

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

PARISH PARTNERSHIP PANEL

Thursday, 7th September, 2017

Present: Cllr N J Heslop (Chairman), Cllr M A Coffin (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Mrs J A Anderson, Cllr Mrs S M Barker, Cllr R P Betts, Cllr R W Dalton, Cllr D Lettington, Cllr B J Luker, Cllr D Markham, Cllr R V Roud, Addington, Aylesford, Borough Green, Burham, East Malling and Larkfield, Hadlow, Hildenborough, Mereworth, Platt, Plaxtol, Shipbourne, Wateringbury, West Malling, Wouldham, Wrotham, Mrs S Hohler and Mr H Rayner

H S Rogers were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors T I B Cannon, B W Walker, Birling, Ditton, Leybourne, Trottscliffe and Mr P Homewood

PART 1 - PUBLIC

PPP 17/10 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 16 February 2017 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

It was noted that the last meeting of the Parish Partnership Panel had been cancelled due to the unexpected announcement of a General Election in June.

PPP 17/11 UPDATE ON ACTION IDENTIFIED IN THE LAST MINUTES

There were no actions identified that were not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

However, the Chairman referred to Minute Number PPP 17/4 (Kent Police Services Update) and advised that the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner (Mr Matthew Scott) had accepted an invitation to attend the Parish Partnership Panel on 15 February 2018.

The Chairman also welcomed the new Chairman of the Kent Association of Local Councils – Tonbridge and Malling branch (Mr Patrick Thomas) to the meeting.

PPP 17/12 PARISH CHARTER

The report of the Chief Executive set out the process for updating the Parish Charter. A revised draft was attached as Annex 1 and was

shorter, more concise and focused on key issues of mutual interest to the Borough and Town/Parish Councils.

It was proposed that focus should be given to the following matters:

- Future operation of the Parish Partnership Panel, encouraging a greater emphasis on items put forward by Local Councils provided these were of relevance to a wider audience
- An agreed commitment to effective communication and the sharing of information
- A protocol on how formal consultations were undertaken, giving sufficient time for responses to be submitted
- A joint commitment to maintaining high standards of conduct and respect
- Joint working to address future financial challenges and resource issues
- Monitoring and review of the Charter, with a suggested review period of five years.

Parish Councils were invited to send comments direct to their local Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC) representative in the first instance. Any comments received would then be raised with the Borough Council by KALC who would then agree any revisions on behalf of Parish Councils. It was hoped that a revised draft would be presented to the Panel in November 2017 for final consideration and formally adopted by KALC and the Borough Council thereafter. It was noted that Parish Councils would therefore not be required to formally 'adopt' the Charter individually.

Members welcomed the opportunity to discuss and review the Charter and recognised the significant financial and organisational challenges affecting local government.

Particular reference was made to Local Councils submitting agenda items for the Parish Partnership Panel and comments as to appropriate timescales and deadlines were invited. The Chairman observed that sufficient notice needed to be clearly understood and accepted by all parties to avoid confusion and to enable the appropriate administration arrangements to be made.

A small number of suggestions were forthcoming and included:

- a slight softening of the words in resources and legal issues to read 'should work together' rather than 'would work together';

- points of contact should be added for areas of relevance to parish councils, such as development control, licensing and street scene.

The Chairman of the Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC) (Tonbridge and Malling) valued the opportunity to comment and anticipated that further detail would come forward from the parishes as a result of consultation. It was also noted that the draft Charter compared favourably to those produced by neighbouring authorities.

RECOMMENDED: That the process of updating the Parish Charter, as outlined in the report, be agreed

***Referred to Cabinet**

PPP 17/13 KENT POLICE SERVICES UPDATE

Inspector Maxine Martin, who had recently joined the Community Safety Unit, provided a verbal update on the ongoing reorganisation of Kent Police, funding implications and key areas of focus.

Whilst the main priorities remained safeguarding, human trafficking, child sex exploitation and modern day slavery, recent cuts to funding and staffing meant a more focused approach on preventing theft, risk and harm to the most vulnerable. There were controlled strategies in place to address these areas and these were mirrored by the Community Safety Partnership priorities and set out in their recent Action Plan.

Particular reference was made to the recent staffing changes at the Community Safety Unit and Inspector Martin advised of two new sergeants (Andy Gallon and Dougal Bell). All of the officers based at the CSU had strong local connections to Tonbridge and Malling and all were committed to reducing crime and anti-social behaviour in the district.

Once the overall reorganisation was complete and there was clarity around the number of Police officers, Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and their areas of responsibility contact information would be shared with the parish councils. The importance of building relationships with local communities was recognised and whilst cuts to funding and staffing were challenging, Kent Police remained committed to neighbour policing and working smarter with reduced resourcing.

