the road have worn away locally I abhor them. They have become difficult to identify in daylight – and just about impossible at night.

Several times, I have been the driver accused by passengers as they are jolted around the car. Yet I am driving carefully, considerably and well within the speed limit.

They now become dangerous to drivers and passengers. Unless KCC improves or replaces them, they will become dangerous to drivers and passengers.

Keep Ramblin’

I HAVE lived an hour’s drive from it for years – and only just enjoyed a family visit (with grandchildren aged 12, 10 and 8) to the Rare Breeds Centre, Highland Farm, Woodchurch, near Tenterden.

What a wonderful day for us all – I’m not sure if all the delightful animals or staff were more enjoying the visit than we were enthralled by the butterflies and birds of prey displays. It was a day to cherish.
Facts, not opinion please

I have only just read the August edition of Downs Mail, and I wanted to thank you for mentioning the blatant bias of the BBC (Mail Marks).

Since before Brexit, they appeared to be allowing their journalists and reporters to provide their own opinion rather than the facts, and this seemed to stretch into what I consider to be almost brainwashing.

As far as Brexit is concerned, they are not able to report a full bulletin, however positive it may be, without a negative to finish. Between the BBC and Mark Carnaby (Bank of England) they have demonised the country entirely and appear desperate to talk us down to a downward spiral, when they should perhaps be lifting us up. But most of all, they should stick to reporting the facts.

I no longer have any faith in their reporting and have also turned to ITV in the hope of finding an unbiased report. I thought I was the only one who had noticed it! It’s always good to read something that fits with our own view, especially when it’s so RIGHT, so I wanted to thank you for putting my concerns so clearly and succinctly into words.

Kim West, Bearsted

Balance usually achieved

Your regular columnist Dennis Foley makes a very familiar charge of bias in the news reporting of the BBC. Yet the former chief political commentator and now Radio 4 Today programme presenter, Nick Robinson, was correspondent and current Radio 4 Today news reporting of the BBC.

I thought I was the only one who had noticed it! It’s always good to read something that fits with our own view, especially when it’s so RIGHT, so I wanted to thank you for putting my concerns so clearly and succinctly into words.

Kim West, Bearsted

Forced marriage fears

For children, the summer holidays mean fun and time with their family. But for some young people, the long break is when they are most at risk of being taken abroad and forced into a marriage.

In 2016/17, Childline provided 205 counselling sessions to girls as young as 13 about forced marriage — a 12 per cent increase from 2015/16. The same year, there were 6,099 visits to the Childline forced marriage page.

Children told counsellors they were frightened of being taken out of the country for marriage and reported emotional abuse by their parents, because they believed resisting the marriage would bring shame and disapproval on their family.

In some instances, children may have been told that they are going on holiday and do not realise that they are heading to their wedding day with a complete stranger. Once they are abroad they may find themselves isolated and find it difficult to raise the alarm and halt the marriage.

No child should be forced into marriage and we must be clear that, regardless of cultural expectations, this is a crime and an abuse of human rights.

The secret nature of forced marriage combined with feelings of loyalty to family and community can mean it is difficult to grasp the true scale of the problem.

To help break the cycle the NSPCC is urging anyone — including potential victims — to speak up, so that we can step in and stop a child being bound into something that they would never ask for.

Adults can call the NSPCC helpline, 0800 800 5000. Children can call Childline on 0800 111 so they can be given support and reassurance.

The NSPCC is urging anyone — including potential victims — to speak up, so that we can step in and stop a child being bound into something that they would never ask for.

Collin Park, NSPCC, regional head of service, London and South East

Cable work shoddy


The report is timely, as it exactly echoes our experience in Grove Green — disruption; surface finish not being level with adjoining pavement. Additionally, heavy equipment used by the contractors broke the road pavement. Additionally, heavy equipment used by the contractors broke the road surface finish to the trench deteriorating; combination with feelings of loyalty to family and community can mean it is difficult to grasp the true scale of the problem.

To help break the cycle the NSPCC is urging anyone — including potential victims — to speak up, so that we can step in and stop a child being bound into something that they would never ask for.

Adults can call the NSPCC helpline, 0800 800 5000. Children can call Childline on 0800 111 so they can be given support and reassurance.

Collin Park, NSPCC, regional head of service, London and South East

Slaughterhouse reforms

The Green Party has been calling for mandatory CCTV in slaughterhouses for decades and the UK’s membership of the EU has never prevented the introduction of the measure – France introduced it earlier this year.

So while the Government’s announcement is welcome, the pitching of the policy as a “post-Brexit reform” is cynical and opportunistic nonsense.

As for the policy itself, the devil is in the detail and we’ve yet to see any.

To help prevent the cruelst treatment of UK farm animals the Government needs, as a minimum, to ensure cameras are placed in any area of a slaughterhouse where animals are handled, killed and skinned.

The footage must also be held for a reasonable length of time and made available for independent viewing and monitoring.

At the same time, urgent steps are needed to improve and monitor on farm animal welfare standards too.

At the very least, the Government must urgently ensure existing EU safeguards are strengthened and maintained.

The House of Lords EU committee warned only last month that leaving the European Union and rushing to sign Britain up to post-Brexit “free trade at all cost” deals will pose the biggest threat to farm animal welfare in the UK.

Ultimately, it’s also worth remembering that no amount of legislation or regulation can ever make the slaughter of farm animals truly cruelty-free.

Keith England, Green Party MEP for the South East

The five editions of the Downs Mail are delivered to 90% of households in the Maidstone and Malling area, reaching over 190,000 readers every month.

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