

## **TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **PARISH PARTNERSHIP PANEL**

**Thursday, 26th February, 2009**

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

Councillors Court, Mrs Kemp, Mrs Murray, Sayer and Miss Sergison were also in attendance.

Together with representatives from Addington, Aylesford, Borough Green, Burham, East Malling and Larkfield, East Peckham, Hadlow, Hildenborough, Kings Hill, Mereworth, Platt, Shipbourne, Stansted, Trottiscliffe, Wateringbury, West Peckham and Wrotham Parish Councils, Snodland Town Council and Kent County Councillor Mrs Dagger.

Apologies for absence were received from Borough Councillor Mrs Holland, Kent County Councillors Mrs Hohler, Long and Rowe and Ightham Parish Council.

### **PART 1 - PUBLIC**

**PPP  
09/001**      **MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the meeting held on 13 November 2008 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**PPP  
09/002**      **UPDATE ON ANY ACTION IDENTIFIED IN THE LAST MINUTES.**

No items were identified.

**PPP  
09/003**      **CHAIRMANS ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman advised Members of the death of Hadlow Parish Councillor Mrs C Bell since the last meeting of the Parish Partnership Panel. He had sent his condolences to her family and felt it appropriate that her loss was recorded.

The Panel was advised that the Tonbridge and Malling Local Strategic Partnership had met twice and that parishes would be represented at this Partnership by Charles Willsher, the Tonbridge and Malling branch chairman of the Kent Association of Local Councils.

**PPP  
09/004**

## **COMMUNITY RESILIENCE PLANS**

Members received a presentation on Community Resilience Plans from David Cloake and Rebecca Blackburn of Kent County Council Emergency Planning encouraging positive participation on disaster management for communities which could find themselves isolated from immediate help by the emergency services as a result of an event or situation which threatened serious damage.

Self-help planning for local communities had been identified as an important approach in dealing with disaster management as local knowledge was invaluable in identifying local hazards. Members were reminded that communities knew their surroundings better than anyone else and it was good practice to identify vulnerable people who might require assistance in an emergency.

Communities were encouraged to prepare a 'Self Help Plan' offering guidance, emergency contacts, control and communications advice, rest centre information, hazards and vulnerability assessments and a resource list of people and equipment available to assist. Kent County Council could provide advice and support in preparing a plan, guidance on the content, free training for those involved within the plan as well as facilitating access to national guidance.

The Panel agreed that communities that made preparations were better able to face an emergency acknowledging that a more informed community was a more resilient community.

Members were advised that it was up to individual parishes and communities as to how they implemented and used a Self Help Plan. It was hoped that a first draft plan would be available by August 2009 and County representatives welcomed any feedback on the guidance and advice provided.

Copies of the presentation would be circulated with the Minutes.

**PPP  
09/005**

## **POLICE LIAISON**

Temporary Inspector Watts provided an overview of the achievements made in performance and the neighbourhood policing agenda. Kent Police believed that continuity in neighbourhood policing was beneficial and this had been achieved by temporary promotions. The enforcement activity and initiatives carried out in the Borough were outlined and included Operation Safer Streets, targeted on shoplifters and the night time economy; the addition of further PACT panels; cycle marking events; numerous Community Days; educational visits and Pubwatch in West Malling and Wrotham.

Members were pleased to note the positive direction of travel and the continuing reduction in crime across the Borough. Compared to previous years Tonbridge and Malling had seen the biggest reduction in crime in Kent. Members were reminded that the Borough was a safe place to live and work where the fear of crime was actually greater than

crime itself. Members of the Panel were asked to promote the good work undertaken to help reduce the fear of crime. Kent Police acknowledged there was still work to be done and the effective partnership working with other agencies and the community was recognised as beneficial.

The appointment of a new Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator, John Watson, was announced and the process of setting up new Neighbourhood Watch schemes and establishing Cold Calling Control Zones was beginning. Volunteers for the new schemes were being sought and ideally required a co-ordinator for each Parish.

In response to a question raised by Aylesford Parish Council related to the effectiveness of Speed Watch, Temporary Inspector Watts expressed his disappointment that problems had been experienced with moving this forward. The local neighbourhood police officer would be asked to contact Aylesford Parish Council to address this issue.

The difficulties in providing crime detection rates as percentages were discussed, although Temporary Inspector Watts offered to provide the number of crimes and their outcomes in an area. Members agreed this as a satisfactory compromise.

Other issues that would be addressed by Kent Police outside the meeting included the moving of a fixed CCTV camera for Aylesford Parish Council; preventative measures and actions identified for dealing with a recent incident at Buckmore Park; recent legislation on PCSO powers and improved feedback on Speed Watch matters for Watlington Parish Council. Consideration would also be given to providing a presentation on Violent Extremism which Members of Tonbridge Forum had received recently.

Members commended Temporary Inspector Watts for a concise presentation, thanking Kent Police for their hard work, especially in terms of visible community policing and continuity of neighbourhood policing, and congratulated them on their excellent results.

Copies of the presentation would be circulated with the Minutes.

**PPP  
09/006**

## **PLANNING ENFORCEMENT**

The Chief Planner provided a presentation on planning enforcement which was an important part of development control and the process undertaken when a complaint was received was outlined. This involved a large amount of investigation and research with each case considered on its own merits by looking at the facts on each site and the site history. If it was decided that a breach had occurred it was then necessary to see whether enforcement was appropriate, or acceptable, as part of planning legislation. Planning Officers needed to be satisfied that it was expedient for the Borough Council to take action. When an enforcement notice was issued the reasons had to be clearly set out, together with action to be taken and what steps were necessary to correct the situation.

