

FANT LABOUR NEWSLETTER - MARCH 2021



Councillors Paul Harper, Keith Adkinson
and Margaret Rose

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WE ARE BACK

It's been an odd year 2020, and one most of us are glad has gone. As we come towards spring there are real signs of light at the end of the tunnel, and that we hopefully are going to all be able to go forward and do what we all want to do with our lives.



Cllr Paul Harper

Why We are not yet on Your Doorstep

Cllr Paul Harper says "I have missed the opportunity to speak with you over the last year during the pandemic, but to keep in touch our regular newsletters are now being published on our website at <https://www.maidstonelabour.com/category/fant-labour-news/> please go there to see what we are doing and to keep up to date with Fant news and also <https://www.maidstonelabour.com/category/fant-councillors-blog/> to see our regular blogs. We do not yet think it is time to start meeting with you on your doorstep. I and your team will continue to review the Covid-19 situation, and when it looks safe for us to engage with you on the doorstep we will do so. In the interim you can contact us by phone or email."

Thank You Fant

We want to thank all Fant residents for the part you have played in keeping our town safe since the lockdown. Social distancing has been well maintained in our area, over the last few months. Cllr Keith Adkinson said "We all must send a special thank you to all the train and bus drivers and Maidstone Council Staff who have kept services going over the spring and summer at no small risk to themselves." Cllr Margaret Rose added "A massive thank you must go to NHS and Care Workers for all their life saving and care work since March 2020, Fant has a large number of people living in our community."



Margaret Rose

Cllr Keith Adkinson to Stand down and Patrick Coates hopes to be his successor on Maidstone



Keith Adkinson

Cllr Keith Adkinson says "After 5 years on the council I've decided it's time to move on. In that time, I've helped a lot of people & introduced some green initiatives such as our Anti-Idling Campaign which will help to reduce vehicle emissions and pollution. I've also helped raise the council's biodiversity game so that every new development and building extension incorporates bee-bricks so that the more than 200 species of solitary bees have somewhere to live. These bees are vital to the health of our eco-systems and to food production.



Patrick Coates & Paul Harper at Fant Farm

I've also promoted the Maidstone Cycle Campaign Forum to ensure that they are consulted on new planning applications to make new developments pedestrian and cycle friendly.



Patrick Coates

To take my place, we have selected well-known local campaigner Patrick Coates. He has a long involvement with Fant and was in fact one of the founders of the Fant Wildlife Group back in 1996. He, like me, is very keen on environmental issues and has an almost encyclopaedic knowledge of Fant. He has campaigned with the team on Fant issues for over a decade.

FANT FARM AND SURROUNDING AREA

So Just over a year ago, before the pandemic your Cllrs held a public meeting about the proposals to build 915 houses on 130.8 acres in the Fant Farm Area in Fant Hall on Friday 31st January 2020. The meeting was attended by over 120 people. Cllr Paul Harper chaired the meeting, introducing the Local Plan Review process with the need to increase the number of homes by an additional 7/9000 up to 2037 a total of 28,000 homes to across the borough.



Paul Harper asking for support to oppose the development

Cllr Paul Harper said "As it's a few years since as a community we managed to stop the previous attempt to develop Fant Farm, I need to judge your views, so I can check that my working assumption of opposition is correct?" He called three votes and the plans for each site were unanimously opposed by the whole meeting



Paul and Keith at site Fant Farm Inquiry Notice January 2017

Cllr Paul Harper said “In Fant we have shown that we can defeat the developers, we have in 2020 managed to see off developers again. Hopefully we have managed to resolve the issue once and for all. The Medway Valley is a green lung bringing the countryside from beyond Barming right up to the Bower Lane Bridge, we will fight to keep it.”

Local Labour Campaigner **Patrick Coates** said “When we defeated the previous developers at a planning appeal in Spring 2018, I thought we would hopefully have 5 - 10 years respite, I never believed that they would be back in under 2 years, and this time on a bigger scale. Working with Paul, Margaret, Keith and Save Fant Campaign we’ve got these sites being thrown out again, so victory to Fant again!”



Patrick Coates

Lockmeadow & Hart Street

The Council has announced plans to improve Lockmeadow. There will be a new 8 station food hall, improved outdoor seating and a new playground. **Cllr Margaret Rose** said “the playground will be great for the children who live in Barker and Hart Street as far as Clifford Way as currently there are no easily accessible playgrounds for the children and this one will be on the Medway Towpath.”

Cllrs Margaret Rose & Paul Harper have been working on the fact that Hart Street residents for years have struggled with the traffic congestion, and periodic gridlock. There now seems to be a partial solution. This will involve reversing the current one way part of Hart Street to create a one-way flow into and out of McDonalds. It will be supported by improved walking and cycling facilities, and should help reduce congestion. It is worth giving it a go as there are few other practicable solutions we can see.

Barbara Skinner Memorial at Gatland Park

Many of you will know Barbara Skinner who unfortunately died suddenly on 9th July 2019 Barbara was the secretary of ‘Save Fant Farm’ At Barbara’s packed funeral **Cllrs Paul Harper** and **Keith Adkinson** decided that there needed to be a memorial to Barbara for helping lead the work to save Fant Farm.



Paul Harper & Brian Skinner by the Memorial Trees

The memorial will take the form of a copse of trees at Gatland Park overlooking Fant Farm and her home, initially we have planted 6 native trees, these will be supported by further planning in the autumn and a memorial bench. **Cllr Paul Harper** said: "Barbara was taken from us far too soon - she was only 67, Barbara had campaigned for more than 10 years to protect Fant Farm from development and would have loved to see these trees, I'm sure, overlooking Fant Farm as they do”.

The trees were paid for by Fant **Cllrs Paul Harper, Keith Adkinson** and **Margaret Rose** from previous community budget, and will be added to later in the year with several scores of hedging whips.

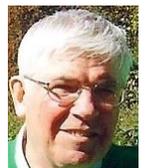


Paul & Keith at Terminus Road

Golding Homes

Following concerns raised with your Councillors, we have had discussions with the new management team at Golding Homes over the Fant Estate (Fant Lane/ Gatland Lane/ Terminus Road/ Farleigh Court/ Fernhill Road & Woodford Road). We hope to set up a tenants/ leaseholders/ residents forum once the Covid-19 crisis is over and public meetings and interaction can resume. In the interim please email **Paul Harper** who is leading on this initiative. **Cllr Margaret Rose** said “as a tenant myself I think this

initiative can only be for the good of the residents of the Fant Estate, and hope to work more closely with them in the future. **Patrick Coates** said “as a former council tenant, such initiatives would have been welcomed in the past to improve tenant involvement. Tenants social and private have been overlooked by landlords for years and we hope to rectify that.”



Patrick Coates



Cllr Rose

Pop In Session/ Councillors’ Surgery

These are currently suspended and will remain so until further notice due to risks associated with Covid-19. **Cllr Margaret Rose** says “As the drop in sessions are cancelled residents can contact us by email, phone or via www.maidstonelabour.com/get-in-touch/”



ON YOUR SIDE IN FANT
www.maidstonelabour.com

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