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Date: **26 October 2022**
Ask For: **TDC and Parish/Town Councils Collaboration WP/Agenda**
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TDC & PARISH/TOWN COUNCILS COLLABORATION WORKING PARTY

27 OCTOBER 2022

A meeting of the TDC & Parish/Town Councils Collaboration Working Party will be held at **5.30 pm on Thursday, 27 October 2022** via Online Meeting Only.

Membership:

Councillor Currie (Chair); Councillors: Austin, Bailey and Fellows

AGENDA

Item
No

Subject

1. **TDC AND PARISH/TOWN COUNCILS COLLABORATION WP QUESTIONNAIRE - TDC CABINET MEMBER RESPONSES** (Pages 3 - 10)

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TDC and Parish/Town Councils Collaboration WP Questionnaire - TDC Cabinet Member Responses

TDC & Parish/Town Councils Collaboration Working Party	27 October 2022
Report Author	Charles Hungwe Senior Democratic Services Officer
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Ashbee, Leader of Council
Status	For Decision
Classification:	Unrestricted
Key Decision	No
Ward:	Thanet Wide

Executive Summary:

The purpose of this report is to provide a framework for a discussion session between the Collaboration Review Working Party and the Leader of Council. The working party is seeking the views of the Cabinet Members regarding how best to improve collaborative working between the District Council and Parish and Town Councils.

Recommendation(s):

Members are asked to note the comments, particularly the proposals suggested in the options section of the report as well as the responses to the questionnaire in Annex 1 to the report.

Corporate Implications

Financial and Value for Money

There were no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Legal

The role of scrutiny is set out in section 9F of the Local Government Act 2000. The council must also have regard to the statutory guidance on Overview and Scrutiny from the ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government when exercising its functions.

Risk Management

There are risks arising directly from this report.

Corporate

The review of coastal waste collection would come up with recommendations for

consideration by the executive. However such recommendations would need to be put in the context of the current limited resources available to the council.

Equality Act 2010 & Public Sector Equality Duty

Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to the aims of the Duty at the time the decision is taken. The aims of the Duty are: (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it, and (iii) foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

Protected characteristics: age, sex, disability, race, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief and pregnancy & maternity. Only aim (i) of the Duty applies to Marriage & civil partnership.

This report relates to the following aim of the equality duty: -
(Delete as appropriate)

- To eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- To advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it
- To foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

No implications arise directly but the Council needs to retain a strong focus and understanding on issues of diversity amongst the local community and ensure service delivery matches these.

It was important to be aware of the Council's responsibility under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and show evidence that due consideration has been given to the equalities impact that may be brought upon communities by the decisions made by Council.

Corporate Priorities

This report relates to the following corporate priorities: -

- Growth
- Environment
- Communities

1.0 Introduction and Background

1.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Panel set up the TDC and Parish/Town Councils Collaboration Review Working Party at its meeting on 26 May 2022 to investigate and report on the potential for closer working between Thanet District Council and the Parish and Town Councils in order for improved services to Thanet residents. It is hoped that from this review, the working party could come up with recommendations for consideration by the Panel and subsequently the Executive.

- 1.2 This piece of work has come out of the comments and feedback received by TDC through the just ended work by the Coastal Waste Review Working Party. Parish and Town Council representatives who took part in this review expressed the view that the district could experience improved service delivery especially with regards to managing litter through improved collaborative working between these two structures of local government.
- 1.3 The purpose of this meeting is for the working party to seek evidence from TDC Cabinet Members led by the Leader of Council. Any information gathered from this session would be used to inform the content of the report to be produced by the working party when they report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

2.0 Collecting Evidence for the review

- 2.1 A questionnaire was sent out to cabinet members requesting their views on the subject under investigation. One response has been received to date. The key questions in the survey document are as detailed below:
1. How do you view the current working relationship between Thanet District Council and parish/town councils?
 2. How does this current working relationship affect the way services are delivered in the district?
 3. Do you have any suggestions for how collaborative working between Thanet District Council and parish/town councils could be improved; and if yes what are they?
 4. From your experience working with parishes, do you think they have the capacity to take on additional roles on a long-term, sustained basis?
- 2.2 In conducting the session, the working party may choose to share the questions amongst the five members and agree on an approach for asking these questions; whether each Member is going to ask a question on a rotational basis or one member leads the asking of their allocated questions and hands over to the next member, once they are done.

