

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

PARISH PARTNERSHIP PANEL

MINUTES

Thursday, 20th November, 2025

Present: Cllr R W Dalton (Chair), Cllr Mrs M Tatton (Vice-Chair),
Cllr R P Betts, Cllr B Banks, Cllr M D Boughton and Cllr M Taylor

Together with representatives of Addington, Aylesford*, Birling, Borough Green, Burham, Ditton*, East Malling and Larkfield, East Peckham, Hadlow, Hildenborough, Ightham, Kings Hill, Leybourne*, Platt, Plaxtol, Shipbourne*, Snodland*, West Malling, Wouldham, Wrotham Parish/Town Councils, County Cllr H Rayner and Chair of Kent Association of Local Councils (Tonbridge and Malling) (Parish Cllr S Barker)

(*participated via MS Teams)

In attendance: Councillors D Davis*, D Keers, M Rhodes* and K Tanner* were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

(*participated via MS Teams)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs S Bell*, P Boxall, L Chapman*, M A Coffin, S Crisp*, S M Hammond, P M Hickmott*, Mereworth, Ryarsh, Trottiscliffe, Waterringbury, County Cllr S Hudson, County Cllr A Kennedy and County Cllr D Sian.

(*apologies submitted for in-person attendance and participated via MS Teams)

PART 1 - PUBLIC

PPP 25/26 NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no substitute members.

PPP 25/27 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 28 August 2025 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

PPP 25/28 UPDATE ON ACTION IDENTIFIED IN THE LAST MINUTES

There were no matters required to be updated.

PPP 25/29 UPDATE ON DEVOLUTION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

A comprehensive update was provided by the Council Leader (Cllr M Boughton) and the Chief Executive (Mr D Roberts) to members of the Parish Partnership Panel on Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation process, which outlined the Borough Council's preferred three-unitary model, its financial and operational implications, the anticipated timeline, and the expected impact on Parish and Town Councils.

Following consideration and recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Cabinet had approved for Option 3A, the three-unitary model with the West Kent authority comprising Tonbridge and Malling, Sevenoaks, Tunbridge Wells and Maidstone areas, to be submitted to the Government by the deadline of 28 November 2025 as the Borough Council's preferred option for Local Government Reorganisation. This option demonstrated balanced populations while providing sufficient scale to withstand financial shocks, respected local identities and maintained existing boundaries, aligned closely with other public sector providers, such as the NHS, Kent Police and Fire and Rescue Services, and represented an option with the lowest implementation and disaggregation costs among the multi-unitary options.

It was expected that, following submission of the proposals for new unitary councils in November, the Government consultation would be commissioned in early 2026 with a final decision on geography to be announced in the Summer. Elections for the new shadow unitary authorities would be planned for May 2027, with the new unitary councils operational from April 2028.

Particular reference was made to the opportunities and risks for Parish and Town councils, including the potential to strengthen their role and scope in the context of larger unitaries and the creation of Area Committees to bridge the gap between parishes and unitary councils, with further discussion around the scope of devolution of powers from Whitehall to a new strategic combined authority, although frustration was shared over the lack of clarity from the Government about a timetable for devolution to happen in Kent while Local Government Reorganisation was underway. It was noted that a joint statement by the Parish Alliance was being prepared for submission to the Government about the key role of Parish Councils in any future plans for Local Government. Support for the joint statement was being sought from Parishes and those Councils that had not yet indicated their support were encouraged to do so.

PPP 25/30 UPDATE ON LOCAL PLAN

The Head of Planning (Mr J Bailey) provided an update on the ongoing public consultation of the Regulation 18 (2) version of the draft Local Plan, demonstrating the online platform, explaining housing and employment targets, site allocations, evidence base, and the importance of parish and resident feedback. Participation via the website was encouraged for efficiency, although alternative submission methods were also available.

In order to meet the minimum objectively assessed housing need calculated using the standard method introduced by the Government, the Local Plan must deliver 1,097 dwellings per year throughout the plan period from 2024 to 2042, totalling 19,746 homes. Employment needs were set at approximately 60,000 for office and 301,000 for light/general industrial and storage/distribution, creating a total of over 360,000 square metres of employment floorspace, as indicated by the available evidence. The challenge of meeting these targets and the importance of site allocations and Land Availability Assessments were recognised.

