

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

PARISH PARTNERSHIP PANEL

Thursday, 1st March, 2012

Present: Cllr M S Worrall (Chairman), Cllr O C Baldock (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Mrs J A Anderson, Cllr Mrs J M Bellamy, Cllr Mrs E M Holland, 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, Dalton, Rhodes, Rogers, Miss Sergison and Mrs Simpson were also in attendance.

Together with Kent County Councillors Mrs Dagger and Mrs Hohler and representatives from Kent Police and Kent Association of Local Councils, Borough Green, Burham, East Malling and Larkfield, East Peckham, Hadlow, Hildenborough, Kings Hill, Leybourne, Mereworth, Platt, Plaxtol, Wateringbury, Wouldham and Wrotham Parish Councils and Snodland Town Council.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Atkins and Balfour.

PART 1 - PUBLIC

**PPP
12/001 MINUTES**

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2011 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**PPP
12/002 UPDATE ON ANY ACTION IDENTIFIED IN THE LAST MINUTES**

There were no actions identified.

**PPP
12/003 COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT FUND**

The Chairman was pleased to announce that 100 organisations had been awarded Community Enhancement Funding in recognition of their contribution to the local community. Certificates were formally presented to representatives of five of the parish councils in receipt of this grant funding as follows: -

East Malling and Larkfield
East Peckham
Kings Hill
Leybourne
Wouldham

West Malling parish council had also received funding but were unable to attend the meeting to receive their certificate formally.

**PPP
12/004**

WEST KENT YMCA

Mr Marsh of the West Kent YMCA gave a presentation which provided an update and overview of local projects being undertaken. It was explained that the charity provided support to young people by offering training opportunities, safe and affordable accommodation and outreach services.

Vocational training was provided by the Horizon Project which aimed to give 'skills for life' in work and everyday living.

Outreach programmes called U Turn made learning accessible; whilst the Vehicle for Change programme gave opportunities to young people and built bridges with communities and local agencies.

The charity also sold donated unwanted furniture and electrical goods which provided a vehicle for employment and training. Information on the furniture and electrical re-use stores would be circulated with the Minutes and parishes were asked to promote this service in their parish magazines.

In response to a question from the Panel Mr Marsh confirmed that the charity worked with both genders and with people of all faiths and religions.

The Chairman thanked Mr Marsh for his informative and valuable contribution to the meeting.

**PPP
12/005**

POLICE LIAISON.

Chief Inspector Kirby, Borough Commander for Tonbridge and Malling, provided an overview of the achievements made in performance and in the neighbourhood policing agenda. Members were advised of a 5% reduction in all crime for the borough up to the end of February 2012, which was the lowest figure for five years.

It was noted that Tonbridge and Malling was the highest borough for anti-social behaviour satisfaction and that all crime had fallen month on month since September 2011.

In response to a question asked by Snodland Town Council, Chief Inspector Kirby was hopeful that funding for Police Community Support Officers for the Valley of Visions project would continue. It had been indicated that Heritage funding would continue until December 2012 and it was hoped that alternative funding opportunities could be found for the longer term future. In addition, Chief Inspector Kirby was pleased to report a 25% reduction in all crime for Snodland.

Members expressed an interest in hearing more details on how rural

crime was addressed and it was suggested that a presentation on this issue be given to a future meeting of the Panel.

The role of Kent Police in discharging core responsibilities when policing events was set out by Inspector Jones. It was reported that the police service was not the first point of reference for event organisers and could not authorise or ban events.

However, Kent Police would continue to support Safety Advisory Groups and the level of police resources committed would be proportionate to the assessment of risks and restricted to the core responsibilities of the service. Members were assured that Kent Police would continue to work closely with key agencies when looking at the safety of events.

Kent Police would no longer provide officers to control traffic within road closures, but would still conduct community engagement at local events and liaise with local authorities and event organisers to assist in a structured event planning process. Inspector Jones stressed that with adequate notice prior to an event appropriate advice and assistance would be given.

The Chairman thanked Chief Inspector Kirby and Inspector Jones for their contribution to the meeting.

**PPP
12/006**

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Member's attention was drawn to the briefing paper circulated and tabled prior to the meeting which attempted to address concerns regarding community events and parades on the public highway.

The main change to the current process was instead of police officers closing the road, the emphasis was on event organisers providing competent marshalls to maintain the traffic management that was put in place. Kent County Council Highways and Kent Police would verify the list of competent marshalls to ensure they were suitable for the role.

It was reported that no charges applied directly for the application and approval process for events on the public highway that used the Town Police Clauses Act administered by Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council. However, if as part of the event management plan traffic cones and signs were required, it was the responsibility of the event organiser to source the correct signage and traffic management.

The Chairman was pleased to announce the Borough Council's intention to purchase a supply of road traffic equipment for communities and parish councils to borrow.

