

News from your local Conservatives



ISSUE No 4 ■ Autumn 2009

Maidstone & The Weald Matters

with **Helen Grant**

Prospective MP for Maidstone & The Weald



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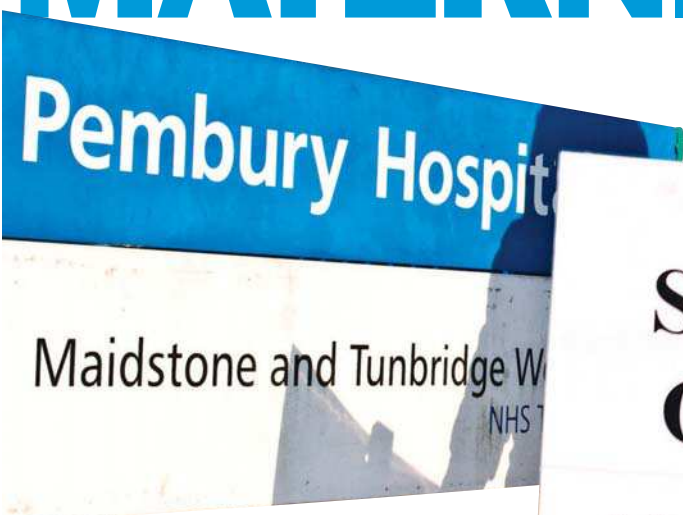
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MAIDSTONE COMMUNITY UNITES IN FIGHT FOR MATERNITY SERVICES



SAVE OUR Maternity Services



Helen leads the way

Have a look at Helen's Pram Push Protest on YouTube at <http://tinyurl.com/PramPush>

In true British Dunkirk spirit people from all walks turned out to help with the battle. Scores of Mums, Dads and their families from all over the Maidstone area came to support a campaign that matters to everyone – the protection of mums in childbirth. M.A.S.H. (Maidstone Action for Services in Hospital) executive committee member Helen Grant felt not enough was being done to highlight and oppose the effects of a decision by Maidstone & Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust.

They intend to close the consultant led full maternity facility in Maidstone and replace it with a midwife-run birthing unit in 2011. The area's main maternity unit will then be based at the new Pembury Hospital, 17 miles from Maidstone just outside Tunbridge Wells.

Helen publicised this threat to Maidstone families by walking the route whilst pushing a pram for almost 6 hours on Sunday 27th September. A convoy of lorries as long as a freight train turned up at the start of the Pram push at Maidstone Hospital, festooned with banners and driven by furious Dads and their families to demonstrate the strength of feeling across the community. Former BBC SE Today presenter Geoff Clark came with his loud hailer and counted the crowd down to the start of the push at 9.00am. All along the way people came out of their homes to applaud and wave on the entourage, with passing drivers tooting their horns in support.

Arriving at Pembury Hospital at the end of the long and arduous 17 mile push Helen said "Stiff legs, sore feet and a few blisters, but that is nothing compared with the stress, pain and potential threats that will be endured by Maidstone Mums having to travel this journey whilst in a dangerous stage of labour. I hope the Pram Push has served to highlight the issue and raise public awareness. We must now continue to apply pressure and seek a review of the decision by the Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust."

A large petition is developing with thousands of signatures that will be delivered by Helen and the MASH team to the Shadow Minister for Health, Andrew Lansley MP, the Current Minister for Health, Andy Burnham MP and the Chief Executive of the Maidstone & Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust.

HAVE YOUR SAY NOW...