Members were assured that each case was assessed as though it were a planning application. It was highlighted that although enforcement was an important aspect of planning legislation it could be a difficult and time consuming process.

The Panel appreciated the presentation as it enabled them to understand better the difficulties associated with enforcement. However, it was agreed that it would be extremely helpful if communication between the Parish and Borough Council could be improved.

In response to a question raised by Wrotham Parish Council relating to advertising signs on roads, Members were reminded that these were the responsibility of Kent Highway Services. The benefits of improved co-operation and co-ordination between the Borough Council and the Highway Authority were recognised. Wrotham Parish Council suggested that this issue be referred to a future meeting of the Joint Transportation Board if possible.

**PPP  
09/007**

## **MANAGING DEVELOPMENT AND THE ENVIRONMENT DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT - PUBLICATION**

Members received a presentation from the Chief Planner (Policy) which outlined how the Managing Development and the Environment Development Plan Document linked in with the Local Development Framework.

The Panel was advised that the document dealt with the quality and character of development; the environmental impact of development; the environmental performance of development; the protection and enhancement of the landscape, biodiversity, the built environment and open spaces and the provision of new open spaces.

The publication of the draft plan was anticipated for 20 March 2009 with a deadline for comments of 8 May 2009. The importance of Members advising of issues significant to them was emphasised.

The Principal Planning Officer (Policy) gave a brief presentation on Character Area Appraisals which outlined the importance of identifying unique and locally distinctive characteristics of the Borough. Character Area Appraisals were part of the planning toolkit assisting with development control decisions, appeals and site/development briefs, design briefs and master plans. The preparation process was explained and would comprise two elements relating to landscape and urban areas. Parishes were encouraged to define the character and setting of each area by participating in a walkabout and providing feedback on informal consultation following initial analysis.

Members sought reassurance on the robustness and validity of existing Village Design Statements and whether these needed to be reworked. Officers felt that although it was sensible to review these regularly there was no requirement for these to be redone. There was potential for

new Village Design Statements to be progressed but Members were reminded that parishes needed to take the lead as these were primarily a community based plan. Assistance could be offered to parishes in preparing Village Design Statements and Members wondered if best practice, experience and document templates from other parishes could be shared. The Panel recognised the importance of protecting, conserving and enhancing areas of the Borough, welcoming the Character Area Appraisals and the opportunity to participate.

In response to a question raised by Borough Green Parish Council Members were advised of a constructive response to the Issues and Options Consultation which would be published for information in due course. They were also advised that Character Area Appraisals and Village Design Statements were not the same as a Parish Plan and that they did not provide an opportunity to revisit previously made planning policy decisions.

The Chairman thanked the Chief Planner and his team for their hard work on the Local Development Framework which had enabled the Borough Council to be leading other local authorities.

Copies of the presentation would be circulated with the Minutes.

**PPP  
09/008**

#### **RURAL TOURING PROGRAMMES**

This item was **WITHDRAWN** from the agenda due to ill health and **DEFERRED** until the next meeting of the Panel on 21 May 2009.

**PPP  
09/009**

#### **CHOICE BASED LETTINGS**

The Housing Options Officer provided a presentation on Choice Based Lettings which explained the details of the Scheme and how residents could access housing via this alternative way of allocating social housing to those in need. This Government led initiative needed to be in place by 2010.

Details of how the process worked were outlined with Members being advised that a new allocations scheme had been produced. Areas of low demand within the Borough could potentially be highlighted via this Scheme increasing applicants' chances of accessing suitable housing. Applicants would be advised of the new system in writing with a detailed pack circulated explaining how the bidding process worked. Details of Open Days providing extra advice would be communicated when final arrangements had been made.

Concern was expressed on issues surrounding the equity of the Scheme; promotion of void properties; the coupon process for bidding and the closure of the housing list.

Members were reassured that the process would be constantly monitored and that as part of the Kent Partnership it was hoped the Borough Council would benefit from sharing experience and feedback with neighbouring authorities and partners. Urgent and homeless

cases would be actioned appropriately with the Borough Council committed to providing the best service possible. Housing Services were keen to incorporate many external agencies to improve the initiative.

The Chairman and Cabinet Member for Housing reminded the Panel that although this Scheme was required by law Officers were aiming for an effective and workable service. Training sessions would be provided for Members shortly.

Copies of the presentation would be circulated with the Minutes.

**PPP  
09/010**

#### **VILLAGE OF THE YEAR COMPETITION 2009**

Parish councils were encouraged to participate in the Village of the Year competition. The competition run by Action with Communities in Rural Kent and sponsored by Calor Gas provided opportunities for communicating successes whether it was about inspirational people, local business initiatives, innovative communication methods or protecting the environment.

Members were reminded that Burham had been successful last year in winning the competition and would be progressing through to the next round on 1 April 2009.

**PPP  
09/011**

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

The Kent County Council 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.

Burham Parish Council took the opportunity of seeking assistance in purchasing local land identified for a new recreation ground, urging both the Borough and County Councils to support this. The Chairman requested that the Parish Council put this request in writing to enable it to be addressed appropriately.

The Chairman advised of ongoing discussions between the Borough Council and Kent County Council to improve joint working for the Parish Partnership Panel and Tonbridge Forum. It was hoped this would promote and demonstrate a shared view of localism.

The meeting ended at 2221 hours