

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL



EXECUTIVE SERVICES

Chief Executive

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NB - This agenda contains proposals, recommendations and options. These do not represent Council policy or decisions until they have received proper consideration through the full decision making process.

Contact: Committee Services
committee.services@tmbc.gov.uk

10 February 2016

To: MEMBERS OF THE PARISH PARTNERSHIP PANEL
(Copies to all Members of the Council)

Dear Sir/Madam

Your attendance is requested at a meeting of the Parish Partnership Panel to be held in the Civic Suite, Gibson Building, Kings Hill, West Malling on Thursday, 18th February, 2016 commencing at 7.30 pm

Yours faithfully

JULIE BEILBY

Chief Executive

A G E N D A

Part 1 - Public

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| 2. | Minutes | 7 - 10 |

To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Parish Partnership Panel held on 19 November 2015

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| 5. | Solar Feed-in Tariff | 15 - 16 |
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DISTRIBUTION

Borough Council Representatives

Cllr N J Heslop (Chairman)
Cllr M A Coffin (Vice-Chairman)
Cllr Mrs J A Anderson
Cllr Mrs S M Barker
Cllr R P Betts
Cllr T I B Cannon
Cllr R W Dalton
Cllr Mrs S M Hall
Cllr S M Hammond
Cllr D Lettington
Cllr D Markham
Cllr R V Roud
Cllr T B Shaw

Parish and Town Council Representatives

Addington Parish Council
Aylesford Parish Council
Birling Parish Council
Borough Green Parish Council
Burham Parish Council
Ditton Parish Council
East Malling and Larkfield Parish Council
East Peckham Parish Council
Hadlow Parish Council
Hildenborough Parish Council
Ightham Parish Council
Kings Hill Parish Council
Leybourne Parish Council
Mereworth Parish Council
Offham Parish Council
Platt Parish Council
Plaxtol Parish Council
Ryarsh Parish Council
Shipbourne Parish Council
Snodland Town Council
Stansted Parish Council
Trottscliffe Parish Council
Wateringbury Parish Council
West Malling Parish Council
West Peckham Parish Council
Wouldham Parish Council
Wrotham Parish Council

County Councillors

Valerie Dagger, Malling West
Trudy Dean, Malling Central
Matthew Balfour, Malling Rural East
Sarah Hohler, Malling North
Peter Homewood, Malling Rural North East

Apologies for absence

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TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

PARISH PARTNERSHIP PANEL

Thursday, 19th November, 2015

Present: Cllr N J Heslop (Chairman), Cllr M A Coffin (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Mrs J A Anderson, Cllr Mrs S M Barker, Cllr R P Betts, Cllr T I B Cannon, Cllr R W Dalton, Cllr S M Hammond, Cllr D Lettington, Cllr D Markham, Cllr R V Roud and Cllr T B Shaw.

Together with Addington, Birling, Borough Green, Burham, East Peckham, Hadlow, Hildenborough, Kings Hill, Platt, Plaxtol, Shipbourne, Snodland, Wateringbury and Wrotham Parish and Town Councils and County Councillors Mrs S Hohler and Mr P Homewood.

Councillors S C Perry and H S Rogers were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mrs S M Hall and from Mrs P Darby of Platt Parish Council.

PART 1 - PUBLIC

PPP 15/16 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

PPP 15/17 UPDATE ON ACTION IDENTIFIED IN THE LAST MINUTES

There were no items identified.

PPP 15/18 SAVINGS AND TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY

The Chairman provided an update on the Council's Savings and Transformation Strategy which had been presented to the Cabinet meeting held on 17 November 2015. He outlined the significant financial challenges facing the Borough Council with particular reference to the need to find a further £1.4 million savings in addition to the £2.8 million achieved over the last number of years. He advised that details of the Savings and Transformation Strategy were available on the Council's website.

The Vice-Chairman advised that the Borough Council hoped to identify new income opportunities by taking a more commercial approach to asset management, reviewing contracts when due for renewal, reviewing fees and charges, reducing or changing standards of service and reviewing the organisational structure to assess whether service

delivery could be realigned, improved or changed. He advised that partnership funding and funding provided to parish and town councils and voluntary organisations would also be reviewed.

PPP 15/19 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MATTERS

The report of the Chief Executive provided an update on the current Overview and Scrutiny Committee review into how the Borough Council engaged with parish and town councils and local community groups. The Panel noted that the findings of the short questionnaire completed by the parish councils had been considered at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Review Group on 6 October 2015 and that the Review Group's recommendations would be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 26 January 2016. The Panel noted that the Parish Charter required revisiting as the last review had been undertaken in 2008. The Chairman advised that a general review of the format and frequency of the Borough Council's meetings was ongoing but indicated that Cabinet had resolved to defer a decision on the Area Planning Committee structure for further investigation. He thanked the parish councils for their comments on this matter.

The Chairman encouraged the parish and town councils to respond to the consultations on the Review of the Holiday Activity Programme and the Review of Fees and Charges.

PPP 15/20 COMMUNITY EMERGENCY PLANNING

The Head of Technical Services provided guidance on the contribution expected from parish and town councils when an emergency, such as flooding, arose within the Borough. He outlined the guidance, training and support provided by the Borough and County Councils to identify and promote community emergency plans which, in turn, would inform the wider emergency plans. He advised that assistance with the development of Community Emergency Plans was available on the Council's website and that he would ask the Kent Resilience Team to contact parish councils directly to encourage them to undertake a community emergency plan. In addition, it was noted that a Community Emergency Plan template was available by emailing andy.edwards@tmbc.gov.uk

PPP 15/21 COMMUNITY EVENT ROAD CLOSURES

In response to a question raised by Borough Green Parish Council regarding the procedures required for Community Event Road Closures, the Head of Technical Services presented the response of the Licensing and Community Safety Manager which clarified the role of the Safety Advisory Group and the scope of the Town Police Clauses Act 1847. Borough Green Parish Council clarified that it was not concerned about the legal requirements but rather the 'bureaucracy' involved in producing an event plan and risk assessment for the various elements of each

event. The Head of Technical Services advised that the Event Plan had to be 'current' and suggested that it would be a simple task to copy and update a previous plan to ensure this if the event planning remained unchanged. Any changes to the event would need to be reflected in revised documentation.

PPP 15/22 KENT COUNTY COUNCIL SERVICES UPDATE

The Kent County Council Community Engagement Manager (Anne Charman) reported on a number of County Council initiatives and consultations contained in the update report which had been circulated as a supplementary report in advance of the meeting.

PPP 15/23 TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL SERVICES UPDATE

The Director of Finance and Transformation provided an update on key points relevant to Tonbridge and Malling. The headline messages included:-

- Christmas Refuse Collection Arrangements
- Recycling arrangements over the Christmas period
- Economic Development Activity in respect of upcoming Business Workshops and promotion of Local Retail Centres.

PPP 15/24 NEXT MEETING - THURSDAY 18 FEBRUARY 2016

It was noted that, while the meeting scheduled to be held on 18 February 2016 would focus on Community Safety and Crime Prevention, parish councils were encouraged to submit details of any other items they wished to raise.