Event organisers were advised to contact officers (Andy Edwards) at Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council with details of the proposed event. This would then be assessed to determine how the event should be progressed and details would be circulated to Kent County Council Highways and Transportation and Kent Police for comment.

In response to a question raised by Borough Green Parish Council it was confirmed that 'competent' persons were able to put out traffic cones and enact a road closure under the Town Police Clauses Act. Discussions were ongoing with Kent County Council to arrange training sessions.

Members discussed a variety of issues including cost implications for traffic management impacting on parish council budgets, the limited time available to plan for summer events and concerns surrounding public liability insurances.

In summary, event organisers should contact the Principal Engineer (Andy Edwards) at Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council who would offer advice and assistance as to the most appropriate route for progressing any necessary application.

The Central Services Director indicated that as from 8 March 2012 the necessary guidance, as well as the ability to complete application forms, would be available on the Borough Council's website. The website would also highlight a range of issues that event organisers might need to consider and provide the necessary contact details.

Copies of the briefing paper and the process tabled at the meeting would be circulated with the Minutes and available to view on-line in due course.

**PPP
12/007**

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL SERVICES UPDATE

The Central Services Director referred to a number of issues of interest. The headline messages included:

- Snow:

The Borough Council had been well prepared for the recent snow and the Central Services Director was pleased to report that all the leisure facilities and Tonbridge Gateway had remained open on Sunday 5 February. All offices were open for business as usual by 0830 hours on Monday 6 February. It was also noted that all refuse collections had been completed on Monday apart from four roads which had remained inaccessible. In addition, there had been many positive comments regarding road clearance.

- Olympic Torch Relay:

It had been announced that the Olympic Torch Relay would pass through Borough Green on Friday 20 July 2012 on route to the opening ceremony of the London 2012 Olympic Games.

- Youth Review:

The Central Services Director thanked colleagues at Kent County Council for their work on the recent review of Youth Service provision

and welcomed the broad engagement with interest groups via the Local Strategic Partnership, the Youth Forum and parish councils. The current proposals regarding youth service provision were mapped out and included a youth hub centre in Tonbridge and a potential partnership arrangement in Snodland. Work on these proposals was continuing in close liaison with the Borough and County Councils.

- Libraries Review:

Consultation on library services was due to start shortly, although further details were still awaited. However, Members were assured that parish councils, key groups and older and younger people would be consulted.

In addition, the Panel was reminded that the Borough Council operated surgeries providing a very valuable service to local residents at the libraries in Martin Square, Larkfield and Snodland.

- Larkfield Leisure Centre:

The Central Services Director was pleased to report a £100,000 investment to improve fitness facilities by the conversion of squash courts to provide space for classes of high demand, such as dance and exercise. This was an example of responding to the community and residents' requirements.

- Welfare Reform Act:

As further details emerged regarding the Welfare Reform Act any changes to Council Tax and Housing Benefits would be shared with the Parish Partnership Panel.

- Localism Act:

The Central Services Director advised that further guidance and clarity were still awaited. However, this was a large and diverse Act which would have implications across many Services. There would be changes in pre-determination on decision making and to the Standards regime. Information on both these aspects would be shared with parishes in due course.

The Central Services Director provided an update on the serious fire in East Peckham which had occurred overnight and advised that housing support and assistance had been given to the family. Temporary accommodation had been secured and this demonstrated the effective and co-ordinated working between various agencies, such as the Borough Council and Russet Homes.

In summing up, the Chairman noted the significant changes in how the Standards regime would operate and the need to consider a co-ordinated approach. Members were assured that all options would be reviewed and passed to parish councils for comment.

The Chairman thanked Kent County Council for the revised proposals

on youth service provision in the Borough. He believed this was as a result of more accurate information being available and thanked parish councils for their input.

Finally, the Chairman was pleased to announce plans to establish Joint Advisory Boards on subject specific matters as and when required. These Panels would provide joint working arrangements between the borough and county councils. Membership of the Panels would reflect the topics under consideration. Other agencies and parishes would be invited to participate as appropriate. The Kent County Councillor for Malling North supported the creation of the Joint Advisory Panel and looked forward to working with partner authorities to deliver appropriate services. It was recognised that good local arrangements were necessary and the intention of the Panel was to involve everyone.

Wrotham Parish Council referred to the upcoming meeting of the Standards Committee, scheduled for Monday 5 March, and expressed disappointment that further details on the options being considered had not been presented to this meeting of the Parish Partnership Panel as it was important for parish members to be aware of the changes. The Chairman explained that the regulations had not long been published and he anticipated that the Standards Committee would give this matter initial consideration prior to full engagement with the Parishes.

