

## **TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **PARISH PARTNERSHIP PANEL**

**Thursday, 12th November, 2020**

**Present:** Cllr N J Heslop (Chairman), Cllr M A Coffin (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Mrs J A Anderson, Cllr R P Betts, Cllr R W Dalton, Cllr P M Hickmott, Cllr S A Hudson, Cllr D Lettington, Cllr B J Luker, Cllr M R Rhodes and Cllr M Taylor.

Together with representatives from Addington, Aylesford, Birling, Borough Green, Ditton, East Peckham, Hadlow, Hildenborough, Ightham, Plaxtol, Ryarsh, Shipbourne, Stansted, Trottiscliffe, West Peckham Parish Councils and County Councillors Mrs T Dean, Mrs S Hohler and Mr H Rayner.

Councillors A P J Keeley, P J Montague, Mrs A S Oakley, W E Palmer, R V Roud, T B Shaw and Mrs M Tatton were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors F A Hoskins and Mrs C B Langridge.

### **PART 1 - PUBLIC**

#### **PPP 20/23 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the meeting held on 3 September 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to recording that West Peckham Parish Council were in attendance.

#### **PPP 20/24 UPDATE ON ACTION IDENTIFIED IN THE LAST MINUTES**

##### **PPP 20/17 – Invitation to Southern Water**

The Chairman extended apologies that unfortunately, due to other priorities, an invitation had not yet been extended to representatives of Southern Water to attend a future meeting of the Parish Partnership Panel. This would be progressed as soon as possible.

##### **PPP 20/18 (d) – Development Management processes and consultation/guidance**

The Chairman of Plaxtol Parish Council thanked the Borough Council for recognising the challenges faced by Parish/Town Councils in adapting to a change of process and welcomed the solutions related to technical responses on List B and Officers patience in addressing concerns. However, particular reference was made to the outstanding commitment

to enable parish clerks to be notified by e-mail when planning applications were validated. Currently, clerks were having to search the Public Access system for individual applications which was time consuming and challenging.

The Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure (Councillor David Lettington) thanked Plaxtol Parish Council for their constructive correspondence. It was explained that the issue of notification emails appeared to be an internal problem related to the way the systems were set up. However, it was believed that a technical solution could be found and this continued to be explored.

### **PPP 20/22 (c) - Climate Change Strategy**

The Chairman, in his role as Leader of the Borough Council, advised that the Street Scene and Environment Services Advisory Board of 5 October had recommended that the Climate Change Strategy and the Year 1 Action Plan be adopted. It had also recommended that options for the establishment of a Climate Change Forum, to provide a mechanism for engagement with key stakeholders and interested parties be explored and reported to a future meeting of the Advisory Board. It was noted that the Climate Change Forum could provide a suitable vehicle for communication with Parish/Town Councils.

In addition, the Cabinet Member for Street Scene and Environment Services (Councillor Robin Betts) advised that, unfortunately due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic and the introduction of new lockdown measures, the progress of the Strategy had been delayed as Officers were diverted into other priorities to support communities and residents. However, the Borough Council remained committed to climate change and were continuing to work with an external consultant to identify the best outcomes.

### **PPP 20/25 BOROUGH COUNCILS RESPONSE TO THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC**

The report of the Chief Executive and the Management Team, presented to Cabinet on 14 October, had provided an overview on a number of aspects as the Borough Council and its communities continued to adapt to living with coronavirus.

Initially, there had been good progress made on actions identified in the Corporate Strategy – One Year Addendum and included work on a new consultation draft of the Economic Recovery Strategy, the Climate Change Strategy, the Medium Term Financial Strategy, the Savings and Transformation Strategy, the Air Quality Action Plan and support for the Leisure Trust.

Unfortunately, the lockdown measures imposed by Government, effective from 5 November to 2 December 2020, had impacted on these

areas of work as the Borough Council adapted to new restrictions, new financial pressures and identifying ways to support communities, businesses and residents.

