

Notes on Parish Partnership Meeting June 11th 2020 Using Microsoft Teams

Using the URL sent I had been sent resulted in an error message saying that there was an error in the URL. I therefore emailed Anthony Riley who sent me another URL link which worked. I logged in, as did other people, and there was a brief update on traveller occupation from one of the Parish Council representatives to say that, "10 more had turned up." This was immediately followed by a message saying, "Your call has dropped. Please try again", followed by "There was a glitch and we are recovering." I then logged in again to see a picture of Nicholas Heslop telling me to turn off my camera and microphone, which I did. The meeting then proceeded. I did not dare to try to request to say anything, fearing I would be blamed for another crash, but from what I heard, there was nothing I could have added. I noted that the same people kept being asked to speak despite requests from others asking to speak using the chat facility.

Agenda Item 2. Re the recommendation at the last cabinet meeting. Nicholas Heslop thanked Sarah Barker for compiling comments. The matter of the 21 days had been deferred to cabinet on June 30th 2020.

Sarah Barker. Nothing much for me to add. I would like to make sure that if there is anything more to add, would people contact me.

Patrick Thomas complained about the 21 day window.

Nicholas Heslop requested that all cameras should be off if not speaking.

David Lettington: There is no prescribed way to respond except for statutory consultees. The Development Management Procedure order requires responses within 21 days of being informed. He is proposing that all councils should be signed up to email notification. The 2 weeks between being informed and issuing list B gives an opportunity to have an additional period.

Patrick Thomas got stuck on mute and could not get his microphone back on so Sarah Barker read out a list of his comments.

Sarah Barker said we need to move forward to non paper comments.

David Lettington responded. If parishes had early notification by email this gives more time before the 21 day period. TMBC is concerned to avoid possible legal challenges associated with delays. He said the system is not working as well as it should. Officers of the borough council will be contacting all councils to make sure they all have access to the necessary technology. The 21 days only came in, in 2015.

Mike Taylor. Borough Green: He picked up the 14 days, saying, "There needs to be some work on the mechanics."

David Lettington: It would require some technical work with the parishes. Parishes to be contacted as soon as the application has been received and validated.

Eleanor Hoyle: Some of the timings have reduced. Can't guarantee a particular number of days. Nicholas Heslop asked how parishes are meeting. Sarah Barker said hers was using Zoom Pro and that they had had six meetings "Very successfully."

Jennifer Bate. Shipbourne: Still requested extensions.

Nicholas Heslop. 21 days includes weekends. Intends to avoid including Christmas and Easter holidays.

Wendy Palmer. Asked if copies could be printed by TMBC if big sized prints required. Said parishes should be treated as official bodies.

David Lettington said Parishes should go to printers to print out big prints.

Harry Rayner: 21 days should be built into the Parish Charter so that it is clearly defined, including the subject of avoiding Christmas and Easter. It should be 21 days including not less than 15 working days including bank holidays. He said he cannot remember an issue about which the Parish Councils were so much up in arms. Ministers will be looking at the three tier system of local government in the months ahead as they seek to reduce costs.

David Lettington promised to go away and look at specific wording.

Eleanor Hoyle: We are continuing to use pre application processes.

Nicholas Heslop asked that the processes needed to be explained to the parishes

Sarah Hudson: Suggested looking at the plans online without printing out lots of paper.

Patrick Thomas: We have a tree warden trained by Hadlow College. He said they had received a "Snotty letter" from TMBC objecting to Parish Councils making their own investigations into planning applications, saying they should only consider the paper documentation sent to them.

David Lettington apologised about the tone of the communication but did not deny the substance of what had been said.

Mike Taylor: The wider issues of planning. We have moved to a developer led process over the years.

Jennifer Bate: Said we sometimes have the applicant come to our meetings. We cannot see why we cannot do that. It has been traditional practice for years.

David Thornevell: We don't have any difficulty going to a paperless system. My concern is when we have a big application. The statutory consultees rarely respond within 21 days. He was asking for extra time "If it is a really big application" with amendments. He cited a particular case of a 40 acre application with amendments about a through road and open spaces.

Allison Parris: We want to stop applicants making last minute changes. Hence the pre-application process.

Harry Rayner: Where in law are parishes discouraged from having contact with their electors?

David Lettington: If Parish Councils wish to contact applicants they can, and they can allow them to speak at meetings. But he said they did not like to "Confuse" applicants.

Nicholas Heslop said he had been taking notes and will listen very carefully to the comments.

Agenda Item 3. Coronavirus. TMBC intends to continue with climate change issues as well as coronavirus. If anyone wants to make further representations, they are free to do so.

Julie Bilby, Chief Executive: 95% of our staff are working from home. Limited staff going into the offices. Community hub work. Working with community groups. Want to get them into a long term sustainable support network. Now down to a dozen or so families. They are implementing the various government schemes. 90% of money has been paid out. £1.1million in discretionary scheme pot. Have had 150 applications to this latest scheme. "It's a train wreck as it is to every other council." Loss of income streams is £2 to £5 million. Reports are out of date almost as soon as they are written. We are working in a very rapidly changing environment. The approach to recovery is a strategic framework.

Mike Taylor: We need to think carefully to have a single point of contact for community hubs that trees down. Mike said he had three different numbers for the community hub.

Julie Bilby: We set up a system of district hubs. We have 4,000 people on the list, all of whom have now been contacted.

Mike Taylor. We have to have a plan for the future. This was agreed.

There will be four high street support officers to assist with reopening of high street shops for an initial two week period.

Agenda item 4. Kent County Council: Sarah Hohler: Advice from government changes all the time. Household Waste Centres have reopened. There is a four to six week backlog of registrations of births and deaths which have to be done face to face. Highways have been able to take advantage of the less busy roads to get work done. We are not going to be charging for chairs and tables on sidewalks. There are 544 care homes in Kent, the most in the country. We have the lowest rate of infection.

Julie Bilby in reply to a question said that there were 39 deaths a month ago, 61 on 4th June, same yesterday. Death rate at 4.6% is the lowest in the county.

Tom Shelley