

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

PARISH PARTNERSHIP PANEL

Thursday, 27th November, 2014

Present: Cllr N J Heslop (Chairman), Cllr M A Coffin (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Mrs J A Anderson, Cllr J Atkins, Cllr J A L Balcombe, Cllr D Keeley, Cllr Miss A Moloney, Cllr M Parry-Waller, Cllr H S Rogers, Cllr A G Sayer and Cllr Mrs C J Woodger.

Together with Addington, Borough Green, East Malling and Larkfield, Hadlow, Kings Hill, Mereworth, Plaxtol, Snodland, Trottiscliffe, Wrotham Parish and Town Councils and County Councillors Mrs V Dagger and Mrs S Hohler.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Balfour and Mrs Bellamy.

PART 1 - PUBLIC

PPP 14/17 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 4 September 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman; subject to noting that Plaxtol Parish Council were present at that meeting.

PPP 14/18 UPDATE ON ACTION IDENTIFIED IN THE LAST MINUTES

There were no actions identified.

PPP 14/19 KENT POLICE SERVICES UPDATE

Chief Inspector Gill Ellis, Borough Commander for Tonbridge and Malling, provided an overview of the achievements made in performance and the neighbourhood policing agenda.

It was reported that the overall position in Tonbridge and Malling remained good with a slight reduction in all crime over the period October 2013 – October 2014. In fact, the Borough had the second lowest crime levels in Kent. Violence against the person had seen an increase but it remained the third lowest in the County.

There was a raised service for repeat victims of anti-social behaviour and there was a targeted approach to help those residents who felt vulnerable and intimidated as a result.

Additional resource had been provided for East Malling as Kent Police had recognised the need to tackle the increase in low level crime and

anti-social behaviour. There was currently higher police visibility in the community.

Snodland Town Council referred to the good work being done between the local Police Community Support Officers, residents and the Town Council to tackle 'pavement parking' which was greatly appreciated.

Reference was made to the Safer Town Partnership Crime Prevention road show arranged for 13 December and the Chairman hoped that this would visit other major retail centres in the Borough.

Chief Inspector Ellis advised of new Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPO) and Domestic Violence Protection Notices (DVPN), which were applied for by police and granted by the Magistrates' Court. These were designed to provide immediate protection for victims of domestic violence where no other enforceable restrictions could be placed upon the perpetrator. The law allowed a DVPO or DVPN to be made even if the victim did not agree to it and placed certain conditions on the perpetrator, including preventing entry to and being within a certain distance of the home and requiring them to leave the home. These new powers were welcomed by the police as an effective tool in tackling and preventing domestic abuse.

PPP 14/20 STOP SMOKING SERVICES

Natalie Ayles of the Kent Community Health NHS Trust advised that Stop Smoking was a Kent wide service that delivered a range of interventions to help people stop smoking.

The service was free, although prescription charges could apply in some circumstances. A number of programmes were offered including a seven week quit programme, behavioural support and nicotine replacement therapy. In addition, 400 people in local communities had received training to provide additional help in delivering the programmes.

Particular reference was made to a number of areas in the Borough where Stop Smoking was having difficulty engaging with the local communities and these included:

Aylesford

Burham, Eccles and Wouldham

East Malling

Snodland East and West

The Service was keen to encourage communities to participate and especially welcomed local knowledge, information and promotion of the programmes available.

Members felt that there were potential opportunities for working with local focus groups and voluntary organisations, of which there were many in Tonbridge and Malling, and suggested that the Chief Corporate Policy Officer (M Raymond) be contacted for further advice and contact details.

The referral line number for the Stop Smoking Service was 0300 123 1220

PPP 14/21 CARE ACT 2014

This item was WITHDRAWN from the agenda.

The Panel agreed that this should be revisited at the next meeting of the Parish Partnership Panel on Thursday 19 February 2015.

The Kent County Council Community Engagement Manager advised that the County Council were now focusing on eligibility of care and looking for participants affected by the changes to provide feedback. Meetings were being arranged with Senior Forums to discuss the implications of the proposed changes and to look at what practical information could be offered.

Any comments on the Care Act 2014 could be sent to james.harman@kent.gov.uk as it was important that views from Tonbridge and Malling were represented.

PPP 14/22 COLLECTIVE ENERGY SWITCHING

Members were advised that Energy Deal was the brand name for a collective switching scheme, which the Borough Council were supporting to help residents access a better deal on home energy bills.

Collective energy switching was where likeminded groups of consumers formed large numbers to negotiate a better deal with gas and electricity suppliers. There was no set model for how individual schemes operated, although this was normally facilitated by a third party who actively negotiated a better tariff for the consumers they represented.

Taking part in the scheme was free to register and there was no obligation to switch. The first step in the process was to register an interest and this was anticipated to be from 2 December 2014 until 2 February 2015. This could be done online at www.energydealswitch.com

Alternatively the Private Sector Housing Team could register interest for those who did not have access to the internet and could be contacted on 01732 876 395 for further advice and assistance.

