

## **TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **PARISH PARTNERSHIP PANEL**

**Thursday, 4th February, 2021**

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

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

Councillors A P J Keeley, A Kennedy, P J Montague, Mrs A S Oakley, W E Palmer, H S Rogers, R V Roud, J L Sergison, T B Shaw, N G Stapleton and D Thornewell were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Apologies for absence were received from Plaxtol Parish Council and Snodland Town Council.

### **PART 1 - PUBLIC**

#### **PPP 21/1 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the meeting held on 12 November 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### **PPP 21/2 UPDATE ON ACTION IDENTIFIED IN THE LAST MINUTES**

##### **PPP 20/17 – Invitation to Southern Water**

The Chairman advised that an invitation had been extended to representatives of Southern Water to attend a future meeting of the Parish Partnership Panel. Every effort would be made to secure their attendance at the meeting to be held on 10 June 2021.

Borough Green Parish Council thanked County Councillor Rayner and Tom Tugendhat MP for their assistance in communicating with Southern Water, which had seen a resolution to their immediate concerns. However, the Parish Council welcomed the opportunity for further updates from Southern Water representatives at the Parish Partnership Panel.

**PPP 20/22 (c) – Climate Change Strategy**

The Cabinet Member for Street Scene and Environment Services (Councillor Betts) advised that the Street Scene and Environment Services Advisory Board, to be held on 9 February, would consider proposals for the establishment of a Climate Change Forum. The Kent Association of Local Councils – Tonbridge and Malling branch (KALC TM) expressed interest in participating in this Forum to ensure effective communication with all parish councils.

Representatives from Laser Energy would also attend the meeting to provide details of the Borough Council's carbon footprint.

**PPP 20/27 Update on Waste Services**

The Cabinet Member for Street Scene and Environment Services (Councillor Robin Betts) advised that the ongoing pandemic continued to represent a significant challenge for Waste Services, due in part to the volume of waste being collected, pressure of staff absence and ensuring staff were able to work safely. However, the contractor had been able to maintain a full completion of rounds on a regular basis and the service over the Christmas period had operated without major incident. It was indicated that once the lockdown measures had been relaxed and staffing pressures reduced a more balanced service could be provided with a better focus on street cleansing.

The Chairman remained committed to providing a more detailed update on the waste service, together with information on fly tipping, at a future meeting of the Parish Partnership Panel.

**PPP 21/3 KENT POLICE SERVICES UPDATE**

On behalf of Kent Police, Inspector Elizabeth Jones provided a verbal update on the achievements made in performance and the neighbourhood policing agenda. The headline messages related to action being taken to address increased thefts from sheds, garages and outbuildings; successful operations against illegal puppy farms and the focus on domestic and child abuse. The latter had increased significantly during the lockdown and Kent Police were actively involved in undertaking 'hidden harm' visits.

In addition, there had been increased reports of anti-social behaviour and drug dealing. Parish Councils were invited to advise the CSU/Kent Police of problem areas so that police visibility could be increased. The Youth Engagement Officer was committed to engaging and educating young people and Kent Police would consider the use of enforcement orders when necessary.

Finally, Inspector Jones had been involved in a recent online community event which had proved very successful. It was hoped that more events of this type would be arranged in the future.

A number of local issues and concerns were raised by Parish Councils and these were discussed in depth. These related to damage to property and harm to wildlife, the conflict between walkers, cyclists and horse riders sharing the same space, excessive speeding along the A227 and Seven Mile Lane and the prevention of motorcyclists gathering on the A25.

Any actions or areas where Kent Police could assist were noted by Inspector Jones. There would also be liaison with the Safer Roads Partnership on speeding issues. Inspector Jones indicated that Kent Police remained committed to resolving speeding issues locally and would continue to work with parishes on identifying priority enforcement areas. However, it was noted that Kent Police had limited powers to address speeding issues long term and changing habits and road layouts had the potential to provide a more sustainable and effective solution.

#### **PPP 21/4 BOROUGH COUNCILS RESPONSE TO THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC**

The report of the Chief Executive and the Management Team, presented to Cabinet on 26 January 2021, had provided an overview on a number of aspects as the Borough Council and its communities continued to adapt to living with coronavirus.

