

## **TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **PARISH PARTNERSHIP PANEL**

**Thursday, 29th November, 2012**

**Present:** Cllr N J Heslop (Chairman), Cllr B J Luker (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Mrs J A Anderson, Cllr J Atkins, Cllr M A C Balfour, Cllr Mrs J M Bellamy, Cllr D Keeley, Cllr M Parry-Waller, Cllr H S Rogers and Cllr Mrs C J Woodger.

Councillors Baldock, Coffin, Dalton and Mrs Murray were also in attendance.

Together with Kent County Councillor Mrs Dagger (Malling West) and representatives from Kent Police, Addington, Borough Green, Burham, East Malling and Larkfield, East Peckham, Hadlow, Hildenborough, Kings Hill, Leybourne, Mereworth, Plaxtol, Stansted, Trottiscliffe, Waterringbury and Wrotham Parish Councils.

Apologies for absence were received from Borough Councillors Mrs Luck, Miss Moloney and Sayer; Kent County Councillors Mrs Hohler (Malling North) and Homewood (Malling Rural North East) and Ightham and Platt Parish Councils.

### **PART 1 - PUBLIC**

**PPP  
12/031**

#### **MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the meeting held on 6 September 2012 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to noting that Leybourne Parish Council had also voiced concerns regarding neighbourhood policing, promotion of surgeries and lack of police visibility.

The Chairman explained that verbatim minutes were not produced and it was not expected that this position should change. However, in future every effort would be made to highlight significant comments and concerns raised by individual parish councils.

**PPP  
12/032**

#### **UPDATE ON ANY ACTION IDENTIFIED IN THE LAST MINUTES**

The following actions were identified from the last Minutes:

- § Minute Number PPP12/023 - Parish Partnership Panel Agenda Planning:

It was confirmed by the Democratic Services Officer that parish councils and the Kent Association of Local Councils had been provided

with a 'forward planner' of meeting and agenda deadline dates. These had been included when the last Minutes were circulated.

In addition, Borough Green Parish Council referred to the new Standards regime and asked whether a Hearing Panel when dealing with a complaint against a parish council would have a parish council chairman.

In response, the Chairman advised that currently five parish councils had signed up to the new protocol proposed by the Borough Council. It was also understood that the Hearing Panel could determine its Chairman. The Kent Association of Local Councils confirmed that there was nothing to prevent a parish council who was on the panel from being elected to the Chair.

Borough Green Parish Council was satisfied with this clarification and confirmed their intention to sign up to the protocol

**PPP  
12/033**

### **POLICE LIAISON**

Chief Inspector Kirby, Borough Commander for Tonbridge and Malling, provided an overview of the achievements made in performance and the neighbourhood policing agenda. Members were advised of a 4.5% reduction in all crime in Tonbridge and Malling.

Particular reference was made to the local crime, policing and criminal justice website for England and Wales, [www.police.uk](http://www.police.uk), which provided information on street level crimes, outcome maps and data and details of local policing teams by entering a postcode, town or street name. A formal letter from local police inspectors setting out details of the website would be sent to parish councils and circulated with the Minutes.

Other key points highlighted included the introduction of legislation aimed at preventing scrap metal dealers using cash transactions and only allowing electronic payment or payment by cheque. Police powers had also been revised to enable entry, by warrant, into scrap metal yards to monitor whether the prohibition on cash payments was being complied with. Burham Parish Council commented that unscrupulous traders were likely to continue to use cash payments. Chief Inspector Kirby accepted that this was a likely scenario but new powers meant that checks could be undertaken. Finally, Chief Inspector Kirby agreed to look at how easy it was for scrap metal licences to be revoked and report back to a future meeting of the Panel.

A new pilot scheme would begin in North Kent during December/January which aimed to predict where crimes would take place by analysing human behaviour. Similar schemes in the United States had seen a 25% reduction in crime. If the pilot was successful it would be rolled out further.

