

# **TDC and Parish & Town Councils Collaboration Working Party Scrutiny Review Report**

<b>Overview &amp; Scrutiny Panel</b>	14 March 2023
<b>Report Author</b>	Senior Democratic Services Officer
<b>Status</b>	For Recommendation
<b>Classification:</b>	Unrestricted
<b>Key Decision</b>	No

## **Executive Summary:**

This covering report is to introduce the report by the Collaboration Working Party after their investigations that started in July 2022, into how the Council could improve closer working relationships with parish and town councils for improved service delivery to Thanet residents. This scrutiny review led to some findings and proposals being identified through a report which is attached as Annex 1 to this covering report..

## **Recommendation(s):**

The Panel is asked to consider the findings and nine recommendations from the Collaboration Working Party and decide whether to adopt all or part of those recommendations and forward them for Cabinet consideration.

## **Corporate Implications**

### **Financial and Value for Money**

The report recommends the prioritising of resources for improved collaborative working between TDC and the parishes and identifying financial resources for any functions that would be delegated to parishes if TDC was to delegate any functions to the parishes. Due to TDC's limited resources any prioritisation for these activities would most likely require the council to consider what other activities would need to be deprioritised in order to release and reallocate funding.

In other words, the council would need to identify new sources of funding or reduce funding on other service areas or activities (via savings or service reductions) to provide the funding to pay for any functions that would have been delegated to parishes. If an officer role were to be identified to support formal engagement of parishes by TDC as proposed in Recommendation 4, again sources of funding such a role would need to be identified.

However, it would be necessary for the council to have assurance that any income estimates to fund the proposals as detailed in the report were robust, reliable and sustainable before they could be included in the budget.

## **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**

This report is a result of the work undertaken by a working party that was tasked by the Overview & Scrutiny Panel to conduct an investigation into the potential for closer collaborative working between Thanet District Council and Parish and Town Councils. Any findings would need to be shared with Cabinet for a final decision.

## **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 At the meeting on 26 May 2022, the Panel set up a four member Collaboration Working Party to conduct a scrutiny review on identifying the potential for closer collaborative working between Thanet District Council and parish and town councils for improved service delivery to the district. The review topic was picked out of a list of topics that were identified by the Panel (on officer advice) and that list forms part of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel work Programme.
- 1.2 The working party was given specific terms of reference as follows:
- a. To consider establishing closer working relationships between TDC and Parish and Town Councils.

### **2.0 Review Activities**

- 2.1 The working party had three further sessions. One was with Cabinet on 27 October which was attended by the Leader of Council, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Cabinet Member for Housing and Cabinet Member for Environmental Services and Special Projects. The working party then held a meeting with parish and town council chairs and clerks on 3 November and this was followed by a session with TDC senior officers on 9 November 2022.
- 2.2 These sessions were useful in bringing forward a number of suggestions that will be shared by the working party in the report back to the Panel. Thereafter the sub group met on 24 November 2022 and agreed on the findings that came out of this investigation and recommendations to forward to the Panel and then signed off the report at a meeting on 1 February 2023.
- 2.4 The working party is attached as Annex 1 to the covering report.

### **3.0 Options**

- 3.1 The Panel is asked to consider the report and the nine recommendations from the TDC and Parish & Town Councils Collaboration Working Party and decide whether to adopt all or part of those recommendations and forward them for Cabinet consideration;
- Or
- 3.2 Members may opt to reject the report and recommendations and thereafter provide some steer on the way forward.

## **4.0 Next Steps**

- 4.1 If the Panel adopts the recommendations from this report, they will then be forwarded to Cabinet on 16 March 2023. If this deadline is too tight the report could be taken to the first Cabinet meeting in the new municipal year.

Contact Officer: *Charles Hungwe (Senior Democratic Services Officer)*

Reporting to: *Nicholas Hughes (Committee Services Manager)*

### **Annex List**

Annex 1: TDC and Parish & Town Councils Collaboration Working Party report

### **Background Papers**

None

### **Corporate Consultation**

**Finance:** *(Insert name and job title)*

**Legal:** *(Insert name and job title)*