

## Andrew Kennedy's KCC Report

Almost 20 years of restricted government funding, along with inflation linked increases in council tax, against a backdrop of increasing demand for services, has left much of local government in a perilous financial position.

Over 100 local councils; districts, counties and powerful unitary councils such as Birmingham and Croydon, have technically gone bankrupt or issued warning notification that they are about to do so. Kent County Council is not in that position, but I would be lying to say that things are not very tough. Tens of millions of savings required to produce a legally balanced budget over the coming years will leave KCC with no option to look at some core services. The alternative to this is a Section 114 notice, which will result in government commissioners moving in and imposing 10% increase in council tax while stopping all discretionary spending.

It is ironic, that a badly managed council which goes bankrupt is then allowed to increase council tax and will receive additional government emergency funding, but a well-managed council (such as Kent) trying its best to balance its books, is starved of resources and forced to make cuts. We appear as a country to reward failure while punishing success.

The biggest issue KCC faces is the cost of Adult Social Care. As the Deputy Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health (and Kent's Mental Health Champion) I see at first-hand how difficult this is. The Adult Social Care budget is £600 million a year – almost half of the entire KCC budget, but the money is spent on just 2% of Kent's population. This is 10x the money spent on Highway repairs and potholes. No wonder so few people understand where the money goes.

However, we are dealing with some of the most vulnerable people in society, whose very life depends on the care we provide. These range from people with severe disabilities who cannot be looked after at home, to residents with dementia and older people who fall ill and whose families cannot (or will not) look after them. There are people in Kent who are so limited in what they can do that they require 24-hour care from more than one carer – at a cost of over £100,000 each.

The other issue are people being discharged early by the NHS to release bed capacity. These vulnerable people will almost always need to go into a nursing or acute care home, and once they do the cost of their care transfers from the NHS to KCC.

I will give you one example of the challenge we face. Last year demand for adult social care increased by 10%. This equated to an additional £60 million of statutory spending. The 4.99% increase in Council Tax brought in an additional £47 million. Therefore, the maximum allowed increase in council tax did not even cover the increased cost of social care – let alone cover any increases in highways, potholes, schools, country parks, HWRCs or anything else provided by KCC.

Locally I continue to do my best for the community. I continue to push for speed restrictions on New Court Road and on Rochester Road at Scarborough Terrace. Regrettably, the speed monitoring undertaken does not meet the threshold required to trigger calming, but I will continue to push for this.

I continue to support local community groups and charities via my KCC Members' Grant and my privately managed Community Pot. The Community Pot is a sum of money arising from me not accepting a pay increase and paying this money into a fund which I use to top-up the KCC Grant.

Since my election I have allocated funding to Burham as follows:

- ✓ £150 for Remembrance lampposts poppies
- ✓ £1,000 to renovate the War Memoria and to engrave additional names
- ✓ £700 for litter picking supplies for Burham and surrounding villages
- ✓ £300 for educational toys for Burham Pre School
- ✓ £300 towards a new Community Defibrillator at Frosts Garage
- ✓ £500 to Burham based Animals Lost and Found in Kent
- ✓ £500 for Burham Village Jubilee Celebrations
- ✓ £55,000 grant for the new Community Minibus shared between Burham and Wouldham

And, of course, all our local primary school children received sunflower seeds to grow over summer, and in December 2024 over 150 veterans and community heroes (25 from Burham) attended my annual carol concert and buffet support at the Capel Morris Centre in Aylesford. Both of these events were financed by me from personal donations or money I raised in sponsorship from local businesses and friends.

Finally, I have been told (verbally, not yet in writing) that my bid for £3,000 of community cohesion funding from TMBC has been successful, and I can now push ahead with my Community Bridge website, listing all community and voluntary groups (over 200 of them) which operate in our local area. This is a trailblazing scheme (the first of its kind in the UK) which I believe will benefit residents, social prescribers, GPs, parish councils and all those involved in community activities locally. It will provide a simple to use point of reference for local groups to advertise what they offer, and for local people to make contact and find out more – free of charge for both groups and users. I am hugely grateful to Cllr Des Keers for informing me of this funding and for his support in the application process.

Andrew Kennedy  
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