

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

PARISH PARTNERSHIP PANEL

Thursday, 4th September, 2014

Present: Cllr N J Heslop (Chairman), Cllr M A Coffin (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Mrs J A Anderson, Cllr J Atkins, Cllr D Keeley and Cllr Miss A Moloney and Aylesford, Borough Green, Burham, Hadlow, Hildenborough, Kings Hill, Leybourne, Snodland, West Malling and Wrotham Parish and Town Councils.

Councillors M R Rhodes, Mrs S Murray and O C Baldock were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Apologies for absence were received from Borough Councillors J A L Balcombe, M A C Balfour, Mrs J M Bellamy, M Parry-Waller, H S Rogers, A G Sayer and Mrs C J Woodger and County Councillors Mrs V Dagger and Mr M Balfour.

PART 1 - PUBLIC

PPP 14/10 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 20 February 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

PPP 14/11 UPDATE ON ANY ACTION IDENTIFIED IN THE LAST MINUTES

There were no actions identified.

PPP 14/12 KENT POLICE SERVICES UPDATE

Inspector Hutcheon (Community Safety Unit manager) provided an overview of the achievements made in the performance and the neighbourhood policing agenda. Reference was made to a new way of recording using 'anticipated', or estimated, levels of crime taking account of seasonal trends and peaks and troughs over a 5 year period. This type of analysis proved useful in understanding the reasons behind causes of crime, informed where to direct resources and focused on a longer term strategy.

Members were advised that all crime within Tonbridge and Malling remained reasonable, despite a slight increase above the 'anticipated' target; although crimes against society were better than 'anticipated' for July. It was noted that domestic abuse was included in violence against the person and that the increase in 'victim based crime' could be due to the way these were now recorded.

The strategic principles of the recent Kent Police restructure were set out and included a focus on maximising officers in frontline roles, reducing unnecessary demand and retaining a reactive and proactive capability to tackle crime. It was reported that Tonbridge remained a main reporting station and the Community Safety Unit, based at Kings Hill, was the 'hub' of local policing activity.

Successful recent initiatives within the Borough included Operation Horizon, tackling nuisance vehicles at Oakdene Café in Wrotham; crime prevention measures and promotion at Sainsbury, Aylesford; Police Contact Points hosting a range of initiatives such as bike marking; Operation Gear, tackling criminals using the rail network and multi-agency Water Safety Days of Action to raise public awareness at Leybourne Lakes Country Park and Tonbridge Town Lock.

In response to a question raised by Snodland Town Council regarding the DVLA changes to the taxing of vehicles, which came into force on 1 October 2014, the Panel was advised that members of the public, parish councils and private landowners could search on the DVLA website to check if vehicles were taxed and/or insured. However, it was likely that initially there would be an increase in the number of vehicles being reported as abandoned.

PPP 14/13 PRESENTATION ON 'LOVE WHERE YOU LIVE'

The Environmental Projects Manager gave a presentation outlining the key points of the Love Where You Live campaign, which encouraged a sense of civic pride across communities, aimed to change littering behaviour and significantly reduce the amount of litter in England by 2020.

It was reported that the Borough Council had made a significant contribution to the campaign and the reduction of litter remained a key priority. In addition, the Borough Council gave regular talks to community groups and schools, held street monitor meetings, assisted with litter picking events and clearing dog fouling and had been a national Love Where You Live Ambassador authority. The support of many local partners, communities and parish councils was also very important and appreciated.

Particular reference was made to the Voluntary Litter Code for Business, which contributed to economic regeneration as customers were encouraged into shops/businesses by well-kept and tidy premises. The scheme had been initiated successfully in Larkfield and was now adopted by Ditton Parish and Snodland Town Councils, with 60 plus businesses currently involved.

Responsible dog ownership was also encouraged by Bag and Flag and The Big Scoop initiatives and the Borough Council worked with parishes

throughout the year. On average there had been an 80% reduction in dog fouling.

In response to a question raised by Wrotham Parish Council it was confirmed that any 'side waste' collected as a result of a litter picking event could be disposed of in household bins, although the Borough Council appreciated notification if there was a large volume.

Reference was made to the Kent County Council Waste Disposal centres and whether they would accept fallen trees dealt with by parish councils. In addition, the Panel asked that if parish councils did take waste to KCC centres consideration could be given to the relaxation of vehicle size limits, particularly length of trailers. It was also noted that the Medway operated Cuxton centre did not have any such restrictions. The Community Engagement Manger offered to direct these queries to the relevant County officers and circulate his findings.

Snodland Town Council commended the enthusiasm of officers which attracted and encouraged involvement in the Love Where You Live campaign. In return the Borough Council appreciated and recognised the important contribution of local communities, especially volunteers, who all helped to sustain the initiative.

PPP 14/14 FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS WITH PARISH COUNCILS

The joint report of the Director of Finance and Transformation, the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Finance, Innovation and Property outlined the proposed methodology to be adopted to determine the Scheme of Financial Arrangements with Parish Councils budget for the financial year 2015/16.

Members were reminded that in 2013 the Council in liaison, with the Parish Partnership Panel, agreed that the budget for the Scheme of Financial Arrangements with Parish Councils would increase or decrease by the same percentage as the increase or decrease in the Borough Council's Local Government Finance Settlement, including New Homes Bonus funding in the previous year.