The meeting ended at 9.00 pm

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Agenda Item 3

Update on action identified in the last Minutes

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Agenda Item 4

- Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2014
- Crime Prevention Panel
- Tonbridge and Malling Community Safety Unit (to include how ongoing anti-social behaviour is reported back to Town and Parish Councils (raised by Kings Hill Parish Council))
- Community Safety Partnership and crime statistic reports
- Kent Police Services Update

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Agenda Item 5

Solar Feed-in Tariff

(raised by Kent Association of Local Councils – Tonbridge and Malling)

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Agenda Item 6

Kent County Council Soft Landscaping Proposal

(raised by Kent Association of Local Councils - Tonbridge and Malling)

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TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

PARISH PARTNERSHIP PANEL

18 February 2016

Report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Services

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 TONBRIDGE AND MALLING LOCAL PLAN AND PLANNING REFORMS UPDATE

This report provides an update for the Parish Partnership Panel on important progress made towards the preparation of the Local Plan and also recent Government Planning Reforms.

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Progress towards the preparation of the Local Plan for Tonbridge and Malling and the Government's ongoing programme of Planning Reforms are regularly reported to the Borough Council's Planning and Transportation Advisory Board, most recently on 12th January 2016. Both of these reports are appended for information.

1.1.2 Since the Planning Reform report was written, the deadline for commenting on the Government's consultation into proposed changes to national planning policy has been extended to the 22nd of February from 25th January.

1.1.3 There has also been an amendment to the Bill to allow for the outsourcing of the processing of planning applications. New clause 43 proposes that pilot schemes be established enabling applicants to choose how they would like their application processed. This opens the way for third parties to bid to process applications, although the Local Planning Authority would retain the decision making function.

1.1.4 The Housing and Planning Bill, at the time of writing this report, is entering the Committee stages in the House of Lords. It is anticipated that the Bill will receive the Royal assent in April or May this year.

Background papers:

Nil

contact: Ian Bailey
Planning Policy Manager

Louise Reid
Head of Planning

Steve Humphrey
Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health

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TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING and TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD

12 January 2016

Report of the Director of Housing, Planning and Environmental Health Services
Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 LOCAL PLAN PROGRAMME AND PROGRESS

This report provides an update on Local Plan progress including the assessments of the sites submitted as part of the Call for Sites exercise, the programme for preparing the Plan and Duty to Cooperate issues.

1.1 Local Plan Progress

1.1.1 Since the last meeting of the Board in September, significant progress has been made in meeting with external consultees and infrastructure providers as part of the technical assessments of the sites submitted under the Call for Sites exercise, which closed on the 1st September.

1.1.2 Members will recall that the purpose of these assessments is to confirm whether the sites that have been proposed for meeting future needs over the plan period are suitable, available and achievable in accordance with National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG), which can be summarised as follows:

1.1.3 Suitability

1.1.4 The suitability assessment involves considering the site and the uses proposed or alternatively any other uses that the site could deliver. The assessment is guided by local development plan policies (existing and emerging) and National policy.

1.1.5 Other relevant factors in determining a site's suitability include:

- Physical limitations or problems such as access, infrastructure, ground conditions, flood risk, hazardous risks, pollution or contamination;
- Potential impacts including the effect upon landscapes, nature and heritage conservation;

- The appropriateness and likely market attractiveness for the type of development proposed;
- Environmental and amenity impacts that may be experienced by future occupiers and neighbouring areas.

1.1.6 Availability

1.1.7 A site is considered available for development, when, on the best information available (confirmed by the call for sites and information from land owners and legal searches where appropriate), there is confidence that there are no legal or ownership problems, such as unresolved multiple ownerships, ransom strips tenancies or operational requirements of landowners. This will often mean that the land is controlled by a developer or landowner who has expressed an intention to develop, or the landowner has expressed an intention to sell.

1.1.8 Because persons do not need to have an interest in the land to make planning applications, the existence of a planning permission does not necessarily mean that the site is available.

1.1.9 Where potential problems have been identified, an assessment will need to be made as to how and when they can realistically be overcome. Consideration should also be given to the delivery record of the developers or landowners putting forward sites, and whether the planning background of a site shows a history of unimplemented permissions.

1.1.10 Achievability

1.1.11 A site is considered achievable for development where there is a reasonable prospect that the particular type of development will be developed on the site at a particular point in time. This is essentially a judgement about the economic viability of a site, and the capacity of the developer to complete the development over a certain period.

1.1.12 An important consideration for assessing the viability of a site is the development potential. The outline of a site does not necessarily mean that all of the area within is developable as there might be physical constraints or part of the site might be needed to provide infrastructure, such as a new school for example. The nature and scale of development will be another factor when considering development potential and viability.

1.1.13 Where constraints have been identified, the assessment should consider what action would be needed to remove them (along with when and how this could be undertaken and the likelihood of sites/broad locations being delivered). Actions might include the need for investment in new infrastructure, dealing with fragmented land ownership, environmental improvement, or a need to review development plan policy.

1.1.14 When these assessments have been completed sites that meet the criteria can be included in the Strategic Land Availability Assessment and published as part of the Local Plan evidence base. Inclusion in the SLAA does not mean that a site will be allocated in the Local Plan. That will be determined as part of the preferred development strategy, which will start to emerge as part of the Issues and Options stage accompanied by public consultations in the spring.

1.2 Local Plan Programme

1.2.1 Work is continuing on the assessments and these are currently on schedule to be completed in the spring in accordance with the Local Plan programme.

1.2.2 However, there remain a number of factors beyond the Council's control that may yet have an impact on the timetable. This includes the contribution of key infrastructure providers and statutory consultees to the assessment process and the ongoing Government Planning reforms, which are continuously changing aspects of Local Plan work and are the subject of another report on this agenda.

1.2.3 Meetings have now been held with all of the main infrastructure providers and statutory consultees and information on the submitted sites has been shared. Their responses could have important implications for the tests outlined earlier in this report, for example, if a site requires major investment in strategic infrastructure to deliver new homes or jobs during the plan period, this may make it unviable. Similarly, some of the statutory consultees may have emerging information on constraints that may reduce the developable area of a site, for example the Environment Agency in respect of flood risk.

1.2.4 Some of those consulted in this way have had experience of providing this information and have the in house capacity to respond in time. Others are less prepared for this task and some, (for example Highways England) are seeking additional studies to be carried out before coming to a view. Officers are discussing practical ways forward in respect of highway matters with Kent Highways.

1.2.5 Another risk to the Local Plan programme is the continuing planning reform agenda. One example of how this might impact on the programme is in respect of the revisions to the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS) published in August 2015. One of the amendments was to change the planning definition of Traveller to demonstrate evidence of a nomadic lifestyle either now or in the future.

