

# **TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## **PARISH PARTNERSHIP PANEL**

### **MINUTES**

**Thursday, 28th May, 2026**

**Present:** Cllr Mrs M Tatton (Vice-Chair, in the Chair), Cllr B Banks, Cllr R P Betts, Cllr M D Boughton, Cllr P M Hickmott, and Cllr M Taylor.

Together with representatives of Aylesford, Borough Green, Hadlow, Hildenborough\*, Ightham\*, Kings Hill\*, Platt, Plaxtol, Ryarsh (Vice-Chair), Shipbourne, Snodland, Stansted, Trottiscliffe, Wateringbury\*, West Malling, Wrotham Parish/Town Councils and County Cllr S Hudson\* and County Cllr H Rayner.

**In attendance:** Cllrs D Keers, A G Bennison and W E Palmer and M Rhodes\* were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

(\*participated via MS Teams)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R W Dalton (Chair), P Boxall, C J Williams, Addington, Ditton, East Malling and Larkfield Parish Councils and County Cllr D Sian.

### **PART 1 - PUBLIC**

#### **PPP 26/9 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIRS**

Following the meeting of Annual Council, appointments of the Chair and Vice-Chair were confirmed to be Cllr R Dalton and Cllr Mrs M Tatton respectively.

Consideration was given to the appointment of the second Vice-Chair from Parish and Town Councils. The following nominations were proposed and seconded:

- (1) Parish Cllr M McKinlay of Ryarsh Parish Council;
- (2) Parish Cllr S Butterfill of Borough Green Town Council

Following a formal vote of all Members present in the Chamber, Parish Cllr S Butterfill was elected as second Vice-Chair for the municipal year 2026/27.

The Panel recorded appreciation to Cllr McKinlay for her service as parish Vice-Chair during the previous municipal year.

**PPP 26/10 NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

There were no substitute members.

**PPP 26/11 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the meeting held on 5 February 2026 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**PPP 26/12 UPDATE ON ACTION IDENTIFIED IN THE LAST MINUTES**

There were no matters raised requiring an update.

**PPP 26/13 PRESENTATION FROM SAFER NEIGHBOURHOOD TEAM**

The Cabinet Member for Community Services (Cllr Keers) was invited to introduce the Safer Neighbour Team and explained that the former antisocial behaviour enforcement team had been renamed in order to emphasise reassurance, confidence and preventative community work, while retaining enforcement capability where needed.

It was reported that the Team had recommenced on 6 May 2026 and would operate from Wednesday to Sunday during peak antisocial behaviour periods. A two-year contract had been awarded to TMS Protection so that the team could become more embedded in local communities.

The Panel heard that the service comprised four officers split into two teams, working variable shifts, with at least one team working until midnight on Fridays and Saturdays. Officers would patrol across the whole borough, wear clearly identifiable uniforms and use liveried vehicles. Those parish and town councils contributing financially would receive at least weekly visits, but non-contributing areas would continue to receive patrol coverage as part of the borough-wide initiative.

A representative from TMS Protection outlined the service aim of providing high-visibility patrols, reassuring the public and supporting enforcement of public space protection orders.

Members were advised that the officers held Community Safety Accreditation Scheme powers, following training, vetting and accreditation with the police, and that these powers enabled officers to address issues including antisocial behaviour, alcohol-related disorder, littering and graffiti.

It was explained that patrols would focus on known hotspots, parks, open spaces and locations where complaints had been received, and that officers would gather intelligence, engage with young people and the wider public, and use patrol logs, smartforms and body-worn video to record activity and support escalation where required.

During questions, clarification was sought on the process for reporting antisocial behaviour. In response, it was advised that Kent Police remained the first point of contact, particularly via 101 for non-emergency matters and 999 in an emergency, but that concerns could also be reported to the Borough Council's Community Safety Partnership through the Borough Council.

Concern was expressed that reporting routes were not yet sufficiently clear and it was agreed that a full list of contact details and reporting routes for antisocial behaviour would be circulated to parish clerks early the following week.

The Panel asked whether the power to stop cycles extended to electric bikes and scooters. It was confirmed that it did, although practical difficulties were acknowledged where officers were on foot and riders were already in motion.

Questions were also raised on the geographical scope of the powers and on officer deployment. The Panel was advised that the powers applied in public places across Tonbridge and Malling Borough and that patrols always operated in pairs for health and safety, resilience and evidential reasons.

