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Date: **08 November 2022**
Our Ref: **TDC and Parish & Town Councils Collaboration WP/Agenda**
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TDC & PARISH/TOWN COUNCILS COLLABORATION WORKING PARTY

9 NOVEMBER 2022

A meeting of the TDC & Parish/Town Councils Collaboration Working Party will be held at **5.30 pm on Wednesday, 9 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 - TDC OFFICER RESPONSES** (Pages 5 - 12)

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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 - TDC Officer Responses

TDC & Parish/Town Councils Collaboration Working Party	09 November 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 TDC officers. The working party is seeking the views of council officers 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 council officers. 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 officers requesting their views on the subject under investigation. Five 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 four 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 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

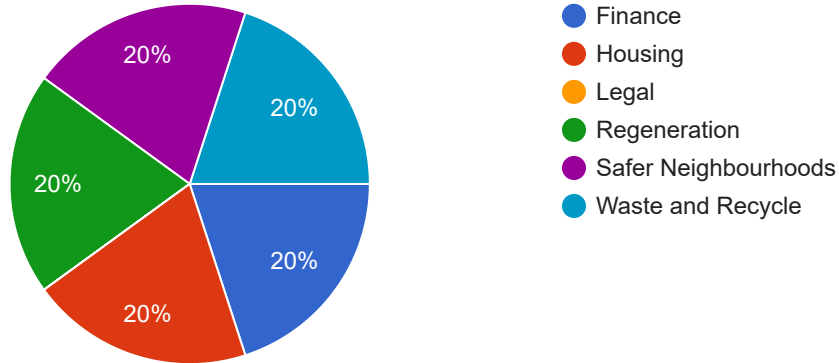
5 responses

[Publish analytics](#)

Which Council Department do you represent?

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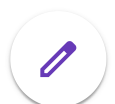
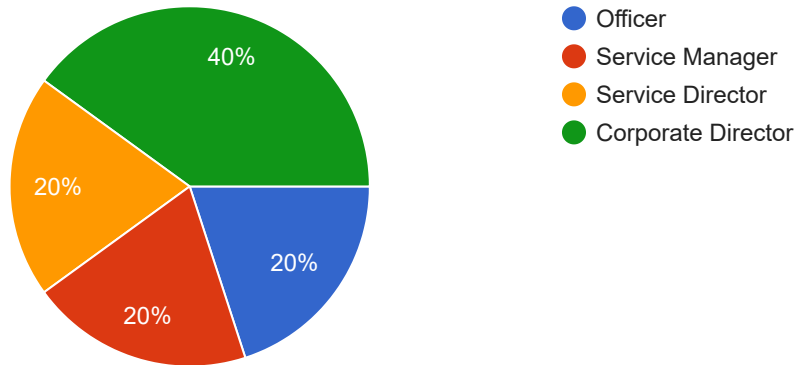
5 responses



What is your role at Thanet District Council?

 Copy

5 responses



Agenda Item 3

Annex 1

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

5 responses

In terms of business support and regeneration work we have been linking more and ore closely with town and parish councils which has been beneficial to both tiers.

Non-collaborative

Relationships at the political level are well established and appear to work well, however this seems to be more prevalent through utilising the informal networks of twin hatters rather than a proscribed Governance process.

This seems to be most prevalent in our engagement with RTC and BTC.

There seems to have been recent improvements in the way officers are engaging with town and parish councils, most notably through the improvements made in the way the street cleansing team is now operating.

It fluctuates depending on department and council

Ok

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

5 responses

N/A

Leads to unproductive conflict and poorer outcomes than might otherwise be achieved

The political leadership and cross party working greatly aids decision making in this area. Despite recent improvements there remains potential for officers to continued to enhance our engagement with the town councils.

The absence of a town council in Margate can create tension and stymie the debate as how best TDC should engage with the parishes and town councils.

yes it can

Some town and parish councils offer more than others from their local who pay an amount as part of their council.



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?

5 responses

N/A

More regular dialogue, formal and informal

From a financial perspective, it is accepted that more work could be done around the budget setting cycle to consult on potential TDC budget changes with the town and parish council. However, resources are a limiting factor that have previously constricted this activity and a assesment would need to be undertaken to understand the potential for the breadth and scope of consultation.

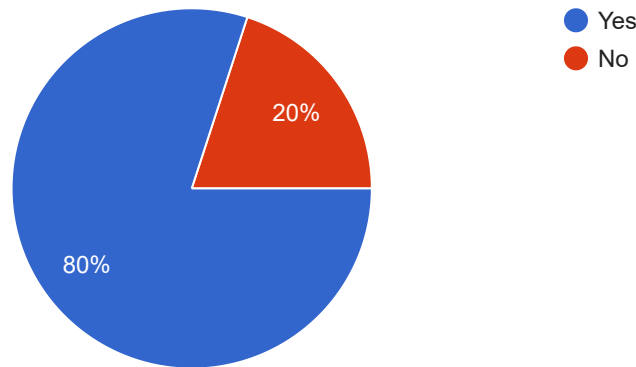
more regular and open dialogue with definitely assist

Town and Parish Councils could deliver more of the work which is relative their area instead of passing the responsibility of that to the district council.

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



5 responses



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

Annex 1

5 responses

Maintaining public spaces (watering etc, possibly by coordinating/working with community/voluntary groups)

Play areas, open spaces, toilets

Town and Parish councils are not subject to the same council tax restrictions as district councils. Consequently, discussions should be undertaken to consider whether the transfer of a range functions should be undertaken to allow for them to be sustainably funded at a local level.

Actives for consideration include but are not limited to:

Cemeteries

Parks and Playgrounds

Beach management

Tourism

Town centre CCTV

Litter bin emptying and litter picking

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

3 responses

I think these relationships are very important to help improve the services offered to the public, communities and businesses, We should absolutely be looking to improved joined up working and to avoid duplication and increase capacity to deliver within our towns.

Place based approach

Unless a Margate Town Council is introduced, a special expenses scheme should be introduced to ensure that residents are fairly charged for council tax.

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