

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

PARISH PARTNERSHIP PANEL

MINUTES

Thursday, 31st August, 2023

Present: Cllr R W Dalton (Chair), Cllr Mrs M Tatton (Vice-Chair), Cllr Mrs S Bell, Cllr B Banks, Cllr M D Boughton, Cllr P Boxall, Cllr M A Coffin, Cllr D A S Davis (substitute) and Cllr M Taylor

Together with representatives from Aylesford, Borough Green (2nd Vice-Chair), Hadlow, Kings Hill, Leybourne, Offham, Platt, Shipbourne, Snodland, West Malling, Wrotham, Parish and Town Councils; and County Cllrs Mrs T Dean, S Hudson and County Cllr H Rayner

In attendance: Councillors D Keers, M A J Hood, M R Rhodes and K B Tanner were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R P Betts, P M Hickmott and Ditton, Hildenborough and Stansted Parish Councils

PART 1 - PUBLIC

PPP 23/16 NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Notification of substitute members were recorded as set out below:

- Cllr D Davis substitute for Cllr R Betts

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 17.5 to 17.9 these Councillors had the same rights as the ordinary member for whom they were substituting.

PPP 23/17 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

PPP 23/18 UPDATE ON ACTION IDENTIFIED IN THE LAST MINUTES

- **Minute Number PPP 23/11 – Tonbridge and Malling Seniors Forum (TAMS)**

The Chair advised that Tonbridge and Malling Seniors Forum had confirmed attendance at the meeting of the Panel in November.

- **Minute Number PPP 23/14 – Local Plan (Carbon Emissions Goals)**

Shipbourne Parish Council had prepared a Climate Change Action Plan setting out potential measures to reduce carbon emissions, which could be circulated to other interested parishes.

PPP 23/19 LOCAL PLAN

The Planning Policy Manager provided an update on the progress of the Local Plan and thanked parish/town councils for their participation in the Regulation 18 consultation which had ended in November 2022. There had been a good response to this consultation with over 4,000 representations received and the submission of an additional 57 sites, which were currently being assessed.

The outcomes of the Regulation 18 consultation were available to view on the Borough Council's website.

Current work included the preparation of evidence, further site assessments, the development of an initial spatial strategy and a review of the Objectively Assessed Needs of the Borough and the Green Belt. It was reported that these would reflect the proposed national changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which were still to be confirmed by Government. In addition, it was indicated that these national changes would likely impact on the Local Plan timetable which made it difficult for the Borough Council to confirm dates of next steps.

However, Officers were hoping to commence a further round of consultation (Regulation 18B) in spring 2024. Following comments in respect of the previous consultation, a new customer portal had been commissioned which was more user friendly. The Borough Council were also producing regular newsletters, via the Media and Communications Team, and these would be used to promote the Local Plan consultations and deadlines.

Members welcomed the further consultation and the improved customer portal but expressed concern at the lack of published information on the additional 57 sites. In response, the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health advised of the importance of understanding the scope and scale of the new sites, the importance of managing risk and the need to avoid treating stakeholders differently than in the previous round of consultation. It was also explained that the Local Plan Regulations set out a rigid framework that needed to be applied to ensure consistency and fairness.

The Panel were assured that all evidence would be published once the base studies and assessments were complete alongside the Regulation 18B Consultation in Spring 2024.

Finally, it was noted that Cabinet had considered a new Local Development Scheme, which set out a proposed revised timetable for the preparation of the Local Plan, in July and all reports were available on the Borough Council's [website](#).

PPP 23/20 S106 AGREEMENT AND TIMESCALES

The Senior Development Obligations Officer advised that an updated s106 Protocol, approved by Cabinet on [4 April 2023](#), improved the monitoring of allocations, distribution and spend and offered greater support to communities.

The main change implemented was the removal of the County Council as signatories to most agreements. This gave greater control to the Borough Council over the delivery of the mitigation and payment of relevant funds, enabled more oversight to be spent on the s106 agreements whilst minimising the time taken to complete and sign the agreement. It also had the advantage of ensuring that most payments were made and directed through the Borough Council who could ensure the projects being undertaken by all parties met the requirement of the planning obligations and the monies were being used towards the specified purposes.

Parish/Town Councils were reminded of the importance of completing a Parish Infrastructure statement identifying potential projects within their communities that could be funded through s106 agreements. These were valuable evidence tools which Planning Officers used to inform negotiations with potential developers. Whilst there had been a good response regarding Parish Infrastructure Statements those parish/town councils who had not yet submitted one were encouraged to do so.

It was indicated that any parish/town council were still able to object to potential development and ask that it be noted that if permission was granted the parish/town council would like to see a s106 agreement fund a project identified on their Parish Infrastructure Statement. In addition, if a parish/town council wished to amend their Statement, the Planning Obligations Team would be happy to assist as required.

