

TDC and Parish/Town Councils Collaboration - Drafting the report to the Panel

TDC & Parish/Town Councils Collaboration Working Party

24 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 initiate a discussion within the working party regarding how they wish to create their report to the Overview & Scrutiny Panel. The working party would now need to consider all the views shared by the witnesses during the various sessions as well as the questionnaire responses submitted by TDC cabinet members, officers, parish/town councils chairs and clerks.

Recommendation(s):

Members are asked to draft the report to be submitted to the Panel.

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 Since evidence gathering has been completed, Members would now need to draft the report to be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

2.0 Collecting Evidence for the review

- 2.1 A questionnaire was sent out to TDC cabinet members, officers, parish/town council chairs and clerks requesting their views on the best way to increase collaborative working between the district and parishes. A number of responses were received and considered at three separate sessions between the working party and the respondents. The key questions that were used in the survey document were 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 Members would now need to go through the responses and in particular the key points raised in the three meetings that were recorded in the working party minutes that are attached as annex 1 to Annex 3 to this report..

3.0 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.
- 3.3 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 covid pandemic, but they have since been moved to monthly sessions.

4.0 Options

- 4.1 Members may wish to use the comments and suggestions recorded in the minutes, in Annexes 1-3 to the report.
- 4.2 Members could task officers to draft a skeletal report using the key points in the working party minutes.

5.0 Next Steps

- 5.1 The working party report could be submitted to the Panel meeting in the early part of 2023.

Contact Officer: (Charles Hungwe, Senior Democratic Services Officer)
Reporting to: (Nick Hughes, Committee Services Manager)

Annex List

Annex 1 - Collaboration Working Party minutes - 27 October 2022
Annex 2 - Collaboration Working Party minutes - 03 November 2022
Annex 3 - Collaboration Working Party minutes - 09 November 2022

Background Papers

None

Corporate Consultation

Finance: *(Insert name and job title)*

Legal: *(Insert name and job title)*