1.2.6 Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments (GTAA's) form part of the Local Plan evidence base and identify future needs for pitches for Traveller families and plots for Travelling Show People. The GTAA for Tonbridge and Malling was prepared by Salford University in 2012 based on a methodology that reflected the PPTS as published in March of that year. The change to the definition in August last year means that the GTAA is no longer in accordance with national policy.

- 1.2.7 The Government has not yet announced when it will reissue new guidance for preparing GTAAs and in the meantime Local Planning Authorities face a stark choice of either continuing with their current GTAAs, which may now represent an over estimate of need, or revising their GTAA in the absence of new guidance at an additional cost and delay.
- 1.2.8 The Government has also made it clear that it wishes to see all future needs addressed in Local Plans, rather than through separate Development Plan Documents. It has also stated that Local Plans should be prepared as soon as practicably possible and ideally no later than 2017, so Local Planning Authorities will have to interpret the new PPTS as best they can.
- 1.2.9 Swale Borough Council has recently suggested an approach through its Local Plan Examination, which was praised by the Inspector although with the caveat that this is in the absence of new guidance on GTAAs and has not been tested. Swale revisited the survey data from their original GTAA and has taken a view on whether some of those respondents had ceased travelling or not. This has resulted in a downward revision of the need for additional pitches.
- 1.2.10 Following the Inspector's comments at the Swale Examination, the Kent Planning Officers Group submitted a letter to the DCLG seeking an opinion on how best to proceed. It is hoped that the Swale Inspector's report and a response from the DCLG may clarify the approach to be adopted in the Tonbridge and Malling Local Plan. This illustrates the challenges faced by plan makers during ongoing planning reforms.

1.3 Duty to Cooperate

- 1.3.1 Officers and Members have continued to meet and maintain a dialogue with neighbouring authorities regularly to update on Local Plan progress and discuss relevant cross boundary issues in accordance with the Duty. To date no neighbouring Local Authority has formally asked whether Tonbridge and Malling could accommodate any unmet need for general housing or employment.
- 1.3.2 However, related to the issue of assessing the needs of Gypsies and Travellers discussed in the previous section, Maidstone Borough Council have formally asked their neighbours, including Tonbridge and Malling, if they can meet some of their unmet need.
- 1.3.3 Maidstone revisited their GTAA survey findings in the light of the revised definition for Travellers, but concluded that the original need (for 187 pitches between 2011-31) represents the best assessment available, whilst recognising that actual needs may be lower. This has resulted in a shortfall of 45 pitches.
- 1.3.4 I have responded initially by simply saying that it is not possible, at the current time, to confirm whether there may or may not be any allocations for this type of development in the emerging Tonbridge and Malling Local Plan. As noted in section 1.2.10 above, clarification of how best to assess future needs in the light

of the changes to the PPTS is awaited and this may result in a lower need than in the current GTAA.

- 1.3.5 Similarly, until the assessments of Call for Sites submissions are completed, it is too early to confirm whether any may be suitable for future Gypsy and Traveller accommodation.
- 1.3.6 Maidstone Borough Council will be taking a report to their Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transport Committee on the 13th January seeking approval to consult on a submission version of their Local Plan (Regulation 19). This may explain why the request has been made at this time (i.e. to demonstrate that all avenues have been explored).

1.4 Summary and Conclusions

- 1.4.1 This report provides Members with an update on progress made in relation to the Local Plan and sets out in some more detail the process for the technical assessments of the sites submitted, which is ongoing.
- 1.4.2 It is anticipated that the work will be completed in accordance with the programme for the Local Plan, which coincides with an Issues and Options public consultation in the spring. There are challenges to keeping to the programme including inputs from external consultees and continuing reforms to the planning system and some of these have been explained in the report.
- 1.4.3 The Local Plan is being prepared in accordance with the Duty to Cooperate. The first formal request from a neighbouring authority in respect of unmet Gypsy and Traveller need from Maidstone Borough Council was received in December.

1.5 Legal Implications

- 1.5.1 Local Planning Authorities are required to prepare and keep up to date a development plan for their area. Failure to do so may leave the Council's planning decision at risk of appeal.

1.6 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.6.1 There are no financial and value for money considerations arising from this information report.

Background papers:

Nil

contact: Ian Bailey
Planning Policy Manager

Steve Humphrey

Director of Housing, Planning and Environmental Health Services

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TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING and TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD

12 January 2016

Report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health Services
Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision (Decision may be taken by the Cabinet Member)

1 PLANNING REFORMS

This report updates Members of the Board on the ongoing programme of Government Planning Reforms and seeks endorsement of a suggested response to a Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) consultation on proposed changes to national planning policy published in December.

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Since the last update to the Board in September there have been a significant number of proposals for further reforms to the planning system including the Housing and Planning Bill, which is summarised in this report for information. In addition, responses have been sought by the DCLG to a consultation on proposed changes to national planning policy for which the deadline is the 25th January. **[ANNEX 1]** to this report sets out the 22 questions with proposed responses for endorsement.

1.2 A Summary of Recent Planning Reforms

1.2.1 The Housing and Planning Bill

1.2.2 At the time of writing, the Housing and Planning Bill (previously described as the Housing Bill in the Queen's Speech in May 2015) had reached the Committee stage in the House of Commons. The Bill contains a number of significant legislative changes for the planning system including:

1.2.3 Planning Permission in Principle (PPIP)

1.2.4 PPIP is a new form of automatic consent intended to offer developers more certainty. The Government proposes that PPIP be granted in one of two ways, the

first is on adoption of a qualifying document that allocates specified kinds of sites, the second route is by application from a developer to the Local Planning Authority (effectively an outline planning consent).

- 1.2.5 In future, Local or Neighbourhood Plans or new Brownfield Registers (also proposed in the Bill) may have land allocations, which effectively already have outline planning permission (initially only for housing, but other uses may be added). Detailed matters would be addressed as part of a 'Technical Details Consent' and proposals may still be refused in the light of these, but the principle of development would be established.
- 1.2.6 Register of Brownfield Land
- 1.2.7 The Bill introduces a new requirement on Local Planning Authorities to compile and keep up to date a new Brownfield Register of previously developed land suitable for housing. The Secretary of State will set out criteria for including land on the Register (for example, sites should have a reasonable expectation for delivering 5 or more dwellings in the near future) and national and local planning policies will also have to be taken into consideration, so if, for example, a site is designated in a Local Plan for employment uses, it would not have to be included on the Register as being suitable for housing.
- 1.2.8 Starter Homes
- 1.2.9 Two new duties are proposed for local authorities in the Bill specifically in relation to Starter Homes, the government initiative whereby new-build houses will be available to first-time buyers under the age of 40 at a discount from the market rate. The first is a general duty to promote the supply of Starter Homes when planning functions are being carried out - for example, when preparing local plans and determining applications - and the second is a specific duty in relation to decisions on planning applications.
- 1.2.10 The specific duty will be a requirement to ensure that Starter Homes are delivered "on all reasonably sized sites", the Government says. Secondary legislation will set out the percentage of Starter Homes that will be required on different sizes of site and in different areas. Local Authorities will be able to exercise discretion where it is clear that the requirement would make sites unviable. If a council is failing to comply with its Starter Homes duties and a policy in its Local Plan is incompatible with these duties, the Secretary of State may prevent the application of that policy when certain planning decisions are taken.
- 1.2.11 Enhanced powers for the Secretary of State to intervene in plan-making and examinations
- 1.2.12 The Government argues that the Secretary of State's current powers of intervention are unhelpful because they only allow plan-making to be taken over in its entirety. Instead, it wants to enable "more targeted and proportionate intervention".

