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**KALC Chief Executive Bulletin – Issue 24 (October 2021)**

Dear Member Councils

Welcome to the November edition of my Bulletin. Hope you are all staying safe and well.

* **Coronavirus update & UK National Threat Level:** As highlighted in the Local Government Bulletin on 15 November, the Prime Minister gave an update on the UK’s threat level and on the COVID-19 vaccination programme. In his statement, he confirmed that following the incident in Liverpool, the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre (JTAC) had taken the decision to raise the UK National Threat Level from SUBSTANTIAL, meaning an attack is likely, to SEVERE, meaning an attack is highly likely. He also added that the government has accepted the advice from the independent experts at the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) to extend the additional offer of a COVID-19 booster vaccine to people aged 40 and over and to offer a second dose of a vaccine to all young people aged 16 to 17 from 12 weeks after their first dose. He also highlighted the importance of ventilation, wearing masks in crowded indoor spaces and hand washing.
* Statement:  
  [https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-opening-statement-at-covid-19-press-conference-15-november-2021](https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.gov.uk%2Fgovernment%2Fspeeches%2Fpm-opening-statement-at-covid-19-press-conference-15-november-2021&data=04%7C01%7Cchief.executive%40kentalc.gov.uk%7C8305bd3c91ea4d180ea108d9a85d3fea%7Cc71e8bd71a0446728795fe649c658937%7C1%7C0%7C637725940756231402%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=RynM2YvanlziVl%2BDiJWtzpQtc2w5bjOm4sTMxufOjdM%3D&reserved=0)
* Announcement:  
  [https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-terrorism-threat-level-raised-to-severe](https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.gov.uk%2Fgovernment%2Fnews%2Fuk-terrorism-threat-level-raised-to-severe&data=04%7C01%7Cchief.executive%40kentalc.gov.uk%7C8305bd3c91ea4d180ea108d9a85d3fea%7Cc71e8bd71a0446728795fe649c658937%7C1%7C0%7C637725940756241400%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=y4aRAel%2FJT%2B4aF2a7qkCBIwtcCgQ9Ai0FrhQEjzUaPE%3D&reserved=0)
* [https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-accepts-jcvi-advice-on-covid-19-vaccination-programme](https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.gov.uk%2Fgovernment%2Fnews%2Fgovernment-accepts-jcvi-advice-on-covid-19-vaccination-programme&data=04%7C01%7Cchief.executive%40kentalc.gov.uk%7C8305bd3c91ea4d180ea108d9a85d3fea%7Cc71e8bd71a0446728795fe649c658937%7C1%7C0%7C637725940756241400%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=tuVH7WM9zuBC5Zgdac7t4FhTg7kktQv3FltQhySGza4%3D&reserved=0)
* **Contain Outbreak Management Fund – funding for Parish, Town and Community Councils:** On 1 November, we e-mailed member councils to advise that Kent County Council has received emergency grant funding from central government under the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF), to be used to support efforts towards preventing or containing the spread of COVID-19 and/or helping those that have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic. Funding has been allocated per Parish, Town and Community Council in recognition of the additional costs they may have incurred between 1st November 2020 and 31st March 2022. Costs are exclusive of VAT unless the VAT is irrecoverable. Applications can be submitted via [Apply for Contain Outbreak Management Eligibility (COMF) for parish, town and community councils - Return to Kent.gov.uk (achieveservice.com)](https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fkentcc-self.achieveservice.com%2Fen%2FAchieveForms%2F%3Fform_uri%3Dsandbox-publish%3A%2F%2FAF-Process-fb40db48-4a1a-4fbe-8a0b-ef842c095df0%2FAF-Stage-fc882538-1a8a-424d-b4b0-600c82b8f15e%2Fdefinition.json%26redirectlink%3D%252Fen%26cancelRedirectLink%3D%252Fen%26consentMessage%3Dyes&data=04%7C01%7Cchief.executive%40kentalc.gov.uk%7C753faea3a7354edeeb3c08d9a3832eca%7Cc71e8bd71a0446728795fe649c658937%7C1%7C0%7C637720606096833471%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=TwDuRGDB97EUjmPGNiZF8pMeZoU1itiVwW6om8wF7QI%3D&reserved=0) any time between 1 November 2021 and 31 January 2022, however Councils are encouraged to submit their application at their earliest convenience. If you have any questions, then please do not hesitate to contact me at [chief.executive@kentalc.gov.uk](mailto:chief.executive@kentalc.gov.uk). On 1 November, we wrote to all member councils in the Medway area asking for evidence of any Covid-19 related costs for the same period so that we can approach Medway Council to see if they will provide similar support.
* **6-month rule -** Members are reminded of the importance that councillors always try to attend meetings of the council, committees and representative roles as appropriate as set out in the 1972 Local Government Act. Failure to attend a meeting over a 6-month period can lead to an automatic disqualification unless a REASON is provided and approved by the council which generates a resulting minute. This prevents the disqualification and resets the 6-month period. Where members cannot attend meetings, they should always try to submit a reason and *not just an apology* (which has no legal resonance). Full details are set out in NALC **LTN 8 Elections** *“Failure to Attend*” items: 12-15 which is available on our website.
* **Personal Safety webinars for Councillors:** The Local Government Association (LGA) has launched a series of webinars to help support councillors’ personal safety while carrying out their everyday activities. This event, which is UK government funded, will provide an overview of personal safety as it applies to councillor’s everyday activities, including risk assessments and practical surgeries for safe working. **It is open to Councillors from all tiers of Local Government.** The first personal safety webinar will take place from 10.30am to 12.00pm on 8 December. Use the following link to sign up: <https://lgaevents.local.gov.uk/lga/frontend/reg/thome.csp?pageID=461537&eventID=1342&traceRedir=2>
* **Improving Standards and Embedding Good Governance:** There is a petition on the UK Government and Parliament website calling for Government to legislate to enable councillors to be disqualified or suspended for poor conduct - see [Legislate to enable Councillors to be disqualified or suspended for poor conduct - Petitions (parliament.uk)](https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/586143).The petition has now reached just over 11,000 signatures which requires the Government to respond. If it reaches over 100,000 then it would trigger a debate in the House of Commons.
* **Local Government Association (LGA) survey on abuse and intimidation of councillors:** The LGA is undertaking a call for evidence to capture the experiences of councillors from all tiers of Local Government who are experiencing or have experienced abuse or intimidation from the public due to their elected role. The survey can be accessed via this link: <https://research.local.gov.uk/jfe/form/SV_eW040OelDMZvuqW>. An overview of the questions can be accessed via this link: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1lWDRTHMJVH3g3pdU_KLLYWNagxh7Xyop/view?usp=sharing>
* **Changes in Public Contracts thresholds under the Public Contracts Regulations 2015:** With effect from 1 January 2022:

Public Works

Current threshold £4,733,252 excl VAT

New threshold £5,336,937 inc VAT

Public Supplies and services

Current threshold £189,330 excl VAT

New threshold £213,477 inc VAT

* **Government consultation on making flexible working the default:** The consultation seeks views from individuals and businesses on proposals to reform flexible working regulations. The proposals include making the right to request flexible working a day one entitlement, as well as introducing a day one right to one week’s unpaid leave for carers. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/making-flexible-working-the-default> . The consultation deadline is **11.45pm on 1 December 2021.**
* **Gatwick Airport launches Northern Runway public consultation:** Gatwick Airport is consulting on proposals to bring the existing Northern Runway into routine use alongside the Main Runway. For further details please visit [Northern Runway and our Future Plans | Gatwick Airport LGW.](https://secnewgate.us5.list-manage.com/track/click?u=92491e317ae33660c0b389a32&id=c1e37fd4ad&e=65c3c74153) Consultation deadline – **11.59pm on 1 December 2021.**
* **Government Consultation on Amendments to the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016 as applied to Groundwater Activities and related Surface Water Discharge Activities:** The proposals affect those Local Councils that are burial authorities. **The closing date for the Defra consultation is 22 December 2021**. The consultation document can be accessed via this link: <https://consult.defra.gov.uk/water-quality/amendments-to-the-epr-for-groundwater/> .
* **National Transport and Highways Survey 2021/2022:** Councils across the UK are asking residents to tell them what they think of transport and highways services in their area, and we're one of those councils. There are six independent surveys in total - feel free to take one or all of them. Apparently, each survey will only take a few minutes of your time. They are asking for your views on: accessibility; highways maintenance; public transport; road safety; tackling congestion; walking and cycling. For further details see - [National Highways and Transport Survey 2021/22 | Let’s talk Kent](https://letstalk.kent.gov.uk/national-highways-and-transport-survey-2021-22). **The survey deadline is 28 February 2022.**
* **Kent & Medway Listens:** This consultation wants to hear how you are feeling and gather your thoughts on how we can help mental wellbeing in Kent and Medway. The project is open until **January 2022.** Please see the following link for further details: <https://letstalk.kent.gov.uk/kentandmedwaylistens>
* **Kent Police & Crime Commissioner Survey on Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG):** In the wake of recent horrific events and the Government’s ongoing VAWG strategy refresh, Matthew Scott aims to work in partnership to understand further what more can be done to tackle VAWG by identifying gaps in provision, seeking ways of preventing these crimes affecting Women and Girls and improving their journey through the Criminal Justice System – building on from the great work that all partners have already done. One important part of this inquiry is the Call for Evidence survey, which is to understand the strength of feeling of women and girls in Kent about different themes, including safety, education, prevention and victim support. To get your views across, please complete the survey to help make a difference to women and girls across the county: [Violence against Women and Girls Survey (kent-pcc.gov.uk)](https://www.kent-pcc.gov.uk/get-in-touch/consultations/violence-against-women-and-girls-survey/)
* **Kent Heritage Conservation Strategy Consultation:** This draft Strategy presents KCC’s strategic aims and objectives for how they will conserve Kent's heritage and inspire citizen engagement and connection. For further details please see <https://letstalk.kent.gov.uk/heritage-conservation-strategy>. The consultation deadline is **13 December 2021.**
* **Kent Design Guide:** **KCC and partners have refreshed and updated the Kent Design Guide as a website, and they welcome your views.** The Kent Design Guide provides guidance on design for the built environment. It is intended as a useful resource for house builders, architects, engineers, town planners, other professionals working in the built environment, and residents. Design guidance is important so that good design standards are met and design leads to sustainably built places and communities in Kent and Medway. The consultation deadline on the Kent Design Guide website is **17 January 2022. For further details, see** [Kent Design Guide | Let’s talk Kent](https://letstalk.kent.gov.uk/kentdesignguide)
* **KALC website:** Just a reminder that all clerks and councillors from our member councils can access the Members Area of the website by asking for a password from [manager@kentalc.gov.uk](mailto:manager@kentalc.gov.uk).
* **Upcoming KALC Online Training:** We are delighted to highlight the following L&D online events using Zoom – please visit [www.kentalc.gov.uk](http://www.kentalc.gov.uk) for further details:
* 25 November **– Emotional Resilience Skills for Council Officers**
* 1 December – **Grant Bid Writing**
* 2 December - **Embracing Equality and Diversity and Inclusion in your Council**
* 9 December **– Managing People and Teams Effectively**
* 15 December **– Climate Change Conference**
* 19 January 2022 - **Introduction to Planning**
* 20 January 2022 - **Dynamic Councillor Workshop**
* 20 January 2022 – **Dealing with a Crisis**
* 27 January 2022 - **Appraisal Skills**

Terry Martin

Chief Executive