

Mike Sole – Annual Report April 2022

It is now approaching a year since I was elected as the county councillor for Canterbury South, so I would like to present this report to you.

Firstly, some thanks. My predecessor, Michael Northey was extremely gracious when I replaced him and provided me with some helpful handover information and advice. I would also like to thank Kent County Councillor and City Councillor Rob Thomas. We may represent different political parties, but I know that we share a similar desire to get things done for the adjoining areas that we represent, and his assistance, advice and friendship are much appreciated.

I would also like to thank the parish councillors and clerks of all 16 parishes in my county division for their warm welcomes. Shortly after being elected, I took tours around all of the 11 parishes that were new to me (I already covered 5 as Canterbury City Councillor for Nailbourne ward) and I am grateful for the time taken to introduce me to the areas.

Canterbury South is a large county division, stretching from Waltham in the west to Grove Ferry in the east. It also includes a large part of urban Wincheap that is not parished. I enjoy walking and cycling around all of the area. I try to be pro-active and get things done. You'll often see me reporting potholes, worn white lines, fly-tipping, overgrown footpaths and many other things. I want us to live in an area that we are proud of, is well maintained, kept clean and safe.

As one of six Liberal Democrat councillors as KCC, out of a total of 81 councillors, I know that I may have little impact of on the direction of KCC, but that doesn't stop me trying by raising items at committees and council. Where I believe that I am achieving things though is by working with councillor officers, cabinet chairs and other councillors of all parties to make the improvements that we need locally.

In particular I have done a lot of work with the local highways officers. By working with them and parish councils, often assisted with grant money from my KCC members fund, we have seen a reduction in the speed limit at Bramling, with another reduction coming at Stone Street, Petham as well as improvements to road surfaces and road and drainage maintenance.

We are making headway with a 30mph limit in Woolage Village and have had meetings about a potential 20mph limit in Bridge and an additional crossing in Thanington, although budgetary issues are an issue there.

On school issues I have helped families with the recent chaotic Special Education Needs home to school transport changes and helped where possible with schools places appeals.

I have particularly enjoyed getting to know so many of the local community groups and through those I have been able to support grants through my Covid Recovery Grant, which has now unfortunately finished, and Combined Members Grant which is also used on highway projects.

In addition to Highways grants, I have been able to support the following organisations:

Love Hambrook Marshes – benches

Little Stour & Nailbourne River Group – publicity and education project

Fifth Trust – redevelopment of skills centre

Barham Football Club – defibrillator

Petham Primary School PFTA – bounce back to school project

Adisham Village Hall – dishwasher

Ashford Road Community Centre – outdoor furniture

Bridge Village Playgroup – literacy and outdoor equipment

Littlebourne Youth Cricket – indoor training

Hilltop Community Association – defibrillator

If there are any local organisations in the area that would benefit from some grant assistance, please ask them to get in touch.

At KCC I sit on the Growth & Economic Development committee and the Flood Risk Management Committee. I also represent Canterbury City Council on the River Stour Internal Drainage Board.

At Canterbury City Council I sit on the Community Committee and Regeneration Committee, although as we move away from a committee system to a leader and cabinet role I do not yet know what role I may have in the future.

I try to attend as many parish council meetings as possible and usually manage about 4 or 5 a month. I am also happy to meet up with residents and parish councillors outside of the formal parish meeting to discuss issues.

As I am also the Canterbury City Councillor for Nailbourne ward I have also dealt with many issues for residents including bin collections, litter, council housing and fly-tipping. I take the lead for the Lib Dem group on Climate Change and Finance at the City Council.

We have a lot going on in the next year at Canterbury City Council. There is the controversial move away from the committee system of governance to a cabinet system and of course the continued development of the local plan that could see up to 17,000 additional homes in the district on top of those already in the current plan but not yet built, like the 4,000 at Mountfield Park between the city and Bridge.

We have a difficult time ahead of us with rising costs which will put huge pressures on council services and families' income and wellbeing. I know that many local families are looking to host Ukrainian refugees in their homes. There will be huge demands for support services and I will do all I can to assist and share relevant information.

I have very much enjoyed my first year as a Kent County Councillor and my continuing term as a Canterbury City Councillor, the highlight so far was being invited to be Father Christmas in Adisham, visiting children with gifts on Christmas morning in a sleigh pulled by a vintage tractor.

Please do continue to get in touch if I can help with anything.

Mike Sole

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