

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

PARISH PARTNERSHIP PANEL

Thursday, 21st May, 2009

Present: Cllr M S Worrall (Chairman), Cllr Mrs J A Anderson, Cllr M A C Balfour, Cllr Mrs S J Boakes, Cllr Mrs C A F Grant, Cllr Mrs E M Holland and Cllr Mrs S L Luck.

Councillors Aikman, Baldock and Mrs Murray were also in attendance.

Together with representatives from Aylesford, Borough Green, Hadlow, Mereworth, Platt and Watlingbury Parish Councils; Kent County Councillors Mrs Dagger and Mrs Hohler and the Kent Association of Local Councils.

Apologies for absence were received from Borough Councillors Dalton, Evans, N Heslop (Vice-Chairman,) Mrs Woodger, Kent County Councillor Rowe and Shipbourne Parish Council.

PART 1 - PUBLIC

PP 09/012 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2009 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

PP 09/013 UPDATE ON ANY ACTION IDENTIFIED IN THE LAST MINUTES.

No items were identified.

PP 09/014 CHAIRMANS ANNOUNCEMENT

The Chairman invited parish councils to give a presentation at future meetings of the Panel about their aspirations, experiences, successful initiatives and a general overview of issues from a parish perspective and how they hoped to progress. An invitation and letter outlining the approach would be sent out in course.

PP 09/015 OLDER PERSONS STRATEGY

Members received a presentation on Kent's Policy Framework for Later Life from Debra Exall, Head of Strategic Policy at Kent County Council, which outlined the key themes and strategic objectives to help older persons live later life to the full.

The main aim was to ensure the views and needs of older people were understood and taken into account.

Key themes which had emerged as part of the consultation and research process centred around valuing later life; planning for a secure old age including finance, health and social life; healthy communities particularly transport, housing, leisure and community safety; information, education and access to learning about new technology. The assumption that social care was the main driver appeared to be inaccurate as independent living had been identified as an important factor.

Ms Exall reported on better communication between agencies and improved links between the networks and Kent County Council on older people's concerns. The next step was to develop a multi-agency action plan building on existing work and initiatives already in place. Individual agencies would report back on how they met the objectives in the Policy Framework.

Copies of the full Policy were available from Debra Exall on request. Parishes were invited to comment on the document and their support welcomed in moving this issue forward, as well as highlighting and identifying priorities and objectives.

The Chairman indicated that the Borough Council fully supported this policy as a good example of joint working. The Council was committed to older persons' issues and had created a new Older Persons Issues Advisory Board to deal with initiatives and improve links with relevant organisations. The Panel was also reminded that the Local Strategic Partnership worked closely with older persons' representatives.

Members welcomed the introduction of this policy and recognised the importance of 'managing expectation' of external agencies to maintain control of expenditure.

A brief discussion followed on the merits of telecare and telemedical which were good examples of how technology could benefit older persons.

Members were interested to see that one strategic objective of the framework involved working with developers to ensure that new developments were designed to be sustainable and 'age proof'. The difficulties in managing this process were recognised but it was hoped that negotiations with developers in making standards as reasonable as possible would address the matter or, at least, start a debate on the subject.

The merits of encouraging mixing and engagement between different generations were recognised and Members were pleased to learn that Children and Youth Services were one of the agencies involved in the Older Persons Strategy.

In thanking Ms Exall for her contribution to the meeting the Chairman took the opportunity of introducing the new Mayor of Tonbridge and

Malling, Councillor Mrs Murray, who would be focusing on older persons' interests during her year in office. The Mayor announced that the charities she would be supporting for the year were Age Concern Malling and Tonbridge and Carers First. She had already attended several events meeting a great many residents and associations. The Mayor reminded the Panel that she was an active parish councillor, and had been so for many years, so she understood the problems and issues faced by them and looked forward to representing them all.

Copies of the presentation and the Kent Policy Framework would be circulated with the Minutes.

**PP
09/016**

ADULT SERVICES

This item was WITHDRAWN from the agenda due to unforeseen circumstances.

**PP
09/017**

POLICE LIAISON

Temporary Inspector Watts provided an overview of the achievements made in performance and the neighbourhood policing agenda. The enforcement activity and initiatives carried out in the Borough were outlined and included Operation Motor III, dealing with anti-social use of vehicles in Tonbridge; bespoke Easter operations running over Tonbridge urban, rural and the Mallings; a proxy alcohol purchase operation in Snodland; licensing visits in West Malling, Kings Hill and Snodland and continuing PACT meetings and surgeries.

