

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

PARISH PARTNERSHIP PANEL

Thursday, 8th September, 2011

Present: Cllr M S Worrall (Chairman), Cllr Mrs J A Anderson, Cllr J Atkins, Cllr M A C Balfour, Cllr Mrs J M Bellamy, Cllr D Keeley, Cllr Mrs S L Luck, Cllr Miss A Moloney, Cllr M Parry-Waller, Cllr A G Sayer and Cllr Mrs C J Woodger.

Councillors Coffin and Rhodes were also in attendance.

Together with Kent County Councillors Mrs Dagger, Mrs Hohler and Homewood and representatives from Addington, Aylesford, Birling, Borough Green, East Malling and Larkfield, East Peckham, Hadlow, Hildenborough, Platt, West Peckham and Wrotham Parish Councils and Snodland Town Council.

Apologies for absence were received from Borough Councillors Baldock (Vice-Chairman) and Mrs Holland; Ightham and Trottiscliffe Parish Councils.

PART 1 - PUBLIC

PPP 11/023

MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 26 May 2011 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

PPP 11/024

UPDATE ON ANY ACTION IDENTIFIED IN THE LAST MINUTES.

The Democratic Services Officer, A Parris, referred to the query raised by Wrotham Parish Council regarding the dates for the Waste Management Plan and Mineral Extraction Plan and confirmed that this information had been circulated via email to Members. It was noted that the consultation period had finished on 23 July 2011.

PPP 11/025

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL SERVICES UPDATE

Mr James Harman of Kent County Council introduced himself as the new Community Engagement Officer for Tonbridge and Malling and referred to the content of a written report which was tabled prior to the meeting. Particular reference was made to a proposed new model of service delivery for Kent Youth Services in Tonbridge and Malling, currently out for consultation until 29 October 2011.

Members expressed concern that the facilities at SAMAYS Youth Centre in Snodland would no longer be used directly by Kent Youth

Service and found the reasoning behind the proposal difficult to understand. Snodland Town Council stressed that SAMAYS provided an extremely valuable service to the community, considering that it was grossly unfair that youth facilities were provided in the urban part of the borough that had good access to other services to the detriment of more rural areas.

The County Member for Malling North (covering Snodland) responded that youth activities would still be available in local areas and explained that the emphasis of the proposed model was commissioning services rather than provision. Under the proposed new model of delivery Kent Youth Service would seek to commission youth work delivery which reflected the general needs and outcomes of the district. However, she urged parish councils to respond to the consultation expressing their views.

The Chairman advised that the Borough Council's formal response to the consultation would be submitted after the issue was reported and discussed at the Leisure and Arts Advisory Board on 21 September. In addition, he advised that the local MP for Chatham and Aylesford, Tracey Crouch, had expressed strong views against the reduction in youth provision and he expected the Borough Council to support that opinion. Borough Council Members also strongly supported Snodland Town Council's concern regarding the loss of a well used facility at SAMAYS.

In concluding this discussion, the Chairman welcomed the opportunity to hear directly from Kent County Council and to challenge their proposals and invited the County Cabinet Member for Customer and Communities to a future meeting of the Parish Partnership Panel to defend these recommendations.

Mr Harman drew attention to the Member Highway Fund, worth £25,000 this year for each Kent Member, who could choose to use the grant to help their local community. Further information regarding this grant was available by contacting local County Members.

Finally, the Panel was made aware of the following grants, which had a closing date of Monday 31 October 2011:

- § Small Community Capital Grant (Total available to distribute in Tonbridge and Malling = £41,500):
- § Local Schemes Grants (Total available to distribute in Tonbridge and Malling = £18,100):

Application forms and further details could be provided by emailing steve.charman@kent.gov.uk

The Chairman thanked Mr Harman for his contribution to the meeting. Copies of the Kent County Council Services Update would be circulated with the Minutes.

POLICE LIAISON

Chief Inspector Kirby of Kent Police, Borough Commander for Tonbridge and Malling, provided an overview of the achievements made in performance and in the neighbourhood policing agenda. Members were advised that 94% of residents reporting anti-social behaviour were satisfied with the service received from Kent Police. In addition, Tonbridge and Malling had seen a 3% reduction in all crime. This was despite a slight increase in shoplifting offences in the Tonbridge area which was being targeted by officers.

Snodland Town Council asked whether youth centres made a significant contribution to reducing youth crime. In response, Chief Inspector Kirby believed that the provision of activities and opportunities was beneficial in tackling youth crime, especially anti-social behaviour.

Wrotham Parish Council asked what steps Kent Police were taking on following up on scrap metal merchants given the recent increase in metal thefts. Chief Inspector Kirby advised that scrap metal merchants' accounts were routinely checked and Op Mercury was in place to actively target this problem. There were also opportunities to check vehicles going into scrap metal sites and these were routinely undertaken.

Hildenborough Parish Council thanked Kent Police for the recent efforts in dealing with a number of incidents in the parish and welcomed the effective communication and successful resolution.

