

TDC & PARISH/TOWN COUNCILS COLLABORATION WORKING PARTY

Minutes of the meeting held on 3 November 2022 at 5.30 pm in the Online Only.

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

In Attendance: Parish Councillor Hudson

Town Clerks Laura Fidler, Gill Gray and Kirsty Holroyd

5. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies made at the meeting.

6. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

7. TDC AND PARISH/TOWN COUNCILS COLLABORATION WP QUESTIONNAIRE - PARISH AND TOWN COUNCIL RESPONSES

The Chair welcomes Parish and Town Chairs and Clerks to the meeting and thanked them for responding to the questions that were sent out to them by officers on behalf of the working party. The Chair then invited members of the working party to comment and ask follow up questions to the responses that were attached as Annex 1 to the report.

Members asked questions and made comments as follows:

- There was a common theme that ran through the questionnaire responses received. The main comment was that the district council could do better and there was a need for lots of improvement;
- The above comments could be viewed as there being a need to improve the lines of communication between TDC and parishes;
- There was a need to have an updated list of TDC officers' contact details so that members know the name for the different roles that interact with parishes;
- There should be a single designated officer to handle queries from parish and town councils;
- What was your view as parishes to the idea of taking on extra responsibilities?
- The Parish Forum could be revived. However it was important to be clear about what issues could be discussed at such meetings; e.g. discussing an approach for handing over functions from the district to parishes;
- The Forum should have a structured and controlled agenda with designated attendees;
- Collaborative working could be on such functions as the hosting of Events in the district, with town and parish councils being asked hosts Events;
- Good communication between the TDC and parishes for hosting such events was important;
- Having a shared schedule for hosting these events would help improve the coordination and communication;
- There was a need for a discussion on the size of the responsibilities to be shared. These could include the management of toilet facilities, open spaces and soft landscaping around the district;
- Due to the challenges being faced by TDC in delivering statutory duties, the district could hand over some of the discretionary functions to parishes;

- Could parishes agree to raise their precepts?
- Residents needed clarity on what were TDC functions and what were parish ones before consideration was given to raising precepts to fund additional responsibilities;
- There was also a need to consider the circumstances of each parish rather than a one size fits all approach;
- All those issues that include asset transfer could be discussed as topics at a newly structured Parish Forum;
- An approach where a Parish Charter which spells out how parishes would be working with TDC could be drafted;
- KCC could be invited into these discussions;
- TDC could be asked to consider adding into the circulation all parish and town councillors into some of the appropriate communication that usually is sent to district councillors;
- Parish and Town Clerks could be added to the Your Voice circulation.

Parish and Town Council representatives responded and made comments as follows:

- The previous Parish Forum meetings used to be regular and were very useful;
- These meetings needed to be planned for in advance so that parishes could also plan ahead of time to enable maximum attendance;
- Parish and town councils would welcome the additional responsibilities provided they came with additional funding;
- It might be worth considering coming up with an agency agreement between parishes and TDC over the functions and resources to be given to parishes;
- There should be a improved way of sharing information between parishes the district council;
- There was a foundation on which to build on a stronger and closer working relationship between the two tiers;
- Residents felt that there were being taxed twice; for the council tax and the precepts;
- There would also be a need to agree on the delivery dates for the functions to be handed over to parishes;
- Currently there was a Thanet Area Committee that could be attended by a TDC officer to share information.

The Chair thanked the parish representatives for attending this meeting and said that once the working party held the last session with TDC officers, members would then produce a report for consideration by the Overview & Scrutiny Panel.

Meeting concluded: 6.10 pm