1.2.13 It is proposed that the Secretary of State will, in future, be able to instruct a Local Planning Authority to undertake the following specific tasks:

- Prepare or revise a Local Plan;
- Submit the Plan to independent examination;
- Publish the recommendations of the inspector; and consider whether or not to adopt.

1.2.14 The Secretary of State will also be able to:

- Direct that a Plan is submitted to him or her for approval;
- Set out what is to happen following an intervention; and
- Issue a "holding direction" to a Local Planning Authority, preventing it taking any step in connection with the adoption of a Plan while the Secretary of State decides whether or not to intervene.

1.2.15 This expansion of ministerial powers will also extend to the examination process. Under the Bill, the Secretary of State will be able to:

- Direct inspectors to suspend the examination;
- Consider specified matters; hear from specified persons; or
- Take other, as yet unspecified, procedural steps.

1.2.16 Enhanced powers for the Secretary of State to intervene in the neighbourhood plan process

1.2.17 As with Local Plans, the Bill enhances the role of the Secretary of State in neighbourhood planning, paving the way for a range of new powers.

1.2.18 In relation to applications to delineate a neighbourhood area, the Secretary of State will be able to order local authorities to designate the entire area applied for if the application fulfils certain criteria or has not been determined within a prescribed period, subject to specific exceptions. This is an alteration to existing law, under which local authorities only have to designate "at least some of the area applied for", and will enable subsequent regulations to introduce automatic designations for neighbourhood area applications in certain circumstances.

1.2.19 The Secretary of State will also be able to set time limits for local authorities to decide whether to hold a neighbourhood plan referendum, and to set a date by which a local authority must make a neighbourhood plan that has been approved at referendum, except where the council thinks this would breach international obligations or rights. Currently, local authorities only have to do this "as soon as reasonably practicable after the referendum is held".

1.2.20 Extension of areas of poor performance

1.2.21 Under the Bill, developers will be able to submit planning applications for non-major developments to the Planning Inspectorate in cases where the local authority has a track record of very poor performance in the speed or quality of its decision-making. Currently, local authorities may be designated for poor performance in relation to major developments only.

1.2.22 Information about financial benefits

1.2.23 A new duty will be placed on local authorities to set out publicly the potential financial benefits of certain development proposals when considering whether to grant planning permission. Under this measure, officers' reports on non-delegated applications will be required to include a list of financial benefits that are likely to be obtained by the local authority as a result of the proposed development if it is carried out, "so far as is reasonably possible".

1.2.24 A financial benefit will have to be recorded regardless of whether it is material to an authority's decision on a planning application, but the officer will need to indicate their opinion as to whether the benefit is material or not.

1.2.25 Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs)

1.2.26 Housing schemes are currently excluded from consideration in NSIP applications, but the Bill will enable development consent for homes to be granted under this regime, provided they are linked in some way to a qualifying infrastructure project. Further guidance will set out details of this provision, but the Government states that it will include housing that is "functionally linked" to the infrastructure project, such as homes required for workers during the construction phase of such a project or key workers during operation. It will also apply where there is no functional link but there is a "close geographical link" between the housing and infrastructure project. Developers of such projects will still have the option of applying for the housing element of the scheme via the conventional planning application route.

1.2.27 Self-build and custom housebuilding

1.2.28 The Bill introduces a new duty on local authorities to grant planning permission for serviced plots sufficient to meet the demand for self-build and custom housebuilding in their areas. This demand will be evidenced by the number of people on the registers that are to be created and maintained by local authorities under the Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015.

1.2.29 Assessment of housing needs revised.

1.2.30 The Bill removes the duty on local authorities to assess the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers in their area as a distinct category. Instead, it instructs local authorities to consider the needs of all people residing in or resorting to their area regardless of status.

1.2.31 **General Observations on the Bill**

1.2.32 The general thrust of the reforms proposed in the Housing and Planning Bill are aimed at increasing the delivery of housing by reducing planning requirements and controls. There are additional proposals to encourage home ownership through the delivery of starter homes and further measures designed to speed up the Local plan and neighbourhood plan making processes. As is often the case with emerging legislation, much of the detail will be reserved for accompanying regulations, planning guidance and Ministerial statements, but the recently launched consultation, which is the subject of the rest of this report, provides some indication of what that detail might look like.

1.2.33 At the heart of the Government's reform agenda is the objective to increase the supply of housing and in particular 'affordable' home ownership for the under 40s through the starter homes initiative. The relentless reform agenda suggests that the planning system is still seen as part of the problem rather than the solution as evidenced by the continuing relaxation of controls and the proposals to speed up the process.

1.2.34 Ironically the reforms are not helping with the plan-making process as the constant changes have to be carefully considered and taken on board. The Planning magazine has reported that the Bill represents '*..possibly the most radical and wide-ranging piece of planning legislation for a generation*'. In contrast paragraph 58 of the consultation on proposed changes to national planning policy states:

'We do not intend that these policy proposals should slow down the preparation of existing Local Plans.'

1.2.35 **Consultation on Proposed Changes to National Planning Policy**

1.2.36 The Government published a consultation document on the 7th December with responses sought by 25th January 2016. The proposals are summarised below and the suggested responses can be found at **[ANNEX 1]**.

1.2.37 Views are invited to the proposed changes to the following areas of national planning policy:

- The definition of affordable housing;
- Making better use of land around commuter hubs by increasing densities;

- Supporting sustainable new settlements, development on brownfield and small sites through Local Plans; and
- Supporting the delivery of starter homes.

1.2.38 Changes to the definition of affordable housing

1.2.39 The current definition of affordable housing for planning purposes is set out in **[ANNEX 2]** to the National Planning Policy Framework and includes social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing for sale (including shared equity and shared ownership models), provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. The definition includes a requirement that the housing should remain affordable or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision.

1.2.40 The Government wishes to change the definition so that it encompasses a fuller range of products that can support people to access home ownership. The definition would still include options for rent, but some products would no longer be subject to in perpetuity restrictions or have recycled subsidy. This effectively paves the way to include starter homes as part of the definition of affordable housing (see section 1.2.8 above). The provision of Starter Homes will very likely be to the detriment of the supply of Affordable Rented and Shared Ownership homes. It is unclear to what degree Starter Homes can address our most urgent housing need, and they are absent as a tenure from our SHMA.

1.2.41 Views are sought on proposed transitional arrangements to review existing and introduce new policy to reflect the changes to the affordable housing definition. Six to twelve months is suggested.

