

Over the past six years KCC has delivered over £0.5 billion of savings across the whole range of council services to address rising spending and reduced government funding. It has been a huge challenge to do this while maintaining these services.

With an ageing population the budget for adult social care has been a priority, taking over 40% of the Council's overall budget, about £364million this year. In addition, 16.62% of the overall budget was allocated to children's services.

KCC has had a war on potholes and has filled well over 11,000 potholes and patched over 8,000 square metres since December. This is on top of the normal maintenance. We have also renewed white lines. I contributed to re-painting the pedestrian crossings in Snodland and cutting back overgrown vegetation, as along the A20, and cleaning up road signs, helped by my member budget

There have been a lot of problems this year with HGVs ignoring road signs and driving down narrow rural roads, or seemingly missing the signs for the Distribution Centre in Ham Hill. This has been exacerbated by the M20 Junction 4 roadworks and I had temporary and permanent signs put up. There seems to be a problem with HGVs using cheaper satnavs which are designed for cars which may explain why they are using these unsuitable routes. I will be asking our MPs to seek a change in legislation to make it compulsory for HGVs to have and use proper navigation devices. The inaccurate post code problem is also being addressed. I have asked Tesco to put up a large sign including their logo to clearly indicate their location to HGV drivers. There is also a problem with illegal parking and KCC are working on a clamp down, with higher penalties for transgressors.

The costs of LED street lighting have made it cost effective to switch all KCC's street lighting to LED which will save energy and maintenance costs and carbon tax and allow more controllable dimming of lights at night and non-peak times. The switchover has begun and will cover the whole of Kent within two years. It is estimated that the capital investment will be repaid through energy and other savings over a 7 to 8 year period. I believe the quality of the light is also much better as it lights the road and pavement rather than the sky!

Road safety is a priority for me. KCC educates and informs young drivers to improve road safety for all. Another high risk group is motor cyclists. This includes improving the safety of our roads and I have funded, from my member budget, signing and barriers in Seven Mile Lane, a reduced speed limit for Trottiscliffe, and speed indicator devices in Snodland and Offham, as well as ensuring consultation on the left turn only from Castle Way in Leybourne.

Ever mindful of safety and crime prevention, we have expanded our community warden service to recruit volunteer wardens to work locally with residents to help create strong, resilient neighbourhoods and improve the quality of life. KCC provides training and uniforms and manages volunteer wardens in partnership with local parish or town councils.

Apart from London, Kent is the only area in England with a bus pass for children 11 – 16 years old. Each pass, depending on usage, costs KCC about £600 a year (we have to reimburse bus companies the normal fare for journeys travelled) but is sold to parents for £270, discounted to £100 for those on low incomes, and free for children in care. This amount is recalculated each year from September. The Young Person's Travel Pass allows free use of scheduled bus routes in Kent from 6am to 7pm, Monday to Friday. It is held by around 25,000 young people.

Since 1985 and the deregulation of the bus industry in the UK, the majority of bus services have been operated on a commercial basis with no involvement from County Councils. The nature of the bus market means that operators can introduce changes to routes and timetables as they deem appropriate (subject to regulations). The current legislative framework does not provide the Council with control over the network of operators so we have to use our working relationships to seek to influence them.

KCC gets rid of the waste from our dustbins but is not responsible for its collection. The amount of Kent's household waste being sent to landfill is at its lowest ever at just 2.6% of the total collected. Most of it is recycled separately or goes to the waste to energy plant at Allington for conversion to electricity.

As well as the highways related schemes I have mentioned, my grant this year has helped Snodland Christmas lights, a school cake decorating competition for the Queen's birthday, and the installation and purchase of an accessible lift for Snodland's offices, Ryarsh play area improvements, fencing in Leybourne and casing for the defibrillator at the school, and (in the pipeline) a traffic count for Birling and signage in Woodgate road, Addington, to warn of pedestrians in the road.

I have remained the deputy cabinet member for community services, including libraries, archives and registration, arts and culture, youth and Duke of Edinburgh awards, coroners, community wardens and other services. I have also represented the County Council as trustee or board member of Turner Contemporary, the Rochester Bridge Trust, Kent Music, the Kent Community Foundation and the Kent and Medway Fire Authority.

Sarah Hohler

County Member for Malling North