Following the recent countrywide riots in August Chief Inspector Kirby made reference to Op Oblong and highlighted the support given by Kent Police to the Metropolitan Police. The Kent approach was also outlined and Members were assured that Tonbridge and Malling had been safe during this period. Chief Inspector Kirby was fairly confident that the risk of further trouble had significantly reduced due to the change in the season.

The Chairman referred to the impending eviction of travellers from Dale Farm, Essex and asked about the preparedness of Kent Police to deal with any movement into the county. Chief Inspector Kirby replied that there was no specific intelligence that suggested there was any movement in the direction of Tonbridge and Malling. However, Kent Police were liaising carefully with the Essex force in monitoring the situation and providing support if necessary. Members were reminded that a guidance note on powers to remove unauthorised campers was available on request.

The Crime Reduction Officer, Nathan Pascall-Smith, was introduced to Members and he provided an overview of Safe Season projects to be undertaken by Kent Police during the autumn and winter.

Parish councils were encouraged to provide education programmes

and spread the crime prevention message throughout their communities. It was explained that a high percentage of burglaries were opportunistic and it was important to lock doors and windows. Education was an important tool in addressing crime prevention.

Finally, reference was made to the Crime Prevention Panel which was a voluntary group of individuals from Tonbridge and Malling who tested crime prevention equipment and arranged seminars to improve education. Kent Police were hoping to encourage younger people to participate in the Panel for 2012. PC Pascall-Smith was happy to attend parish council meetings to talk about crime prevention issues or provide literature for distribution.

The Chairman thanked Chief Inspector Kirby and PC Pascall-Smith for their contribution to the meeting.

**PPP
11/027**

DIGITAL SWITCHOVER

The speaker from Digital UK apologised for not being able to attend the meeting due to unforeseen circumstances. However, on their behalf the Director of Finance advised that an information pack containing details of the switchover, the Help Scheme and a DVD film covering all aspects of the change was due to be sent to all parish councils in the near future.

**PPP
11/028**

STOP PRESS ITEMS

The Director of Finance reported on a number of *stop press* items of interest. The headline messages included:

- § The Community Enhancement Fund: The closing date for applications was the end of September and details of the scheme were available on www.tmbc.gov.uk Decisions on bids submitted would be made in October.
- § Sexual Entertainment Venues Consultation: Members were reminded of a letter sent by Licensing Services seeking views on whether to adopt new powers relating to sexual entertainment venues, following recent changes to legislation. The closing date for comments was 7 October 2011.
- § Heritage Open Days: The Panel was reminded that Heritage Open Days celebrated Englands architecture and culture by offering free access to properties that were usually closed to the public or charged for admission. This year's event was taking place during the upcoming weekend, Saturday 10 and Sunday 11 September. Further details were available on the Borough Council's website.
- § Scrutiny Review Panel - Planning Enforcement: As part of a review into planning enforcement the Borough Council was holding a consultation meeting for local partners on 15 September commencing at 1830 hours. Invitations had been

sent to parish councils and Members were encouraged to participate.

- § Local Government Boundary Review: Particular reference was made to the ongoing boundary review. This was likely to take 6 to 8 months before completion and the Boundary Commission were likely to consult with communities in due course. The Panel was advised that the Boundary Commission was an independent body and the Borough Council had no control over any proposals. The Chairman welcomed written comments from parish councils regarding this review and potential boundary and ward changes to support and inform the Borough's Council final response.

**PPP
11/029**

SPORT ENGLAND INSPIRED FACILITIES FUND

The Chairman invited Mr Matt Delaney, of the Great Outdoor Gym Company, to provide information on the Sport England Inspired Facilities Fund and how this funding stream could be accessed. Inspired Facilities focused on making it easier for local community and volunteer groups to improve and refurbish sports clubs or transform non-sporting venues into modern grassroots sports facilities. This was part of a Sport England programme to deliver a London 2012 legacy of increased mass participation in sport. Inspired Facilities was investing £50 million of National Lottery funding in up to 1000 community sports projects between 2011 and 2014. Further information and a catalogue of suggested and costed facility improvements were available on the Inspired Facilities website: www.sportengland.org

Particular reference was made to adiZones, which were available for funding bids and were multi-sports Olympic fitness spaces comprising a range of different activities. These facilities were free at the point of use for the whole community and encouraged greater sports participation.

There were five opportunities to apply for an Inspired Facilities grant, with each round awarding up to £10 million. Community and voluntary organisations, including parish and town councils, could apply for grants worth between £20,000 and £50,000. At least 70% of the available funding was set aside for these groups. The closing date for the first funding round was 28 September 2011 with a further two from 1 February - 2 April 2012 and 23 July - 17 September 2012.

To support the application process organisations needed to demonstrate how the facility addressed health inequality and/or disadvantage; supported the needs and development of the community and encouraged the community to take part and keep taking part in sport.

