

## TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

### PARISH PARTNERSHIP PANEL

Thursday, 11th September, 2008

**Present:** Cllr M S Worrall (Chairman), Cllr N J Heslop (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Mrs J A Anderson, Cllr M A C Balfour, Cllr R W Dalton, Cllr D W P Evans, Cllr Mrs C A F Grant, Cllr Mrs S L Luck, Cllr B D Stone and Cllr Mrs C J Woodger.

Councillors Baldock, Court, Homewood, Luker, Sullivan and Miss Sergison were also in attendance.

Together with representatives from Aylesford, Borough Green, Leybourne, Mereworth, Plaxtol, Trottiscliffe, Wateringbury and West Peckham Parish Councils and Kent County Councillors Mrs Dean and Rowe.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs Boakes, Mrs Holland, Miss Moloney, Kent County Councillor Mrs Dagger, Ightham and Offham Parish Councils and Snodland Town Council.

### PART 1 - PUBLIC

**PP  
08/022**      **MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the meeting held on 29 May 2008 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**PP  
08/023**      **UPDATE ON ANY ACTION IDENTIFIED IN THE LAST MINUTES**

There were no items identified.

**PP  
08/024**      **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman congratulated Burham Parish Council on winning the prestigious 2008 Kent Calor Village of the Year competition. The Panel was advised that Burham would now represent Kent in the national stages of the competition later in the year. Six of the villages entering the competition were from the Borough of Tonbridge and Malling including Burham, East Peckham, who won in the Business Category, East Malling, Mereworth, Offham and Plaxtol.

The Chairman commented that this showed that civic pride and community was a strong and valuable feature of life in the Borough and congratulated all six villages on their success.

**PP  
08/025**

## **KENT HIGHWAY SERVICES**

Andy Moreton from Kent Highway Services outlined the recent changes including the introduction of contact centres and Liaison Officers which were now extending into the whole county. He explained that faults or problems were recorded onto a customer services system at the contact centre where they were assigned an unique reference number and allocated to an appropriate inspector or priority response officer. Emergency calls were expected to be dealt with in a 3 day timescale whilst non urgent issues had a timescale of 2-3 months. The Panel was reminded that street lighting, drainage and transportation were major issues which took time to resolve.

The role of Liaison Officers was to monitor faults and provide responses to residents with individual officers within Kent Highway Services taking responsibility for the problem.

The importance of effective communication in building relationships was acknowledged and inspectors would be encouraged to visit parish clerks in an effort to achieve this as Mr Moreton recognised that lack of feedback caused problems and frustration.

Questions were invited, with the Chairman asking that site specific issues be raised out of the meeting, and included updates on the previously provided spreadsheet with parishes receiving regular printouts shortly, the ongoing development of an interactive website enabling parish clerks to enter and check progress on faults and drainage gulley mapping. Mr Moreton offered to follow up this last query and report back.

The Chairman thanked Mr Moreton for his contribution to the meeting and felt it had been a worthwhile discussion.

**PP  
08/026**

## **OPERATION OF POLICE IN ALCOHOL CONTROL ZONES**

In response to a question raised by West Malling Parish Council Chief Inspector Thomas explained the approach adopted by Kent Police in operating alcohol control zones.

The Panel was advised that if areas were designated as an alcohol control zone this provided police with a legal ability to require adults to cease drinking alcohol or to seize it before problems escalated. This action was not possible in an area not designated as alcohol free unless a crime had been committed.

The identification and effective management of public open spaces meant that problem areas could be monitored, benefiting public safety, prevention of crime and disorder and the protection of children.

Chief Inspector Thomas reassured Members that although a finite resource was available police would be located where problem areas had been identified.

West Malling Parish Council asked to receive regular reports on how these zones were operating in an effort to monitor displacement and movement of the problem. This would be considered for the future. Chief Inspector Thomas would also report back on what was contained in the Green Paper and whether additional powers would be extended to PSCOs.

**PP  
08/027**

### **CLARIFICATION OF PARISH COUNCIL'S ROLE IN THE LICENSING PROCESS**

West Malling Parish Council asked whether the Borough Council and neighbouring Parish Councils would support a lobby by Kent County Council Select Committee to Government requesting that parish councils be statutory consultees on licensing applications.

The Borough Council representatives agreed the importance of parish councils being consultees on licence applications which could impact on the character of the local area. It was explained that borough councils were not permitted to consult parish councils or canvass opinion as it was seen to be a breach of human rights and prejudicial to the applicant.

The Chairman and Chief Executive welcomed a formal approach being made by the County Council and consideration would be given as to the Borough Council's support.

Members of the Panel also expressed frustration at current licensing regulations and welcomed a more formal approach and involvement of the parish councils.

**PP  
08/028**

### **PRESENTATION BY THE WEALD AND DOWNS ANCIENT WOODLAND PROJECT**

The Chairman welcomed Philip Sansum Ancient Woodland Survey Officer who gave a presentation on the Weald and Downs Ancient Woodland Survey. The aim of the project was to revise the Ancient Woodland Inventory which was a national dataset, administered by Natural England, of woodland greater than two hectares. The original inventory was produced on a county by county basis in the 1980s and 1990s. It was originally paper based and converted to a digital map in 2000. The methodology used was a three stage process including desk based mapping, field surveys and archive research. The aims of the survey were to provide a robust evidence base to help inform planning decisions affecting ancient woodland and to raise awareness of and increase protection for ancient woodland and to help identify threats to the resource, areas for improving habitat connectivity and opportunities for the strategic management of key woodlands.

