LABOUR PRESS RELEASE – 10th MARCH 2021

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**Maidstone Labour launches candidates for May 2021 Elections**

Following an extensive selection process across the party the Maidstone Labour Party is pleased to announce its candidates to fight the Maidstone Borough Council Elections and Kent County Council Elections.

There will be an opportunity for all residents in the borough to Vote Labour in what are the biggest local elections in years. In addition to our local candidates Labour is standing for the Police and Crime Commissioner as well.

Labour is targeting to win 3 seats on Maidstone Council and 3 seats on Kent Council as follows

Maidstone Borough Council Target Seats

1. **Fant Patrick Coates**
2. **Park Wood Dan Wilkinson**
3. **Shepway South Maureen Cleator**

Kent County Council Target Seats

1. **Maidstone Central (2 seat division) Patrick Coates and Paul Harper**
2. **Maidstone South East Dan Wilkinson**

We believe that we are in a good position to win our Maidstone Target Seats which would increase the size of the Labour group from the current 4 to 6 and would mean that Labour will continue to hold the balance of power on Maidstone Council.

In Fant Labour Councillor Keith Adkinson is retiring from the Council after 5 years. 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

1Keith Adkinson

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.

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.”

Patrick Coates

**Dan Wilkinson** said “It is an honour to be selected to stand for Labour in Park Wood ward which is an area I know well. Labour has worked constantly on the Council and with residents to bring the Heather House refurbishment and replacement proposals forward. I am critical of the time this process is taking.

As someone who prioritises a transition to cleaner, greener and inexpensive modes of transportation I realise the inadequacies of our public transport across the borough. Luckily Park Wood is on the one fairly decent bus corridor in the borough, although it needs to be upgraded to a 5/10 minute interval service so people can turn up and go as bus users can in London.”

**Maureen Cleator** said “As a worker in mental health social care in Maidstone, I have seen first hand the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on peoples mental health and the inadequacy of the Governments response. The Conservatives are incredibly planning to make cuts in the NHS and Social Care as a return to their discredited austerity cuts. We need to improve both the NHS and Social Care and if the pandemic has taught us anything, it is that the UK has performed the worse of all developed counties in the death toll and infection rates, due to their decimation of social care and the NHS. This has to be stopped now.

**Patrick Coates** said “I have done community work and campaigning for the residents of Fant for well over 20 years. It is a privilege to have been selected to replace my colleague and friend Keith Adkinson. I share the values and concerns of the Fant communities, and look forward to working with our Fant Labour Team which has been led by Cllr Paul Harper on the Council since 2014. I will work to ensure social justice for all, and to continue to work and support your excellent team of Fant Labour Councillors.”

**Paul Harper** said “I am happy to be carrying the Labour torch of hope with Patrick Coates to the residents of Maidstone Central. If elected I will work as hard for them as I do for the residents of Fant. For instance over the last 4/5 years I have been working with neighbours to restore community access to the Oakwood Park Playing Fields with the Oakwood Park Community Group which I helped set up. We will be launching our scheme for restored public access to the playing fields the Easter.”

You can follow Labour on [www.maidstonelabour.com](http://www.maidstonelabour.com)

Contact Detail Paul Harper 07834845154 or cllrpaulharper@outlook.com

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL CANDIDATES

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Allington | John Randall |
| Barming and Teston | Dhaneswar Luchmun |
| Bearsted | Jim Grogan |
| Boughton Monchelsea and Sutton Chart | Rob Millar |
| Boxley | Marsha Todd |
| East | Stella Marlyn Randall |
| Fant | Patrick Coates |
| Headcorn | Sarah Barwick |
| Heath | Joanna Burns |
| High Street | Richard Coates |
| Marden and Yalding | Natallie Allen |
| North | David Reay |
| North Downs | Theresa Lyons |
| Park Wood | Dan Wilkinson |
| Shepway North | Lesley McKay |
| Shepway South | Maureen Cleator |
| South | Kim Roberts |

Women 9 53%

Men 8 47%

BAME 2 12%

Disabilities 1 6%

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL CANDIDATES

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Maidstone Central (1) | Patrick Coates |
| Maidstone Central (2) | Paul Harper |
| Maidstone North East | John Randall |
| Maidstone Rural East | Marlyn Randall |
| Maidstone Rural North | Jo Burns |
| Maidstone Rural South | Rob Millar |
| Maidstone Rural West | Richard Coates |
| Maidstone South | Kim Roberts |
| Maidstone South East | Dan Wilkinson |

Total 9 Candidates make up

Women 3 (33%)

Men 6 (67%)

BAME 1 (11%)

LGBT 1 (11%)

Photo’s

Patrick Coates standing in Fant (MBC) and Maidstone Central (KCC)



Maureen Cleator standing in Shepway South (MBC)



Dan Wilkinson Standing in Park Wood (MBC) and Maidstone South East (KCC)



Paul Harper Standing in Maidstone Central (KCC)



Dhaneswar Luchmun standing in Barming and Teston (MBC)



Joanna Burns standing in Heath (MBC) and Maidstone Rural North (KCC)



Stella Marlyn Randall standing in East (MBC) and Rural East (KCC)



Jim Grogan standing in Bearsted (MBC)



Richard Coates Standing in High Street (MBC) and Maidstone Rural West (KCC)



David Reay Standing in North (MBC)



Kim Roberts standing in South (MBC) Maidstone South



John Randall standing in Allington (MBC) and Maidstone North East (KCC)



Bio’s of Main Candidates

**[1]Maureen Cleator**

Maureen Cleator was born in Liverpool but has lived in Maidstone since 1986 when her family were posted to 36 Engineer Regt. Maureen has lived in and worked in Maidstone since then in various roles in local government, the NHS, private and voluntary sector.