Complete and return the form on the back page of this newsletter

Email Helen at helengrant@helengrant.org

Sign online at www.helengrant.org

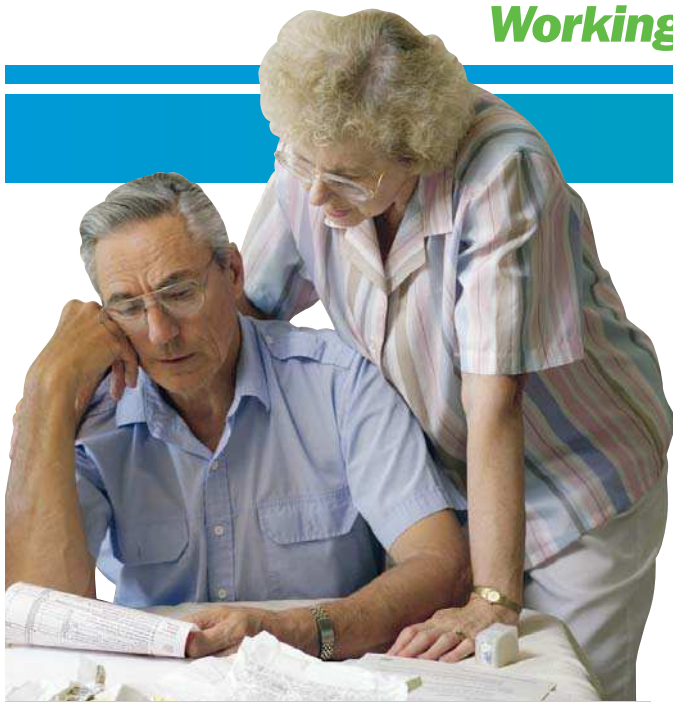
Text **NHS** to **0779 780 1704** to register your interest

Join Helen's **facebook** group at

<http://tinyurl.com/PramPush-facebook>

facebook

Helen Grant – Working Hard for Maidstone & The Weald



A WELCOME SERVICE FOR OUR OLDER RESIDENTS

Need a helping hand with your cleaning or gardening? Like to lighten your load with the laundry and ironing? Helen Grant talked with Age Concern Maidstone's chief executive Paul Coles to find out what might be on the table.

She learned that for just £12 per hour, carefully vetted staff from well known charity Age Concern, can provide shopping escorts, doctor/medical appointment escorts, and help with laundry, ironing, gardening and cleaning.

Age Concern Maidstone's Independent Living Service was launched in response to a demand from older residents for all of these kinds of task and it is proving to be a real success. Since the service was launched in January 2009 they have already had to increase their staff by 50% to cope with demand.

Mr Coles said "From our experience of working with older people we know that they trust our name and they know that when we offer a service for an hour they will receive a full hour's service. To ensure our clients safety all our staff are Criminal Record Bureau checked. They are a really friendly and committed team, and not there just to carry out domestic tasks. We ask them to be our eyes and ears and to befriend our clients".

Mrs Grant said "I am committed to doing all I can for our older residents and am pleased to be able to promote this excellent service."

TORY BOROUGH COUNCIL REALISES AMBITIONS

When the Conservatives gained overall control of Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) in May 2008 they stated a clear ambition to regenerate the Borough. Part of their strategy requires attracting businesses to start up or re-locate to the area, to increase prosperity and help make Maidstone a place where people want to live and work. The provision of excellent sporting, leisure and cultural amenities forms the heart of such an attraction and Maidstone & The Weald Matters decided to find out what has been achieved so far?

Councillor Brian Moss – Cabinet Member for Leisure and Culture, sets out his stall for us;

New athletics training facility: In partnership with Sutton Valance School, MBC have completed the construction of an all weather running track together with provisions for field events. This will allow the Maidstone and Medway Athletics club to have first class training facilities which will be extended to local schools and the community. The track was recently

opened by Sir Roger Bannister – the world's first four minute miler.



(L – R) Sir Roger Bannister unveiling the commemorative plaque opening the new running track at Sutton Valance School, Mayor of Maidstone Peter Parvin, Cllr Brian Moss and Bruce Grindlay, Headteacher of Sutton Valance School.

Maidstone Museum: A £3.7 million extension to the Maidstone Museum has received a Heritage Lottery Fund grant of £2 million. The extension will provide increased display space, much better facilities and an educational suite to service the growing popularity of the museum with both schools and adults. Further funding is underway for the balance without being a burden on the council tax payer. Work is due to start next spring.

