Responses received from Parish Councils in respect of 'Fairer Charging'

Parish	Response	Comment
Addington	Please find below the response from Addington Parish Council to the (local charge) consultation. Members are disappointed with the proposals and would like T&MBC to explain why the current grant system was put in place. We would also like it noted that unlike many parishes in the area the recreation ground and facilities are currently maintained by volunteers. It was suggested that T&MBC should promote a volunteer based approach across the borough based on the Addington model. Members are disappointed that T&MBC are putting more pressure on the budget of Parish Councils to save T&MBC money and that the Parish Council will be forced to increase their budget if it is to continue supporting the recreation ground, village hall and churchyard. Members would also like to understand whether the Parish Council could benefit from any business rates to offset any loss of funding.	Response sent explaining the background to the grant scheme, and reason for proposal. Also confirmed that Addington residents would be marginally better off under this model. Further response received advising that '*Members are fully aware that overall parishioners will not be worse off but if we didn't have our volunteer network we would have to have increased the precept some time ago. Faced with a diminishing volunteer base and a potential loss of this grant we will be forced to make a substantial increase in our precept'*.
Aylesford	Firstly the Parish Council would like to thank you for the opportunity to comment on these 2 very significant documents in respect of Parish Councils and their finances. The Council would also thank you for the excellent consultation documents which were quite easy to understand never an easy task in respect of financial matters. The council gave these papers very serious consideration and agreed the following responses to the 2 consultation papers: (a) That the introduction of the Local Charges (Special Expenses) scheme as a replacement for the FPAC scheme be welcomed as a much fairer way of charging for these services for residents of the parished areas and that its introduction from April 2017 be supported: (b) That whilst the Council is disappointed that TMBC are proposing to withdraw their scheme by which they distribute part of the funds they receive through the Government CTR scheme to parish councils, it understands TMBC's financial problems and with the council gaining as a result of changes to the FAPC scheme would accept the need for the withdrawal of this scheme;	Noted general support for introduction on local charge (special expenses). If Members were to adopt a Special Expenses Scheme, information would be made available at billing time to explain the movement in

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	(c) That with the changes arising out of (a) and (b) above which while beneficial to Aylesford residents overall shows a very large increase in council Tax rate for the Parish and would wish the reasoning behind this fully explained in the Council Tax bill and accompanying literature thereby minimising the number of enquiries the Council will receive; and (d) That TMBC be asked to continue their efforts in finding out government intentions re Parish Council Tax capping and to have in place a Plan B in case of the hopefully unlikely prospect that capping is extended to Parish Councils as thee changes to both FAPC and the CTR could possibly no longer be viable.	the overall council tax. 'Capping' of parish councils is a risk, but has not to date been brought forward by this Government. See body of report.
Birling	Whilst overall the proposed changes to the way the Borough element of the Council Tax bill should be advantageous to the majority Birling Parish Council is concerned that it will have a disproportionate adverse impact on a small number of parishes. From the illustration provided local charging will impact significantly on Birling Parish Council. To replace the income required by the proposed withdrawal of the Financial Allocation to Parish Councils by TMBC, a significant increase in precept would be required despite the fact that this would be offset by a reduced Borough charge. To remain viable Birling Parish Council, based on this year's income, will need to increase the precept from £8772 to £13,413 an increase of £4641 equating to 65%. Whilst recognising this would be offset by the reduction in charging for the Borough element based on Band D charging the example shows that an additional £10.07 would be charged. A further concern is that currently it is unclear whether the government will impose a cap on precept increases determined by Parish Councils. Birling Parish Council objects to the proposals by TMBC to withdraw the FAPC on the grounds that it will be a cost shift to local residents with immediate effect. This has a significant effect in small communities and is too great to bear in a single year thus the proposed timescale is considered unreasonable. This proposal threatens the viability of small parish councils should a cap on precept increases be imposed. For Parishes disproportionately affected Birling Parish Council asks that TMBC consider phasing the withdrawal of the FAPC over a reasonable time period of 3 to 5 years. This proposed compromise would ensure that savings would be achieved in a more reasonable timescale, that parishes significantly affected such as Birling can raise the precept over this period to ease the burden of costs on local residents, reduce the risk to assure income recovery and ensure the long term viability of the Parish. Whilst we note the deadline of the 20th June for consultation and the Parish Council acknowledge the principles behind the scheme it would be helpful to meet TMBC to review details specific to Birling. Leybourne Parish Council have suggested we join the meeting they have requested and we would be happy to do so.	'Capping' of parish councils is a risk, but has not to date been brought forward by this Government. See body of report. Phasing – if a local charge (special expenses) scheme is adopted by the Council, the existing s136 FAPC scheme will consequently fall. Therefore, there could not be a phased withdrawal of s136 FAPC grants alongside the introduction of a special expenses scheme.