Maureen currently works for Kent County Council in mental health social care in Maidstone. Maureen is a member of UNISON and is currently co chair of UNISON South East Region Labour Link Committee and Education Training and Development Committee Maureen is the Service Conditions Officer for the Kent Local Government Branch UNISON one of the trade unions lead negotiators on the staff negotiation team for pay service conditions and COVID response, meeting regularly with Senior Offices and Councillors of KCC. Maureen is an Armed Forces Service Champion for KCC and a member Labour Friends of the Forces.

Maureen is currently supporting local residents in dealing with anti social behaviour and crime in Maidstone Town centre by supporting local businesses and residents to work with multi agencies in responding to and organising community based solutions

Maureen is a member of Maidstone & The Weald CLP and is the current Women’s Officer. When not under pandemic lockdown restrictions Maureen work base is The Shepway Centre Oxford Road providing mental health support to the local community in Maidstone & Malling area.

**[2]Dan Wilkinson**

Dan Wilkinson works as a machinist in the cash industry and is a Unite union shop steward. He stood as a Parliamentary candidate at the most recent 2019 General Election when he came second .

He has lived in the Maidstone area all his life and has campaigned, amongst other things, on homelessness issues and against cuts to public services.

Dan is standing in Park Wood ward, where he narrowly lost in 2018. His priorities include the reduction of antisocial behaviour, the protection and improvement of local amenities, and making the diverse areas of the ward cleaner, greener places to live. He has been a supporter of the Heather House refurbishment saga which has been dragging on far too long.

**[3]Patrick Coates**

Patrick Coates has lived in West Maidstone for 30 years and before he retired worked in various jobs in Maidstone.

Patrick has been selected to replace retiring Labour Councillor Keith Adkinson. Patrick is a known local community campaigner. He has a long involvement with Fant and was in fact one of the founders of the Fant Wildlife Group back in 1996. He has been a leading Trustee of the Fant Wildlife Group ever since its establishment, and is very well recognised in the Fant and West Maidstone area. Patrick is very keen on environmental issues and has an almost encyclopaedic.

He has campaigned with the team on Fant issues for over a decade.

Patrick was also a founder member of the Maidstone Fair Trade campaign.

Patrick has previously stood for both KCC and MBC, and has worked with Maidstone Council on a number of issues as well as Kent regarding the environment. I have attended and addressed meetings of Maidstone Council which have give him experience of public life.

**[4]Paul Harper**

Paul Harper has lived in Maidstone since 2009 and has been a Fant Councillor since 2014, Paul has experience as a community organiser and leader as well as a listening Councillor, who puts people ahead of politics. Paul had 16 years’ experience as a Councillor in Merton, South London. Paul currently works for Islington People’s Rights, a welfare charity in Islington, London. He has always been a union member and is currently in Unison, the Union he has been in for most of his working life.

Paul has been the Chair of Maidstone Council’s Economic Regeneration and Leisure Committee since 2018, and in that role has overseen and led a number of initiatives including:

1. Restoring Maidstone Cemetery,
2. Initiating work into declaring local nature reserves,
3. Pushing and leading on the creation of Maidstone’s first Arts and Cultural policy for over a decade,
4. Set up the Making Maidstone More Active strategy
5. Ensuring that our developing Economic Strategy is focused on the positive role of th creative cultural sector

Some of Paul’s other achievements and campaigns include:

1. As a Councillor and environmental campaigner, Paul Harper has helped further the environmental agenda on a local, regional and national agenda
2. Stopped the housing development at Fant Farm, working with Save Fant Farm as a member of the group
3. Saved Roseholme Playground from being closed and sold for housing
4. Trustee of Fant Wildlife Group 2011 to date, Member of Kent Wildlife Trust
5. Leading the successful campaign to restore community access to Oakwood Park Playing Fields,which will start from Easter 2021.
6. Cleared the footpath from Roseholme to Upper Fant Road, to make it more accessible
7. Cleared Mansfield Walk Footpath, to make it safer and easier to use and also allowing more natural light
8. Established the Maidstone Cycle Campaign Forum to encourage safe and responsible cycling
9. Supported transport plans to encourage public transport, walking and cycling as alternatives to the car
10. Commissioning a National study into the future of soccer pitches given the historic decline in usage

**[5]David Reay**

As an English teacher in Maidstone I soon noticed that the area you lived in and the school you went to had a big effect on your educational and life chances. Subsequently, working as a musician, I've learned you sometimes have more work than you want and sometimes less. As a person with a visual impairment, I know that life isn't always made easy for people with a disability or disadvantage of any kind. As someone with a lifelong interest in mental health and counselling, I know that anybody can be struggling in any number of ways, whatever the outward appearance.

Over the years, I've got more impatient with the lack of progress we've made in tackling the difficulties people face, and more convinced that the party that has that aim at its heart is the Labour Party. In matters that affect most people's lives, such as housing, transport, education, health and services and in cultural life, too, it's important to be democratic, to listen to people and find out what changes they want, and then to have the courage to make them.