

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

PARISH PARTNERSHIP PANEL

Thursday, 3rd September, 2020

Present: Cllr N J Heslop (Chairman), Cllr Mrs J A Anderson, Cllr R P Betts, Cllr R W Dalton, Cllr F A Hoskins, Cllr S A Hudson, Cllr Mrs C B Langridge, Cllr D Lettington, Cllr B J Luker, Cllr M R Rhodes and Cllr M Taylor.

Together with representatives of Addington, Aylesford, Borough Green, Burham, Ditton, East Malling and Larkfield, East Peckham, Hadlow, Hildenborough, Ightham, Kings Hill, Offham, Platt, Plaxtol, Ryarsh, Shipbourne Parish Councils and County Councillors Mrs T Dean, Mr M Balfour, Mrs S Hohler and Mr H Rayner.

Councillors M C Base, A P J Keeley, R V Roud, J L Sergison, Mrs M Tatton and D J Cooper were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M A Coffin and Leybourne Parish Council.

PART 1 - PUBLIC

PPP 20/16 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

PPP 20/17 UPDATE ON ACTION IDENTIFIED IN THE LAST MINUTES

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

However, the Chairman invited the County Member for Malling West (Councillor Harry Rayner) to comment on the recent flooding in Borough Green, Ightham and Stansted. As this was a recurring issue related to drainage, surface water and the maintenance programme it was suggested that Southern Water were invited to a future meeting of the Parish Partnership Panel to address these significant concerns. The Chairman supported this proposal and would extend an invitation to Southern Water.

PPP 20/18 PLANNING SERVICES UPDATE

Updates were provided on the following issues:

(a) Planning For the Future and consultation timescales

The Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure (Councillor David Lettington) presented an overview of the Government proposals to reform the planning system in England. These proposals were currently out for consultation and responses had to be submitted by the end of September/early October.

The Borough Council would consider its response at an extraordinary meeting of the Planning and Transportation Advisory Board scheduled for 29 September and parish councils were encouraged to submit comments direct or via local Ward Councillors or the Kent Association of Local Councils.

The main proposals set out in the White Paper 'Planning for the Future' and those matters which potentially had significant implications for the operation of the Borough Council, in its role as Local Planning Authority, had been considered by the Planning and Transportation Advisory Board held on [28 July](#).

Finally reference was made to the progress of the Borough Council's Local Plan and it was confirmed that virtual Hearings were programmed for October.

(b) S106 Procedures

The Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health advised that a report to the Planning and Transportation Advisory Board of [28 July](#) had provided an overview of planning obligations for the period 2018-2020. An update on upcoming changes to how future monitoring of obligations would take place had also been provided.

Members had approved the adoption of a Planning Obligations Protocol which was intended to provide a clear and transparent framework in respect of how the Service would negotiate and secure planning obligations under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 in order to mitigate the impacts of development taking place across the Borough. Successful negotiation of planning obligations required effective management and monitoring to ensure timely and appropriate use of collected obligations.

(c) Planning Enforcement – Revised Policy

The Panel was advised that the Planning and Transportation Advisory Board held on [28 July](#) had approved the adoption of a Planning Enforcement Section 215 Protocol. This was intended to provide a clear and transparent framework on how the authority decided to take action to serve formal notices, in particular how sites would be assessed to establish whether such action was appropriate and proportionate and whether any other powers held by the Borough Council should be called

upon as an alternative. It was noted that, given the high number of complaints the enforcement team received on such matters, the Protocol would ensure that financial and personnel resources were properly focused.

(d) Development Management processes and consultation/guidance

Further to Minute Number PPP 20/12, it was reported that Cabinet of 30 June 2020 had approved the proposed changes to development management processes, as set out in [Decision Notice D200040CAB](#) and the report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health to the Planning and Transportation Advisory Board of 3 March 2020.

The Borough Council had committed to a programme of engagement with stakeholders and there had generally been positive feedback from parish councils and applicants. A user guide providing clear instructions was being developed and would be available on the website in due course. Parish Councils were also encouraged to volunteer to test the new development management and notification process to aid understanding of any potential problems.

Following discussion a number of potential improvement actions were identified (summarised below) and noted by the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health for further investigation:

- Rescheduling of training webinars
- Training sessions and guidance with parish clerks on using the Public Access search function
- List B to be amended to advise when the 21 day consultation period expired
- List B to be amended to advise whether a technical response was required from a parish council
- Applicants to be encouraged to submit all documents in a screen readable format
- Recognised that hard copies of documents might be necessary on an exception only basis for complex planning applications

Finally, the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health emphasised that these proposals were intended to improve the application process for all parties and parish councils continued to have an important role in consultation.

PPP 20/19 STREET SCENE SERVICES UPDATE

Updates were provided on the following:

(a) Waste Services Contract

The Waste Contract Manager provided an update on the recent performance of the waste service contract and referred to the significant challenges presented by the coronavirus pandemic. These challenges were also exacerbated by issues at the waste disposal sites, increased volumes of waste due to residents being at home for longer periods; the recent heatwave and vehicle breakdowns due to poor maintenance.

However, the Borough Council had managed to continue its waste service operation during the lockdown measures and only garden waste collection had been suspended for a short period. As a result, subscriptions to the service were extended for 2 months.

It was also reported that Tonbridge and Malling residents had successfully recycled 58% of waste which was significantly higher than the target set.

A number of measures had been identified to improve the performance of the contractor and these would be reviewed by the Street Scene and Environment Services Advisory Board on 5 October.

Finally, it was reported that a number of local authorities continued to experience significant disruption and Tonbridge and Malling compared favourably nationally.

In response to a question regarding the number of 'bring' sites in the Borough and whether there had been a significant reduction in their use it was suggested that this was discussed at the Street Scene and Environment Services Advisory Board in October.