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	In summary: Agree that local communities should pay for : • Xmas lighting and flower displays • events such as Carnivals and Xmas Fairs • the net cost of providing allotments • maintaining playgrounds, playing fields and parks Disagree that local communities should pay for maintenance of cemeteries and churchyards, and disagree that there should be a local charge.	Note that Birling receives £4232 in FAPC grant made up of £2365 Basic Allocation; £1727 for the open churchyard and £140 footway lighting. See comments about churchyards in the body of the report.
Borough Green	Please consider these answers as the official response from Borough Green Parish Council, which is broadly in agreement with proposals to introduce fairer charging. Agree that local communities should pay for : • Xmas lighting and flower displays • events such as Carnivals and Xmas Fairs • the net cost of providing allotments • maintaining playgrounds, playing fields and parks • maintenance of cemeteries and churchyard • Agree to the introduction of a local charge Borough Green Parish Council has considered this alongside the consultation document for the withdrawal of CTR grants w.e.f April 2017. This council has agreed to support the T&MBC review of funding arrangements w.e.f 01.04.17 as outlined in the consultation document and will work with the borough councilto introduce fairer charging across the borough.	Noted general support for introduction on local charge (special expenses).
Burham	Agree that local communities should pay for : • Xmas lighting and flower displays • events such as Carnivals and Xmas Fairs • the net cost of providing allotments • maintaining playgrounds, playing fields and parks	Noted general support for introduction on local charge (special expenses).

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	• maintenance of cemeteries and churchyard Agree to the introduction of a local charge	
Ditton	As Parish Clerk I am responding on behalf of the Parish Council. Members will also respond as individuals. The Parish Council believes that it is fair for the Borough Council to continue to contribute towards the upkeep of playgrounds, playing fields and parks as these facilities are used by many other visitors to the village and not just local residents (for example many TMBC residents drive to our car park and walk their dogs on our rec and Quarry Local Nature reserve. Many TMBC resident children play on our football pitches). Also the church would struggle to keep the churchyard well maintained and provide floodlighting if the contribution from the Borough Council was withdrawn. If the funding for such things is withdrawn by the Borough Council and the Parish Council has to increase its precept to provide these services it will have a considerable impact on what local residents pay. In summary: Agree that local communities should pay for : • Xmas lighting and flower displays • events such as Carnivals and Xmas Fairs • the net cost of providing allotments In summary: Disagree that local communities should pay for: • maintaining playgrounds, playing fields and parks • maintenance of cemeteries and churchyards • And disagree that there should be a local charge. •	Local residents of Ditton would be circa £14.45 better off (based on the modelling in the research paper) if local charge were introduced. Note that this would reduce to £4.28 better off if CTR grant were simultaneously withdrawn. Ditton's FAPC grant in 2016/17 is £8,134 made up of £7,065 Basic Allocation and £1,069 for an open churchyard. See comments about churchyards in the body of the report.
East Malling & Larkfield	The parish council considers in view of the financial circumstances faced by the Borough Council with its impending loss of Government grant it accepts the proposals as fair and reasonable. It is likely that if these changes are agreed we would be increasing the parish council tax for 2017/18 to offset the lost income. However if capping for parish councils were introduced for 2017/18 this would be a problem and therefore our agreement is subject to the matter being urgently reviewed if that happened. In this respect the council is mindful that it feels if capping were introduced it is likely to be applied to larger councils.	Noted general support for introduction on local charge (special expenses). 'Capping' of parish councils is a risk, but has not to date been brought forward by this Government. See body

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	The council would also ask that further consultation take place about the issue of Christmas Lighting for 2017. If Tonbridge Christmas Lighting costs are charged to the Towns Council taxpayers it can understand the Borough wishing look at the position in the Malling area. In our case we understand that the grant you gave for the Martin Square lights in 2015 was £1472 and our parish council tax would have to rise by 0.30p at Band D if it took on the expense. We would ask there be a separate consultation with affected parishes and Chambers of Commerce/Traders on this issue. Lastly I have been asked to say that the council appreciates the consultation exercise with parishes which it regards as excellent.	of report. Christmas lighting is discussed in the body of the report.
East Peckham	I have studied the papers relating to the proposed changes and feel that the proposals should be supported because they are the most equitable solution to the problems facing TMBC.	Noted general support for introduction on local charge (special expenses).
Hadlow	No response received	
Hildenborough	Agree that local communities should pay for : • Xmas lighting and flower displays • events such as Carnivals and Xmas Fairs • the net cost of providing allotments • maintaining playgrounds, playing fields and parks • maintenance of cemeteries and churchyard • Agree to the introduction of a local charge	Noted general support for introduction on local charge (special expenses).
Ightham	Following response received after the deadline: I know that the deadline has passed but at our recent Parish Council meeting I was asked to register our support for the new charges.	Noted general support for introduction on local charge (special expenses).
Kings Hill	Local Charge Consultation. Thank you for the information provided for this consultation which has been reviewed by Kings Hill Parish Council. As Kings Hill residents are likely to benefit from the introduction of a "Local Charge" and see a reduction in the overall council tax charged to them, the Council agrees that it has no objections to the proposal.	Noted general support for introduction on local charge (special expenses).

