KCC Councillor Wayne Chapman Tenterden Division
Town / Parish Council Report April 2026

(Covering Appledore, Biddenden, Rolvenden, Rolvenden Layne, St Michaels, Tenterden, Wittersham, Kenardington, Newenden, High Halden, and Stone-cum-Ebony)

Introduction — June 2026

Welcome to my June 2026 monthly report. Summer is firmly with us and I hope residents across all our communities are enjoying the longer days and the best of the Kentish countryside. June is a special month in our division, from the Romney Marsh to the Wealden villages, the orchards and hop gardens, the market town of Tenterden and the quiet lanes of our rural parishes, this is a division that comes alive in summer.

This month's report is a substantial one. There has been significant news from Kent County Council: KCC's direct response to the water supply crisis that struck Kent during the late May heatwave, the opening of a brand new library in Folkestone, important warnings about rogue traders as well as waste traders, serious concern over rural broadband failures, the Annual Meeting of the Council with new civic leadership appointed, and a Cabinet reshuffle. Alongside all of this, Local Government Reorganisation continues to move towards its critical summer decision point.

A Message from the Leader of Kent County Council

KCC Leader Linden Kemkaran has reflected on a busy and testing month. The heatwave at the end of May caused further serious water supply failures across Kent, affecting thousands of homes and businesses. Her message is clear: what happened is not acceptable. Residents deserve reliable water supply, clear communication when things go wrong, and confidence that those responsible are being held to account.

The Leader also highlights real positives: the new Folkestone Library and Community Learning Centre opened on 26 May, the Annual Meeting of KCC marked a new civic year with new leadership, and KCC's financial position continues to strengthen. I share her commitment to keeping every parish council in our division fully informed.

Water Resilience Crisis, KCC's Response and My Role

The repeated failure of water infrastructure across Kent reached a critical point during the late May heatwave. An estimated 18,000 South East Water customers experienced supply disruptions, bottled water stations were set up across the county, and businesses were forced to close. This followed a KCC Scrutiny Committee Short-Focused Inquiry that had already identified significant gaps in resilience, coordination and accountability across the water system.

I want to be direct with you about my own involvement. As Chair of the Kent Flood Risk and Water Management Scrutiny Committee, I have been at the forefront of KCC's scrutiny of South East Water and other water companies operating in Kent. Being a member of "The Short-Focused Water Inquiry" earlier this year produced detailed findings and recommendations to the KCC Executive, the events of late May demonstrate that the pressure must continue and intensify.

Kent Water Resilience Partnership

On 28 May, KCC Leader Linden Kemkaran announced the establishment of the Kent Water Resilience Partnership, which she will personally chair. The partnership will bring together water companies, local authorities, regulators and wider partners; focus on long-term planning, performance and public visibility; and create a forum where those responsible for water supply must account publicly for their actions and investment decisions.

KCC has no direct regulatory power over water companies, but we have a responsibility to stand up for Kent residents. As the Leader put it: people across Kent are fed up with being left without water and not getting clear answers. That simply is not good enough. I will continue to press this issue through both the Scrutiny Committee and the new Partnership.

KCC Annual Meeting, New Civic Leadership

Kent County Council held its Annual Meeting in May 2026, appointing new civic leadership for the 2026/27 municipal year. Jeremy Eustace was elected as Chairman of Kent County Council, with Dodger Sian appointed as Vice-Chairman. I congratulate both on their appointments. Outgoing Chairman Richard Palmer and Vice-Chairman Peter Evans were thanked warmly for their service.

The Annual Meeting also reviewed progress against KCC's strategic priorities. The Reform UK administration's first full year in office has demonstrated significant financial recovery, service delivery improvements and the groundwork for longer-term transformation through Local Government Reorganisation.

KCC Cabinet Reshuffle — May 2026

The following changes were made to the KCC Cabinet in May 2026:

- Georgia Foster has moved from Cabinet Member for Communities and Regulatory Services to become Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health, following Diane Morton's decision to step down from that demanding portfolio
- Richard Palmer has been appointed as the new Cabinet Member for Communities and Regulatory Services

I want to place on record my personal thanks to Diane Morton, who I had the privilege of working alongside when she visited the Tenterden Social Hub and Dementia Centre with me in April. Her dedication to Adult Social Care in Kent has been outstanding. She will continue to serve her residents as a committed councillor and a valued supporter of the administration.

