

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

PARISH PARTNERSHIP PANEL

MINUTES

Thursday, 29th May, 2025

Present: Cllr R W Dalton (Chair), Cllr Mrs M Tatton (Vice-Chair), Cllr B Banks, Cllr M D Boughton, Cllr P Boxall, Cllr R I B Cannon (substitute), Cllr P M Hickmott, Cllr M Taylor and Cllr C J Williams (substitute).

Together with representatives of Addington, Aylesford, Borough Green, Burham, Ditton*, East Malling and Larkfield, East Peckham, Hadlow, Hildenborough, Ightham*, Kings Hill, Leybourne, Offham, Plaxtol*, Shipbourne, Snodland, Ryarsh, Stansted, Wateringbury, West Malling, West Peckham*, Wrotham Parish/Town Councils and County Cllr S Hudson and County Cllr H Rayner

(*participated via MS Teams)

Cllrs D Keers and R V Roud were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs S Bell*, R P Betts, L Chapman, M A Coffin, S Crisp*, S M Hammond, Platt and County Cllr Mrs T Dean.

(*apologies submitted for in-person attendance and participated via MS Teams)

PART 1 - PUBLIC

PPP 25/8 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIRS

Following the meeting of Annual Council, appointments of the Chair and Vice-Chair were confirmed to be Cllr R Dalton and Cllr Mrs M Tatton respectively.

Consideration was given to the appointment of the second Vice-Chair from Parish and Town Councils. The following nominations were proposed and seconded:

(1) Parish Cllr M McKinlay of Ryarsh Parish Council;

(2) Parish Cllr S Butterfill of Borough Green Parish Council

Following a formal vote of all Members present in the Chamber, Parish Cllr M McKinlay was elected as second Vice-Chair for the municipal year 2025/26.

PPP 25/9 NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Notification of substitute Members was recorded as set out below:

- Cllr Cannon substitute for Cllr Betts
- Cllr Williams substitute for Cllr Chapman

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

PPP 25/10 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2025 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

PPP 25/11 UPDATE ON ACTION IDENTIFIED IN THE LAST MINUTES**(1) Minute Number PPP 25/7 (2) Work Programme 2025**

West Malling Parish Council referred to the request that updates on 'Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation' be included as standing items on future agendas. It was acknowledged that this had been omitted in error and, therefore, was not on the agenda this evening.

However, Cllr Boughton (as Leader of the Borough Council) provided a brief summary of the current position. Tonbridge and Malling had submitted an interim proposal by the deadline set by Government, which had indicated support for a West Kent cluster made up of Maidstone, Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Malling and Tunbridge Wells.

Recent feedback received recognised the strategic importance of Kent and Medway given its position as the 'gateway to the UK' but encouraged a single submission from Kent and Medway. The letter from Government would be shared with Parish/Town Councils out of meeting.

It was confirmed that Kent County Council were engaged in the process although the views of the new administration were not yet known. However, it was hoped that the County Council would continue to co-operate in discussions with Borough and District Councils.

The representative of the Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC) (Tonbridge and Malling) advised that sessions on local government reorganisation would be held and these details would be available on the KALC website.

PPP 25/12 HOUSING SERVICE UPDATE

The Housing Solutions Manager provided a detailed update on the Housing Service and outlined key priorities, pressures and measures implemented to address these across the homelessness service, temporary accommodation and the housing register.

Particular reference was made to the increased demand in respect of housing register allocations and homelessness and the average waiting times for housing. It was reported that the Borough Council had the fourth lowest temporary accommodation placements in the County despite increased demand.

Members welcomed the opportunity to comment and a range of issues were discussed and noted, including numbers of social housing units, the process for finding and allocating temporary accommodation and the demand for new homes. With regard to the housing register and the number of outstanding cases it was explained that the biggest challenge for staff was incomplete documentation being received, which led to delays in processing.

Concern was expressed at the number of empty properties in disrepair in the borough and the issues with engaging with registered social providers, especially Clarion, was highlighted. Officers offered to provide Parish/Town Councils with contact details for councillor use where there was a commitment to respond within 10 days. This would be shared as soon as possible.

The presentation given to the Panel was attached to the Minutes.

PPP 25/13 PLANNING CONSULTATION - ROLE OF PARISH/TOWN COUNCILS

The Cabinet Member for Planning (Cllr Taylor) advised that following discussions with Planning Officers a potential mechanism for improving engagement with Parish/Town Councils had been identified.

Unfortunately, due to the challenges around meeting legal deadlines and targets an extension to the 21-day consultation period requested by parish/town councils was currently unlikely. However, it was hoped that better engagement at an earlier stage could assist.

The protocol being developed for trial was for Officers, Ward Members, relevant parish councillors and developers to communicate to share views and concerns. The Cabinet Member hoped that local knowledge would offer guidance to potential developers.

Concern was expressed around the potential risk of pre-determination and whether this protocol resolved the issue around the 21-day consultation period. It was felt that hearing developers plans and

offering guidance did not necessarily mean a parish was pre-determined at an early stage. The Cabinet Member offered to continue to discuss the issue around the 21-day consultation with parishes.

[Subsequent to the meeting, Officers indicated that parish councils had different rules when responding to planning applications and these rules should be adhered to.]

