

# Public Document Pack



Date: 31 October 2022  
Our Ref: TDC & Parish/Town Councils Collaboration WP/Agenda  
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## TDC & PARISH/TOWN COUNCILS COLLABORATION WORKING PARTY

3 NOVEMBER 2022

A meeting of the TDC & Parish/Town Councils Collaboration Working Party will be held at **5.30 pm on Thursday, 3 November 2022** via Online Only.

### Membership:

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

### AGENDA

Item  
No

Subject

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
2. **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS** (Pages 3 - 4)  
To receive any declarations of interest. Members are advised to consider the advice contained within the Declaration of Interest advice attached to this Agenda. If a Member declares an interest, they should complete the [Declaration of Interest Form](#)
3. **TDC AND PARISH/TOWN COUNCILS COLLABORATION WP QUESTIONNAIRE - PARISH AND TOWN COUNCIL RESPONSES** (Pages 5 - 18)

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## **Do I have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest and if so what action should I take?**

Your Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI) are those interests that are, or should be, listed on your Register of Interest Form.

If you are at a meeting and the subject relating to one of your DPIs is to be discussed, in so far as you are aware of the DPI, you **must** declare the existence **and** explain the nature of the DPI during the declarations of interest agenda item, at the commencement of the item under discussion, or when the interest has become apparent

Once you have declared that you have a DPI (unless you have been granted a dispensation by the Standards Committee or the Monitoring Officer, for which you will have applied to the Monitoring Officer prior to the meeting) you **must**:-

1. Not speak or vote on the matter;
2. Withdraw from the meeting room during the consideration of the matter;
3. Not seek to improperly influence the decision on the matter.

## **Do I have a significant interest and if so what action should I take?**

A significant interest is an interest (other than a DPI or an interest in an Authority Function) which:

1. Affects the financial position of yourself and/or an associated person; or  
Relates to the determination of your application for any approval, consent, licence, permission or registration made by, or on your behalf of, you and/or an associated person;
2. And which, in either case, a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably regard as being so significant that it is likely to prejudice your judgment of the public interest.

An associated person is defined as:

- A family member or any other person with whom you have a close association, including your spouse, civil partner, or somebody with whom you are living as a husband or wife, or as if you are civil partners; or
- Any person or body who employs or has appointed such persons, any firm in which they are a partner, or any company of which they are directors; or
- Any person or body in whom such persons have a beneficial interest in a class of securities exceeding the nominal value of £25,000;
- Any body of which you are in a position of general control or management and to which you are appointed or nominated by the Authority; or
- any body in respect of which you are in a position of general control or management and which:
  - exercises functions of a public nature; or
  - is directed to charitable purposes; or
  - has as its principal purpose or one of its principal purposes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union)

An Authority Function is defined as: -

- Housing - where you are a tenant of the Council provided that those functions do not relate particularly to your tenancy or lease; or
- Any allowance, payment or indemnity given to members of the Council;
- Any ceremonial honour given to members of the Council
- Setting the Council Tax or a precept under the Local Government Finance Act 1992

If you are at a meeting and you think that you have a significant interest then you **must** declare the existence **and** nature of the significant interest at the commencement of the matter, or when the interest has become apparent, or the declarations of interest agenda item.

Once you have declared that you have a significant interest (unless you have been granted a dispensation by the Standards Committee or the Monitoring Officer, for which you will have applied to the Monitoring Officer prior to the meeting) you **must**:-

1. Not speak or vote (unless the public have speaking rights, or you are present to make representations, answer questions or to give evidence relating to the business being discussed in which case you can speak only)
2. Withdraw from the meeting during consideration of the matter or immediately after speaking.
3. Not seek to improperly influence the decision.

## **Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality**

Councillors must declare at meetings any gift, benefit or hospitality with an estimated value (or cumulative value if a series of gifts etc.) of £25 or more. You **must**, at the commencement of the meeting or when the interest becomes apparent, disclose the existence and nature of the gift, benefit or hospitality, the identity of the donor and how the business under consideration relates to that person or body. However you can stay in the meeting unless it constitutes a significant interest, in which case it should be declared as outlined above.

## **What if I am unsure?**

If you are in any doubt, Members are strongly advised to seek advice from the Monitoring Officer or the Committee Services Manager well in advance of the meeting.

If you need to declare an interest then please complete the declaration of [interest form](#).