New Folkestone Library and Community Learning Centre

On 26 May 2026, KCC officially opened the new Folkestone Library and Community Learning Centre at 14 Sandgate Road, bringing essential public services back to the heart of Folkestone town centre for the first time in three years, following the closure of the former Grace Hill building in December 2022.

While Folkestone is not within our division, this is a significant county-wide story and a tangible demonstration of what the Reform UK administration is delivering for Kent residents. Every single

library threatened with closure by the previous administration has been saved. The new centre offers:

- Adult and children's library with full book lending and local history collection
- Free public computers and Wi-Fi
- Birth and death registration appointments
- Adult education classrooms and learning spaces
- Community events, Baby Rhyme Time, craft sessions and activities

Deputy Leader Brian Collins attended the opening. For more information:

www.kent.gov.uk/libraries

Waste, Fly-Tipping and Rogue Traders — 'Check Before You Chuck'

KCC, working with all local councils through the Kent Resource Partnership, has launched a countywide campaign called 'Check Before You Chuck', running throughout May and June 2026. The campaign targets rogue traders who collect waste cheaply from residents and then dump it illegally in our countryside and rural lanes.

This is a particular concern in rural divisions like ours. Agricultural lanes, field edges and quiet roads across Appledore, Biddenden, High Halden, Rolvenden, Wittersham and our other rural communities are all potentially vulnerable. If waste is traced back to its original source, the original householder can face a substantial fine.

Three Steps to Protect Yourself

- Check that the person or company collecting your waste is registered as a licensed carrier — verify on the Environment Agency website
- Ask where the waste will be taken and request a waste transfer note
- Keep a record of who collected the waste and when

Over 90% of fly-tipped waste could have been disposed of for free at one of KCC's 18 Household Waste Recycling Centres. The nearest HWRC for our division is Ashford HWRC. Slot booking is required: Book an HWRC slot: www.kent.gov.uk/waste

Check waste carrier registration: Environment Agency Public Register

Residents can also use the KCC Trading Standards Checked scheme when looking for trusted local traders: www.checkedkent.co.uk

Rural Broadband — KCC Raises Alarm Over Government Failures

KCC has this month voiced serious concern over the government's latest announcement on Project Gigabit, the £5 billion national programme to deliver gigabit-capable broadband to hard-to-reach rural areas. This matters directly to residents across our division, where connectivity in many villages and hamlets remains genuinely poor.

In January 2024, Building Digital UK (BDUK) awarded a £112 million contract to CityFibre to connect over 50,000 rural homes and businesses across Kent and Medway. The government's latest

announcement means that only around 8,000 premises will now benefit from this contract — a fraction of what was promised. A further 80,000 Kent premises are not included in any upgrade plan at all.

KCC has written directly to the relevant government minister demanding urgent action. I will be pressing this issue from my position on KCC scrutiny committees. Good broadband connectivity is not a luxury — it is essential for businesses, farmers and residents across our rural division. For the latest information: www.kent.gov.uk/broadband

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Update

Local Government Reorganisation remains the single most significant structural change facing Kent local government. The government's decision on which model for new unitary authorities in Kent and Medway will be selected is expected this summer, currently anticipated for July 2026. Once announced, detailed transition work will begin in earnest, with new authorities expected to deliver services from April 2028.

KCC's Preferred Position: Option 1A — The Kent Council

KCC continues to advocate strongly for a single unitary authority for the whole of Kent and Medway. This option has been independently assessed as £464 million less expensive than the next closest alternative. It delivers the fastest financial payback, annual savings of £69 million, and would create a powerful, unified voice for our county. Splitting Kent into smaller councils would increase annual running costs by up to £40 million, potentially requiring council tax increases or service cuts to cover those costs.

I will keep all parish and town councils across the division fully informed as events develop. I recognise that some individual councils may have expressed different preferences about which model best serves their local community, and I respect those views. What matters most is that whatever structure emerges, local communities retain a strong voice and that services to residents are protected. Full details:

www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/local-government-reorganisation-and-devolution

KCC Internal Preparation

Internally, KCC has been progressing Service Complexity Assessments and is in the process of procuring a Strategic Partner to support transition planning across Kent and Medway. The Devolution and LGR Cabinet Committee met on 14 May and meets again on 15 July, when any emerging information from the government's decision process will be reviewed.