3.0 Worth noting: Current Arrangements between TDC and Parishes

- 3.1 Currently TDC interacts with Parish and Town Councils through virtual meetings; the Parish Conference Calls. These are informal sessions where the CEx meets with Parish and Town Clerks and Chairs to get updates on and discuss topical issues affecting the district. Initially this was a forum where the CEx and senior TDC officers would provide updates about Covid 19.
- 3.2 There is also a parish Forum that is hosted by TDC where the Leader of Council chairs two sessions in a year where Town and Parish Clerks and Chairs attend to discuss matters of interest to the district. Discussion topics are sought from the parish and town councils. These sessions are supported by the CEx and senior officers.

Parish Forums have not been held for quite some time as they seem to have been replaced by Parish Conference Calls. The Conference Calls were held fortnightly at the height of the pandemic, but they have since been moved to monthly sessions.

4.0 Options

- 4.1 Members may wish to ask follow up questions relating to the questionnaire key questions highlighted in para 2.1 (1-4) in order to get more in-depth responses.
- 4.2 Members could simply ask those same questions as worded in para 2.1 (1-4).

5.0 Next Steps

- 5.1 The following is a proposed generic timetable which Members can review and amend at the first meeting.

October 2022 - interview sessions with relevant stakeholder groups;
November 2022 - interview sessions with relevant stakeholder groups
November 2022 - Review of information collected and drafting of initial report;
December 2022 - Review of report by the working group, relevant senior officers and CMT;
January 2022 - Presentation of Final report to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

Contact Officer: *(Charles Hungwe, Senior Democratic Services Officer)*
Reporting to: *(Nick Hughes, Committee Services Manager)*

Annex List

Annex 1 - Questionnaire circulated to Cabinet Members and responses received

Background Papers

None

Corporate Consultation

Finance: *(Insert name and job title)*

Legal: *(Insert name and job title)*

Thanet District Council and Parish/Town Councils Collaboration Survey

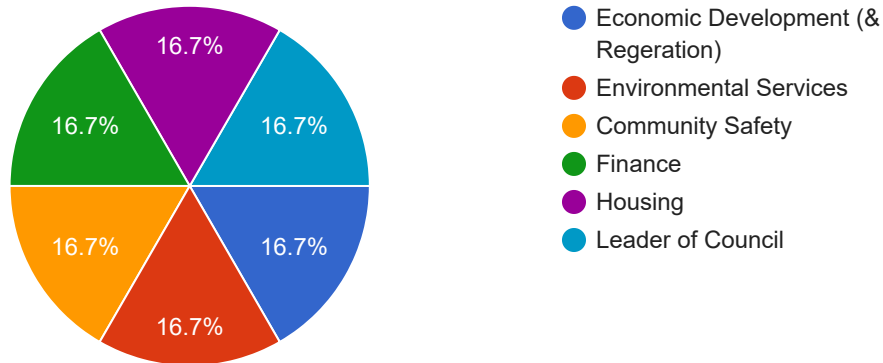
6 responses

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Which Cabinet Portfolio area(s) are you the lead Member?

 Copy

6 responses



How do you view the current working relationship between Thanet District Council and parish/town councils?

6 responses

I feel that TDC and BSPTC are wary of each other and would benefit from a closer, more cooperative relationship. I only feel confident to give views on my own town council

I believe that generally working relationships are very informal and rely on individual officers and members interacting on an ad hoc basis.