Mote Park: A £2 million grant for the regeneration of Mote Park has also been obtained from the Heritage Lottery Fund. This magnificent jewel in the heart of Maidstone has been neglected for many years and will now provide better leisure and educational facilities to be enjoyed by all.

The Leisure Centre in Mote Park: This is undergoing renovation which will be completed next spring and will provide a much improved leisure experience.

High Street Improvement Project: This project has considerable support from local businesses and on its completion will be a prominent feature of the town.

Councillor Moss said: "In these difficult financial times we are achieving our ambitions by applying for grants and raising funds from other non-council revenue sources. Under a Conservative banner we are proud to provide the services our residents should expect from a first class borough. We will all gain from this success".

'Maidstone's Dream' campaign: This encourages business sponsorship of Maidstone's outstanding athletes and is proving popular and successful with an increasing number of athletes being sponsored until the 2012 Olympic Games. The dream is to 'bring home a medal to Maidstone'!

The Exchange Arts Centre: New Investment has provided extra performance space and much better facilities including the 'Graham Clarke' gallery to showcase the work of local artists. The centre now provides a wider range of entertainment too, with a buzz!

NATIONAL PILOT TO HELP WORKLESS FAMILIES LAUNCHED IN MAIDSTONE

A special 2 year project to be based in Maidstone, Kent has been unveiled by national employment charity Tomorrow's People.

Prospective MP Helen Grant who is the Tomorrow's People Patron for the Maidstone region helped launch the plan at the Conservative Party Conference in Manchester. She said "From new research Tomorrow's People have identified that there are almost 5 million families in this country where multiple generations have never been in long term work. This is a pilot for a national initiative to tackle the problem and I am especially pleased that they have selected Maidstone as the location. My role as Patron is to help promote and develop the charity in a multitude of ways locally, regionally and nationally. I am looking forward to starting my work with the team on this special project.

For more information about Tomorrow's People, go to www.tomorrows-people.org.uk

The work of Tomorrow's People is not just about jobs, it is about self esteem, self confidence and unlocking some of the pathways to achieving the elusive goal of social mobility, something that is close to my own heart and my political platform".

Tomorrow's People believe that there may be far reaching benefits from this initiative, not just for the members of the families involved, but also to the local community and to the tax payer in helping reduce the huge cost of welfare benefits. Funding is still needed before the 2 year project can proceed but Tomorrow's People are hopeful that this obstacle can be overcome shortly. Their overarching mission is to break the cycle of unemployment and dependency by helping the most disadvantaged to get, and keep, a job. Nationally Tomorrow's People has assisted over 400,000 long-term unemployed people since 1984.

Helen Grant with Tomorrow's People Chief Executive Debbie Scott OBE



CONSERVATIVE PARTY CONFERENCE REPORT



The Conservatives, we keep being told, mustn't "bang on about Europe". No one is interested in the subject. In one sense, this is true. If by "Europe" we mean the Brussels bureaucracy, people see it as far less important than, say, the loss of an important train service, or the downgrading of local hospital services.

But Europe can't be divorced from domestic politics. An almost unbelievable 84 per cent of our legislation comes from Brussels. Every British government department is touched. Even matters with no cross-border angle, issues that you'd assume were wholly domestic, often turn out to be regulated by the EU. The row over fortnightly versus weekly bin collection was a direct consequence of the EU's Landfill Directive. The Home Information Pack was caused by the Brussels requirement to have an ecological survey of every dwelling. The closure of rural post offices is being driven, at least in part, by the EU's Postal Services Directive. The hassle involved in opening a bank account these days, with all your old utilities bills, is a consequence of the EU's Money Laundering Directive.

The list goes on and on. The prohibition of a range of higher dose vitamin and mineral supplements? Brussels. The closure of our abattoirs, and the longer and more distressing journeys for livestock? Brussels. The decline of the honeybee? Brussels. Car seats for 12-year-olds? Brussels.

The point is not that the EU is wrong about every one of these issues. It's that we ought to determine them ourselves, not have them decreed by Commissioners whom no one can vote for, and then applied uniformly to 500 million Europeans.