Other items of interest included a pilot anti-social behaviour hotline for the Mallings. This was staffed by the Neighbourhood Police Team from Tuesday to Saturday evenings and covered all the Malling area. It was hoped to extend this initiative across the Borough, subject to the success of the pilot although it appeared to be working well.

Following a question raised at the last meeting Temporary Inspector Watts advised that PCSO powers in Kent were in line with the Home Office definition of the core role of PCSOs. However, at present there were four national reviews of PCSOs underway and their powers could be standardised across all forces in the future. Further information was available from the Home Office website.

In conclusion Members' attention was drawn to the implementation of a dedicated Tonbridge and Malling Neighbourhood Task Team in the forthcoming year. This Team would work alongside existing Neighbourhood officers, be flexible and not dedicated to a single ward allowing them to be placed where they were needed most, targeting specific issues.

Members were pleased to note the continuing reduction in crime across the Borough, noting the largest percentage reduction in vehicle thefts and violent crime in Kent. Temporary Inspector Watts addressed an issue raised at the last meeting surrounding the reporting of crime statistics advising that more detail would be provided on case specific

crimes in parishes, including the number of enforcements issued.

Borough Green Parish Council asked Kent Police whether it was worth considering setting up a formal 'car meet' area for young people to curtail anti-social use of vehicles. Temporary Inspector Watts agreed the idea was worth consideration but was wary of encouraging it, especially as many participants came from outside of the area.

The Cabinet Member for Environmental Services outlined the Borough Council's current approach on serving Fixed Penalty Notices when litter was seen thrown from vehicles. He reported that the LGA were lobbying DEFRA for a change in the relevant legislation. This proposed change would allow local authorities to write, via a prescribed notice, to the keeper of a motor vehicle requesting information on the perpetrator of a littering offence. The failure to provide such information would become an offence. He had been requested by Cabinet to write to DEFRA confirming the Council's support for the changes proposed by the LGA relating to litter legislation and Kent Police were asked to support this approach.

Copies of the presentation would be circulated with the Minutes.

**PP
09/018**

BOROUGH COUNCIL'S FINANCIAL POSITION

The Chief Executive outlined the Borough Council's current financial position and how the economic downturn was having a significant impact on the Council's income and budget. The situation was not anticipated to improve in the short term with reductions in planning, land charges search fees and other income streams continuing. Parishes were reminded that support from central Government had not been significant and predictions for next year's grant funding did not improve the position. The Borough Council had undertaken a major savings exercise and this would be repeated in an effort to find further options.

The Chief Executive advised the Panel that the decision to make reduced grants to parish councils and voluntary organisations had been a difficult one. However, parishes were warned that this situation was unlikely to change over the next financial year. Whilst the Borough Council would continue to support, where possible, standard revenue support grants for parishes the Leader could see no prospect of returning to the annual round of capital support for parish schemes. Applications for any urgent or emergency works identified would be considered on a case by case basis and supported if possible. Members were reminded that these must be genuine cases and if funding was agreed monies should be taken within the timescale submitted.

The Chief Executive advised that members of the Kent Public Service Board appeared to think that the national finances situation was so severe that a 10-20% reduction available to support public expenditure was likely. If this worse case scenario happened it might become

necessary to reduce services to manage expenditure.

Borough Green Parish Council reminded parishes of their ability to raise funds by increasing their precepts, which although not popular would be appropriate to maintain the current levels of service without impacting on the Borough Council's budget. Parishes would be actively encouraged to consider this option.

Members were advised of a successful request to Kent County Council for a contribution to the provision of the bulky waste collection service, on the grounds of a lack of a civic amenity facility in the Borough. Parishes were asked to consider whether they could make a contribution to this service, especially if collections were made from that parish.

The Chairman asked the Panel to consider the effects on staff working in this climate, with increasing workloads during a recruitment freeze. Members were asked to be understanding of the situation and the pressures under which the staff were working. The Panel agreed that the level of support and response from all sections of the Borough Council was excellent and even, if reduced, would still be better than other organisations. The Chairman and Chief Executive acknowledged this compliment on behalf of the Borough Council.

**PP
09/019**

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.

Mr Flory advised that Members Grants' of £10K were available after the County Elections.

The meeting ended at 2120 hours