Members were invited to promote the scheme amongst their communities as it was important to raise public awareness, especially as only 20% of people routinely switched. Partner organisations, such as Russet Homes, would also assist with publicity.

In response to a question, it was reiterated that this Scheme related to domestic use and not business and did not cover oil or LPG fuels. It was also reported that this initiative had been running since 2013 previous experience had found that utility companies engaged in the scheme.

The Borough Council hoped to publicise the initiative using media outlets, the website, libraries, parish council offices, housing associations and a potential letter to all benefit recipients.

Kings Hill and Wrotham Parish Councils offered to include the Borough Council's press statement regarding the initiative in their parish magazines.

The Chief Executive took the opportunity of advising Members that Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council had recently launched its own twitter account and actively encouraged staff to use social media as a way of communicating with residents. In addition, the 'my account' element of the website was now live and enabled residents to register and receive regular updates on new schemes and initiatives. Finally, Media Services had contacted all parish and town councils within the Borough to create a circulation list to receive press releases for inclusion in local newsletters.

PPP 14/23 KENT COUNTY COUNCIL SERVICES UPDATE

The Kent County Council Community Engagement Manager reported that the County Council were on track to deliver this year's saving target of £81m on top of savings of £269m achieved over the last three years. However, there were indications from Government that the squeeze on local government finance would continue until at least 2018 which was a significant challenge.

Due to reduced levels of Government funding and the spending demands on services additional savings from the budget would be required and it was likely that a further £260m during the next three years would be needed.

As part of the budget setting process a full public consultation had been launched to give residents the opportunity to comment on how the

savings could be achieved. More information and links to the questions could be found at:

<http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/have-your-say/budget-consultation>

The consultation closed on 28 November 2014 and any responses would be considered before the budget was set in 2015.

It was also reported that Kent County Council opposed a second runway at Gatwick airport and this issue was to be discussed by Cabinet in the near future.

Members referred to the recent consultation on Community Wardens and expressed disappointment at the perceived lack of consideration given to the responses submitted. In response, the County Council Member for Malling North advised that feedback was extremely valuable and all views were taken into account. With regard to Community Wardens there might be opportunities for volunteers to assist wardens and/or different ways of working.

Particular reference was made to the Kent Emotional Well-being Strategy for Children and Young People Consultation which was open until 5 January 2015. Further information was available on: <http://consultations.kent.gov.uk/consult.ti/EWStrategy/consultationHome>

The Chief Executive of Tonbridge and Malling took the opportunity to update Members on the position regarding flooding measures within the Borough.

Tonbridge and Malling continued to work closely with the EA, Kent County Council, Southern Water, Kent Police and Kent Fire and Rescue Services to ensure flood protection and emergency planning measures were as robust as possible. It was noted that 30 properties still remained uninhabited since the flooding over Christmas and New Year.

East Peckham, Hildenborough and Tonbridge town centre had flood warden schemes strengthened or established and there was an ongoing relationship with Aylesford Flood Committee.

Members were reminded that capacity for the Leigh Flood Storage Area had implications for the whole borough and preparatory work was in hand to increase this sometime around 2020. There had been a £100k funding contribution from the Borough Council towards a design of a possible scheme, although the overall cost to increase capacity by 60% was estimated at £11-12m. It was hoped that funding for flood measures would be announced as part of the Autumn Budget Statement on Wednesday 3 December 2014.

In addition, the Leigh Flood Storage Area scheme had been promoted for Local Enterprise Partnership Funding but the outcome would not be known until January. However, it was possible that a funding shortfall would still remain.

The Borough had received flood defence funding from DEFRA with £200k for Hildenborough for protection measures and improvement schemes were currently being designed. East Peckham had also received funding to protect residents.

Finally, a technical newsletter from a multi-agency working group, which outlined all the latest developments, would be attached to the Minutes for information.

Any parishes requiring assistance on emergency planning for floods could contact the Chief Engineer (M O'Brien). It was also suggested that Hadlow Parish Council be contacted and asked to share their emergency planning template as this was an example of good practice.

PPP 14/24 TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL SERVICES UPDATE

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

- Airport Commission consultation

The consultation was open until 3 February 2015 and parish councils, individuals and groups were encouraged to submit a comment.

- Community Enhancement Fund

This fund had given £219k to 102 organisations and 15 parish councils across the Borough. A schedule setting out the full details of the distribution would be shared in due course. Meanwhile, further information was available on the Borough Council's website.

- Memorial Gardens

Gardens in Aylesford and Tonbridge had been successfully refurbished and had had well attended Remembrance Services.

- Financial Arrangements with Parish Councils

Members were reminded that the budget allocation to parish councils had increased by 1.3%, as reported at the last meeting of the Parish Partnership Panel, and this had been approved by Cabinet in October.

The council tax base figures for individual parishes were being calculated and it was indicated that the council tax reduction scheme

allocation would be passed on to parishes, together with an estimate of any election costs. Parishes were encouraged to complete their precept forms by 27 January 2015 to fit in with the Borough Council's budget preparation schedule. Written notification would be received in due course and once the financial settlement for the Borough Council was known.

The meeting ended at 9.45 pm