The Chairman thanked Chief Inspector Kirby for his contribution to the meeting and questions were invited.

Kings Hill Parish Council asked about funding for Police Community Support Workers and was advised that the ringfencing for this money ended in March 2013. However, the Panel was cautioned that it was up to the new Police Crime Commissioner to decide where funding was directed. Further details would be known at the end of the current financial year.

**PPP  
12/034**

## **KENT COUNTY COUNCIL SERVICES UPDATE**

The Kent County Council Community Engagement Officer reported that County Councillors for Tonbridge and Malling had decided upon which applications had been successful for the Small Community Capital Grant and Local Schemes Grant funding. Over £250k worth of applications were submitted, all of a very high standard and funds were anticipated to be released in 2-3 weeks time.

New youth service arrangements were due to go live in January 2013 and would see organisations from the community and voluntary sector work with Kent County Council to run youth activities in the area. In addition, extra funding had been gained for new local projects via the Local Children's Trust Board.

Other key points highlighted included the end of the consultation into budget proposals, Kent Jobs for Young People and a new streamlined system for reapplying for concessionary bus passes.

Burham Parish Council queried the finish time for daily bus passes, feeling that 2300 hours was too early for those passengers wishing to have an evening's entertainment in town. The Community Engagement Manager offered to check if there was any flexibility regarding the finish time and would report back either out of or at the next meeting. Other comments raised regarding concessionary bus passes related to the amount of information required from the applicant, whether the application process could be simplified and whether these could be dealt with via a 'one stop shop' either at Tonbridge Gateway or library. Members also suggested that the library at Martin Square, Larkfield be considered as a venue to apply for bus passes. These issues were noted by the Community Engagement Manager and would be updated subsequently.

In response to West Malling Parish Council, the Community Engagement Officer advised that a publicity campaign to raise public awareness would start in January 2013. In addition, in response to Leybourne Parish Council it was confirmed that Kent County Council funded concessionary bus fares.

East Peckham Parish Council asked if Kent County Council had a policy to address light pollution. It was confirmed that there was a policy in place but Members were reminded that the County did not own all the streetlights and these could vary.

Finally, Kings Hill Parish Council referred to the consultation on the expansion of the Discovery School and the recent meeting held on 27 November 2012 seeking the views of the community. It was reported that an overwhelming majority of local residents preferred to have two forms as part of the consultation document. A copy of the Tonbridge and Malling response to the consultation would be shared with the parish council. It was also confirmed that there was no restriction on the size of the development.

The Kent County Council Services update presentation would be circulated with the Minutes and available on the website.

**PPP  
12/035**

### **WINTER MAINTENANCE AND PLANNING**

Reference was made to a written report, tabled prior to the meeting, which outlined the arrangements made between Kent County Council and Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council to provide a local winter service in the event of severe weather.

Information on how residents could help themselves was available on

[www.kent.gov.uk/roads\\_and\\_transport/highway\\_maintenance/winter\\_maintenance\\_and\\_repairs/tonbridge\\_and\\_malling\\_winter\\_s.aspx](http://www.kent.gov.uk/roads_and_transport/highway_maintenance/winter_maintenance_and_repairs/tonbridge_and_malling_winter_s.aspx)

Details of salting routes and other information on Winter Service for Tonbridge and Malling was also available and parish councils were encouraged to look at the website.

**PPP  
12/036**

### **COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME**

The Director of Finance reported that, following the recent Government consultation on the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, billing authorities would be instructed to issue parish councils with their adjusted taxbase as was originally set out at the beginning rather than the unadjusted taxbase as suggested in the consultation paper.

To provide context and remind Members of the current position the Revenue and Benefits Manager gave a presentation on the Council Tax Reduction Scheme. There had been an excellent response to the consultation with the majority of participants agreeing that a reduction of 18.5% in council tax support was fair. This option had been agreed by Council on 21 November 2012.

