

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY SELECT COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Wednesday, 6th November, 2024

Present: Cllr S A Hudson (Chair), Cllr K S Tunstall (Vice-Chair), Cllr S Crisp, Cllr R W Dalton, Cllr F A Hoskins, Cllr A McDermott, Cllr W E Palmer, Cllr Stacey Pilgrim, Cllr M R Rhodes, Cllr G C Bridge (substitute) and Cllr C Brown (substitute).

Cllrs K B Tanner, M D Boughton*, D Keers* and Mrs A S Oakley* were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

(*participated via MS Teams)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A G Bennison

CE 24/30 NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Notification of substitute members were recorded as set out below:

- Cllr Bridge substituted for Cllr Tatton
- Cllr Brown substituted for Cllr Lark

In accordance with Council Procedure Rules 17.5 to 17.9 these councillors had the same rights as the ordinary member of the committee for whom they were substituting

CE 24/31 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

CE 24/32 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the notes of the meeting of the Communities and Environment Scrutiny Select Committee held on 17 July 2024 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

CE 24/33 KENT POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER - RURAL TASK FORCE

Mr Matthew Scott, the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) started by reminding Members that the role of the PCC was managing the police budget, holding the Chief Constable to account and funding support for victims of crime.

The [Police and Crime Plan for 2025](#) was currently out for consultation and was seeking views on how much crime and antisocial behaviour affected people across the County and what issues Kent Police should focus on.

An update was provided on the Rural Task Force which had been established to tackle and prevent crime in the countryside and to protect and to support Kents rural communities. The Task Force included officers specially trained to deal with rural offences such as wildlife crime and worked in collaboration with rural community groups, organisations and the Farmers Union.

Additional resource had been allocated to the Rural Task Force and the West Division, which included Tonbridge and Malling, currently had 4 PCs and 3 PCSOs dedicated to rural matters.

Areas of recent focus included preventative measures in respect of hare coursing and poaching, a commitment to protecting streets in rural and isolated areas (Rural Safer Streets) and tackling unlawful commercial fly tipping. The Task Force had also had success in deterring the theft of farm machinery/property by encouraging and supporting property marking.

In conclusion, Mr Scott was pleased to report a positive performance and that there had been a reduction in crime in rural areas.

Rural Matters a magazine for residents and businesses could be viewed online:

<https://www.kent.police.uk/police-forces/kent-police/areas/kent-police/about-us/about-us/rural-matters-magazine/>

Finally, there was recognition that previous telephone call handling performance, especially on 101, had been poor. However, Mr Scott was pleased to report that performance had improved with 999 calls being answered within 10 seconds and 101 calls within 45 seconds.

MATTERS FOR CORPORATE MONITORING

CE 24/34 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2024/25 - QUARTER 2

The report provided data on Key Performance Indicators for the period July – September 2024 (quarter 2) that were aligned to the Corporate Strategy 2023-27, monitored on a quarterly or annual basis and related to the theme of communities and environment.

This data was a key tool in assessing performance management, helped to delivery positive change and provided Members with an insight into

areas where the Borough Council was performing well and areas that needed greater focus.

Members welcomed a reduction in the numbers of victim-based crime and fly tipping incidents being reported and improved figures for recycling and composting. Whilst the latter was below the baseline target (of 51.6%) the percentage for quarter 2 (51%) represented a positive direction of travel.

It was also noted that reports of anti-social behaviour were higher than the same period in 2023/24. However, this reflected the greater community engagement being undertaken and was seen as a positive step in improving intelligence and putting measures in place to tackle anti-social behaviour.

RESOLVED: That the positive and negative trends identified in the report be noted.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET

CE 24/35 REVIEW OF FEES AND CHARGES - COMMUNITIES AND ENVIRONMENT

The joint report of the Director of Street Scene, Leisure and Technical Services, the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health and the Director of Finance and Transformation set out the proposed fees and charges for the provision of services in respect of garden waste subscriptions, household bulky refuse and fridge/freezer collections, "missed" refuse collections, stray dog redemption fees, Tonbridge Allotments, Tonbridge Cemetery, pest control, food certificates, contaminated land monitoring and private water supplies from 1 April 2025.