## **TDC and Parish/Town Councils Collaboration WP Questionnaire - Parish and Town Council Responses**

<b>TDC &amp; Parish/Town Councils Collaboration Working Party</b>	03 November 2022
<b>Report Author</b>	Charles Hungwe Senior Democratic Services Officer
<b>Portfolio Holder</b>	Councillor Ashbee, Leader of Council
<b>Status</b>	For Decision
<b>Classification:</b>	Unrestricted
<b>Key Decision</b>	No
<b>Ward:</b>	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 town and parish council representatives 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 town and parish councils represented by their respective Chairs and Clerks. 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 town and parish council Clerks and Chairs requesting their views on the subject under investigation. thirteen responses have 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 sub group 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.

November 2022 - interview session with parish and town councils;  
November 2022 - interview session with TDC senior officers;  
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 2023 - 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 parish and town councils 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

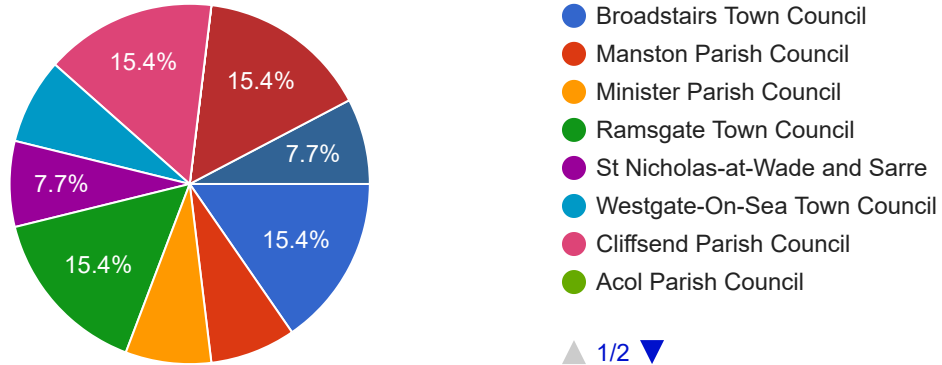
13 responses

[Publish analytics](#)

## Which Parish or Town Council do you represent?

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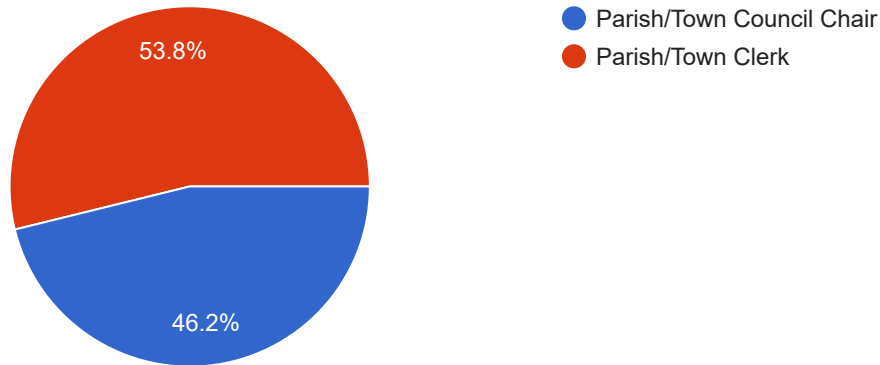
13 responses



## What is your role at the council?

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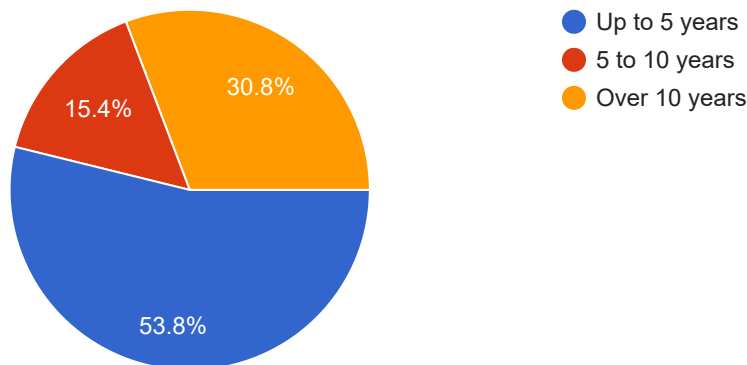
13 responses



## How long have you been involved with your local council?

Copy

13 responses



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

13 responses

Patchy

Poor

Distant and fragmented

I have had no dealings with anyone other than Ashley Jackson

Patchy according to Dept or individual being contacted. Communication (partic replies to emails) typically slow, or in the case of Planning Dept very slow. Communications with TDC Cllrs excellent. Often difficult to get hold of individuals at TDC by phone; response to left messages typically poor. Overall ... needs improvement.

