

# Public Consultation

## Fairer Charging in Tonbridge and Malling

Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council is inviting borough residents, parish councils and other key stakeholders to take part in a Public Consultation.

### What is being considered?

The Borough Council is considering changing the way that it charges for the Tonbridge & Malling Borough element of your Council Tax bill from 2017/18 onwards.

### Why are we considering this?

Currently, the cost of providing Borough Council services is shared by all council tax payers in the borough. However, some residents live in areas with several Borough Council-provided facilities and services while others live in areas with fewer because these services are provided by their local parish council. We think it could be fairer if the people who benefit from these local services paid for them via a "Local Charge", in the same way that those who live in parished areas pay through their "Parish precept".

If you live anywhere within the borough other than the town of Tonbridge, you pay an extra parish precept for the local services (such as playgrounds and open spaces) provided by your parish/town council. As Tonbridge is not parished, the Borough Council has to provide services to the residents of Tonbridge.

The Borough Council does not charge any extra council tax to the residents of Tonbridge for these local services because all residents pay a general "Borough precept". So, to help make things fairer to the parishes, the Borough Council gives money to parish councils to help them with the costs of the local services they provide. This allows parish councils to reduce the amount of Council Tax that they charge in their Parish precept.

Cuts in the government funding that the Borough Council receives mean that it needs to save £1.8 million over the next four years. The Borough Council is seeking to make these savings while protecting the services that it provides. One of the areas being reviewed as part of this process is the grants that are made to the parish councils. However, it would be unfair to simply remove the grants to the parish councils without considering the cost of the local services that the Borough Council provides in Tonbridge.

One solution is to introduce a **Local Charge** to pay directly for the **local facilities and services** provided by the **Borough Council**.

The Borough Council is therefore considering introducing a Local Charge which would cover the cost of the following: local parks, playgrounds, allotments, flower displays, events, cemeteries and churchyards.

The majority of Borough Council services, such as waste collection, recycling, street cleansing, environmental health, housing and country parks, are borough-wide and therefore would not form part of a Local Charge.

The way that Council Tax charges are applied for services provided by other organisations such as Kent County Council, Kent Police and Kent Fire & Rescue would be unchanged.

In addition to improving fairness, Local Charges would replace the need to give grants to parish and town councils, saving approximately £226,000 per year.

## What would the Local Charge mean for residents?

As we are considering only a small number of services for a Local Charge, there would only be relatively small changes to individual Council tax bills. Tonbridge residents would see an increase to take account of all the local services they receive. Those with no local services in their areas would most likely see a modest reduction in their Borough precept. Parish councils are likely to need to replace their lost grant income, which may mean a small increase in Parish precept, depending on the area that you live in. We have estimated the changes that residents in each area of the borough are likely to see in their council tax.

The Borough Council's total income from council tax will be unaffected by these changes.

Our Questions and Answers section may help to answer any queries you may have. You may also like to view our video and read the Cabinet report and supporting documents.

### Your chance to comment

We want to hear what you have to say about this proposal. In particular, we want to know whether you agree with this new approach and which services you think should be charged only to the local communities with those facilities or which local services should continue to be shared by the whole borough. The link below will take you to our questionnaire. All responses must be submitted by **noon on Monday 20 June 2016**. The Council will meet later this year to review all comments received and make a decision on the way forward.

### Take part in the questionnaire:

#### Which parish/town do you live in?

Addington		East Peckham		Offham		Tonbridge	
Aylesford & Walderslade		Hadlow		Platt		Trottiscliffe	
Birling		Hildenborough		Plaxtol		Wateringbury	
Borough Green		Ightham		Ryarsh		West Malling	
Burham & Eccles		Kings Hill		Shipbourne		West Peckham	
Ditton		Leybourne		Snodland		Wouldham	
East Malling & Larkfield		Mereworth		Stansted & Fairseat		Wrotham	
Outside Tonbridge and Malling				Other (please specify)			

**For each of the following statements, please indicate whether you agree or disagree:**

	Agree	Disagree
Christmas lighting and flower displays should be paid for by the local communities which have those facilities.		
The cost of providing events such as Carnivals and Christmas Fairs should be paid for by the local communities which have those events.		
The net cost of providing allotments should be paid for by the local communities which have those facilities.		
The cost of maintaining playgrounds, playing fields and parks should be paid for by the local communities which have those facilities.		
The cost of looking after cemeteries and churchyards should be paid for by the local communities which have those facilities.		
From April 2017, Council tax bills should include a Local Charge where appropriate.		
Any other comments:		
Name:		
Telephone or email address:		

We would like to know if different groups of people in the borough's population have been able to take part in the consultation and identify if any groups have been excluded, or if different groups of people feel differently about the options and proposals. **If you are happy to**, please indicate the following that apply to you:

Your Sex:            Male            Female

Your Age:            18-24            25 – 44            45 – 64            65+

Your Ethnicity:    White            Mixed/Multiple Ethnic Groups            Asian/Asian British

                          Black/African/Caribbean/Black British            Other ethnic group

                          Prefer not to say

Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months?

Yes    No

**Data Protection Statement:**

Your personal information will be held and used in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. A summary of your response to this questionnaire may be published as part of the feedback document regarding the consultation but your name will not be published.