1.2.42 Increasing residential density around commuter hubs.

1.2.43 Local Planning Authorities would be expected in future to require higher densities around commuter hubs where feasible. No minimum density is proposed – that would be for the Local Planning Authority to determine, although in assessing how many extra homes could be delivered in this way the Government has looked at increasing average densities around existing hubs from 34 dwellings per hectare to 40. Commuter hubs are described as a public transport interchange and has or is likely to have a frequent service (at least every 15 minutes during normal commuting hours). This would include Tonbridge for example.

1.2.44 Supporting new settlements, development on brownfield and small sites through Local Plans

1.2.45 Proposals under this heading include strengthening national planning policy to provide a more supportive approach for new settlements within Local Plans (i.e. new, larger scale developments or urban extensions to meet housing needs).

- 1.2.46 Amendments to national planning policy are also proposed to support the measures emerging in the Housing and Planning Bill to prioritise the use of brownfield land in meeting future housing needs. This would in effect be a presumption in favour of using brownfield land for housing, unless there are overriding conflicts with the Local Plan or national planning policy.
- 1.2.47 This presumption in favour would be extended to small sites of less than 10 dwellings provided that they are within existing settlement boundaries and well designed. Garden developments would not be included in this presumption. Sites adjacent to settlement boundaries would also be carefully considered and supported if they are sustainable.
- 1.2.48 Ensuring housing is delivered on land allocated in Local Plans
- 1.2.49 This proposal is aimed at improving delivery of sites already allocated in Local Plans. A new housing delivery test is proposed, which would measure the number of new homes actually delivered against Local Plan targets over a two year period to overcome peaks and troughs. If a pattern of significant under delivery is identified over a sustained period action would need to be taken to address this, possibly in the form of identifying a range of additional, sustainable sites, possibly including new settlements as proposed in 1.2.40 above.
- 1.2.50 Supporting the delivery of starter homes
- 1.2.51 A range of proposed changes are suggested to promote the delivery of starter homes. These include amending paragraph 22 of the NPPF, which seeks to ensure that employment land is not safeguarded unless there is a reasonable expectation of it coming forward for those uses over the plan period. The amendment would have the effect of requiring that underused or unviable employment land be released for starter homes unless there is significant and compelling evidence to justify why such land should be retained for employment use.
- 1.2.52 One approach that the Government is considering is a policy with a clear limit on the length of time that unused commercial or employment land should be protected (3 years is proposed) and there is not significant and compelling evidence of market interest for it coming forward within a two year timeframe.
- 1.2.53 The current exception site policy to release land specifically for starter homes on unviable or underused commercial or industrial brownfield land not currently allocated for housing, is proposed to be extended to include land previously in use for retail, leisure and non-residential institutional uses. The exception site policy will also be amended to make it clearer that planning applications for starter homes will only be rejected if there are overriding design, infrastructure and local environmental considerations that cannot be mitigated.

- 1.2.54 Further changes are proposed to encourage starter homes within mixed used commercial developments and rural areas. The former would apply to town centre sites and the latter to rural settlements via the existing rural exceptions site policy.
- 1.2.55 Further changes to national planning policy are proposed to encourage starter homes in Green Belt areas. This would apply to neighbourhood plans for communities located in the Green Belt and also brownfield land located in the Green Belt.
- 1.2.56 It is proposed that neighbourhood plans would be able to allocate small scale sites in the Green Belt specifically for starter homes to increase affordable home ownership opportunities to young people and young families. Further changes are also proposed to provide more flexibility and enable suitable, sensitively designed redevelopment for starter homes to come forward on brownfield sites in the Green Belt where there is no substantial harm to openness.

1.2.57 **General Observations**

- 1.2.58 The focus on increasing opportunities for lower cost home ownership through redefining affordable housing, promoting starter homes and (through the Welfare Bill) extending the Right to Buy could have important implications for the majority of those in housing need as only a relatively small proportion will be able to access the 80 per cent of market value/rent models and the Right to Buy will erode the social rented housing stock at the other end of the scale. Local Authorities' ability to address those in housing need will also be compromised if the emphasis in future is on the delivery of starter homes, which currently have no proposed eligibility requirements to prove a local connection. This means that there is a risk that future 'affordable' housing built as starter homes in T&M does not address local housing needs.
- 1.2.59 The relaxation of planning controls and the reduction of the ability of Local Planning Authorities to secure developer contributions for infrastructure, for example, by extending permitted development rights and exemptions for starter homes, could also have adverse impacts on existing communities.
- 1.2.60 The ability for Local Plans to identify and safeguard land for employment uses in future may also be diminished as a result of these proposals.

1.3 **Conclusions**

- 1.3.1 This report has summarised the main planning reforms that have been proposed since the last meeting of the Board and made some general observations. **[ANNEX 1]** sets out more detailed responses to the questions posed by the current consultation for approval.

1.4 **Legal Implications**

- 1.4.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.5.1 There are no direct financial or value for money implications arising from this report although once implemented some of the proposed reforms will have resource implications.

1.6 Risk Assessment

- 1.6.1 Failure to respond to the consultation carries the risk of not expressing the views of the Council and potentially influencing the outcomes.

1.7 Equality Impact Assessment

- 1.7.1 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users as this is a response to a Government consultation rather than implementing the changes.

1.8 Recommendations

- 1.8.1 That the content of the report be **NOTED** and that **[Annex 1]** be **ENDORSED** as this Council's response to the DCLG's consultation on proposed changes to national planning policy.

The Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health Services confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation, if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

Background papers:

Nil

contact: Ian Bailey
Planning Policy Manager

Steve Humphrey
Director of Housing, Planning and Environmental Health Services

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**DCLG Consultation on Proposed Changes to National Planning Policy -
Summary of Questions and Responses**

a) Affordable Housing

Q1. Do you have any comments or suggestions about the proposal to amend the definition of affordable housing in national planning policy to include a wider range of low cost home ownership options?

Response: The proposal to broaden the definition of affordable housing options to include more lower cost home ownership models such as starter homes is of no concern in itself, but it should be recognised that this product will only be available to a limited number of those meeting the criteria and finding themselves at the top end of those in affordable housing need.

If Local Planning Authorities are to have new duties in respect of delivering starter homes and meet new requirements for a proportion of starter homes on qualifying sites, while simultaneously losing the ability to negotiate for affordable housing models that meet identified needs this new affordable housing stock may have to be offered to buyers from further afield. This would have the effect of increasing objectively assessed housing needs by encouraging inward migration, particularly in areas close to London.

The removal of the requirement to retain affordability or recycle the subsidy is of concern as this form of affordable housing will only ever be temporary, in the case of starter homes, for 5 years.

Q2. Do you have any views on the implications of the proposed change to the definition of affordable housing on people with protected characteristics as defined in the Equalities Act 2010? What evidence do you have on this matter?

Response: Of the protected characteristics listed age and disability may be adversely affected by the proposed changes. Those first time buyers over 40 years of age will not be able to access the proposed starter homes and those with disabilities relying on benefits may find themselves unable to access the low cost ownership housing that the changes seek to promote and find themselves struggling to find other affordable housing such as social rented and shared ownership.

b) Increasing residential density around commuter hubs

Q3. Do you agree with the Government's definition of commuter hub? If not, what changes do you consider are required?