In bringing forward the charging proposals for 2025/26 consideration had been given to a range of factors, including the Borough Council's overall financial and market positions, trading patterns, the current rate of inflation and customer feedback. A set of guiding principles for the setting of fees and charges had also been taken into account and were summarised in 4.2 of the report.

Particular reference was made to the Borough Council's significant and challenging financial position and as it was becoming increasingly difficult to achieve further expenditure savings to meet the targets in the Savings and Transformation Strategy it was essential that opportunities to maximise income were taken.

Attention was drawn to the Waste Contract which was due for renewal in 2027 and Members were advised that there would be a significant financial impact in respect of any future waste collection arrangements.

Given this context, the waste contract specification would need to be revisited with the aim of reducing the cost of waste collection in advance of the next contract. However, there remained significant demand for many of the services included within the Waste Contract which could be mitigated by increasing fees and charges for other services.

In addition, Members noted that it was proposed not to increase the fee for 2025/26 of requests for re-visits of food businesses following food hygiene inspections as detailed in 5.10 of the report.

Careful consideration was given to the options available and there was in-depth discussion on the proposals for garden waste collections with the majority of Members feeling that this still represented good value for money. Due regard was given to the overall financial position and potential impacts on the Medium Term Financial Strategy and on the grounds of maximising income, whilst providing value for money it was proposed by Cllr Hudson that garden waste collections should be increased to £63 per annum for the first bin and £40 per annum for second and third bins. This was seconded by Cllr Brown and supported by the majority of the Committee.

Consideration was also given to the household bulky refuse service and whether the existing concessionary charges for those in receipt of Council Tax benefit could be extended to cover other benefits. Members were advised of the challenges in assessing the financial impact of extending the subsidy as the Borough Council did not have information on all benefit claimants. However, it was likely that the financial impact would be a significant loss of income and increased collection costs.

RECOMMENDED*: That

- (1) the proposed annual garden waste subscription of £63 per annum for the first bin and £40 for a second or third bin, as proposed by Cllr Hudson and seconded by Cllr Brown, be approved;
- (2) the schedule of proposed charges for household bulky refuse and fridge/freezer collection service as set out in 15.2.6 of the report, be approved;
- (3) the proposed charge for “missed” refuse collection as set out in 5.3.3 of the report, be approved;
- (4) the schedule of proposed charges in respect of Stray Dog redemption service, as set out in 5.4.4 of the report, be approved;
- (5) the charging structure for Tonbridge Allotment as set out in 5.5.2 of the report, be noted and endorsed;

- (6) the schedule of proposed charges for Tonbridge Cemetery as set out in Annex 1 and 5.6.2 of the report, be approved;
- (7) the proposed continuation of the pest control subsidy for residents in receipt of Council Tax Reduction Scheme as set out in 5.7.1 of the report be approved;
- (8) the proposed charge for condemned food certificates as set out in 5.8.2 of the report, be approved;
- (9) the proposed charge for exported food certificates as set out in 5.9.4 of the report, be approved;
- (10) the proposed charge for provision of services in respect of contaminated land as set out in 5.11.5 of the report, be approved;
- (11) the proposed charge for provision of services in respect of private water supplies as set out in 5.12.5 of the report, be approved; and
- (12) the above proposed scale of charges be implemented from 1 April 2025.

***Recommended to Cabinet**

MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION

CE 24/36 IDENTIFICATION OF SAVING OPTIONS

Members were invited to propose options for evaluation to assist in bridging the current funding gap identified in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy. Any proposals would be evaluated in the coming months as part of the budget setting process.

It was agreed that any ideas should be emailed to the Chair in the first instance.

CE 24/37 WORK PROGRAMME 2024-2025

The Work Programme setting out matters to be scrutinised during 2025 was attached for information. Members were invited to suggest future matters by liaising with the Chair of the Committee.

The Chair advised comments were awaited from the Kent Resilience Forum in respect of a potential item on cladding of high-rise buildings.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE

CE 24/38 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no matters considered in private.

The meeting ended at 8.42 pm