The Chairman, in his role as Leader of the Borough Council, advised that since the publication of the agenda, the position locally had changed. Tonbridge and Malling had seen an increase in coronavirus figures, with clusters in Aylesford South, East Malling and Trench ward in Tonbridge. Whilst the local figures were slightly below the county average they were following the upward trajectory.

Residents were asked to continue to follow national guidance by maintaining social distancing, wearing face coverings and washing hands to reduce the spread of the infection. Anyone developing symptoms should self-isolate and follow Government advice.

Government funding in two parts had been allocated to the Borough Council to provide further financial support to local businesses. A new Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed) Scheme utilising the first government funding allocation of £1,413,378 would be launched as soon as the funding allocation had been received, which was expected on Friday 13 November. Further detail of the Scheme and associated Policy was provided in the Decision taken under Emergency Provisions ([D200014EM](#))

The Borough Council would use the second tranche of government funding to provide further support under a discretionary scheme which would be launched in the next few weeks.

Currently, 4,000 residents had been identified as clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) and the Borough Council were working closely with Kent County Council on assessing and supporting these individuals.

## **PPP 20/26 UPDATE ON THE LOCAL PLAN AND SECTION 106 PROTOCOL**

The Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure (Councillor David Lettington) provided an update on the progress of the Local Plan and advised that although the examination in public had started, the Planning Inspector had 'paused' the process after 3 days of hearings. Concerns about legal compliance of the Local Plan had been cited but the Borough Council were still waiting for an explanation as to the reason for the 'pause'. However, the Cabinet Member remained hopeful that the process would continue and indicated that any action that might become necessary would be a joint decision between Members and Officers.

There was also an update on the Section 106 Protocol and the Panel was advised that the Planning and Transportation Advisory Board of 11 November had given this careful consideration and raised a number of concerns that would be revisited by Officers. Whilst s106 was the

responsibility of the Borough Council, as the Local Planning Authority, comments were welcomed from key stakeholders, service providers and parish/town councils.

Details of the draft Protocol were set out in the report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health, attached to the agenda.

The following concerns and points were raised, discussed and noted:

- The ongoing delay in the Local Plan process which was disappointing, frustrating and meant that developers were submitting applications at short notice;
- There were no obvious reasons why parishes couldn't pursue private arrangements outside of the s106 protocol with developers to secure agreements on sewerage issues;
- Parishes believed they could assist the Borough Council in negotiating s106 obligations due to local knowledge and experience;
- To ensure transparency related to s106 obligations was there potential to publish details;
- It was indicated that priorities identified by Parish/Town Councils in relation to s106 would be considered as part of the overall assessment in line with other commissioning services, such as KCC Education, Highways and the NHS.

In conclusion, the Cabinet Member welcomed the comments of Members and indicated that the Borough Council would be happy to cooperate with parishes where appropriate. The points raised would be discussed with the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health to see if any of these could be pursued. It was intended that the introduction of a Section 106 Protocol would be mutually beneficial to all involved in the planning obligation process.

## **PPP 20/27 UPDATE ON WASTE SERVICES**

The Cabinet Member for Street Scene and Environment Services (Councillor Robin Betts) provided an update on a number of areas related to Waste Services.

Since the engagement of a new manager in mid-August there had been an improvement in the performance of the contractor with a full completion of rounds achieved on a regular basis. However, a number of 'hotspots' remained and these would be monitored.

There was also good news on recycling performance, with a figure of 57% achieved. This demonstrated that residents were actively supporting climate change by exceeding target figures for recycling of waste. The following collection rates between June – August were noted:

- Refuse up to 28%
- Dry recycling up to 28%
- Paper/card up to 45%
- Food waste up to 13%
- Going to landfill was approximately 0.01%, with anything not recycled being converted to energy

Unfortunately, the coronavirus pandemic had placed greater pressure on the contractor with daily collection tonnages exceeding the amount usually collected over the Christmas period.