Response: The definition seems reasonable, however the policy that determines in what circumstances higher densities will be acceptable and the level of local flexibility in interpreting the policy will be key to the success of this initiative.

Q4. Do you have any further suggestions for proposals to support higher density development around commuter hubs through the planning system?

Response: The policy would benefit from the addition of more criteria to determine which hubs can sustain higher densities of development to address issues such as adequate parking facilities, air quality management and sensitive design for hubs located in historic centres.

Q5. Do you agree that the Government should not introduce a minimum level of residential densities in national policy for areas around commuter hubs? If not, why not?

Response: Agreed. This should be for Local Planning Authorities to consider through Local Plans with community engagement.

c) Supporting new settlements, development on brownfield land and small sites, and delivery of housing agrees in Local Plans

Q6. Do you consider that national planning policy should provide greater policy support for new settlements in meeting development needs? If not, why not?

Response: Current policy already provides the facility for Local Planning Authorities to consider planning for new settlements and urban extensions as part of their Local Plans or as Area Action Plans so it is unclear what is meant by introducing a more supportive approach for new settlements.

The best policy for ensuring housing targets are met consistently is to include a range of different sized sites in the land allocations of the Local Plan. Over reliance on one or even a few large sites or new settlements increases the risk of under delivery since no matter how large a new settlement may be when completed, the number of units being delivered on a yearly basis will be more conservative and usually measured in hundreds rather than thousands.

They can usefully contribute to an overall housing supply, but a broader portfolio of sites provides more reliable delivery over time.

Q7. Do you consider that it would be beneficial to strengthen policy on development of brownfield land for housing? If not, why not and are there any unintended impacts that we should take into account?

Response: Local Planning Authorities already prioritise previously developed land for new development over green field and the SHLAA process should identify those brownfield sites that are suitable for housing. By prioritising brownfield land for housing one unintended impact may be to increase the hope value of such sites meaning that the potential to develop such sites for other uses might be diminished.

There is also the risk that such a policy will represent an incentive for landowners not to market such sites so that a case may be more easily made for unviability or underuse.

Q8. Do you consider that it would be beneficial to strengthen policy on development of small sites for housing? If not, why not? How could the change impact on the calculation of the local planning authorities' five-year land supply?

Response: The proposed changes to national policy would effectively be introducing a presumption in favour of residential development up to 10 units on sites within the confines of existing settlements or immediately adjacent, but not extending this to sites comprising residential gardens.

Currently such proposals are dealt with on a case by case basis and this enables local policy considerations and distinctiveness to be taken into account. The presumption in favour of residential development would make the retention of any non-residential uses within settlements more challenging. This could have the unintended effect of removing local services from rural communities as redevelopment for housing offer greater returns.

It would also put pressure on all Local Planning Authorities to review settlement boundaries since the presumption in favour of small scale developments adjacent to the boundary would generate a lot of interest. There is no discussion of how this might work in Green Belt areas. Presumably, Green Belt policy would take precedence, although Q19 seeks views on an exception in respect of neighbourhood plan allocations for starter homes.

Any increases in the five year supply calculations would have to be in the form of an adjustment to the windfall allowance, since sites of 5 units or less are not included in SHLAAs. Such a policy change is likely to generate a number of new applications and windfalls initially, but the number of such sites will diminish over time.

Further guidance on calculating windfall allowances to take these factors into account would be welcomed.

Q9. Do you agree with the Government proposal to define a small site as a site of less than 10 units? If not, what other definition do you consider is appropriate, and why?

Response: Sites under 5 units are not included in SHLAAs so it would be more consistent to use this threshold.

Q10. Do you consider that national planning policy should set out that local planning authorities should put in place a specific positive local policy for assessing applications for development on small sites not allocated in the Local Plan?

Response: If the intention is to amend national planning policy to introduce a presumption in favour then it seems unnecessary (and inconsistent with the rest of the NPPF) to reiterate this in the form of a local policy.

Q11. We would welcome your views on how best to implement the housing delivery test, and in particular:

- What do you consider should be the baseline against which to monitor delivery of new housing?
- What should constitute significant under-delivery, and over what time period?
- What steps do you think should be taken in response to significant under-delivery?
- How do you see this approach working when the housing policies in the Local Plan are not up-to-date?

Response: Annual Monitoring Reports already include the information necessary to compare historically what the Local Planning Authority expected to be delivered and what was actually recorded so this seems an unnecessary additional burden on Local Plan teams. The Government could simply amend the guidance for preparing AMRs to include this.

If such a requirement were to be introduced the time period should not be an arbitrary 2 years, but taken over a longer average to better reflect economic or development cycles and certainly no shorter than 5 years. After the Global economic recession in 2007/8 housing delivery took much longer than 2 years to recover and no intervention by Local Planning Authorities would have been able to change that.

Simply making even more sites available through Local Plans will not be sufficient to improve under performance in housing delivery where there is a healthy pipeline of planning permissions and local plan allocations. In such cases the Government should look to the housebuilding sector for answers, not the planning system.

Q12. What would be the impact of a housing delivery test on development activity?

Response: Negligible.

d) Supporting delivery of starter homes

Q13. What evidence would you suggest could be used to justify retention of land for commercial or similar use? Should there be a fixed time limit on land retention for commercial use?

Response: Local Plan evidence in the form of Employment Land Reviews and Economic Futures Assessments already have to identify objectively assessed needs for employment land and identify sites that have a reasonable expectation of being developed for those uses in accordance with paragraph 22 of the NPPF. The proposed changes to national planning policy together with other planning reforms such as extending permitted development rights will make the task of safeguarding employment land in Local Plans more challenging. This will be particularly so in areas where the differential between residential and employment land values are so high, such as the south east.

The proposed 3 year time limit that employment land should be protected if unused is too short. As noted in response to Q11, the time period should at least reflect

economic or development cycles and be a minimum of 5 years, which is also when Local Plans should be reviewed and a view taken on whether sites are likely to be developed or not.

Q14. Do you consider that the starter homes exception site policy should be extended to unviable or underused retail, leisure and non-residential institutional brownfield land?

Response: This would make sense given that the location of such sites is more likely to be in areas that are better suited to residential use.

However, there is a danger that the number of sites coming forward for starter homes will exceed local demand leading to in migration and potentially exacerbating local housing needs as a result.

There is also a risk that sites for other uses including infrastructure will diminish or become unviable.

Q15. Do you support the proposal to strengthen the starter homes exception site policy? If not, why not?

Response: Greater clarity in how the policy will work in practice would be welcomed. In terms of strengthening the policy see response to Q14 re managing the amount of starter homes.

Q16. Should starter homes form a significant element of any housing component within mixed use developments and converted unlet commercial units?

Response: If there is a demonstrable need for starter homes as identified through SHMAs then this is a reasonable expectation. If there is not, the same cautionary note in respect of Q14 and 16 applies here.

