

A Message from your County Councillor - JULY 2017

I suppose the inevitable downside to taking time off for a holiday in June as reported last month is a very packed diary in July? As well as my usual full days, I only had one evening Monday to Thursday off in July. I also had two Friday evening meetings and two half day Saturdays. Add in time to contact residents in person and by phone plus time to read Agenda papers I estimate I worked approximately 80 hours per week in July, 8 normal working weeks in 4 weeks!

Having arrived home on Sunday 2nd, on Monday 3rd I travelled via a meeting at Swale House, Sittingbourne to Birmingham for the Annual Local Government Conference. I feel as Leader it is part of my job to attend. As well as the Councils Chief Executive I always take another Councillor as part of their Personal Development Plan. This year it was Deputy Cabinet Member for Communities Nicholas Hampshire who represents Borden. Many of you will have met Nick recently as he played a major role supporting my Council election campaign and then Helen Whatley's campaign in the General Election. The LGA Conference is an unequalled Forum to listen to and quiz Government Ministers and share experiences with major figures in the Local Government world.

The following weekend was the Kent County Show. I attended on the first day in a Council capacity. I was able to have long talks with 'de facto' Deputy Prime Minister Damian Green and Greg Clark, Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy amongst others. Also, I joined Police and Crime Commissioner Matthew Scott in a discussion with local and regional National Farmers Union Officers on Rural Crime and Policing.

The Saturday and Sunday allowed me some 'family time'. We met my daughter and her family there on the Saturday and on the Sunday we took my two eldest grand children to the Show. Archery, shooting and horses being the key attractions.

I have also travelled to London four times in July, twice representing Swale Borough Council at events (both held on the House of Commons Terrace), once to represent the County Council at a Southern Region Flood and Coastal Committee (usually held in Worthing). London by train is much more convenient. An especially important meeting as this is the time we start to finalise the list of schemes to be included in the programme to be built over the next three years. Kent is on course to do particularly well. The fourth visit to London was an invitation to be one of 12 senior local Councillors to discuss devolution and other current issues, under strict 'Chatham House' rules.

Amongst the many other meetings those worthy of mentioning included the County Council Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee where I was able to quiz senior figures from the East Kent Health Trust regarding changes at Canterbury Hospital and the Swale Clinical Commissioning Group proposed changes to the delivery of urgent and emergency care in North Kent including Sittingbourne & Sheppey. As I write you can still watch these exchanges on the Kent County Council website. There have also been July meetings of both Kent County Council and Swale Borough Councils (more later), the County's Regulation Committee which I Chair and the Kent Environmental Champions Group which I also Chair amongst others.

In many ways the big news this month is the formal adoption of the Swale Local Plan. Although we could all, I am sure, find something within the Plan with which we disagree most people and Councillors have recognised how important it is to have a Plan and one that complies with Government Policy. We will now have the ammunition we need to resist unwanted developments in inappropriate locations. Despite the heavy July workload I have also managed to attend meetings of both Oare and Dunkirk Parish Councils (on the same evening!), Graveney School Governors which I chaired in the Chairman's absence and spent one Saturday morning at Kent Association of Local Councils Executive Committee.

Other than the County Show there has been time for other weekend "outings". One afternoon I attended a garden party at Torry Hill organised by Swale Community and Voluntary Services to thank representatives of the many organisations that make our Community life better by giving their time freely. On the last Sunday of the month I was pleased to unveil an Information Board at the site of the first world war Throwley Airport. The Board was funded in part by Swale Borough Council's First World War Grant Scheme which I initiated and organised by Throwley Parish Council whose Chairman and his wife entertained the 60 plus who attended to "bubbly and nibbles" after. A truly uplifting genuine Community event.

The month concluded with two full days of Home to School Transport Appeals on Friday 28th and Monday 31st. I have three further full days of Appeal hearings in the first half of August.

Andrew Bowles