**PPP
11/030**

'LOVE WHERE YOU LIVE'

The Environmental Projects Co-ordinator was pleased to report that Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council had become the first of only

five local authorities in the country to be chosen by Keep Britain Tidy as an 'Ambassador' partner in an exciting new national anti-littering campaign entitled 'Love Where You Live'.

The campaign was due to be launched nationally in September and aimed to inspire people to think about their communities and take action to reduce litter where they lived and visited.

The Panel viewed a DVD presentation showing the local campaign for Tonbridge and Malling. The events schedule for the launch week (19 - 25 September 2011) was tabled during the meeting for Members' information. Particular reference was made to a stakeholder meeting in October 2011 with local and national partners and a litter campaign in December 2011.

Parishes were encouraged to get involved by planning and supporting Love Where You Live in any upcoming activity; adopting the Love Where You Live brand; using local networks to extend the reach of the campaign and supporting Love Where You Live through usual media channels including social networking sites. Further help and advice was available from Environmental Health Services.

The Chairman confirmed that this was a borough wide campaign and would be enthusiastically supported throughout Tonbridge and Malling.

**PPP
11/031**

WOODLAND TRUST – JUBILEE WOODS PROJECT

This item was **WITHDRAWN** from the agenda. However, the Leisure Services Manager (Outdoor) gave a brief introduction to the project and referred Members to the Woodland Trust website for further information - www.woodlandtrust.org.uk

In addition, reference was made to a leaflet tabled at the meeting which explained that the Jubilee Woods project was set to create hundreds of new woods in celebration of Queen Elizabeth's Diamond Jubilee. Particular reference was made to the availability of free Jubilee tree packs of 105 or 420 trees for planting in communities. Members were advised that the Borough Council would be looking at sites in its ownership to see if a site could be indentified for planting. The Borough Council would also promote the project to local communities and schools to encourage their participation.

The Leisure Services Manager (Outdoor) also highlighted the Jubilee Beacon Project, which was another initiative to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee in June 2012. As part of the celebrations a series of beacons would be lit across the United Kingdom. It was hoped that 2,012 beacons would be lit on Monday 4 June as part of the extended Bank Holiday weekend. Her Majesty the Queen would also light a national beacon on that day.

There were two types of beacon available: the traditional bonfire beacon and the church tower beacon, fuelled by bottle gas. A special book listing all the beacon sites would be presented to the Queen after

the event.

The deadline for organisations to register a Jubilee Beacon was 30 April 2012 and applications were recommended as soon as possible, especially for inclusion in the special book.

Members were advised that, subject to English Heritage approval, a church tower beacon was being considered for the roof of Tonbridge Castle. In addition, the Borough Council had liaised directly with parish and town councils to encourage them to actively take part. The Chairman commented that applications for a Jubilee Beacon might be suitable for Community Enhancement Funding.

**PPP
11/032**

BRIEFING ON UNIVERSAL CREDIT

The Director of Finance and the Principal Benefits Officer set out the main implications known to date regarding the introduction of Universal Credit.

It was explained that Universal Credits were introduced as part of the Welfare Reform Bill and would be a single benefit to simplify the system for working age people. The main aims were to restore fairness and simplicity, ensure a financial incentive to work, reduce fraud, support the vulnerable and curb the spiralling benefit spend.

A pilot scheme was scheduled to start in April 2013, with new working age claims from October 2013 or April 2014 at the latest. A full transition of 'legacy' benefits/credits was expected by October 2017.

The Government's preferred model for administration was through the Department for Work and Pensions. However, no details on this aspect were due until 2015. The Government's intention was to minimise face to face contact with the majority of claims being made, assessed and delivered electronically.

Members were also advised of the abolition of nationally administered council benefit schemes in April 2013. These were to be replaced by locally administered schemes and Government funding would be less than the overall cost of the current scheme in the final year. In response to a question raised by Aylesford Parish Council, it was indicated that it was difficult to predict whether council tax would increase as it was dependent upon how the local scheme was set up. The Director of Finance also stressed that it was not entirely clear what local authorities had to achieve in terms of delivering a local scheme. This proposal was currently out for consultation.

The Principal Benefits Officer set out the major implications for local authorities, advising that from October 2013 there could be a large reduction in workload due to lack of new Housing Benefit claims. Other implications included increased rent arrears, homelessness and reduced availability of private sector rented accommodation; issues surrounding staffing levels and current workloads increasing; the development and the implementation of the local Council Tax Benefit

scheme would be a significant project.

Members expressed regret and frustration at the proposal to remove service delivery from local authorities and to the Department for Work and Pensions. The Director of Finance reported that local government was lobbying hard for some role in the delivery model, especially the reduction of face to face contact as figures demonstrated that this was the traditional way people claimed benefit. In addition, it was strongly believed that local government should have a role in this.

The Chairman referred to the ongoing change in housing legislation and the lack of available affordable housing, which was leading more people to require benefit assistance to help manage their day to day living expenses.

Parish councils were encouraged to make representations to the local Members of Parliament setting out how the proposals would impact on their residents and communities.

The meeting ended at 2205 hours