The Director of Finance and Transformation proposed to adopt this methodology for the forthcoming financial year. As a result the Scheme of Financial Arrangements with Parish Councils budget for 2015/16 would increase by 1.3%, subject to final approval at Cabinet.

Members were advised that although there was an increase in funding for this year it could not be guaranteed for the longer term and was subject to central Government decisions regarding New Homes Bonus. It was reiterated that when the New Homes Bonus scheme reached its sixth year or was replaced by something else it could result in a marked percentage decrease.

The Leader and the Cabinet Member for Finance, Innovation and Property confirmed that the proposed methodology would be used for as long as possible in recognition of the good working relationship between the Borough and Parish Councils. Members were assured that whatever the future of the New Homes Bonus, the financial arrangements with parish councils would remain transparent.

The Chairman of the Kent Association of Local Councils (Tonbridge and Malling) welcomed the good news and commented that it was a fair settlement given the current financial constraints being experienced by local authorities. It was acknowledged that the funding model was heavily dependent upon the New Homes Bonus funding and any future implications regarding financial arrangements would be monitored and raised.

Final details for individual parishes would be shared once known.

PPP 14/15 KENT COUNTY COUNCIL SERVICES UPDATE

The Kent County Council Community Engagement Manager reported on the progress made in the transformation programme and advised that recommendations for Phase 1 Service Reviews had been endorsed in May 2014. Significant budget saving had already been achieved. Phase 2 reviews would begin shortly.

Reference was made to the Care Act 2014, which introduced major changes to adult social care from April 2015. Some of the benefits included clearer financial arrangements, better information and advice, improved support for carers and greater choice of services. It was reported that local authorities would have legal duties to provide information and advocacy to prevent care needs; together with powers to delegate social care functions to another organisation, except safeguarding, decisions on charging and integration.

The Kent County Council would arrange a number of engagement and briefing opportunities over the next six months to raise awareness of the changes to partners and residents. A programme of events was being prepared, including workshops and presentations, and any ideas were welcomed and invited.

Finally, Members were advised that the new Member Grant Scheme was now open and more details were available from local County Members or from the Community Engagement Manager (james.harman@kent.gov.uk)

In response to a question regarding the street light night time switch off, Members were advised that a review of the process of engagement and consultation was currently underway. The Kent County Council recognised that lessons had been learnt, particularly around communication. Concern was expressed at the slow reaction of the

County Council in addressing issues on street lights, particularly those not working or on all the time.

Snodland Town Council referred to the Kent Highways website which no longer provided a reference/job number via return email once a problem had been logged and asked for this to be reinstated.

It was suggested that if specific street lighting issues were passed to the Community Engagement Manager he would forward these to the relevant officers in KCC to address, together with the website issue.

PPP 14/16 TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL SERVICES UPDATE

The Director of Finance and Transformation provided an update on key points relevant to Tonbridge and Malling. The headline messages included:

- South East Local Enterprise Partnership funding

Working with partners across Kent and Medway the Borough Council had recently submitted bids for the Regional Growth Fund and had been successful in securing funding for two key local projects. Improvements to Junction 4 on the M20 had been awarded £2.19M and Tonbridge town centre High Street improvements had been given £2.37M.

In addition, a further £4.89M had been secured for local transport initiatives and part of this would be used to carry out improvements to Snodland station.

- Housing

It was announced that for the period 2015/18 over £7 million of capital grant had been allocated to the Borough Council to provide affordable housing in Tonbridge and Malling. This was the highest level obtained for any local authority in Kent and reflected the work with partners in bidding for schemes.

- Community Enhancement Funding

The deadline for submissions was Monday 8 September and parish councils were encouraged to apply for a grant if they had not yet done so.

- Heritage Open Days

Events would take place during the weekend of 13 – 14 September. Twenty one properties were participating and there were three new

entries this year, including Aylesford Pottery, the control tower at Kings Hill and Hadlow Tower.

Further details were available online at www.tmbc.gov.uk or nationally at www.heritageopendays.org.uk

- Music at Malling

The fourth music festival would take place from 23 – 28 September and this year would commemorate the centenary of the start of World War 1.

- Christmas Refuse and Recycling Collection Arrangements

It was reported that the majority of residents would see no change to their regular service. However, those who had a Thursday collection, due to Christmas and New Year's Day falling on that day, would experience a temporary suspension of their green waste service. Details would be communicated to residents via the website, a calendar delivered during October and the festive bin hangers delivered in December.

In addition the current street monitor guidance for use by parish councils and the wider community in reporting a range of street scene related issues was in the process of being updated and would help maximise use of online reporting systems.

- Health Initiatives

The Borough Council's Healthy Living Team delivered a range of health improvement programmes, such as adult weight management and family based healthy lifestyle programmes. Details of all programmes were available online and Parish Councils were encouraged to promote these programmes locally. A range of promotional material was made available for collection at the end of the meeting.

The Chairman also referred to upcoming activities of the Tonbridge and Malling Seniors Forum which were set out in further detail in the leaflets tabled for collection at the end of the meeting.

The meeting ended at 9.00 pm