Borough Council Officers were now based at the Tonbridge depot to monitor activity and daily performance and the aim was now to maintain consistency on completion of rounds.

Finally, the Cabinet Member advised that the closure of the waste transfer station in Sevenoaks until 21 December was likely to significantly impact on waste collections at that end of the Borough, as North Farm would be dealing with increased volumes.

The following concerns and points were raised, discussed and noted:

- The number of complaints received by Ward Members had reduced;
- Unfortunately, there had been increased incidents of fly tipping;
- Guidance on how to prosecute fly tippers and evidence gathering would be shared with Parish/Town Councils and promoted on the website;
- There was over 50% subscription to the garden waste collection scheme which exceeded original targets. A direct debit facility for renewals was currently being tested;
- There was a significant issue with the facilities at Allington due to ongoing repairs and maintenance, which might have a consequential impact on waste collections in the North of the Borough;
- Road cleansing along Pilgrims Way around Wouldham, Burham and Peters Village had not been undertaken recently;
- The reinstatement of the weekend bulky waste collection service remained under review and was subject to risk assessment and ensuring that it was Covid safe;

Particular reference was made to the aerobic digester located at Blaise Farm which for technical reasons was emanating odours across Kings Hill and Offham, leading to complaints from residents. It was hoped that once the facility was operating fully, the emissions would reduce and improve the situation. Guidance on reporting issues would be placed on the website.

In conclusion, the Cabinet Member was pleased at the improved performance of the waste contractor, resident's commitment to recycling

and climate change and committed to providing more detailed information around fly tipping to a future meeting of the Parish Partnership Panel.

### **PPP 20/28 KENT COUNTY COUNCIL SERVICES UPDATE**

Members noted the report provided by the County Member for Malling North (Councillor Sarah Hohler) and circulated in advance of the meeting.

Particular reference was made to the opportunity for residents to submit comments on potential areas of spending reductions and the level of Council Tax to help shape and balance the 2021-22 Budget. This [consultation](#) closed on 24 November 2020.

Details of a number of County initiatives and consultations were also set out for information. Attention was drawn to:

- Knock and Check – encouraging residents to reignite the community spirit seen during the initial months of the pandemic and to help the most vulnerable during the winter.
- Food vouchers had been given to families to help feed children during half-term.

All Kent County Council consultations could be viewed online at:

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

Finally, it was noted that the County Council had joined the Borough Council in opposing the potential large increase in housing targets for the South East. The overall annual requirement for Kent and Medway was already forecast to rise from 7,577 homes a year to 12,073 (60% increase) following the current standard method. The proposed changes would increase this by a further 2,835 to 14,908 homes a year.

### **PPP 20/29 AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT AREAS**

The Parish Partnership Panel noted the report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health presented to the Street Scene and Environment Services Advisory Board, which provided an updated Air Quality Action Plan and identified actions to be taken to reduce pollutants within the 6 Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) and to tackle Nitrogen Dioxide across the Borough as a whole.

It was indicated that the comments and concerns previously raised at the Street Scene and Environment Services Advisory Board of 5 October had been noted by Officers. The Cabinet Member for Street Scene and Environment Services recognised the challenge in reducing air pollutants and commented on the benefits of encouraging people to move to electric vehicles.

Reference was made to the Kent County Council Rail Strategy Consultation, considered by the Planning and Transportation Advisory Board of 11 November, which supported low carbon travel.

The following concerns and points were raised, discussed and noted:

- It was unlikely that air quality could be improved unless road and traffic issues were addressed;
- The value of progressing the junction 5 east facing slip road to benefit West Kent, which the Borough Council continued to lobby for;
- The lack of detailed data from Public Health England on mortality rates due to air pollutants;
- UK Powers Network continued delay in setting up the equipment in Borough Green to provide statistical information. This position was being actively pursued by the Cabinet Member and Officers; and
- The difficulty in balancing ongoing housing development, particularly along the A20 corridor, the pressure to meet housing targets imposed by Government and reducing air pollutants.

The meeting ended at 9.30 pm