

Thanet District Council and Parish/Town Councils Collaboration Survey

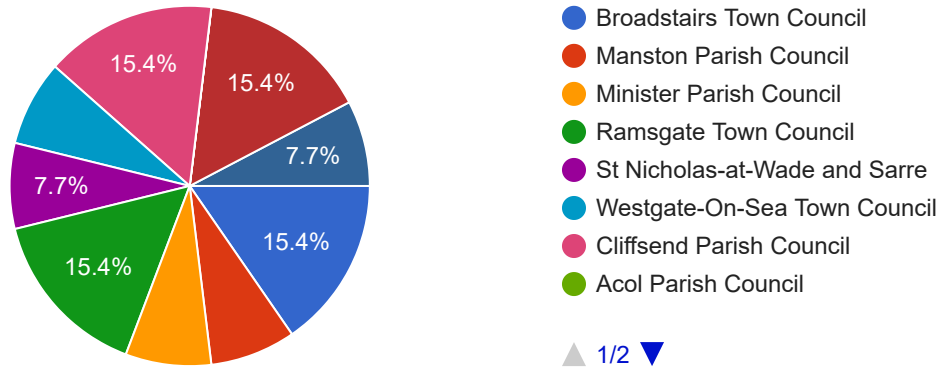
13 responses

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Which Parish or Town Council do you represent?

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13 responses

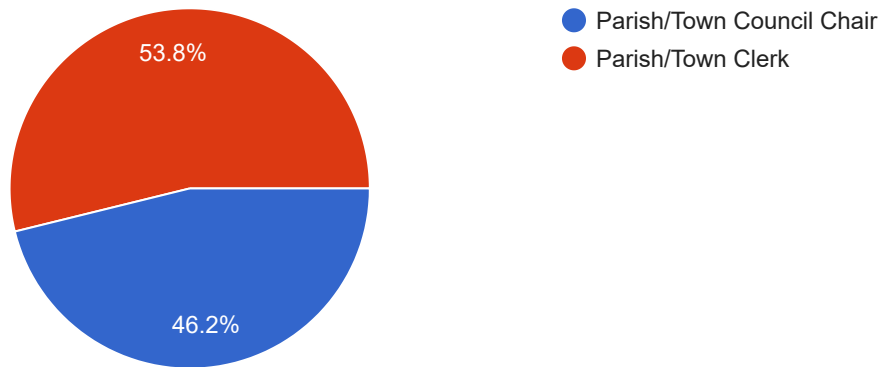


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What is your role at the council?

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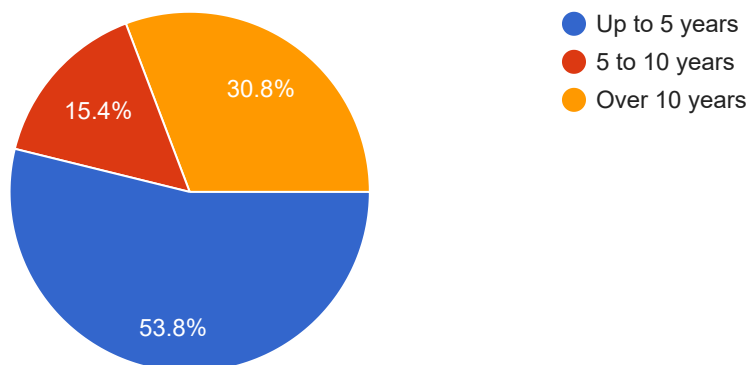
13 responses



How long have you been involved with your local council?

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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?

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



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

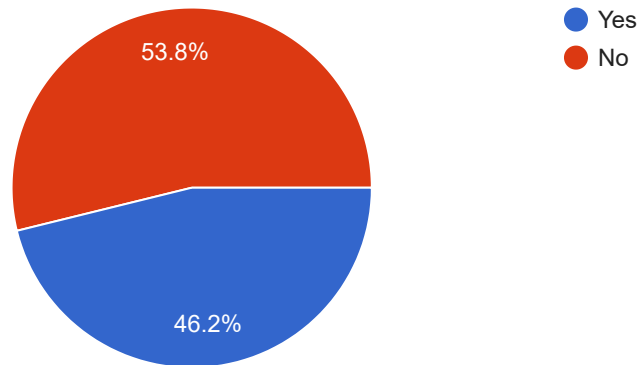
We suggest that the pre CoVid meetings are re-established. We would also like to see a Parish/Town Liaison Officer. If this is not possible, then a comprehensive organisational chart with roles responsibilities and contact details. A TDC representative at a Parish Council



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.

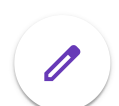
I have answered no but it would greatly depend on the nature of the role and if there was any funding available to support an additional role

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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