The issue of whether all parishes should contribute financially to the scheme was discussed. It was explained that smaller parishes with relatively low levels of crime and antisocial behaviour might not need to contribute, although they would still receive a service as part of the borough-wide initiative.

The Panel also discussed the distinction between the remit of the Safer Neighbourhoods Team and other issues such as traveller encampments, large-scale waste matters and speeding traffic. It was explained that, while the team would report such matters and gather intelligence, they would not lead on them; rather, these would be dealt with by the relevant specialist council service, Kent Police or other partner agencies.

At the conclusion of the item, thanks were recorded to the Cabinet Member and to the TMS representative for the presentation, and it was confirmed that the presentation slides would be circulated.

### **PPP 26/14 UPDATE ON STANSTED COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW**

The Panel received an update on the Stansted Community Governance Review.

Following a request from Stansted Parish Council, there had been a public consultation between 16 March and 17 April 2026 and the outcomes of this would be considered by the General Purposes Committee on 10 June 2026. However, it would be recommended that

the number of councillors on Stansted Parish Council should increase from seven to nine.

The Panel heard that every household in the parish had been written to, that registered electors had also been contacted by email where addresses were held, and that social media posts and physical posters had supplemented the consultation.

A response rate of 6.4% had been achieved, which was average for this type of review. Over 80% of respondents had supported the proposed increase in councillor numbers.

If approved, a number of measures would need to be undertaken before the change could be implemented in time for the next parish elections in May 2027, including formal notification, publication of an order and electoral system updates.

Members of the Panel expressed support for the proposal and welcomed the potential increase in capacity for Stansted Parish Council.

#### **PPP 26/15 UPDATE ON PLANNING MATTERS**

A detailed update on Development Management and Local Plan work was provided and Members were advised that a 'pause' had previously been introduced in relation to certain planning application determinations because of South East Water's response to the Regulation 18 Local Plan consultation and the implications this had raised around water supply capacity.

It was explained that water supply had thereby become a material planning consideration, and that the pause had allowed applicants and agents the opportunity to submit material addressing relevant Local Plan policies.

The Panel heard that planning applications were now recommencing following legal advice and extensive engagement with DEFRA, MHCLG, the Environment Agency and South East Water.

It was also reported that Full Council had resolved on 12 May 2026 to replace the three-ward based Area Planning Committees with a single Planning Committee. The first meeting of the new committee would be held on 24 June 2026.

Reference was made to the updated guidance published on the Borough Council's website dealing with water supply and planning applications. It was reported that major developments would now be expected to submit a potable water demand technical note and that the local validation checklist was being consulted upon so that applications could be invalidated if that information was not provided.

For developments of 30 dwellings or more, or commercial developments of 3,000 square metres or more, the Borough Council would look to impose Grampian-style conditions preventing development from proceeding until sufficient water supply capacity was available.

The Panel also received an update on the Planning Advisory Service review. It was reported that an action plan had been agreed and was being regularly monitored, and that work was under way on a review of staffing structures, in particular around conservation, landscape and business support resources.

It was further reported that the Borough Council had secured grant funding to improve public digital access to planning data, including Article 4 directions and listed building curtilages, and that almost £50,000 had been secured through the Pathways to Planning programme to support the recruitment of a graduate planner.

On Local Plan progress, the Panel was reminded that the Regulation 18 consultation had closed on 2 January 2026 and that work was being undertaken towards Regulation 19.

The current programme anticipated Full Council consideration on 3 September 2026, with Regulation 19 consultation commencing on 10 September 2026 for the statutory six-week period, and submission to the Planning Inspectorate by the end of December 2026.

It was recognised that the timetable was challenging but was being pursued so that the Borough Council could remain within the current “legacy” Local Plan system, rather than falling into the untested new system.

The Panel heard that, in addition to meeting the Government’s objectively assessed housing need, the Local Plan also had to include a 20% buffer, and that site allocations and evidence base work continued to be reviewed accordingly.

A wide-ranging discussion followed on public transport, the implications of South East Water’s position, confidence in the evidence base, public confidence more generally, Borough Green Garden City, and the possible interaction between the Local Plan timetable and local government reorganisation.

