

## **TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **PARISH PARTNERSHIP PANEL**

**Thursday, 19th February, 2015**

**Present:** Cllr N J Heslop (Chairman), Cllr M A Coffin (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Mrs J A Anderson, Cllr J Atkins, Cllr M A C Balfour, Cllr Miss A Moloney, Cllr H S Rogers, Cllr A G Sayer and Cllr Mrs C J Woodger.

Together with Addington, Birling, Borough Green, Hadlow, Kings Hill, Platt, Plaxtol, Snodland and Trottiscliffe Parish and Town Councils and County Councillors Balfour and Mrs Hohler.

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J A L Balcombe, Mrs J M Bellamy, D Keeley, M Parry-Waller and East Peckham Parish Council.

### **PART 1 - PUBLIC**

#### **PPP 15/1 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the meeting held on 27 November 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### **PPP 15/2 UPDATE ON ACTION IDENTIFIED IN THE LAST MINUTES**

There were no actions identified.

#### **PPP 15/3 CENTENARY FIELDS**

Mr T Houseden (Development Manager) of the Fields in Trust gave an introduction to the Centenary Fields programme, which was a countrywide joint initiative with the Royal British Legion, aimed to safeguard, improve and protect open spaces for future generations and to commemorate World War 1.

To be eligible for nomination and dedication a Centenary Field needed to have a significant link to World War 1 and should be:

- Used principally for outdoor recreation, sport or play
- Accessible to the public
- Affordable for the local community

Sites with an existing or planned War Memorial; memorial garden or area for contemplation; plus amenities such as pavilions, village halls,

indoor leisure or heritage facilities used for community recreation could be included.

It was reported that the Borough Council had identified the recently refurbished Tonbridge Memorial Garden as a site to be nominated for dedication under this scheme. Parish and town councils were encouraged to protect at least one suitable site and were invited to make nominations. From February 2015 it was hoped to have 'Field Day' events to carry out dedication or commemoration events.

In response to a question, the Panel was advised that robust methods of protection were used, such as charitable or contract law, but some flexibility could be retained for the benefit of a changing community. It was reiterated that management and ownership of the site did not change and the initiative was a valuable tool in safeguarding open space.

As a beneficiary of the previous Queen Elizabeth II Fields Challenge, Snodland Town Council welcomed this new initiative and highly recommended the programme. It was also noted that improvement funding to support and benefit the community could be available via this new scheme.

#### **PPP 15/4 CHANGES TO THE CARE ACT 2014**

This item was WITHDRAWN. However, a Frequently Asked Questions sheet had been provided by Kent County Council which had been circulated and tabled at the meeting. This information would also be attached to the Minutes and, therefore, available on the website.

[NB. Information correct as at 4 March 2015 but subject to change]

#### **PPP 15/5 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 the Borough remained good with a reduction of 0.4% in victim based crime. Excellent partnership working with the established CSU at Kings Hill and other partners continued. Public satisfaction with local policing in the Borough, as at December 2014, was 83% and this was slightly higher than the force average.

Recent initiatives included Op Heath, a multi-agency taxi enforcement operation in support of the Borough Council; Op Caddy, a drugs dog visit to local schools and colleges and speed enforcement at Red Hill in Watlingbury and Stocks Green Road in Hildenborough.

Reference was made to Oakdene Café and it was anticipated that following the success in 2014 agencies, including Kent Fire and Rescue Service and the Community Safety Unit, would again work in partnership to minimise anti-social behaviour.

Members expressed concern regarding the enforcement of speed limits in rural locations and asked that additional 'ad-hoc' operations be undertaken. Chief Inspector Ellis assured the Panel that Kent Police took this issue seriously and referred to the recent initiatives in Watlingbury and Hildenborough where traffic offence reports had been issued. However, if parish or town councils identified a speeding problem within their villages they could contact Chief Inspector Ellis directly on [Gillian.ellis@kent.pnn.police.uk](mailto:Gillian.ellis@kent.pnn.police.uk) requesting speeding initiatives be undertaken. Kings Hill Parish Council referred to a previous offer of funding speeding enforcement operations with overtime. This position would be clarified by Chief Inspector Ellis.

Concerns regarding legal highs and site specific issues were also noted.

Finally, Snodland Town Council thanked Kent Police for their recent funding contribution towards equipment for a local club using the Police Property Fund.

#### **PPP 15/6 KENT COUNTY COUNCIL SERVICES UPDATE**

The Kent County Council Community Engagement Manger reported that a 12 week public consultation on proposals to modernise libraries, registration and archive services had begun. Views could be registered online at [www.kent.gov.uk/libraries](http://www.kent.gov.uk/libraries) ; information and feedback forms were available in all libraries, Register offices and mobile libraries. The following drop-in sessions were also arranged for Thursday 26 February:

- 0900 -1230 hours at Larkfield Library
- 1400-1700 hours at Paddock Wood Library

The consultation closed on Wednesday 8 April 2015.

Reference was made to the public consultation on the County's draft corporate outcomes framework which focused on what the Council was seeking to achieve rather than specifying the detail of how services were designed and delivered. This ended on 20 February 2015 and further details could be found at [www.kent.gov.uk/corporateoutcomes](http://www.kent.gov.uk/corporateoutcomes)

Kent County Council had agreed to progress converting its stock of 120,000 street lights to LED. This improvement would help reduce the street lighting energy bill by around 60% which meant that all night lighting for residential areas could potentially be reinstated. Members expressed a preference for these lights to be dimmed and this could be arranged by contacting the local County Councillor.

Inspections of Children's Centres in Tonbridge and Malling had taken place in November/December 2014 and significant improvements in all areas had been reached. It was reported that the number of families registered at centres had significantly increased but further improvement to reach 70% was required. Parish and town councils were encouraged to support and promote Children's Centres.

Finally, Members were invited to comment on proposed changes to Stansted School. This consultation would run until Friday 6 March 2015 and further information was available on:

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

The Panel expressed concern and sadness regarding the potential future of the school and the County Member for Malling North (Mrs S Hohler) advised that all options would continue to be explored, including 'free school' status.

#### **PPP 15/7 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:

- Airport Consultation:

The Borough Council remained opposed to a second runway at Gatwick and supported a second runway at Heathrow.

- Love Where You Live Initiatives:

Details were given of a number of initiatives planned for February and these included events in Larkfield, Mereworth, Platt and Snodland. National Spring Clean Day was Saturday 21 March 2015.

- Webchat:

This had recently been trialled on the Borough Council's website to support and assist customers on-line by offering guidance on how and where to self-serve and signposting to relevant departments. The service had received a positive reaction with over 800 visitors in a few weeks and this would shortly be expanded to other Services.

- Council Tax:

Council tax bills for 2015/16 were now being produced and would be received by households in March. Reference was made to changes to discounts and exemptions applicable to empty homes that came into

effect from 1 April 2015. Affected residents had been contacted to advise them of the forthcoming changes and to encourage these properties back into use. Members were advised that the long term empty properties, those longer than 2 years, would now be charged council tax of 150%; whilst the period for short term empty properties was reduced from 3 to 2 months.

The meeting ended at 9.05 pm