

Draft Maidstone Parish Charter responses

As at 3 July 2015

Parish Council or MBC Department	Consultation Response	Noted
<p>Ms Pauline Bowdery Clerk Boxley Parish Council</p>	<p>Our Commitment.</p> <p>(a) Non-political. whilst this may be the current situation this can change and this sentence should reflect this.</p> <p>(b) Comprised of voluntary, elected Parish Councillors... Comment – this should read elected or co-opted Parish Councillors.</p> <p>Parish Councils recognise that MBC...</p> <p>(e) Inclusion of Kent County Council into is affected by the financial and political decisions of central government and Kent County Council and has to work within certain constraints.....</p> <p>Overall it was felt to be fairly balanced and the parish council welcomed that there would be an annual review.</p>	<p>Noted. It should always be non-political - to be removed.</p> <p>Agreed co-opted not to be used.</p> <p>Agreed this document should focus on MBC/PC</p>
<p>Ms Gail Gosden Parish Clerk & RFO Broomfield & Kingswood Parish Council</p>	<p>Comments to Cllr Perry</p> <p>Councillors wish me to extend their thanks for your input regarding the Parish Charter. Councillors agree that many of the points you raise will help Parishes quite significantly and if that helps to improve relationships between the Borough and</p>	

	<p>the Parished that would be tremendously useful. Please let me know if Councillors can help in any way with progressing the Parish Charter.</p>	
<p>Mr Terry Ketley Clerk to Coxheath Parish Council</p>	<p>APPENDIX 'A' Page 1 – Foreword Paragraph 3 recognises the “essential role” that Parish Councils play in the “fabric of local life” affecting over half the population of the Borough of Maidstone. Possessing unique local knowledge, the Parish Councils are recognised here as a key player in community planning and decision making in the rural areas of the Borough. Careful liaison with regard to specific local projects is mentioned and yet in the very first paragraph this document refers only to the “Parish Tier”. This seems to suggest that the Borough Council will in future only liaise with one body and not individual Parishes, whose knowledge must be the key to a truly democratic decision making process. A much closer partnership between County, Borough and Parish Councils is to be welcomed. In the past each has appeared to follow its own route, often at loggerheads with the other tiers. This has led to a serious lack of public trust in the present system, which can be evidenced by the low turnout at local elections.</p> <p>Page 2 – Our Commitment “Serving the community” is the role that any elected member should always place first. Item I states that it is recognised that Parish members are immediately accessible and always held accountable by their residents, often for decisions taken elsewhere that they have not supported. Parish Councils often feel that this is not appreciated or supported in practice by officers.</p>	<p>Noted. Updated to include Parishes and Parish Councils</p> <p>Operational - Task and Finish Group to be established.</p>

	<p>Page 4 – Introduction It seems to be implied that KALC can represent all Parish Council views on all matters. This cannot be the case with particular local issues since different groups of Parishes have very different issues. This has been clearly demonstrated in the past in the context of the Parish Services Scheme and discussions on housing and transport issues in the South Maidstone Parishes.</p> <p>Paragraph 2 is welcomed and in particular the recognition of the importance of the Localism Act 2011. Unfortunately Maidstone Borough Council has a demonstrably poor record in adhering to both the spirit and the letter of this act, particularly when dealing with Neighbourhood Plans. Again 'local' must mean each Parish and not just an overall view from KALC.</p> <p>Page 4 – Key Principles 2 This is agreed in general terms. However, in 'delivering and maintaining a local Parish service' the Borough Council need to recognise that the economies of scale differ widely from those of the urban area. For example, in the past it was suggested that grass cutting and landscape maintenance should be benchmarked against the costs of running Mote Park. This is clearly unrealistic and discriminates against rural parishes. The recognition of the use of local businesses for local maintenance also needs to be highlighted as does the cost of administering such contracts each year. There is also a need to take into account some form of inflation index linking. Coxheath Parish Council sees these as key failings which need to be addressed sooner rather than later.</p> <p>Page 5 – Priority Working Areas In our opinion 'Finance' should be added as a priority area, for the reasons already stated.</p>	<p>Operational - Task and Finish Group to be established.</p> <p>Operational - Task and Finish Group to be established.</p> <p>Operational - Task and Finish Group to be established.</p> <p>Finance is a key principle, which forms part of the main,</p>
--	---	--

	<p>Neither the Borough Council nor Parish Councils should lose sight of the fact that there are other key areas, which may not be under our joint jurisdiction but which can have a major impact on priorities. These include health, education, transport, public safety, community services and the provision of utilities, all of which have been highlighted in consultations on the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plans.</p> <p>Pages 6 to 11 – Key Principles</p> <p>1.1 We are not sure what is envisaged by the last paragraph. It could be that “relevant Borough Council members” are guided by party political objectives and that these could be at odds with local (Parish) views. The wording “where appropriate” is delightfully vague and we question the point of the inclusion of this sentence.</p> <p>1.2 Coxheath Parish Council would not wish to see Parish Liaison meetings with KALC obviate the need for meetings between officers and representatives of individual Parish Councils.</p> <p>1.3 We have articulated our concerns over the blanket use of IT and electronic communications in all instances in the main body of the letter.</p> <p>2.1 Our comments at 1.2 above apply. There is a danger that the whole process will become over-centralised with the inevitable disadvantages to individual Parishes.</p> <p>2.2 Again, as we have stated in the main body of the letter, a six week consultation period is the minimum requirement for Parish Councils since the opportunities to meet and discuss important issues are more limited than those applicable to the Borough Council. It has to be borne in mind that the only paid resource is the Clerk (who is often employed on a part time basis) and this can be a limiting factor when dealing with complicated and important issues such as the Local Plan. It is</p>	<p>static document, rather than priorities, which will be reviewed annually.</p> <p>Not all cases will be appropriate; therefore, it needs to be fair and equal.</p> <p>Operational - Task and Finish Group to be established.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Operational - Task and Finish Group to be established.</p> <p>Operational - Task and Finish Group to be established.</p>
--	--	--

