**Report for Lyminge Parish Council 11 December 2023**

I thought it would be useful to update you all on the many schemes to help people who may be struggling financially or mentally. The best place to look is at Kent Together and there’s a link on the home page of Kent County Council at [www.kent.gov.uk](http://www.kent.gov.uk) There’s advice about funding, benefits, reducing energy costs, budgeting and how to either get a referral or self refer for help. For those who prefer the phone to the web the number is 03000 41 92 92.

Release the pressure is a KCC helpline for those with mental health problems. It’s available 24/7 at 0800 107 0160.

KCC’s Household Waste Recycling Centres do a great job helping Kent residents recycle excess waste but around half of the waste people take to our sites could be recycled if people pre-sorted it. Staff at the HWRCs have been opening the black sacks to extract cans, bottles, metal, paper and card. The waste is often contaminated by food so we are encouraging people to pre-sort so we can recycle more.

KCC has also just launched a scheme to recycle IT equipment – PCs, laptops, printers and mobile phones. It’s open to residents, businesses and organisations and is free to use. You can book a collection slot and your equipment will be wiped of data and reused where possible or recycled when not. See <https://www.kent.gov.uk/environment-waste-and-planning/rubbish-and-recycling/device-recycling-scheme>

The Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty now have a new name - they and the National Parks are now National Landscapes. The name change is important as it’s a signal that the AONBs are of equal value to the National Parks. KCC hosts the Kent Downs National Landscape team, and they do brilliant work not least in running the Government’s Farming in a Protected Landscape scheme (FIPL). Over a year ago Kent Downs AONB launched with the Parc Naturel Regional des Caps et Marais d'Opale for Geopark status with UNESCO and we’re now very hopeful of a positive outcome. Geopark status would raise the profile of these two areas connected by chalk and help promote tourism in our area.

Susan Carey, Member for Elham Valley