The conference meetings are useful to keep updated with relevant issues and to share concerns with other Parishes who may be experiencing similar problems. Some departments in TDC are much better at responding to emails/queries than others.

as answered for Monkton PC

It is good, we do communicate and collaborate for some events and initiatives

The relationship on an officer level is good, and generally answers to questions are received quite quickly. Some questions do seem to disappear into the ether though (this will be certain officers who for whatever reason don't respond to questions). Stewart Bundy played a very useful role in pointing my correspondence in the right direction and chasing for answers. I'm not clear if he's still tasked with helping us though (whilst TDC staff are re-organised).

We try to be sympathetic to our TDC counterparts, who we generally feel are overworked and understaffed.

Where possible we will try to do 'favours' for TDC, and in return we can see that the same is done for us. This tends to be successful in quite low-level things i.e. grass cutting and clearing rubbish. We've tried to play a useful "eyes and ears on the ground" role for Louise Askew's team, and in return we feel like this team is trusting us with more and more information....the problem comes though when we're asked to keep something confidential, whereas I want to be able to share everything with my councillors.

There have however been times when I think TDC has used an informal meeting of officers to "tick the box" of having consulted with the town council, which puts RTC officers in a difficult position and does a discourtesy to the process because the extensive knowledge that the elected members could bring to the table has been bypassed.



It has been poor. However, over the last year we do have a TDC representative to contact and this has helped in a small way

Current relationship is strained, due to resource constraints it is difficult to get a response from some departments.

could be better cooperation

I've worked here at Birchington Parish Council for just over 4 months now and last week we held a team building meeting with our Councillors. This survey was discussed at our meeting. The responses below are high level responses and I am more than happy to supply examples / more detail if necessary - it's fair to say that it is felt that the working relationship could be improved.

- It feels like a Parent/Child relationship and not a collaborative partnership
- Does TDC see BPC as a key stakeholder ?
- Prior to CoVid we had regular Parish/Town Council Meetings these are now non-existent
- Communications are generally poor
- It is unclear what TDC can do / can't do for the Parish
- We have experience of TDC members and employees being unable to fulfil responsibilities
- Delays in decision making
- There is a disconnect between County - District - Town/Parish



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

Annex 1

13 responses

They could be improved. Where named officers are contactable, services are good

Difficult and time consuming making contact and slow getting answers.

Whilst response to emergency situations are satisfactory we lack a true working relationship where we can jointly plan for the needs of Cliffsend. This is leading to apathy and a lack of ambition or foresight by all parties.

Ashley is brilliant and one of the few TDC employees who responds very quickly

We are often held up in dealing with Parish issues by inability to obtain responses and action from TDC.

We are able to keep residents updated with important issues that may affect them when raised at the conference meetings. The relationship with the District Councillors is most important.

as answered for Monkton PC

It is very helpful and it often results in an improvement in services and better communication to residents

TDC's lack of capacity is continuously detrimental to RTC functions. This is particularly frustrating when we want to take on a TDC function and TDC isn't helping (e.g. transfer of Albion Gardens, transfer of cliff top shelters).....instances where we will save TDC time and money, if TDC could make time for the necessary initial paperwork.

It is still not effective due to the constant change in staff at a senior level at TDC. I do not see any real progress until this is resolved.

It impedes delivery of services and delays decision-making.

To much delay in answering correspondence and acting on decisions

In the specific area of communications ...

With some officers still working from home we struggle trying to get face to face meetings to discuss matters of importance to us. We also have experience of this way of working leading to errors.

Written communications often lack basic information such as job title, contact information etc

We have experienced poor internal communications - TDC staff asking the Parish who in TDC deals with something



# Agenda Item 3

## Annex 1

Resource allocation ...

Some individuals seem to have multiple responsibilities

Available funds - Birchington is often overlooked. When we are made aware of available funding we seem to wait for ages to get a result

Asset transfer - we continue to wait for an update on Rosetti Gardens



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?

13 responses

More consultation, particularly with regard to events. Closer working with CSU, open spaces, waste and environmental services

Always having an up to date list of District officers and their responsibilities.  
Having regular joint meetings

Access is the most fundamental requirement. We need the ability to be able to talk with the appropriate people within TDC about our plans and needs and a longer term strategy. Our elected representative seems to be the only way we can get attention whereas we need local conversations. We would absolutely welcome meetings with TDC either in person or virtually.

not sure about this question

Most urgent - Planning Dept needs more personnel!! They have far too many new emails/calls to deal with on top of existing work load. But main issue is a general lack of communication and the fact that information and updates usually have to be chased rather than being sent.