To my knowledge they are varied

Acceptable

I think it is reasonably good. But there may be some better opportunities to speak to them more

I feel we currently have a good working relationship as a Council. My ward includes 5 parish councils and I have at times struggled to sort out issues that the parishes have that require TDC assistance but by and large we get things resolved in the end.



How does this current working relationship affect the way services are delivered in the district?

Annex 1

6 responses

The town planning committee waste valuable time discussing and making recommendations on applications for invalid reasons. There is sometimes misinformation, eg relating to proposals for toilet provision, oil spills on the beach and parking, which bring about a lack of mutual respect and, again, wasted time.

I think that the casual nature of the relationships means that opportunities for greater efficiencies are missed. Also, at TDC, much officer time is wasted by twin-hatters pushing for more service for their particular town or parish.

They should not be affected

As a twin hatter (TDC/B & St.P TC) I am not aware that the TC officers have any major difficulties regarding the current arrangements - with the exception of Officer to Officer contact resulting from the current working arrangements

Sometimes means things can get miss reported or the Parish Council is not clear what's going on

I think we are slow to sort out issues with missed waste collections, particularly if there are repeated issues on a particular road in the rural areas of the district.

Do you have any suggestions for how collaborative working between Thanet District Council and parish/town councils could be improved; and if yes what are they?

6 responses

I think that meetings, perhaps bi-monthly and with Q/A sessions, between representatives of both councils, would be beneficial in clarifying issues and improving efficiency.

There should be more clearly defined service levels so that district and parishes know what can be expected of each other.

Better communications between the tiers

From the feedback that I receive from TC officers, it would be of assistance to the Broadstairs Town Clerk if her TDC contact list was regularly updated to reflect responsibility changes at TDC

Monthly meetings with the Chair of Town/Parish Councils.

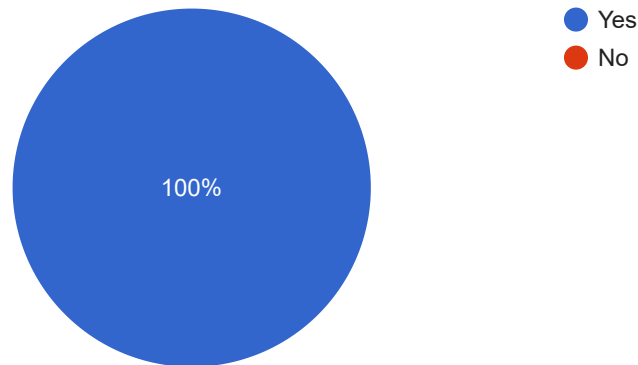
I think we need a designated officer for Parish and Town Councils. The parish and town councils are taking up more of the slack from TDC and we need to be able to support them and resolve issues they have quicker than we currently do.





From your experience working with parishes, do you think they have the capacity to take on additional roles on a long-term, sustained basis?

6 responses



If yes, what additional roles or responsibilities would you suggest?

6 responses

Planning decisions, following training, using local knowledge
 Taking on the management of toilets in the town.
 Managing other facilities, eg leisure facilities.

Parishes and towns could take over localised services such as toilets, parks and open spaces and agreed service enhancements.

Services such as parking and toilets

I believe that with precept flexibility and District support, the TC could take on public assets within the Town - Parks and Gardens for instance

Toilets. Some level of street cleaning

They can maintain and be responsible for our green spaces, including parks. St Nick Parish want to take over Bell Meadow but TDC want them to buy it from the council when we currently pay the Parish circa 8k a year to maintain it for us. The Parish would take it on and maintain it without anymore funding from TDC. Parish and Town Councils could also maintain public toilets in their areas, as Minster Parish currently does.



Agenda Item 1 Annex 1

Is there anything else that you would like to add regarding the relationship between District and Parish councils?

5 responses

Only that there is a good deal of room for improvement. Town and district councils should complement each other, rather than compete.

Parishes and towns have the opportunity to raise precepts without government constraint so they can access cash in a way that the district cannot.

Joint working groups

Not at this point

We need a designated officer at TDC to liaise with Town and Parish Councils.

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