**PPP
12/008**

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL SERVICES UPDATE

The Kent County Council Community Engagement Officer (James Harman) reported on grants available for 2012/13 and advised that application forms would be available on-line from April 2012. It was also reported that the Kent County Council element of council tax would not increase.

Particular reference was made to the Big Society Fund, KCC Youth Services, foster carers and the Youth Opportunities Fund, details of which were available in the written report tabled prior to the meeting.

Parish councils were asked to promote foster carers in an effort to attract more volunteers to help children. People interested in fostering could telephone 0845 330 2968 or visit www.kent.gov.uk/fostering

The concerns surrounding the restructure and spending expenditure for Supporting People were noted and Members were assured that this would be looked at in liaison with key partners.

The Kent County Council Services Update presentation and report would be circulated with the Minutes and available to view on the website in due course.

**PPP
12/009**

BUDGET POSITION – GENERAL UPDATE

The Cabinet Member for Finance provided a general update regarding the Borough Council's budget position and set out the following key headline messages: -

- The budget for 2012/13 had been prepared on the basis of preserving services and supporting key priorities. However, even with the modest council tax increase of 2.9% there was still a significant contribution (£80K) from reserves to support the position.

- The target of achieving efficiency savings of at least £300k set by Cabinet had been fully met without affecting services. The Central Services Director was pleased to report that the Borough Council had achieved nearer to £500. This was mainly as a result of staffing and shared services but also freezing Members' Allowances had added to this figure.

- Members were reminded of the Council's previous commitment to setting up a fund of £500k for the Community Enhancement Fund, using the New Homes Bonus. This had been very successful and in 2012/13 the focus would be on Jubilee celebration events.

- The Central Services Director announced that a number of Capital Plan schemes would be progressed in 2012/13. These included the Car Park Enhancement Programme Phase 5; Larkfield Leisure Centre Dance/Exercise Studio; Tonbridge Swimming Pool Changing Village Floor; Racecourse Sportsground Improvements; Haysden Country Park Bridge Repairs; Open Spaces Site Improvements (Tonbridge) and Tonbridge Cemetery Path Improvements.

- Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council had been significantly affected by the cut in grant from Government. This represented a 28% reduction over two years and created a challenging position. It was emphasised that the Borough Council received the lowest grant allocation in Kent, which equated to approximately £35.49 per head of population compared to £69.17 for Thanet. It was noted that the South East average was £44 and this provided an important context to the Borough Council's budget position.

To help preserve services in 2012/13 the Borough Council was using 'reserves'. However, it was necessary to find further savings to reduce the impact of continuing external funding cuts. The Borough Council was facing broader challenges for the future but the current planning provided an opportunity to review and monitor the position.

The council tax for Tonbridge and Malling at Band D would be £176.90, an increase of £4.99 over 2011/12. This was less than 10p per week. Excluding parishes, because Kent County Council, police and fire had 'frozen', this represented an increase of 0.35% on overall bills. The Central Services Director explained that this was a minimal increase but necessary to ensure service provision continued.

The Chairman commented on the difficulties associated with Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council receiving the lowest government grant per head of population.

AIR QUALITY MONITORING

The Chief Environmental Health Officer reported that the Borough Council had a statutory duty to review and assess air quality within the local authority area and to develop and implement action plans to tackle local air pollution, when Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) were declared.

The demanding nature of the air quality regime prescribed by DEFRA and the constraints on councils in relation to air quality was given full consideration at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 10 January 2012. The recommendations from this meeting would be circulated with the Minutes and available to view on the website in due course.

Air quality in Tonbridge and Malling was typical of a borough with a mixed urban and rural environment. There were six AQMAs declared due to the exceedances of nitrogen dioxide related to road traffic. These were as follows:

- M20 - between New Hythe Lane and Hall Road
- A20 - Ditton at the Station Road/New Road junction
- Tonbridge High Street - south end
- Wateringbury crossroads - A26/B2015 junction
- A20 Aylesford - South Aylesford Retail Park junction
- A20 - New Hythe Lane junction

Particular reference was made to the recent detailed assessment for Borough Green which recommended the declaration of an AQMA. This would be submitted to DEFRA for verification.

The local Borough Council Member for Borough Green (Councillor T Sayer) felt that residents deserved protection from pollution, especially as it had the potential to be a health hazard, and strongly urged Kent County Council to reconsider their position regarding a relief road/bypass.

In response to a question previously raised by Borough Green Parish Council, the Chief Environmental Health Officer advised that there was no direct mechanism that would require or automatically lead to a review of the adopted Local Development Framework as the result of a change in the air quality control regime. However, it was a factor that would be taken into account as and when a new local plan for the borough was prepared.

Members expressed frustration at the Borough Council's inability to enforce the appropriate agencies to take action on air quality issues and believed it unfair to fine a local authority which had no ability to take action.

The meeting ended at 2215 hours