

KCC Member Report to Sandwich Town Council – October 2020

A week ago the Cabinet Member for Finances gave an update on the **financial pressures** being faced by KCC and the difficult decisions to be faced in order to balance the **budget** as it tackles the impact of Covid on its finances.

The pandemic has resulted in extra costs this year totalling £96.3 million. Although much of this has been offset by Government grants and underspends on activities that could not go ahead as planned, the Council still needed to take action to save £12.8 million over the remainder of the current financial year to balance its budget.

These actions include a reduction in member allowances and member grants and the decision not to re-open any buildings which have not already re-opened as part of the council's planned programme to resume services following the pandemic.

The full briefing can be found on the KCC website www.kent.gov.uk

However there is some good news with regard to one building – **Sandwich Library will re-open** tomorrow 29th September for bookshelf browsing and borrowing, it will then be open on Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, detailed opening hours can be found on the KCC website.

KCC are participating in a nationwide campaign about **adoption** to dispel myths around who is eligible to adopt and encourage more people to consider adoption, the number of adoptions has fallen by a third in four years and there are still many children in need of an adoptive family. In Kent our team has continued to work on a virtual basis during the pandemic and it has still been possible for people to progress their adoption hopes using virtual meetings. It has also been possible for a few children to join their new families and there have been heart warming stories and praise for the team from the families. To find out more visit www.youcanadopt.co.uk or the KCC website.

Children have **returned to school** and the new regimes and systems that teachers, staff and KCC have worked hard to put in place are on the whole being very successful, KCC Public Health is continuing to be in close contact with schools and advice and guidance is being given on an individual school basis as the need arises. Transport to school and the new advice from government has created a few issues which are gradually being resolved. In Sandwich more parents preferring the drive children to school has resulted in safety issues outside the **Sandwich Technology School** particularly in the afternoons, **an action plan has been agreed with Highways and DDC Parking enforcement** which includes the installation of bollards, repainting of the yellow zig zag lines and some enforcement of these lines, bus keep clear boxes and additional information to parents. These actions are all directed at keeping the entrance to the school clear to improve safety for pedestrians and sight lines for buses. I have been in contact with the school who have also been advising parents about safety issues. I am sure that the Governors will be raising this also as an ongoing safety issue.

Finally work on the **Toll Bridge** has started and the bridge structure was successfully lifted from its supports. I have worked with Highways staff and Town and District Councillors to make sure that as much is being done to help residents and businesses as possible. With the help of Cllr Holloway and Cllr Collor at DDC we are offering a free parking permit in Sandwich car parks to residents in the roads north of the bridge for the duration of the repair, additional signage as been provided wherever possible when requested. It was absolutely essential to get this major repair completed before the bridge failed completely which was a very real concern, indeed there was a, thankfully

short lived, problem the week before closure which reminded everyone of the seriousness of that eventuality.