Q17. Should rural exception sites be used to deliver starter homes in rural areas? If so, should local planning authorities have the flexibility to require local connection tests?

Response: See response to Q16 above. Local connectivity would help to meet the aspirations of such communities to increase local affordable housing options.

Q18. Are there any other policy approaches to delivering starter homes in rural areas that you would support?

Response: While the starter homes initiative will provide additional options for lower cost ownership in rural areas, they should form part of a wider portfolio of affordable housing options in order to meet local needs.

Q19. Should local communities have the opportunity to allocate sites for small scale starter home developments in their Green Belt through neighbourhood plans?

Response: National Policy states that Green Belt boundaries should only be amended at the time a Local Plan is prepared and then only if it can be demonstrated that such an amendment is justified by balancing other policy objectives. This proposal would require consequential amendments to national Green Belt policy and the relationship between Local and neighbourhood plans.

Q20. Should planning policy be amended to allow redevelopment of brownfield sites for starter homes through a more flexible approach to assessing the impact on openness?

Response: Further clarification of the interpretation of Green Belt policy in this respect would be welcomed.

e) Transitional arrangements

Q21. We would welcome your views on our proposed transitional arrangements.

Response: The proposed 6-12 months transitional period to allow for partial reviews of Local Plans seems very short taking into consideration the need for a probable review of SHMAs to take account of the change in affordable housing definition. It is also not clear how the transitional period would apply to Local Plans in preparation.

Some of the other proposed changes will also require revisiting evidence and policy provisions. This is not conducive to Local Planning Authorities preparing Local Plans by 2017 contrary to paragraph 58 of the consultation document that states: 'We do not intend that these policy proposals should slow down the preparation of existing Local Plans.'

f) General questions

Q22. What are your views on the assumptions and data sources set out in this document to estimate the impact of the proposed changes? Is there any other evidence which you think we need to consider?

Response: Some of the assumptions are based on scaling up data from one region to a national average (West Midlands in respect of greenfield land allocated for employment use – Para.39) while others are based on quite outdated sources such as the brownfield land estimates from the 2010 NLUD (Para 54). These may represent an overestimate of the potential for additional housing. Local Authority monitoring sources may offer a more accurate representations.

Q23. Have you any other views on the implications of our proposed changes to national planning policy on people with protected characteristics as defined in the Equalities Act 2010? What evidence do you have on this matter?

Response: See Response to Q2.

Agenda Item 8

WRAP Plastic recycling leaflet - the Borough Councils position
(raised by Kent Association of Local Councils - Tonbridge and Malling)

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Agenda Item 9

Financial arrangements with Parish Councils

- To include an update on the financial settlement

(Raised by Kent Association of Local Councils – Tonbridge and Malling)

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Agenda Item 10

Updates on recent Scrutiny Reviews:

- Community Engagement
- Holiday Activity Programme

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TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

PARISH PARTNERSHIP PANEL

18 February 2016

Report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Services

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 LOWER THAMES CROSSING UPDATE

This report updates the Panel on the latest round of public consultations for the Lower Thames Crossing.

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 Highways England launched the latest public consultation exercise into options for a new Lower Thames Crossing on the 26th January. The consultation runs to 24th March. Ten Public Information Events were held between 5th and the 18th February including four in Kent (held at Gravesham and Shorne).
- 1.1.2 Previous consultations in 2013 included options for three crossing points, but the latest consultation is for a single option, namely a road tunnel crossing east of Gravesend (in Kent) and Tilbury (in Essex), previously known as Option C. Views are also sought on different route options linking the crossing points to the rest of the Strategic Highway Network. There are three options north of the Thames, linking to the M25 between Junctions 29 and 30 and two to the south of the Thames linking to the A2/M2 (between Thong on the A2 and Junction 1 of the M2).
- 1.1.3 The 2013 consultation also included an Option C 'Variant', which would have included additional improvements to the A229 between the M20 and M2, but this has not been included as part of the current consultations.
- 1.1.4 More information on the proposals and how to comment can be found on Highways England's website here: <http://www.lower-thames-crossing.co.uk/>
- 1.1.5 This includes a booklet entitled 'Lower Thames Crossing, Route Consultation 2016' which Highways England recommends reading before responding. Responses can be made on line by filling out a questionnaire, with 8 set questions. If respondents have problems accessing the questionnaire on line, Highways England can be contacted on this number 0300 123 5000.
- 1.1.6 At the time of writing the Borough Council was considering the consultation documentation and formulating a response. As Option C is now favoured it will be

critical that there is a thorough evaluation of the impacts on the local highway network and junctions and satisfactory mitigation measures. We will liaise with Kent Highways in addressing these issues.

Background papers:

Nil

contact: Ian Bailey
Planning Policy Manager

Louise Reid
Head of Planning

Steve Humphrey
Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health

Tonbridge & Malling Parish Partnership Panel

Thursday, 18 February 2016

Kent County Council Services Update

Sign up to KCC's new mailing list and receive the latest council news in your mailbox

By subscribing to KCC's free emailing service residents can receive important Kent County Council information and news as it becomes available. A valid email address is required and will be used only to provide information on topic preferences subscribed to. For more information visit: www.kent.gov.uk

Apply for a Primary School Place now

You must apply for a primary school place now if your child is due to start school in September 2016. Most children begin primary school at the start of the school year in which they reach school age (5 years old). All schools must admit children from the September following their 4th birthday.

You must apply for a primary school place if:

- your child is due to start primary or infant school (reception year)
- your child is at infant school (Year 2) and is due to start junior school (Year 3)
- your child is at primary school (Year 2) and you want your child to move to junior school at the start of Year 3.

KCC will process applications between 16 January and 17 April 2016.

If you apply online an email will be sent to you on **18 April 2016** after 4pm to tell you which school you have been offered. You can also [log in](#) to view your offer from 5pm.

If you applied by post, KCC will send your offer by first class post on 18 April 2016.

For more information visit: <http://www.kent.gov.uk/education-and-children/schools/school-age>

Kent Country Parks

Visit one of KCC's Country Parks and discover something to do in the great outdoors. By subscribing to the Country Park's newsletter you can stay up to date with the latest news of events and activities.

For more information visit: <http://www.kent.gov.uk/leisure-and-community/parks-and-outdoor-activities>

KCC Highways – report a problem on the road or pavement

KCC Highways, Transportation and Waste welcomes feedback from its customers and has designed a fault reporting tool so that residents can quickly and easily let us know about any problems on the roads and footways or about any equipment such as streetlights, that may not be working.

If you wish to report a fault visit: www.kent.gov.uk/highwayfaults

From here can be viewed all known issues, any planned works, report multiple issues, upload photos as well as track any existing enquiries. KCC no longer offers a generic email service as the improved online fault reporting tool has been designed to ensure all of the information is captured so that faults are responded to quickly. Residents can still call to report any complex or urgent matters on 03000 418181 and speak to one of KCC's trained highway specialists.