Prompt responses to email queries. Reminders of the conference meetings could be sent when the dates are set months in advance.

as answered Monkton PC

There is always room for improvement and I think that there could be a dedicated officer at Thanet District Council who liaises with the local Councils to request ideas on a regular basis and engage with the Thanet Area Committee which meets each month

TDC officers need to embrace working jointly with our Councillors as well as the officers.

I would suggest a monthly face to face meeting with the C/E and Leader.

I think we are all trying to do our best, I'm sure services are over-stretched. During the pandemic we had the opportunity to attend virtual conferences where each Town/Parish could discuss various issues, this worked well when kept brief, it was mooted that they might continue. Maybe a dedicated email address for Town/Parish Councils to use?

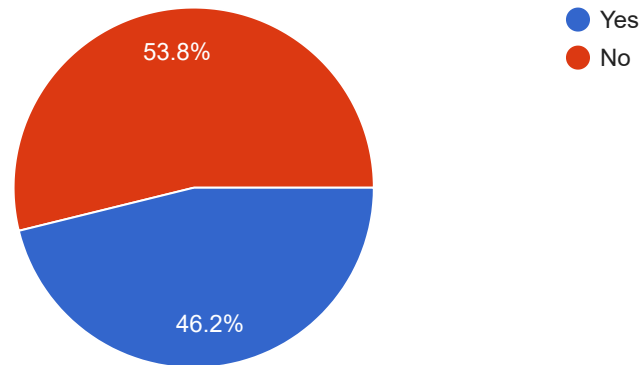
opportunity to meet face to face with senior staff and decision makers

We suggest that the pre CoVid meetings are re-established. We would also like to see a Parish/Town Liaison Officer. If this is not possible, then a comprehensive organisational chart with roles responsibilities and contact details. A TDC representative at a Parish Council



Does your local council have capacity to take on additional roles on a long-term, sustained basis?

13 responses



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

13 responses

n/a

As Broadstairs and St Peters Town Council has 'The Power of General Competence' it can already do anything it wishes: Within the law.

We would be prepared to have conversations around soft landscapes but this would need to be supported with funding discussions. There may be other areas but we would need to discuss these first.

We have a couple of retired councillors who are willing to take on responsibilities

I have answered no! Monkton PC does not have enough resources to take on extra responsibilities.

I have answered no but it would greatly depend on the nature of the role and if there was any funding available to support an additional role

We have capacity for more open spaces work.

Transfer of some community assets to be discussed, providing the processes are made easier without RTC paying TDCs legal fees

No additional roles considered.

car parks, public toilets



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

9 responses

I would welcome closer working , more regular meetings and named officers.

I remain positive and confident that, once the new senior officer team is in place, relationships between District and parish councils will improve.

Whilst we appreciate that organisations change and so do the people within them, there has been so much that it is difficult to keep track of who we should be interacting with. The movement also means that it is difficult to build relationships.

No

In general, I find the attitude of TDC to our Parish Council to be no different to the attitude of TDC to the general public. I do not feel our status as a PC and our role and duty in the community is generally acknowledged by TDC. I feel it should be. We often have to route issues through our District Cllrs which doubles our workload and is ultimately inefficient and a poor reflection on TDC. Communication is key, even if just an acknowledgement of an email or a follow up saying 'still working on this'.

\*\*\* PLEASE NOTE I REPRESENT MONKTON PARISH COUNCIL - THIS WAS NOT ON YOUR DROP DOWN BOX ABOVE. I entered Minster PC as otherwise unable to submit the form. Sort of sums things up ...

I am encouraged that we can achieve more by working together and this was demonstrated 100% during the pandemic.

At parish council level it's beneficial / desirable for officers and councillors to be working together and I think there's a disservice being done to the elected members/residents by not including councillors in meetings/working groups.

TDC officers are reluctant to involve our councillors (most of whom are TDC councillors) because it's allowing TDC councillor involvement "via a back door".

I would like our elected members to be part of all groups/meetings alongside officers; they have the best knowledge of the local area and actively excluding disadvantages projects.

This is now an ideal time for a better relationship to blossom , providing the meetings as suggested are agreed.

We have been waiting far to long to complete the asset transfer of Rossetti Gardens heads of terms agreed October 2021

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# Agenda Item 3

## Annex 1

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