(b) Provision of Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) in Tonbridge and Malling

The County Councillor for Malling North (Councillor Sarah Hohler) advised that Kent County Council's Planning Committee had unanimously approved the proposal by FCC Environment (UK) Limited to establish a HWRC in Allington. Further detail was set out in the County Services Update report under Minute Number PPP 20/21.

(c) Fly Tipping Enforcement – Days of Action

Further to Minute Number PPP 20/3 (c), and as part of the 'days of action' campaign, the Borough Council remained committed to educating households to check the credentials of those collecting waste. These initiatives had been delayed due to the coronavirus pandemic and it was hoped that these could be rescheduled in the near future. Details would be shared with parish/town councils when these were finalised.

It was reported that a number (10) of fly tipping hotspots would be assessed for potential covert CCTV monitoring. This was subject to further discussion with the Kent Intelligence Unit but it was hoped that this proactive action would improve problem areas.

(d) Parking Enforcement and funding of Traffic Wardens by parishes

The Kent Association of Local Councils (Tonbridge and Malling branch) referred to a proposal from Shipbourne Parish Council regarding the potential for parish councils to contribute funding for traffic wardens to undertake parking enforcement in their parishes. The Head of Technical Services provided an overview of the current staffing arrangements and enforcement operations in the Borough.

The parish councils referred to significant parking issues outside of the working hours of operation of the Parking Enforcement Team and queried whether the enforcement role could be 'sub-let' to other organisations. It was explained that only first (county) and second (borough) tier authorities were allowed to take enforcement action and that Kent Police had powers to deal with parking issues out of hours.

However, the Head of Technical Services offered to explore all options with parish councils and it was suggested that a virtual webinar be held to discuss concerns and funding.

Finally, the Panel was reminded that problems could be reported to parking.services@tmbc.gov.uk

PPP 20/20 KENT POLICE SERVICES UPDATE

The Chairman, in his role as Leader of the Council, welcomed Inspector Elizabeth Jones to her new position at the Tonbridge and Malling Community Safety Unit.

Acting Inspector Jones provided a verbal update on the achievements made in performance and the neighbourhood policing agenda. The headline messages were that there had been a significant number of complaints related to lack of social distancing and mass gatherings; burglary from dwellings had reduced during lockdown and Police Community Support Officers (PCSO) continued to engage actively with the community.

Currently, the Community Policing Team were targeting human trafficking, drug crime and community initiatives.

Recent crime trends and activity included:

- Addressing anti-social behaviour around Blue Bell Hill following feedback from residents;
- Addressing dangerous driving on bikes and motorbikes via Op Impala;
- Dealing with traveller incursions in Tonbridge and Malling and serving Section 61 notices;
- Preparing for Op Autumn which included higher visibility patrols in hot spot areas; and
- Reviewing the circumstances of a licensed event in Wrotham which breached Covid-19 safety measures.

Particular reference was made to the traffic issues on the A20, particularly from Wrotham to West Malling, and the Panel welcomed the inclusion of this as a 'red route', which meant that it was an area of particular interest to police.

Finally, Inspector Jones committed to exploring options to provide a more personalised or parish specific summary to parish councils.

Further information on any of the items raised in the Kent Police Services Update report was available by contacting Kent Police direct. Alternatively, any specific community issues could be passed to the Democratic Services Officer (allison.parris@tmhc.gov.uk) to forward to Kent Police.

PPP 20/21 KENT COUNTY COUNCIL SERVICES UPDATE

The County Member for Malling North (Councillor Sarah Hohler) reported that, despite extra funding provided by Government to cover additional costs and loss of income related to Covid-19, the County Council faced a budget shortfall currently estimated at £40-50M for this financial year.

In addition, there had been a significant number of unaccompanied asylum seekers in recent months, 589 of which were under 18. Kent had reached capacity on 14 August and other local authorities were now offering assistance.

Further detail was provided on the Household Waste Recycling Centre and there would be improvements made to the entrance and exits. The aim was to open the facility in 2021.

The replacement of Addington footbridge meant the overnight closure of the M20 early in October. However, there had been agreement that further improvement works on the M20 would be dealt with by partial lane closures and keeping the motorway open.

Finally, the Chairman of Kent County Council would be supporting Porchlight as his annual charity this year and would be walking from Stansted to West Malling to raise money.

In conclusion, the Chairman commended Kent County Council on the recently launched Economic Recovery Dashboard which provided useful economic indicators to support the post Covid-19 recovery.

PPP 20/22 TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL SERVICES UPDATE

The Chairman, in his role as Leader of the Borough Council, provided a brief update on key points of relevance to Tonbridge and Malling. The headline messages included:

(a) Local Retail Centres and Shopfront Grants Scheme

The Panel was reminded that over the past 18 months, the Borough Council had been running various Shopfront Improvement Schemes to support local businesses and help improve the look and feel of town and local retail centres. An update on these Schemes had been provided at the Economic Regeneration Advisory Board on [2 September](#).

Members had approved the promotion of the Local Retail Centres and Shopfront Grants Scheme to encourage further applications and parish councils were asked to make local businesses aware of the potential funding opportunities. The Scheme would be closed to new applications from 31 March 2021.

(b) Response, Recovery and Reorientation

The Chairman advised that this was an evolving process and work continued on recovery and reorientation opportunities.

(c) Climate Change Strategy

The Cabinet Member for Street Scene and Environment Services (Councillor Robin Betts) advised that the consultation on the draft Strategy had ended on 30 June and thanked everyone for the submissions received. There would be a more detailed update provided at the Street Scene and Environment Services Advisory Board on 5 October, where it was anticipated that an Action Plan would be presented for discussion.

The meeting ended at 10.10 pm