That's why the Conservative Party is not afraid to talk about the EU. It's not Europe we're obsessed by; it's Britain, and British democracy. We need to get powers back from Brussels, to take decisions more closely to the people they affect. And we need the referendum that all three parties promised at the last election, but that Labour and the LibDems no longer support.

If you want Britain to be part of a country called Europe – a single polity, with its own President, foreign policy, criminal justice system, military capacity and constitution – then by all means vote Lib-Lab.

If you want us to be an independent nation, trading with Europe but governing ourselves, I hope you'll vote Conservative. But please don't say it doesn't matter.

The Liberal Democrats are the UK's most pro-European federalist party. They would sell our sovereignty without a second thought. Don't let them do it!



Helen amidst the Shadow Cabinet on stage at Manchester applauding David Cameron's highly praised Conference speech

At the Manchester Conference in October my Party offered bold plans to deal with the enormous problems our country faces.

To deal with Labour's Jobs Crisis we have published our detailed plan to Get Britain Working. To deal with Labour's Debt Crisis George Osborne set out some of the tough decisions that need to be taken and, unlike Gordon Brown, he won't duck them. David Cameron has clearly shown he has a plan for Britain – to rebuild our broken economy, mend our broken society and fix our broken politics. I believe the public have seen a Conservative Party united, determined and ready to deliver the radical change Britain needs. Our Shadow Cabinet has set out a series of detailed policies, across the board, demonstrating fresh new and vigorous ideas to take Britain forward. I am pleased to list some of these below. For details of all of these policies, and more, go to www.conservatives.com/Policy.aspx

HELEN GRANT, Conservative PPC – Maidstone & The Weald

ENDING THE SCANDAL OF FORCED HOME SALES TO PAY FOR CARE

It is an immense injustice that every year 45,000 elderly people are being forced to sell their family home and lose their life savings to pay for care when they are at their most vulnerable. This scheme is a huge step forward for England's care system.

TECHNICAL SCHOOLS

Our new technical schools will provide credible, high quality vocational education in each major city. We will also triple the number of Young Apprenticeship places to 30,000 and remove the cap that stops state schools offering these places. This is crucial to tackling youth unemployment and recovering from the recession.

ENDING THE AUTOMATIC PRIVACY OF CRIMINALS

It is widely felt that the rights of criminals have been put before the rights of law-abiding citizens. A Conservative government will free the police, probation and prison services to name offenders where necessary in order to protect the public and prevent crime.

GENERAL SIR RICHARD DANNATT TO BECOME SENIOR DEFENCE ADVISER

"When the country is at war, when Whitehall is at war, we need people who understand war in Whitehall. We are proud to announce that someone who has fought for our country and served for forty years in our armed forces will not only advise our defence team but will join our benches in the House of Lords and if we win the election could serve in a future Conservative Government".
David Cameron 8.10.09

SCHOOLS OLYMPICS TO REBUILD COMPETITIVE SPORT

Following the success of the Kent School Games over the past two years we have been working with Dame Kelly Holmes to devise the School Olympics as a way of guaranteeing a genuine legacy from the 2012 Olympics. We agree that the values of competitive sport are crucial in creating a society that brings out the best in young people.

SIR JAMES DYSON TO HEAD CONSERVATIVE HIGH TECH TASK FORCE

Sir James is one of our finest design engineers and entrepreneurs. No one is better qualified to meet the challenge of making Britain the high tech capital of Europe. The Conservative Party will look at ways to unlock the talent in our universities and allow a new generation of high tech exporters to flourish.

10,000 EXTRA UNIVERSITY PLACES

This summer has seen a crisis in university places. With a record number of young people not in work or education or training, it is vital that we prevent a similar crisis next year. Our plan to give graduates a discount for repaying loans ahead of schedule will give thousands more young people the opportunity to go to university, rather than staying on the dole.