KCC Budget and Financial Position

KCC continues to make strong financial progress under the Reform UK administration. The council is on course to deliver £100 million in savings this year. Further achievements include:

- Debt reduced by £67 million, with a further £16 million reduction anticipated by year-end
- £39.5 million of potential future spend reprofiled
- £14 million of savings secured specifically to minimise council tax increases
- Kent's first ever Commercial Strategy now developed and in progress
- An LGR proposal that is £464 million less expensive than the alternatives

This financial recovery represents a fundamental turnaround from the position inherited in May 2025 and demonstrates that Reform UK can deliver disciplined, efficient governance at county level.

Highways and Transport

Highways maintenance across our rural division remains one of my highest priorities. The arrival of Ringway Infrastructure Services as KCC's new principal highways contractor on 1 May 2026 marks a significant moment. Ringway replaces Amey after over twelve years, bringing with it new performance targets, clearer accountability and a commitment to faster repairs. I am watching the new contract's performance closely and will hold Ringway to account where standards are not met.

Tenterden, Appledore Road

Works along Appledore Road continue to progress. Traffic calming kerbside buildouts, pedestrian crossing improvements, speed restriction signage and new street lighting are all at varying stages of completion. Once current works are finalised, the long-awaited full resurfacing of Appledore Road will be formally diarised. I continue to liaise closely with KCC Highways and contractors to ensure works are concluded to the required standard as promptly as possible.

Newenden, A28 Bridge

The parapet wall repair works at Newenden Bridge were successfully completed in March and the bridge is now fully open. KCC is planning a more extensive maintenance programme for the bridge requiring a full closure, now scheduled for June to September 2027. This lead time has been specifically designed to allow businesses, residents and the wider community ample time to plan ahead. I will continue to keep all parties fully informed.

Residents are reminded that potholes and highway defects can be reported directly at:

www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/report-or-track-a-problem-on-the-road-or-pavement

SEND and Education

The pressures on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision and the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit remain one of the most significant challenges facing KCC and councils nationally. Kent continues to operate under a Safety Valve Agreement with the Department for Education and is fully committed to protecting outcomes for young people with SEND while managing the deficit position responsibly.

If you are aware of families in the division who are struggling to access the SEND support they need, please encourage them to contact KCC:

www.kent.gov.uk/education-and-children/special-educational-needs

Public Health — Summer Heat Advice

As summer progresses, KCC's Public Health team is advising residents on heat-related health risks, particularly for older residents, young children and those with underlying health conditions. The May heatwave was a powerful reminder that extreme heat poses real public health risks. I would

ask all parishes to help ensure that vulnerable residents are looked out for during hot weather periods.

Residents are encouraged to check on elderly or vulnerable neighbours during hot spells and to report any concerns about water quality to South East Water or their GP. NHS guidance on coping with hot weather is available at:

www.nhs.uk/live-well/seasonal-health/heatwave-how-to-cope-in-hot-weather/

Rogue Traders – Major Prosecution, A Personal Note & An Urgent Warning

Two Jailed in Major KCC Trading Standards Prosecution

On 20 May 2026, KCC Trading Standards secured the sentencing of two men following an eight-week trial at Inner London Crown Court. Samuel O'Hanlon (45) of Folkestone was jailed for 10 years, and Jack Sargeant (29) of Ashford, directly connected to our own district, was sentenced to five years and nine months. Both were convicted of fraudulent trading and money laundering.

Operating under the names Bespoke Homes (SE) Limited, Advanced Contractors South East Ltd, and Precision Contractors South East Limited, the pair ran a co-ordinated fraud operation over several years, targeting householders across Kent. They pressured people into agreeing to building and home improvement work under false pretences, demanded large sums upfront, manufactured spurious additional problems to extract further payments, and left homes in disarray and lives devastated. Their combined offending, fraud and money laundering combined, exceeded £2.4 million.

Sentencing both men on 20 May 2026, His Honour Judge Richards said: "You have caused misery, heartache, poverty and grief on a large scale… a trail of serious financial and emotional harm. You used your limited knowledge of building as a platform for the fraudulent extraction of money from a series of clients. They were stuck with no way forward and no way back out of the financial nightmare you had created."

O'Hanlon was banned from company directorships for 12 years; Sargeant for 10 years. Both must serve at least 40% of their sentences before parole eligibility. Multiple victims gave evidence of long-term anxiety, loss of confidence, and lasting distress, with some requiring ongoing support from family members and other agencies.

A Personal Note from Your Councillor

I want to be transparent with you about my own direct involvement in this matter.

As Managing Director of a local Services Business, I have encountered rogue traders operating in the home improvement and sector at first hand, and I gave professional witness evidence in connection with this particular case. I know from my own working experience in the trade exactly how these operations work: how they identify and target vulnerable homeowners, how they manufacture apparent urgency, and how they use partial or shoddy work to trap victims in an ever-escalating financial nightmare from which there seems no escape.