It was highlighted that while the Local Plan at Regulation 18 stage had very limited weight as a material planning consideration, it would be gaining weight as it progressed through the Local Plan process. The Borough Council aimed to submit the Plan by December 2026, in line with government deadlines set for plan submission under the existing plan-making system, despite the impending Local Government Reorganisation.

Particular reference was made to engagement with Parish Councils and residents during the consultation process, as detailed feedback and responses, including specific concerns and potential benefits of development, would be valuable to inform the next stages of the plan-making. It was suggested that relevant Ward Councillors could be copied into submissions made by Parishes and residents to ensure awareness.

PPP 25/31 UPDATE ON PLANNING ENFORCEMENT

An update on Planning Enforcement function of Planning Services was provided by the Planning Enforcement Manager (Mr J Solomons) to members of the Parish Partnership Panel, covering team structure, performance improvements, review of the Local Enforcement Plan, s215 Direct Action on Untidy Land and migration underway to the IDOX Uniform system.

Concerns were raised by Parish representatives about enforcement effectiveness, resource constraints, and data accessibility, in response to which it was explained that with Enforcement being a discretionary service, it would always have to be balanced against the Council's other priorities in terms of resourcing. Suggestions were made for parish-

funded Tree Preservation Order reviews and potential legislative changes to enforcement fees were discussed.

It was agreed that an update on Enforcement would be provided at the next meeting of the Parish Partnership Panel in February 2026, including progress on Article 4 directions and digitalisation projects, with ongoing efforts to improve transparency and responsiveness.

PPP 25/32 INFORMAL LANDFILL REGISTER

An informal Landfill Register was introduced by the Cabinet Member for Planning (Cllr M Taylor), which was compiled with input from Parish and Town Councils to record information about historical landfill and contaminated sites, with an aim to preserve local knowledge.

The Panel discussed its use as evidence for the emerging Local Plan, its value for environmental health and future contaminated land assessments, and noted that it would be reviewed by the Environmental Health Team as part of the process to update the Borough Council's contaminated land strategy to ensure the statutory duty was fulfilled.

PPP 25/33 UPDATE ON THE ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR ENFORCEMENT TEAM

Members of the Parish Partnership Panel were provided with an update by the Cabinet Member for Community Services (Cllr D Keers) on the success of the Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Enforcement Team, contracted by the Borough Council from May to November 2025, and the recent approval of Cabinet for the scheme to continue for a further two-year period in 2026/27, under a rebranded new name of 'Safer Neighbourhoods Team'.

A request for contribution to the cost had been circulated to all Parish and Town Councils within the borough, with a flat-rate funding of £2,000 per parish per year suggested. However, in recognition of some feedback raised by smaller parishes about affordability, the Cabinet Member for Community Services agreed to review the proposed fee structure in liaison with Officers.

PPP 25/34 UPDATE ON CLIMATE CHANGE

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Environment and Economy (Cllr R Betts) and the Climate Change Officer (Ms L Stewart) presented updates on the Borough Council's recent climate and sustainability actions and initiatives, including promotion of food waste recycling campaigns, single-use plastics reduction, energy efficiency projects at leisure centres, and the forthcoming green business grants.

Particular attention was drawn to two site visits arranged for members of the Parish Partnership Panel on 27 November 2025, to learn operation

at the Allington Household Waste Recycling Centre and the Blaise Farm Composting Facility.

A suggestion was made by the Chair of Kent Association of Local Councils (Tonbridge and Malling) (Parish Cllr S Barker) for climate change actions of the Parish and Town Councils to be recognised and promoted as part of the borough-wide initiatives, which was welcomed by the Cabinet Member for Housing, Environment and Economy.

PPP 25/35 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(1) Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council Community Awards

Suggestion was made on improving communication to parishes for future rounds of the award scheme to maximise parish awareness and participation.

(2) Information relating to Budget for Street Scene Services

In response to a query raised by a representative of the Ightham Parish Council, the Cabinet Member for Housing, Environment and Economy (Cllr R Betts) advised that information being requested on the allocation and expected outcomes of the street cleansing budget would be provided as soon as available.

(3) Promotion of Local Plan Community Engagement Meetings

As part of the commitment to engage local communities on the Regulation 18 (2) consultation of the Local Plan, a series of public meetings and drop-in sessions had been arranged in partnership with Parish Councils, including a virtual session on 15 December 2025 for those unable to participate in person. Details could be viewed on the website at: [Local Plan community engagement events – Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council](#).

The meeting ended at 9.45 pm