

TDC & PARISH/TOWN COUNCILS COLLABORATION WORKING PARTY

Minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2022 at 5.30 pm in the Austen Room, Council Offices, Cecil Street, Margate, Kent.

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

11. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies made at the meeting.

12. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

13. TDC AND PARISH/TOWN COUNCILS COLLABORATION - DRAFTING THE REPORT TO THE PANEL

The Chair invited Members to go through the minutes of the three sessions that were held with TDC cabinet members, parish and town council Chairs and Clerks and TDC senior officers and come up with recommendations to report back to the Overview & Scrutiny Panel. Members said that there was a crossover of ideas that came from these sessions.

Member agreed that the following recommendations be considered by the Panel:

1. The Parish Forum be reconstituted which would be managed with a strictly controlled agenda, meets quarterly. The Forum would have a membership made up of parish and town council Chairs and Clerks and would be chaired by the Leader of Council;
2. Preamble: Parish and Town Council were keen to take on additional functions from the district council. However it must be acknowledged that they have different capacities for assuming additional responsibilities.
Recommendation: Provide clarification on the delegated responsibilities between TDC and the parish and town councils. These responsibilities would be further developed over time;
3. There was a need for sharing and learning experiences from other parish/town councils that were already carrying out some of the functions;
4. Thanet District Council establishes a dedicated officer role to act as the point of contact between parishes and the district. A cabinet member role be identified to monitor the transition period during the transfer of functions to parish and town councils;
5. A regular circulation that provides information to parish and town councilors and clerks be developed from some of the information in The Loop and CEX's weekly email to District Councillors;
6. Preamble: Training for newly elected parish and town councilors was important in providing a good foundational understanding on important issues like decision making on Planning matters (and Member conduct).

Recommendation: TDC to invite parish/town councillors to joint training with district councillors, particularly for the induction training after the May 2023 Local Government Elections as is appropriate;

7. TDC and the parishes jointly develop a Parish Charter, which would detail a framework for collaborative working between the district council and parish and town councils. The Charter would also explain how parishes could take on additional responsibilities from the district council and need for mutual respect between the two tiers;
8. Review the Asset Management Policy to include a provision that parish and town councils would be kept informed on asset disposals taking place in their parish and town areas;
9. Establish good communication between the district and parishes so that the parishes are kept informed of such important activities taking place in their local areas like Events and asset disposals;
10. Parish and Town Council Chairs and Clerks be invited to Members Briefing sessions as is appropriate;
11. Share an up to date TDC structure chart with contact details that can be shared with parish and town councils.

Members also recommended that once cabinet has made a decision on the above recommendations, the Panel maintains a watching brief on the matter through the Collaboration Working Party.

Members agreed to meet on 17 January 2023 to agree the finalised report to be presented to the Overview & Scrutiny Panel on 16 February 2023.

Meeting concluded: 6.30 pm