It was confirmed that, by the time the Regulation 19 consultation was issued, the supporting evidence base would need to demonstrate sufficient confidence in both supply and demand measures relating to water and their consequences for the borough.

## **PPP 26/16 CLIMATE CHANGE UPDATE**

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Environment and Economy (Cllr R Betts) was pleased to advise that four Air Quality Management Areas

had been revoked following achievement of air quality targets. This meant that Watlington remained the only area where an Air Quality Management Area was still in place.

An update was provided on the Green Business Grant scheme. The first round had concluded with 12 applications and 11 successful funding awards, and a further round was expected in due course. This would be promoted at the appropriate time.

Members were informed that Tetra Pak recycling was now available through the borough's recycling arrangements.

The Panel also heard that anti-idling engagement work with schools had continued, including poster campaigns and activity at Tunbury School in Walderslade. In response to a question about the anti-idling campaign, it was agreed that the relevant contact details would be provided by email.

On biodiversity and habitat work, it was reported that 2,000 trees and whips had been planted across the borough since January, thereby exceeding the original target of 1,000.

Other work highlighted included the creation of a Miyawaki micro forest at Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground, further planting at Swanmead Sportsground, and environmental enhancements at other sites including Leybourne.

Roadside nature reserve coverage had significantly increased and management practices had been adjusted in order to support biodiversity, including the introduction of wildflower seed.

A home energy update was also provided. The thermal imaging camera loan initiative had proved successful over the winter period and, owing to demand, a second camera had now been acquired.

The Panel heard that the climate action event at Shipbourne and Plaxtol Eco Fair had been well attended and had provided useful demonstrations of low-carbon technology and sustainability initiatives.

The continuing work of the Climate Change Forum was noted and parishes were encouraged to share details of local events and repair cafés so that a directory could be developed and activity promoted.

In response to a question about the anti-idling campaign, it was agreed that the relevant contact details would be provided by email to the member concerned.

**PPP 26/17 KENT POLICE UPDATE**

In the absence of Kent Police, who had submitted apologies due to operational matters, a written update had been provided and tabled at the meeting.

The Chair indicated that any comments and/or questions on the information set out in the written update should be raised with Kent Police outside of the meeting.

Attention was also drawn to the My Community Voice scheme, which was commended as a useful way for parish representatives and residents to receive timely police updates and engage directly with local officers.

**PPP 26/18 ANY OTHER BUSINESS****(1) Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)**

Clarification was sought as to whether the announcement of the Governments preferred model for LGR was likely to be delayed given the uncertainty around the future of the current government. In response, it was reported that recent correspondence had indicated that a decision remained expected in July 2026.

Concern was expressed that the future role of parish and town councils had not been clearly addressed by government. The Leader of the Borough Council (Cllr M Boughton) acknowledged that this had been a source of frustration and advised that, although considerable preparatory work was under way, the next phase of detailed work could not properly commence until the geography of the proposed new unitary arrangements was known.

It was reported that substantial preparation was ongoing across a range of workstreams, including finance, audit and assets, and that information gathering and principle setting were continuing in readiness for the next phase.

A further question was asked about engagement with Kent County Council in relation to information sharing and it was noted that, from an officer perspective, the project work had been collaborative and professional.

Finally, Members were advised that the Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC) Area Committee would be meeting on 9 July 2026 and that invitations would be issued to relevant parties to discuss local government reorganisation in greater detail if a decision had been made by that date.

**(2) Asset Register for Parish/Town Councils**

The Cabinet Member for Planning (Cllr Taylor) asked parish and town councils to identify any parcels of land in their areas that were owned by Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council or Kent County Council, so that a list could be compiled ahead of local government reorganisation.

This would be used to inform discussions about whether such land might appropriately be transferred to parish/town councils in some cases.

**(3) Kent Downs National Landscape**

The Panel received an update on the Kent Downs National Landscape position, including the possibility of future expansion. It was reported that support for expansion remained, but that the matter was not currently being formally progressed.

**(4) Wrotham Quarry- proposed extension**

The proposed extension of Wrotham Quarry was noted and the Kent Association of Local Councils offered to circulate any relevant information.

**(5) Items for next meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting of the Parish Partnership Panel would be held on 28 August 2026.

Members were invited to submit any suggested items for the future work programme as soon as possible.

The meeting ended at 9.45 pm