The Borough Council had also agreed to apply for transitional funding from the Government. However, local authorities would not know if they had been successful until March 2013. Parish councils were advised that Tonbridge and Malling would honour the commitment even if the bid for transitional funding was not successful. It was noted that with transitional funding the average loss would equate to circa £1.72 per week for Band D, whilst without transitional funding the average loss would be circa £3.73 per week for a Band D property. There were currently no proposals regarding transitional funding from 2014/15 onwards.

Finally, the Director of Finance set out the effect on parishes and reiterated that each parish council's tax base would be reduced to reflect the discounts given for council tax support. It was explained that each parish council would be affected differently because of the spread of benefit claimants. However, the Borough Council would pass over to parishes a share of the grant received from central Government, with each parishes share calculated based upon the discounts applicable to that parish and the level of council tax charged. It was stressed that the calculation would be fair and transparent. In addition, parishes would benefit from the removal of the 10% second homes discount; the removal of the 10% for long-term empty properties and the reduction to three months for 'Class C' properties.

The exact figures allocated by Government would not be known until 19 December but the Borough Council intended to calculate an estimate of the grant for each parish and advise when the taxbases were issued in early/mid December. Following receipt of figures on 19 December a 'final' grant figure would be provided.

All parish councils present recognised the tight deadlines for setting precepts and expressed concern at the timescales. The Director of Finance said that in the circumstances she was suggesting 25 January 2013 as the 'deadline'.

One of the main concerns voiced by the parish councils revolved around whether they were included in the council tax capping regime, as rumours had suggested a 2% target. There remained confusion regarding the Government's intention although it was difficult to see how council tax 'capping' for parish councils could be introduced without notice.

The presentation provided would be circulated to all parish councils for information.

**PPP  
12/037**

## **ASSETS OF COMMUNITY VALUE**

The report of the Chief Executive set out the details of the Government's recently introduced Community Right to Bid. This gave town/parish councils and local community groups the opportunity to nominate a local site or building to be included on a register of 'assets of community value'. The process for nominating an asset to the register was set out in the report.

It was explained that the inclusion of any asset on the register did not provide a right for a town/parish council or community group to acquire the property.

Before parish and town councils took the opportunity to make nominations to the register it was recommended that Government guidance was considered carefully. This was available from the following link:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/2229703.pdf>

Finally, the Borough Council's online nomination form and further guidance was available on:

<http://www.tmbc.gov.uk/services/community-and-living/community-advice/community-engagement>

In response to East Malling and Larkfield Parish Council it was confirmed that community groups could serve notice in respect of parish council land if it met the necessary criteria. For example, if Leybourne Lakes were listed the Borough Council would have to observe the rules governing disposal.

In addition, it was noted that any challenges to decisions should be directed towards officers as they had responsibility for what was listed on the register.

Kings Hill Parish Council thanked the Planning Policy Manager for his help and now had all the information they required.

**PPP  
12/038**

## **TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL SERVICES UPDATE**

The Director of Finance provided an update on recent events and referred to a number of key points of interest. The headline messages included:

### § Senior Staff Restructure:

It was reported that David Hughes would be leaving Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council for a new position at Gravesham Borough Council. From February 2013 the new Chief Executive would be Julie Beilby.

Information on lead responsibilities from 1 February 2013 was tabled and would be circulated with the Minutes.

It was noted that there would be a further reshuffle following the retirement of the Director of Health and Housing in May 2013, with the Director of Planning, Transport and Leisure assuming responsibility for housing and some environmental health services. The Chief Leisure Officer would become the Director of Street Scene from this date.

### § Housing Allocations Scheme Consultation

The Housing Allocations Scheme was in the process of being drafted and consultation was expected in the New Year. Details of this would be available on the website.

The Parish Partnership Panel recognised and appreciated the contribution and commitment of David Hughes during his time at

Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council, particularly as Chief Executive, and asked that their thanks be formally recorded.

The meeting ended at 2120 hours