Particular reference was made to the nationwide vaccination programme and the Chairman, in his role as Leader of the Borough Council, was pleased to confirm that a mass vaccination centre would operate from the Angel Centre, Tonbridge in the next few weeks. It was hoped that the facility would be open the week commencing Monday 8 February 2021, subject to the Kent and Medway Health Trust setting up the centre.

The Borough Council would monitor the operation regularly to ensure that appropriate measures were in place to ensure the safety of everyone. However, the Leader was pleased that a mass vaccination centre had been secured within the Borough as this would benefit all local residents.

Reference was made to the number of Covid-19 cases within Tonbridge and Malling and a downward trend was reported. Whilst the current position looked optimistic the Chairman emphasised the need to remain cautious and adhere to Government guidance.

A further round of grant funding to support businesses had been launched this week and 150 applications had been received so far. The

Borough Council continued to distribute monies as quickly as possible. Details of the grant funding available to businesses was summarised at paragraph 1.6 of the Cabinet report.

#### **PPP 21/5 UPDATE ON THE LOCAL PLAN**

The Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure (Councillor David Lettington) provided an update on the progress of the Local Plan and indicated that, in the opinion of the Planning Inspector, the 'duty to co-operate' had not been met.

In consultation with external legal support, the Borough Council had robustly challenged these views. A detailed written [response](#) had been submitted to both the Planning Inspector and the Secretary of State. There had also been a request that the Secretary of State intervene and direct the Planning Inspector to continue with the Local Plan hearings.

The local Members of Parliament supported the position of the Borough Council and had also written to the Secretary of State. In addition, the Leader of the Borough Council had asked to meet with the Minister to discuss the position further. This was still subject to confirmation.

A number of concerns and points were raised, discussed and noted and included frustration that the Local Plan hearings had been postponed, the implications arising from unmet housing need and a reduced land supply and the extremely difficult position the Borough Council now faced with no Local Plan setting the parameters for development.

A revised timetable relating to the measures to be addressed would be considered by the Planning and Transportation Advisory Board in due course.

#### **PPP 21/6 KENT COUNTY COUNCIL SERVICES UPDATE**

The County Member for Maidstone North (Councillor Sarah Hohler) reported that good progress continued to be made on asymptomatic testing with over 160,000 individuals tested within Kent. There had been one case of the South African variant in postcode area ME15 and the subsequent door to door testing was going well. Kent remained on target to deliver 10,000 tests by the end of the week.

Reference was made to the Department of Transport initiative to open 4 new test centres for HGV drivers nationally. It was expected that there would be a test centre on the M25. As a result of ongoing testing of freight drivers, a number of individuals were in the 'driver isolation unit' in Wrotham Heath.

Kent County Council would be considering and setting their budget for 2021/22 next week. It was reported that the council tax base would be much reduced due to the coronavirus pandemic. However, there had

been a good response to the recent public consultation on the County budget, with 65% expressing concern that social care needs were not being met. There was also high support for local authorities sharing premises and resources and for online meetings.

Details of a number of County initiatives and consultations were also set out for information. Attention was drawn to the Vision Zero Consultation related to speeding and the ambition to reduce fatalities. Consideration was being given to piloting a speed corridor in support of this initiative.

All Kent County Council consultations could be viewed online at:

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

The Chairman, in his role as Leader of the Borough Council, advised that Tonbridge and Malling were lobbying Government for West Kent to be included in a Kent wide scheme for lorry enforcement, especially as there were implications for the M2, M20 and M26 of increased lorry parking. The Chairman and County Members reiterated that the impact on local communities was at the forefront of the HGV enforcement campaign.

In closing the meeting, the Chairman advised that the Kent Association of Local Councils – Tonbridge and Malling Area had regular communication with the Borough Council. All parish councils were encouraged to raise issues via this route as soon as possible so that any concerns could be addressed in a timely manner and did not have to wait for a meeting of the Parish Partnership Panel.

The meeting ended at 9.16 pm