Jack Sargeant is from Ashford. This was not something happening in a distant part of the county. These were people across Kent, potentially including residents in and around our own division, being targeted in their own homes. This prosecution matters deeply, and I pay tribute to the KCC Trading Standards team for the dedication and professionalism that secured this result after such a long and complex investigation.

An Urgent Warning to All Residents

I want to use this report to issue a clear and direct warning. Rogue traders are active in our communities. They target people in their own homes, often the elderly and the vulnerable, and the consequences, financial, emotional and physical, can be devastating. Please share this information as widely as possible, particularly with older or more isolated members of our communities.

Key steps to protect yourself and those you care about:

- **Never accept unsolicited doorstep offers for work of any kind. Legitimate, reputable traders do not cold call.**
- **To consider, KCC Trading Standards Checked traders, a vetted, approved directory of reliable tradespeople: www.kent.gov.uk/tschecked**
- **Never go to a bank or cashpoint with a trader. No legitimate trader will ever ask you to do this.**
- **Always get a written quote and ensure you understand your cancellation rights before agreeing to any work.**
- **Be especially wary of anyone claiming urgent or emergency work is needed, take time, ask a trusted person, and do not be pressured into making any decision on the spot.**
- **If you feel pressured or intimidated, ask the trader to leave. If they refuse, call 999 without hesitation.**
- **Report concerns about rogue traders to the Citizens Advice consumer helpline: 0808 223 1133.**

KCC Trading Standards Checked scheme. The scheme exists precisely to give residents the assurance they need when inviting a tradesperson into their home.

Community Safety

Residents are encouraged to report suspicious activity to Kent Police via 101 (non-emergency)

or 999 (emergency). Anonymous reporting is available through Crimestoppers at:www.crimestoppers-uk.org

Looking Ahead

Spirit of Tenterden Festival – 3–5 July 2026

Now in its sixth year, Tenterden's biggest free community celebration returns to the Recreation Ground: Friday 3 July (2pm–10pm), Saturday 4 July (10am–10pm), and Sunday 5 July (11am–5pm). Live music, real ale, street food, craft and artisan stalls, family entertainment, a display arena, children's activities and the popular dog show — all run by volunteers, entirely not for profit, and completely free to enter. I will be attending on behalf of the division and look forward to seeing as many of you there as possible. A wonderful community event that reflects everything that is best about Tenterden and our surrounding villages.

Folkestone & Ashford Military Show – 6–7 June 2026

The Folkestone and Ashford Military Show returns to Sellindge Showground on Saturday 6 and Sunday 7 June 2026, running 10am to 5pm each day. Organised by Kent (Marine) Cadet Force in support of the Royal British Legion, this is a great family day out very close to our division, featuring military and cadet displays, flyovers, exhibitors and traders, and a range of activities for all ages. Further information and tickets at www.folkestoneandashfordmilitaryshow.co.uk.

Armed Forces Day – 27 June 2026

Saturday 27 June 2026 is National Armed Forces Day — an opportunity for all of us to show our support and appreciation for the men and women who serve and have served in our Armed Forces, including veterans, reservists, cadets and their families. Armed Forces Week runs in the lead-up to the day. Ashford Borough Council traditionally marks the occasion with a flag-raising ceremony at the Civic Centre. I would encourage all our parish and town councils, where they are able, to recognise Armed Forces Day in their own communities — whether through a flag, a moment's reflection, or a community event. The contribution of our Armed Forces community deserves our visible and heartfelt gratitude.

Appledore Classic Car Show 2026

Appledore's popular annual Classic Car Show and Village Fair is expected to return in summer 2026, one of the largest classic vehicle events in the South East, attracting around 5,000 visitors and 450 vehicles. Organised entirely by volunteers to benefit the recreation ground, pavilion and children's playground. Visit www.appledorevehiclerally.co.uk for the confirmed date.

Parish and Town Council Meetings

I make every effort to attend parish and town council meetings across the division and to place a report item on your agendas each month. If you would like me to attend your next meeting, present on a particular issue, or have any items you would like me to address, please contact me in good time. I greatly value the direct dialogue with local representatives and residents.

How to Contact Me

I am always happy to hear from residents, parish councillors, community groups and businesses across the Tenterden Division. Please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Cllr Wayne Chapman

KCC Councillor — Tenterden Division

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