

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

PARISH PARTNERSHIP PANEL

MINUTES

Thursday, 5th February, 2026

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

Together with representatives of Aylesford*, Birling, Borough Green, Burham, Ditton*, East Malling and Larkfield, East Peckham, Hadlow, Hildenborough, Ightham, Kings Hill*, Leybourne*, Platt, Ryarsh (Vice-Chair)*, Shipbourne, Stansted, Watlington*, West Malling and Wrotham Parish Councils, County Cllr S Hudson*, 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 A G Bennison, M A J Hood*, D Keers* and M R Rhodes* were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

(*participated via MS Teams)

Apologies for absence were received from Borough Councillors B Banks, P Boxall**, L Chapman**, M A Coffin, S Crisp**, and S M Hammond, Plaxtol and Wouldham Parish Councils, County Councillors Mrs T Dean, A Kennedy and D Sian.

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

PART 1 - PUBLIC

PPP 26/1 NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no substitute members.

PPP 26/2 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2025 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

PPP 26/3 UPDATE ON ACTION IDENTIFIED IN THE LAST MINUTES

There were no matters required to be updated.

PPP 26/4 UPDATE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

The Leader of the Council (Cllr M Boughton) and the Chief Executive (Mr D Roberts) provided the Panel with a comprehensive presentation on the Government's newly launched consultation on the proposals for Local Government Reorganisation in Kent and Medway. The consultation started on 5 February 2026 and would run for seven weeks, closing on 26 March 2026. Online submission was available at [Consultation on the Proposals for Local Government Reorganisation in Kent and Medway - Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government - Citizen Space](#) and responses could also be submitted via email or by post.

A decision on the geographies for the new Unitary Councils across Kent and Medway was expected to be announced by the Government in the Summer, potentially in July, with new Unitary Councils becoming operational from April 2028.

Among the five options which were under the current consultation, the three-unitary model was preferred by the Borough Council, which was based on balanced populations, respected local identities and existing boundaries, aligned closely with existing partnership geographies, and represented evidence-based 'value for money' of all the multi-unitary options. This option also had the support of the greatest number of Boroughs and Districts within Kent and Medway – Folkestone & Hythe, Maidstone, Sevenoaks, Tonbridge & Malling and Tunbridge Wells. The other options, either risking splitting parish boundaries or creating overly large or small authorities compromising local democracy or ability to withstand financial shocks, were therefore not recommended by the Borough Council.

While there was concern raised on the relatively higher costs of multi-unitary models compared to a single unitary model with potential implications for setting council tax, it was acknowledged that large unitary council(s) were likely to risk loss of local democracy and responsiveness, however, the three-unitary model could effectively balance local representation with overall efficiency, achieving 'best value for money' for the residents.

In closing, both the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council encouraged all Parish and Town Councils to respond to the consultation, explaining the structure of the survey, emphasising the importance of providing feedback on all proposal options under consultation, and promoting recognition of the valuable role of Parish and Town Councils within the Local Government Reorganisation process.

PPP 26/5 PLANNING UPDATE

Following the recent Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan consultation run by the Borough Council, the Cabinet Member for Planning (Cllr M Taylor) was pleased to report that over 2,000 responses and 6,000 comments had been received and these were in the process of being analysed by the Planning Service, with the next milestone being the Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan, due for submission to the Planning Inspectorate by the end of this year.

In response to a query about the continuity of the Local Plan with Local Government Reorganisation on the horizon and transition to a new Unitary Council, the Leader (Cllr M Boughton) emphasised the importance of progressing and adopting a Local Plan at pace given potential policy implications for the new unitary authority.

Furthermore, the Planning Development Manager (Mr I Williams) provided an update on the Borough Council's successful application to secure a Digital Planning Improvement Fund of £50,000, which would be utilised to help publish standardised planning data, improve digital maturity through the submission of a Digital Planning Maturity Assessment and the creation of an action plan to boost digital skills, and provide opportunity to access open-source planning software. This initiative was expected to enhance data accessibility for the general public.

PPP 26/6 CLIMATE CHANGE UPDATE

The Climate Change Officer (Ms L Stewart) and the Cabinet Member for Housing, Environment and Economy (Cllr R Betts) presented updates on the Borough Council's recent climate change and sustainability actions and initiatives, including training for staff and Members, food waste recycling improvements, energy efficiency projects, and community engagements, with particular reference made to a recently launched 'Green Business Grants Scheme'. Details of the scheme were available on the Council's website at [Apply for a Green Business Grant – Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council](#).

Furthermore, upcoming local initiatives were promoted and participation from communities were encouraged. Information regarding these events were included in the quarterly Climate Change Bulletin, published as part of the agenda for this meeting.

Positive comments were made on the recent site visits to the Allington Household Waste Recycling Centre and the Blaise Farm Composting Facility, which highlighted the benefits of closed-loop composting and opportunities for Parishes to obtain compost for allotments at low cost. An update on the operation of the anaerobic digester plant producing biogas from food waste would be provided in due course.

During discussion, the Cabinet Member for Housing, Environment and Economy drew attention to the Blue Bell Hill low-carbon modular home development that would be used by the Borough Council as temporary accommodation to support addressing homelessness in the north of the borough, explaining its significance as the first of its kind in the area.

Finally, a query was raised on whether the Climate Change e-learning training package could be made available to Parish councillors, which the Climate Change Officer undertook to investigate.

PPP 26/7 KENT POLICE UPDATE

Inspector Z McKinley provided the Panel with a detailed update on anti-social behaviour (ASB) trends in the borough, with comparative data set out for neighbouring districts, highlighting major issues such as motor vehicle nuisance, rowdy or nuisance gatherings in public, and drunken and rowdy behaviour.

Particular reference was made to several key hotspots identified for vehicle related anti-social behaviour and the effectiveness of camera technology to assist in investigation. As explained by the Cabinet Member for Community Services (Cllr D Keers), a new and more advanced camera system was being considered for a pilot in the borough, with the aim of improving outcomes for ASB enforcement.

With regard to the collaborative and strong working relationship between the Kent Police and the Borough Council via the Community Safety Partnership, in particular the significant role played by the Borough Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Enforcement Team (now renamed 'Safer Neighbourhoods Team'), the Cabinet Member for Community Services reflected on the improved community engagement and highlighted the importance of intelligence-led policing and the value of public reporting as a result of the proactive actions of the Safer Neighbourhoods Team.

In addition, catapult-related offences were recognised as a national focus for policing and it was noted that a restriction around the use of catapults was being considered for inclusion in the Borough Council's Public Spaces Protection Order, which was due to be reported to Members at the Communities and Environment Scrutiny Select Committee on 4 March 2026.

Representatives of the Panel recorded their appreciation to Inspector McKinley and the Borough Council's Community Safety Unit for the work they had been undertaking in reducing crime and improving safety across the borough.

PPP 26/8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no other businesses identified to be discussed.

The meeting ended at 9.17 pm