PPP 25/14 LOCAL PLAN

The Cabinet Member for Planning (Cllr Taylor) was pleased to report that Officers had implemented an improved engagement programme with Borough Councillors by the introduction of Advisory Group meetings. This afforded the opportunity for local Members to raise concerns in respect of specific areas.

Local Plan evidence continued to be collected and assessed and revised Policies prepared for consultation. The next stage of consultation was due to start in October 2025.

Every effort would be made to ensure a fair and equitable distribution so that affordable housing was available in every parish/town.

A revised LDS setting the timetable for the development of the new Local Plan was considered by Cabinet in March, with the Regulation 18: Second stage of consultation starting in October 2025.

The full timetable was available on the Borough Council's website [Local Development Scheme – Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council](#)

PPP 25/15 ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR ENFORCEMENT TEAM 2025

The Cabinet Member for Community Services (Cllr D Keers) introduced the Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Enforcement Team which worked in partnership with Kent Police to tackle anti-social behaviour across Tonbridge and Malling by providing high visibility and reassurance to the public. He was pleased to announce that the Borough Council's work in this area had been recognised with a national award as the Community Safety team had received the silver IESE prize (Working Together category) for the creation of an enforcement team to work across the borough. This success would be built upon to ensure that Tonbridge and Malling continued to lead the way in supporting local communities.

The initiative, to be repeated this year, had contributed to a 33 per cent reduction in reported anti-social behaviour cases being reported to Kent Police during the six month engagement period in 2024.

The day-to-day operations of the enforcement team included the use of body-worn cameras, handheld devices, real-time reporting and interaction with local people and businesses to gather intelligence and

address issues. There was also a focus on engagement and enforcement working closely with Kent Police.

It was reported that the Enforcement Team would operate Wednesday to Sunday with varying shifts to cover key times for anti-social behaviour from the 21 May 2025 until the 16 of November 2025.

Members asked about the process for reporting anti-social behaviour and it was clarified that active incidents should be reported to Kent Police via 101, whilst slower-time issues could be reported to the Community Safety partnership. Any issues of ASB should be reported as the information could be used as intelligence to enable the Team to be deployed to 'hot spot' areas.

Finally, it was also confirmed that all Parish/Town Councils would receive regular reports on ASB activities and outcomes.

PPP 25/16 CLIMATE CHANGE INITIATIVES

In the absence of the Cabinet Member for Housing, Environment and Economy (Cllr R Betts), the Cabinet Member for Planning (Cllr M Taylor) provided the following update:

- Recruitment was ongoing for a new Climate Change Officer, following the departure of the previous post holder. Interviews were scheduled to take place in mid-June and it was hoped to have a new Officer by mid-July. The new appointment would contact all parish/town councils when in post.
- With regard to Climate Change Updates for the Borough Council, progress against the 2024/25 annual climate change action plan would be reported to the Communities and Environment Scrutiny Select Committee on 16 July 2025. At this meeting the 2025/26 action plan and the latest carbon audit would also be provided.

In closing, Cllr Taylor referred to the decarbonising programmes at Larkfield Leisure Centre and Tonbridge Swimming Pool, the design of the replacement Angel Centre, the numerous green grants and the encouragement of climate change initiatives amongst the parishes. All of which demonstrated a commitment to climate change and the environment.

It was noted that the Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council and the parishes had unwavering public support for these initiatives in recognition that reliance on fossil fuels was not sustainable.

Burham Parish Council were invited to share their positive experience of a climate change initiative and advised that money spent on incorporating solar panels on a new roof for their village hall had been recouped within 2 years. The next project would be installing solar panels on their community hall.

The representative of KALC referred to the Home Energy Project led by Shipborne Parish Council and information on this initiative would be circulated after the meeting. The importance of sharing information in respect of climate change projects and alternative heat supply options was recognised.

PPP 25/17 COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

The Head of Electoral Services advised that a community governance review had started to explore the possibility of creating a town council for Tonbridge.

Community governance reviews were the mechanism used to change governance arrangements such as creating new parish/town councils, changing boundaries and merging/creating new parishes.

Following a vote by Tonbridge and Malling borough councillors and the submission of a petition with over 2,000 signatures a review into the idea of a local body to represent Tonbridge and manage some local services would be conducted.

The review would be completed within a year and would include public consultation to gather feedback from residents. A cross-party group of councillors would then make recommendations to Council for all members to consider.

A six-week public consultation would start on Monday 2 June 2025 and leaflets would be sent to all local residents and businesses. Where possible emails would be sent to as many interested parties and key stakeholders as possible.

Information on the community governance review was available on the Borough Council's [website](#)

PPP 25/18 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(1) Planning Enforcement

KALC requested that an update on planning enforcement be provided at the next meeting. It was acknowledged that currently this was a significant issue for the Borough Council as the number of cases exceeded what Officers could deal with. A new Enforcement Manager was due to start in w/c 2 June which it was hoped would help with identifying solutions. In the meantime, the Planning Enforcement Plan was being reviewed to create improvements.

As a result of the work outlined above, the Chair suggested that a detailed update be provided to the Parish Partnership Panel at the meeting in November 2025. This was supported.

(2) Planning and Climate Change

Concern was expressed that currently planning legislation did not consider the impact of a changing environment due to climate change, especially around water supply. Unfortunately, Members were reminded that water supply was outside of the planning system although it was highlighted that planning authorities were reliant on statutory organisations giving accurate information regarding their infrastructure. Any concerns should be raised directly with providers.

The meeting ended at 10.10 pm