TOUGH MEASURES TO TACKLE ALCOHOL-FUELLED ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

To start to address the alcohol-fuelled crime and disorder that plagues our streets we will prevent the cheap sale of super-strength beers, ciders and alcopops and empower local councils to clamp down on disorder hotspots.

STOP KIG

PUBLIC ENQUIRY NOW UNDERWAY

HOW YOU CAN HELP...

The Kent International Gateway (KIG) is a proposal to obliterate a massive area of green space just north of beautiful Bearstead with a four million ft² industrial estate. Local outrage at this monstrous development has been massive from the start and quickly resulted in the formation of an opposition pressure group known as STOPKIG.

A public enquiry commenced on October 13th and is expected to last for 8 weeks, ending in early December.

STOPKIG organisers are calling for people to go along and listen to the enquiry taking place. This will show clear and ongoing public opposition and may help with the outcome. The enquiry is taking place in Kent House, Romney Place, Maidstone ME15 6LH. Tel 01622 695700.

Helen Grant has been a member of STOPKIG since November 2007 and is an active campaigner against the proposal. She said "Whilst the KIG site is not actually within the constituency of Maidstone & The Weald it is right on our doorstep and the negative effects of the development will undoubtedly be suffered by people from miles around. Many, many people I have canvassed and surveyed within Maidstone & The Weald have indicated strong opposition to the project and that is why I stand with them and say No to KIG!"

If you would like to know more or are interested in becoming involved in STOPKIG, visit the official website at www.STOPKIG.org to register your details as a supporter or volunteer, and to receive email updates. STOPKIG.org is an inclusive organization which wants to include everyone and is keen to hear from anyone with time, expertise or information to contribute.



Campaigners Hugh Robertson MP, Helen Grant, Val Springett, Mary Robertson.



Helen Grant

Helen Grant will be the Conservative parliamentary candidate for Maidstone & The Weald at the next election.

You can contact Helen at:



Maidstone & The Weald Conservative Association,
3 Albion Place,
Maidstone, Kent
ME14 5DY



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www.helengrant.org



helengrant@helengrant.org

The Rt. Hon. Ann Widdecombe MP is still your Member of Parliament and will remain so until the next General Election.

If you need her help, please call 01622 752463.

MORE LIB DEM CANDIDATES JOIN CAMERON'S CONSERVATIVES

Conservative Party Leader David Cameron and Party Chairman Eric Pickles recently met Liberal Democrat Party Candidates who have joined the Conservatives.

Eric Pickles MP, Conservative Party Chairman, said: "Like the ex Liberal Democrat candidates here today many more Liberal Democrats are finding that the modern Conservative party offers them the change that they so desperately want, that is why they are joining us in increasing numbers."



Conservative Party Leader, David Cameron, and Party Chairman, Eric Pickles, with former Lib Dem party candidates

HELEN IS ASKING FOR YOUR SUPPORT IN FIGHTING THE THREAT TO FULL MATERNITY SERVICES AT MAIDSTONE HOSPITAL



PLEASE SIGN HER PETITION HERE
AND SHE WILL DELIVER IT TO:

- The Shadow Minister for Health, Andrew Lansley MP
- The Current Minister for Health, Andy Burnham MP
- The Chief Executive of the Maidstone & Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust

"We call upon the Maidstone & Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust to safeguard a full maternity service at Maidstone Hospital for the health, safety and well being of Maidstone families."

Email*

Phone(s)* Home..... Mobile

Address..... Postcode.....

Name(s).....

Please return to: **Helen Grant, Maidstone & The Weald Conservative Association, FREEPOST, MA 827, MAIDSTONE, KENT ME14 5BR**

*By giving us your email address and/or mobile number, you are agreeing to receive communications and information from us by email or SMS. If you are registered for the Telephone Preference Service, by giving us your telephone number you are giving us permission to ignore this and occasionally call you.

Promoted by MWCA on behalf of Helen Grant, both of 3 Albion Place, Maidstone, Kent ME14 5DY and printed by The Print Factory, Lexicon House, Midleton Road, Guildford, Surrey GU2 8XP