Members were advised that the South East was particularly important for ancient woodland with 11% existing in Tonbridge and Malling. A potential gain of 248 hectares had been discovered in the north east of the Borough, with Deadman Wood in Aylesford being newly identified as an ancient semi natural wood of great age. This discovery

highlighted the importance of undertaking this type of work to identify and protect these small woods before they disappeared.

Mr Sansum advised that once the survey work had been completed the whole map would be published and distributed so that parishes were aware of what areas they should be protecting. The project was expected to be completed in Autumn 2009.

At the request of the Chairman copies of the presentation would be circulated to Members of the Panel.

**PP  
08/029**

### **KENT PROBATION - COMMUNITY PAY BACK SCHEME**

Alison Hlwatika, the Community Payback Manager, gave a presentation on Kent Probation's Community Payback Scheme. The project involved offenders doing unpaid work in the community as part of a community order sentenced by the court with schools, parish councils, local authorities, charities, communities and any non-profit making organisations benefiting. The type of work undertaken varied from painting and decorating local halls and schools, ground clearance to restore public areas as safe, clean places to enjoy and leaflet distribution. In summary, every week around 1,000 offenders carried out nearly 6,000 hours of unpaid and supervised work across Kent as part of their community sentence. Parish Councils were invited to consider projects that the Pay Back scheme could undertake on their behalf. The Crime Reduction Co-Ordinator at Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council, Alison Finch, had agreed to act as a point of contact if any schemes were identified.

Members were advised that the Pay Back Scheme was a very effective punishment preventing reoffending and had an impressive record of reducing reoffending.

Aylesford Parish Council thanked Ms Hlwatika for the recent work undertaken on Aylesford Village Hall for which the Parish Council was grateful.

At the request of the Chairman copies of the presentation would be circulated to Members of the Panel.

**PP  
08/030**

### **POSTIVE FUTURES - CHARLTON ATHLETIC COMMUNITY SCHEME**

The Chairman welcomed Matt Parish, Community Director of Charlton Athletic Community Scheme, who gave a presentation on Positive Futures which aimed to reduce youth crime, anti social behaviour and re-offending by engaging with local communities and providing opportunities and activities for young people. Other objectives of this initiative included improved health and school attendance, improved participation increasing social responsibility and improved community cohesion.

Parish Councils were asked whether they were aware of any

organisations or groups that wanted to become involved in the initiative as it was a scheme for the community. The benefits of partnership working and effective communication with local groups meant that ideas on what activities were needed could be shared and considered.

Mr Parish stressed that the programme was open to any suggestions but that resource and funding was limited.

The Chairman thanked Mr Parish for his contribution to the meeting recognising that the idea was highly commendable and for the benefit of the local community.

Mr Parish could be contacted on [matt.parish@cafc.co.uk](mailto:matt.parish@cafc.co.uk)

**PP  
08/031**

## **POLICE LIAISON**

Chief Inspector Tony Thomas provided an overview of the achievements made in performance and the neighbourhood policing agenda.

Members were pleased to note a positive direction of travel and the continuing reduction in crime across the Borough, showing the effective partnership working and commitment of all agencies. However, concern was expressed that the cuts in funding could affect community policing. Chief Inspector Thomas reminded Members that PACT Panels were a useful resource to resolve local issues and he did not think this would be affected by any potential financial implications.

East Malling, West Malling and Borough Green Parish Councils were pleased that these areas were being considered as cold calling control zones. It was felt these operated better with an effective neighbourhood watch scheme in the area and they asked whether consideration could be given to linking the two initiatives. Chief Inspector Thomas indicated that community responsibility would be promoted at the next Farmers Market and this could be used to recruit for the neighbourhood watch schemes.

At the request of the Chairman copies of the presentation would be circulated to Members of the Panel.

**PP  
08/032**

## **REVIEW OF FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS WITH PARISH COUNCILS**

The report of the Director of Finance provided details of the outcome of the review of Financial Arrangements with Parish Councils. The Panel was reminded that due to severe financial pressure, caused largely by the recent poor 3 year government grant settlement, a number of options to reduce this pressure had been considered by the Borough Council. The existing Financial Arrangements with Parish Councils had been reviewed with the following outcomes agreed:-

- in respect of the Capital Grants element of the Scheme of Financial Arrangements with Parish Councils, the grant terms and conditions be

strengthened to ensure that grant monies allocated were spent on Council priorities and in a timely manner, in particular that parish councils submit applications for fully worked up schemes by 30 October each year; and

- in respect of the Revenue Grants aspect of the Scheme, the annual uplift should track the cash increase received by the Borough Council in its Revenue Support Grant settlement in the previous year.

The Chairman stressed that the relationship with parishes was deeply valued and the Borough Council would not walk away from complete financial commitment. Unfortunately circumstances out of the Borough Council's control had led to changes being necessary. The Parish Councils were thanked for their help and commitment.

On a positive note the Cabinet Member for Environmental Services advised that 90% of all waste collected was either being reused or recycled.

**PP  
08/033**

### **KENT COUNTY COUNCIL SERVICES UPDATE**

The Kent County Council Community Liaison Manager, Loic Flory, provided an update which would be circulated with the Minutes and invited questions from the Panel none of which were forthcoming. Parishes were invited to suggest issues for future meetings.

The difficulties experienced with the Kent Test (11+) moving to September were discussed and even though it was agreed it was an improvement to the previous situation, it was suggested that consideration should perhaps be given to making the test later in the first term.

The meeting ended at 2150 hours.