

PPP 20/12 DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT - PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES**(PPP 20/4 – Public Consultation on Planning Applications)**

The Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure (Councillor David Lettington) provided an update on the development management proposals, which were intended to ensure parity and improve efficiency and effectiveness for all parties in the planning system.

The Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC) (Tonbridge and Malling) was thanked for compiling comments received from parish councils as these would aid discussions in advance of the Cabinet meeting on 30 June. In response KALC expressed appreciation to the Cabinet for deferring the matter and indicated that parishes remained keen to share their concerns.

It was recognised that the proposals represented some challenges for parish councils, who might have to adapt their current practices to adopt the changes. Unfortunately, a planned period of engagement with the parish councils had been delayed due to the coronavirus pandemic. However, it was reported that Planning Officers would undertake engagement with parishes, developers and agents via a survey and webinar as soon as possible.

Parishes reiterated concerns that the Borough Council would not accept representations on applications received after a 21 day notice period from any party not included in the statutory (technical) consultees definition, such as parish councils. It was felt that insufficient weight would be given to the response of the parish council and, as many of them followed a 28 day parish council meeting cycle, it would be difficult to meet the proposed 21 day response deadline.

A number of other points were raised and related to:

- Clarification as to the definition of the 21 day period and whether Bank Holidays were excluded;
- The perceived changed working relationship between the Borough and Parish Councils;
- Lack of hard copy for significant and large planning applications; and
- Any flexibility to extend the 21 day response deadline at the request of individual parish councils when required.

In response, the Cabinet Member reiterated it was important that all parties were treated equally. In addition, parish councils were encouraged to register to receive email notifications when a planning application was lodged and validated on the planning portal (Public Access). This would give advance warning that a response would be required and would assist parishes in meeting the 21 day response deadline. The Panel were also assured that the views of parish councils were taken very seriously.

In summing up, the Chairman recognised that a number of significant points had been raised and these would be reflected upon in advance of Cabinet on 30 June. In his role as Leader of the Council, he also committed to meeting with KALC, and potentially a small number of parish representatives, to discuss these points further.

Any outcomes arising from the period of engagement with stakeholders would be considered further by Cabinet on 30 June 2020.

PPP 20/13 RESPONSE TO THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC AND THE WAY FORWARD

The report of Management Team, considered by Extraordinary Cabinet on 19 May, provided a strategic overview of the Borough Council's response to the national emergency, the impacts on service delivery, the introduction of priority initiatives and financial impacts. A framework for the development of a future recovery was also considered.

As part of this future recovery plan, the Cabinet of 3 June had approved a one-year addendum to the Borough Council's Corporate Strategy. This would provide a framework within which to consider a wide range of issues in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Particular reference was made to the Climate Change Strategy and it was reported that the consultation period had been extended until the end of June. The responses submitted during the earlier consultation period had been received and recorded.

The Chief Executive was pleased to report that the Borough Council had been well prepared for remote working, with 90% of staff working from home where possible. In addition, a number of staff had been redeployed to support the work of the Community Support Hub, which had been established to support vulnerable residents by providing essential food supplies and telephone befriending services. The Borough Council had worked with parish councils, community groups and voluntary organisations to identify and signpost to long term support networks.

Reference was made to the financial support distributed to local businesses via rate relief and the delivery of Small Business Grants and Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grants. It was also reported that there