In response to concerns raised about rural crime and the theft of farm equipment, it was indicated that this was low level within the Borough. However, the Panel was reassured that rural issues were taken seriously and there was a recent example where criminal activity had been stopped due to information from the local community.

A number of concerns were raised about reporting non-emergencies to 101 and

Inspector Martin acknowledged the difficulties being experienced. However, she remained confident that this service was valuable in helping residents and was hopeful that future improvements, and introduction of on-line reporting, would tailor the service provided for the benefit of the public.

The Kent Association of Local Councils sought reassurance that emails would be responded to if there were significant areas of concern identified by parish councils. Inspector Martin confirmed that Kent Police and/or the Community Safety Unit would always respond where possible and was happy for her email address to be shared with the Panel.

A number of other points were raised and noted and these included the increase of internet/social media related crimes, PCSO powers and responsibilities, perception of crime in rural communities and the Chairman of KALC's recent meeting with the Assistant District Commissioner.

Finally, Wouldham Parish Council referred to plans to introduce a 40 mph speed restriction. Inspector Martin indicated that Kent Police would be unable to enforce this restriction and suggested that Speedwatch be considered. The Speedwatch coordinator (Alan Watson) could be contacted for further advice.

PPP 17/14 KENT COUNTY COUNCIL SERVICES UPDATE

The Kent County Council Community Liaison Officer (Anne Charman) reported on a number of County initiatives and consultations. Further detail was set out in the Kent County Council Services update report attached to the agenda.

Particular reference was made to the key points made by the Leader of the County Council (Paul Carter) to Full Council on 13 July 2017 regarding the positive outcome of the Ofsted Inspection of Children's Services, which had put KCC in the top 25% nationally, and an update on the progress of the Sustainability and Transformation Plan. The latter brought together health and social care integration across the county, including Medway, and aimed to make better use of the National Health Service and Social Care.

At the request of the Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure (Councillor Howard Rogers) details of the Lorry Watch initiative were set out. The scheme aimed to support and empower local residents in areas where issues persisted with the through traffic of Heavy Goods Vehicles. Community volunteers recorded details of lorries that were suspected of using unsuitable roads or not adhering to limits and restrictions. Further information on how to establish a local Lorry Watch was available by emailing freight@kent.gov.uk

Current consultations included the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy; Rights of way improvement plan and Kent Country Parks Strategy. Deadlines for submitting responses were 18 October, 17 September and 11 September respectively. All Kent County Council consultations could be viewed on line at:

<http://consultations.kent.gov.uk/consult.ti>

Kent County Council had recently secured funding to support Kent based life sciences businesses. The Boost4Health scheme offered practical support to businesses with exporting and encouraged international collaboration. Further detail was available on the website at:

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/business/business-loans-and-funding/eu-funding/boost4health#tab-1>

Finally, the Panel were advised that a consultation on proposals to upgrade the M20 junctions 3 – 5 to a smart motorway was due to begin later this month. Public exhibitions were arranged for Ryarsh Village Hall (Friday 15 September); Trottiscliffe Village Hall (Saturday 16 September) and Capel Morris Centre, Aylesford (Friday 22 and Saturday 23 September).

Further detail was available on the website at:

<http://roads.highways.gov.uk/projects/m20-junctions-3-to-5-smart-motorway/>

The County representative for Malling North took the opportunity of advising the Panel of further works scheduled for the western overbridge at junction 4 of the M20. The scheme was intended to address the problem of repeated potholes and could result in some overnight and/or weekend closures.

PPP 17/15 TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL SERVICES UPDATE

The Chief Corporate Policy Officer provided an update on key points relevant to Tonbridge and Malling. The headline messages included:

- Village Stores Initiative:

A partnership between the Borough Council and Action with Communities in Rural Kent launched in September 2016 in recognition of the role that village stores played within local communities. The scheme offered business advice, mentoring and support. It was noted that the Borough Council contributed to the funding of the initiative.

Phase 1 had helped 7 stores in East Peckham, Plaxtol, Leybourne, Wateringbury and Wouldham. Funding for phase 2 had been approved by the Borough Council recently and the programme would be extended for a further twelve months.

Further take up of the scheme was being actively encouraged.

- Aylesford Jobs and Training Fair

This would take place on 1 November at the Royal British Legion Village (Capel Morris Centre) Aylesford and was a partnership between the Borough Council, the RBLI and Jobcentre Plus.

There would be up to 25 businesses, potentially looking to recruit, and training providers in attendance. Local jobseekers would be invited via the Jobcentre but the event was open to anyone looking from employment.

Members of the Panel were asked to share information about both initiatives and further detail was available on request.

The meeting ended at 8.30 pm