KCC Combined Member Grant Scheme 2015/16

KCC's Combined Member Grant scheme is open until 31 March 2016 with £25,000 available to every County Councillor to fund both community and highway projects in their electoral division. Tonbridge & Malling County Councillors have a total of £175,000 to allocate in 2015/16.

The County Councillors have used their grant allocations in past years to support a wide range of organisations and projects, from sports clubs and arts groups to charities and social enterprises to Parish and District Council projects. The feedback from applicants and local people has been universally positive and has helped a number of projects receive additional or match funding as a result.

For more information on the Combined Member Grant scheme, please contact your local County Councillor or Anne Charman, KCC Community Liaison Officer.

KCC also produces a monthly publication 'Inside Track' which provides information on funding opportunities at a county and national level. For a copy of Inside Track or information on other funding opportunities visit: <http://www.kent.gov.uk/leisure-and-community/community-grants-and-funding>.

Winter Health

For health information on everything you need to know for you and your family this winter please visit:

<http://www.kent.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/health/healthy-living/winter-health>

Consultations - **have your say, your views count**

You can view all KCC consultations online at: <http://consultations.kent.gov.uk/consult.ti>

Signed up to the KCC Consultation Directory yet? It only takes a few minutes to register and gives a full list of past, current and planned consultations and provides an opportunity to feedback on local services and policies. It enables KCC to contact residents when an activity is due to take place or to receive feedback for a particular consultation or involvement activity when it is published on KCC's website.

(Please note there are separate lists for **Traffic Regulation Orders** and **Start of Works Notices** and for **Public Rights of Way Notices**.)

Mobile Library Service – 21 January to 4 March 2016

Kent County Council (KCC) has been looking at how it can make the Mobile Library Service more efficient and provide a better service for residents across Kent.

In recent years improved public transport links, growth of car ownership, as well as greater access to services available via the internet have meant that the way people access all KCC services, including library services, is changing and there is a need to adapt to meet its customers' needs.

To ensure that KCC's mobile libraries stop in the places where they will benefit its customers most, KCC has looked at a range of criteria when planning routes and stops and it is now asking for your views on its proposals for the service.

You can view a list of Mobile Library stops for each district and find out more about the impact these proposals may have on your local Mobile Library stop by visiting: <http://consultations.kent.gov.uk/consult.ti/mobilelibraries/consultationHome>

Tonbridge Gateway – 11 January to 21 February 2016

In 2009, Tonbridge Gateway opened in Castle Street, Tonbridge. Since then, people have visited the Gateway to access a range of Kent County Council (KCC), Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council (TMBC) and partner services.

To make sure every pound spent in Kent is delivering better outcomes for its customers, communities and businesses, KCC must review the services it provides and where it provides them from to ensure it is getting value for money.

KCC is now considering whether the Tonbridge Gateway is the right location from which to provide its services. While the services that Kent County Council provides will not change, it is possible that

they could be accessed from Tonbridge Library and the Adult Education site. This would reduce property costs, helping to offset the unprecedented savings the council faces and will continue to face over coming years.

KCC provides or commissions the following services from the Tonbridge Gateway:

- Kent Supported Employment clinics
- Carers First
- Life Choice Independent Living
- Smoking Cessation
- Sexual Health

To find out more or to have your say on these proposals please visit:

<http://consultations.kent.gov.uk/consult.ti/tonbridgegateway/consultationHome>

Proposed Changes to M20 Junction 10a (Ashford) – 14 January to 17 March 2016

This is a Highways England Consultation on a proposal to provide a new M20 junction 10A and link road to the A2070 at Ashford in Kent with a new dual carriageway link road to the existing A2070 Southern Orbital Road (Bad Munstereifel Road) and also connect to the A20 Hythe Road.

To find out more about these proposals or complete an online questionnaire visit:

www.highways.gov.uk/m20j10a

Lower Thames Crossing – 26 January to 24 March 2016

Highways England is consulting on options for a Lower Thames Crossing; a new road crossing for the River Thames connecting Kent and Essex.

A new crossing is needed to reduce congestion at the Dartford Crossing and unlock economic growth, supporting the development of homes and jobs in the region.

Highways England proposes a tunnel crossing under the Thames located east of Gravesend and Tilbury. There are three route options north of the river and two south of the river.

This is a Highways England Consultation. You can find out more about these proposals and complete an online questionnaire by visiting: <http://www.lower-thames-crossing.co.uk/>

KCC news

To view the latest news and releases from KCC visit KCC's Media Hub at <https://kccmediahub.net/>

Recent media releases

Kent to consider return to all-night lighting

A preferred option to return to all-night street lighting when Kent's new energy-efficient Light Emitting Diode (LED) lamps are installed – meeting residents' needs and savings targets – will be considered on Friday, 12 February by Kent County Council members.

The newly-upgraded lighting will be connected to an individual central management system (CMS) that will allow the authority to monitor and provide optimal lighting levels in the future.

Given this new flexibility, a 10-week county-wide consultation on street lighting preferences was carried out last autumn. The findings will be debated on 12 February at a meeting of the Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee.

Contract awarded to convert Kent's street lights to LED

The contract to convert Kent's 118,000 streetlights to energy-efficient Light Emitting Diode (LED) technology has been awarded to engineering and infrastructure firm Bouygues Energies & Services.

The newly upgraded lighting will be connected to an individual central management system (CMS) that will allow Kent County Council to monitor and adapt lighting levels in the future.

Work to convert streetlights to LED is due to begin in residential areas in March 2016 and will be completed within 38 months. Once completed, this will save Kent taxpayers up to £5.2 million a year.

Further consultation on disposal of land

Following the response to the publication of notices in respect of Parkwood, Preston Hill, Bluebell Hill Picnic site, The Larches and Dryhill, KCC is proposing to suspend the process pending a further consultation in due course.

Since 2008, Kent County Council has been looking at its visitor offer across its country parks and smaller sites, including picnic sites and has identified that there are a number of parks with a relatively small number of annual visitors compared to other sites.

In the current financial climate the Council has had to consider very carefully its Country Park Offer to ensure that resources are focused where it can make the biggest impact for its residents. KCC

will therefore be seeking local stakeholders and community views on the future public use of the sites.

As part of this KCC would welcome proposals from local communities as to how it can best ensure that the sites remain open to the public and are financially viable. www.kent.gov.uk/publicnotices

For more information on any of these subjects please contact:

Anne Charman, KCC Community Liaison Officer

anne.charman@kent.gov.uk or 07717 665893

*KCC's **Community Liaison Team** covers all 12 district council areas in Kent supporting local County Councillors in their role as community leaders and administering their grants. The team works closely with partners from the public, private and voluntary sectors, to help ensure Kent's residents and local community groups are kept well informed about KCC's services and are given the opportunity to influence decisions.*



Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council Services Update:

- Queens 90th Birthday
- Publicity initiatives, including the plastics leaflet recently distributed by the Kent Resource Partnership
- Easter refuse and recycling collection arrangements
- Clean for the Queen – the national litter campaign

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