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Leybourne	No formal response received, although emailed enquiries were made by Leybourne in respect of different aspects. In one email of enquiry it was noted "We understand the financial situation and accept that the proposals coming forward are best endeavours to achieve a fairer environment".	
Mereworth	No response received	
Offham	No response received	
Platt	No response received	
Plaxtol	This note represents the views of Plaxtol Parish Council which discussed the proposals contained in the public consultation yesterday. We agree that the local communities which have such facilities should pay for: • Xmas lighting and flower displays • events such as Carnivals and Xmas Fairs • the net cost of providing allotments • maintaining playgrounds, playing fields and parks • maintenance of cemeteries and churchyards We also agree that, from April 2017, Council tax bills should include a Local Charge where appropriate.	Noted general support for introduction on local charge (special expenses).
Ryarsh	No response received	
Shipbourne	No response received	
Snodland	At a recent meeting held by Snodland Town Council, the Council agreed that the introduction of a local charge is fairer if the people who benefit from these local services paid for them via a "Local Charge". Agree that local communities should pay for : • Xmas lighting and flower displays • events such as Carnivals and Xmas Fairs • the net cost of providing allotments	Noted general support for introduction on local charge (special expenses).

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	• maintaining playgrounds, playing fields and parks • maintenance of cemeteries and churchyard	
Stansted	No response received	
Trottiscliffe	No response received	
Wateringbury	No response received	
West Malling	Firstly, thank you to you and your teams for their hard work producing this consultation & providing support answering our many questions. Having discussed this at length West Malling Parish Council is broadly in favour of your proposal. We are pleased that Tonbridge residents will now be paying a more realistic council tax level. There are three issues below that we have more detailed comments about and we have detailed them below. Capping of Parish Council Funding -Our response has been based on the assumption that DCLG will not cap Parish Councils preventing them from increasing their funding by more than 2%. Although the transfer of responsibilities would lead to a one off increase in the Parish rate I for WMPC of anything up to 30% our funding, there is an inherent danger that Central Government acts to introduce a cap as has been the case for Borough Councils and County Councils for some time. If this were to happen, we would not be in favour of the proposals in the consultation as we would be unable to raise the required funds to service the additional responsibilities we would be taking on. We are very hopeful that DCLG will not take this course of action, but we thought it prudent to lay out our thinking if this did transpire. Churchyard -The grant given to WMPC for our churchyard is spent by a joint committee of the Parish and Parochial Church Councils. It pays for the level of maintenance required to keep the churchyard open for burials. Rev David Green has advised us that when the grant is withdrawn, he will close the churchyard since the PCC does not have the funds to maintain it. Our understanding is that the PCC is required to pass the responsibility for burials to the Parish Council, who can in turn pass responsibility on to the Borough Council. There are very few open churchyards in the area and it is therefore very likely that the burials would then transfer to Tonbridge and become a cost to Tonbridge residents. WMPC believes therefore that the churchyard grant should continue, recognising that to do otherwise will have the long term effect of increasing burials in Tonbridge and therefore the charges to Tonbridge residents.	Noted general support for introduction on local charge (special expenses). 'Capping' of parish councils is a risk, but has not to date been brought forward by this Government. See body of report. The s136 scheme incudes (where applicable) grants t parish councils in order to encourage churchyards to remain open for as long as possible, for the benefit of local residents. See body of report.

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	Christmas Lights - It is easy to see how those Parishes which do not offer a display will choose for the costs to fall on those which do, and their residents benefit freely from the displays provided by others. In West Malling at least two thirds of visitors to the town come from adjoining parishes, whilst the parish rate is drawn from only around 1200 houses. Our ability to raise money to replace the grant is therefore very limited. There should be consultation with the Parish Councils which erect Christmas Lighting displays on the future of this grant. Transfer of Assets - We would like to have a discussion with Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council about the transfer of the assets identified under the 'Local Charge' to us. From discussions with your staff, we have identified these and would welcome the opportunity to take this matter forward. The Parish Council has also had sight of the Borough Council's allocations for events and Festivals. My members were very disturbed to see the overwhelming amount estimated to be spent on Tonbridge events. Only £3,000 was spent on festivals outside Tonbridge compared to £40,200 on Tonbridge events. Whilst we appreciate that the Tonbridge events will attract people from a wider area, this is also true of several events held outside of Tonbridge. If there are to be similar grants in future we would like to see the Borough Council distributing them more evenly across the population of the Borough.	Christmas lighting is discussed in the body of the report. Discussions taking place. Tonbridge events includes allocation of staff time (as there is no Town Council) as well as grants.
West Peckham	No response received	
Wouldham	No response received	
Wrotham	No response received	