In response to a question related to Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), it was confirmed that Tonbridge and Malling were not a CIL charging authority and this position was unlikely to change. However, there were new proposals from Government in respect of a potential Community Levy Charge that might be of interest. Any new proposals were unlikely to be introduced very quickly although the Borough Council would monitor and explore options.

More information and guidance on s106 agreements and Parish Infrastructure Statements was available on the Borough Councils [website](#) or by contacting planning.obligations@tmbc.gov.uk The Senior

Development Obligations Officer also offered to visit parish/town councils if necessary.

PPP 23/21 CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY AND REDUCTION OF CARBON FOOTPRINT

The Chair of the Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC) (Tonbridge and Malling) advised of useful discussions held with the Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Regeneration and Property (Cllr Betts) and the Borough Council's Climate Change Officer. Both of whom had agreed to attend the KALC T&M AGM on 28 September 2023.

Following this discussion parish/town councils had been asked to submit a response on whether they already had a Climate Change Action Plan, were developing one or have not yet started a Climate Change Action Plan. Whilst there had been a good response rate a number of parish/town councils had yet to provide an Action Plan and these would be pursued by KALC.

The Climate Change Officer outlined key points to consider when formulating an Action Plan and these included:

- Minimising energy use;
- Decarbonise energy;
- Tackle transport; and
- More trees

Decarbonising heat and transport were key priorities for tackling carbon emissions from the Borough Councils own operations. Leisure Centres and refuse collection vehicles accounted for 86% of the total TMBC gross emissions, with staff travel and operational and service vehicles producing 39% of gross emissions.

However, the Borough Council was progressing energy efficiency, renewables and decarbonisation measures at the Leisure Centres, with solar panels installed at Larkfield Leisure Centre.

The presentation of the Climate Change Officer also highlighted the key milestones delivered by the Borough Council and key actions that were in progress. These included installation of an additional 60 EV chargers in Council-owned car parks; LED lighting installations for Larkfield Leisure Centre and Tonbridge Swimming Pool; solar panel array installations for Tonbridge Swimming Pool and bids for funding for heat pumps at swimming pool sites.

There was general discussion on a range of issues including difficulties with insulating older properties, recognition that heat pumps were not necessarily suitable for everyone and the effectiveness of solar and photovoltaic panels.

With regard to the further installation of EV chargers, Members welcomed the good progress being made and noted that future locations were dependent on the quality of the electric supply available. However, it was anticipated that there would be approximately 65 EV charging stations in the Borough by March 2025.

PPP 23/22 TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDERS (TROS)

In addressing questions raised by the Kent Association of Local Councils (Tonbridge and Malling) (KALC) in advance of the meeting, a briefing note was provided which set out the processes for considering and installing parking restrictions.

The Cabinet Member for Transformation and Infrastructure (Cllr Coffin) assured the Panel that the Borough Council placed contracts as soon as practicable once changes to parking arrangements were agreed.

The County Councillor for Malling West (Cllr Rayner) made particular reference to the delay in double yellow lines being installed in front of the new primary school at St Marys Platt. Given the specific nature of this concern, it was agreed that the Cabinet Member for Transformation and Infrastructure should provide more information out of meeting.

In addition, the Cabinet Member for Planning (Cllr Taylor) indicated that the traffic signs at St Marys Platt also required correction.

PPP 23/23 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(1) Joint Standards Committee

The Principal Democratic Services Officer advised of the exercise to clarify the contact details for parish/town representatives, review the 'pool' of parish/town council participants and allocate six voting rights. This exercise was intended to streamline and improve the organisation of meetings of the Joint Standards Committee.

Members were reminded that when the Joint Standards Committee was established in 2013 there had been a canvass to see which parishes wanted to participate. These then formed a 'pool' of 15 who could attend the Standards Committee and be eligible to participate in Standards Hearings. Out of these 15, there should be 6 voting parish/town members as recommended in 2013. Now was the opportunity for those parish/town councils not currently in the 'pool' to express an interest by **Friday 29 September**.

At the same time, the Borough Council would allocate voting rights for 2024, and possibly 2025, based on previous attendance. Changes to the 'pool' and the nominated voting rights would be presented to the Parish Partnership Panel in November, with these noted at the first Joint Standards Committee in January 2024.

It was confirmed that Parish/Town Council representatives could still attend meetings of the Joint Standards Committee and participate in discussions even if they were not allocated voting rights during 2024. These rights would be reviewed annually.

(2) Improved communication and engagement with parish/town councils

The representative of Aylesford Parish Council asked about improved communication between the Borough Council, parish/town councils and residents. Reference was made to the myTMBC app and whether this could include a messaging facility and push notifications. It was also felt that the app should be easier to use.

In response, the Leader of the Borough Council (Cllr Boughton) expressed interest in the views of parish/town councils as users. It was also indicated that residents had many different ideas as to what they wanted the app to do. However, the Panel were assured that the Borough Council continued to look at ways of using and improving apps as well as the website.

The meeting ended at 9.25 pm