	<p>also essential that key public consultations are, wherever possible, not held over peak holiday periods.</p> <p>2.3a Whilst Coxheath Parish Council seeks to embrace electronic forms of communication, the use of the consultation portal on such issues as the Local Plan is both limiting and prescriptive. We have found from experience that it is almost impossible to get across the significance of our comments within the prescribed format. Systems of communication on these issues must be flexible and not constrained.</p> <p>2.3d We wish to see the wording 'Work with Parish Councils to seek mutually acceptable solutions to contentious issues' added as an additional item to the Borough Council's commitment at 2.2g.</p> <p>4.3c The words 'probably via KALC' should be deleted.</p> <p>4.3f Please see our comments under Page 4 – Key Principles.</p> <p>5.3b Electronic communication with all residents remains an unachievable goal at the present time. The dissemination of information, on behalf of the Borough Council, can be a significant commitment for Parish Councils and any such service will need to be reflected both financially and by ensuring information is disseminated in advance of need. For example, it is unrealistic to despatch election notices expecting them to be displayed immediately, since there are often logistical limitations in displaying posters on Parish notice boards.</p> <p>6.1 The Borough Council must move beyond the point of 'paying lip service' to the Localism Act. In our opinion, Parish Councils are very committed to both the spirit and actuality of Localism. Neighbourhood Plans must be given the opportunity to progress and must not be blocked by the local authority, as is happening at the moment.</p> <p>Pages 11 to 16 – Priority Working Areas</p>	<p>Operational - Task and Finish Group to be established.</p> <p>Noted. Updated.</p> <p>Noted. Updated.</p> <p>Operational - Task and Finish Group to be established.</p> <p>Operational - Task and Finish Group to be established.</p>
--	---	--

	<p>2a.3a We do not agree that statutory consultations should be conducted with Parish Councils, via Maidstone KALC. This section should be redrafted to read 'In line with statutory consultation requirements, involve, where appropriate, Parish Councils in the preparation and review of the Local Plan and its associated policy documents.</p> <p>2a.3b Again, we wish the wording to be amended to ' Review with Members and, if appropriate, produce supplementary planning guidelines on issues raised by Parishes and in consultation with Maidstone KALC'.</p> <p>2a.3d Add the words ' plus planning documents and correspondence' to the end of the sentence.</p> <p>2a3f To be amended to read 'Provide co-operation, guidance and support to Parish Councils on the production of Neighbourhood Plans'.</p> <p>2a.3g Add the words 'and enforcement' between 'planning' and 'history'.</p> <p>2a3j Add the words 'and other planning related documents' after 'appraisals'</p> <p>2a4b Add the words 'early and' between 'through' and 'close'.</p> <p>2b2 The paragraph indicates that Neighbourhood Plans must be in general conformity with Maidstone Borough Council's Local Plan. If the Parish Charter is to be agreed imminently, then this reference is factually inaccurate since there is no Maidstone Local Plan at the present time. The words Local Plan should, we contend, be replaced by the 2000 Development Plan plus saved policies and subsequent DPDs.</p> <p>2b5 See comments above at 2b2.</p> <p>2b6 Add a further sentence to the effect that 'There will be co-operation and integration, wherever possible, between Parish Councils, the Borough Council and other agencies as part of the process of formulating the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plans'.</p> <p>2b7a Add the word 'co-operation' after 'Provide technical</p>	<p>Noted. Updated. Changed via to including.</p> <p>Noted. Updated.</p> <p>Wording will remain.</p> <p>Guidance and support encapsulate co-operation.</p> <p>Noted. Updated.</p> <p>Sentence unchanged.</p> <p>Covered by existing bullet points.</p> <p>As above.</p>
--	--	--

	<p>advice, support’.</p> <p>2b7d To read ‘Take timely decisions at key stages in the process’.</p> <p>2b8d The Parish Council is not sure what is meant by this phrase but in any event it is equally applicable to the Borough Council and should be added as Para 2b7i.</p> <p>3.1c To read ‘Promote sustainable recreation and tourism to support the local environment and economy’.</p>	<p>Key stages will refer to timely.</p> <p>Noted. Updated.</p>
<p>Ms Anne-Marie Butler Downswood Parish Council</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning enforcement is not mentioned in the document and this is an area where we have had problems in the past. We would like to see some emphasis on this as to what we can expect from MBC. • The document is very specific about Parish Councils and does mention non-Parished areas but it is not clear how MBC will keep its side of the bargain in areas such as keeping the public informed. Might additional resources need to be put into this as it is unfair that different people should experience different levels of service simply because of where they live. • It is not clear what will happen if either side ‘break’ their terms – if a Parish has not attended a KALC meeting and does not sign the document can they still be expected to serve by its terms? Should MBC expect different standards from different Parish Councils? <p>Apart from that, we think the document is sound and is a good step forward for both ‘sides’. Lots of hard work has gone into it and this has not gone unnoticed – thank you!</p>	<p>Planning enforcement is a discretionary service. This is a service issue that should be picked up outside the charter. Noted. Updated. Non-parished included.</p> <p>This is not a legally binding document. It is a memorandum of understanding. Operational - Task and Finish Group to be established.</p>
<p>Cllr Dennis Clifton / Mrs A Broadhurst</p>	<p>Key Principles 1. Leadership This section, detailing the Borough Council and the Parish</p>	

<p>Clerk to Harriestham Parish Council</p>	<p>Council working together in partnership, broadly speaking is already happening, with Borough Councillors attending Parish Council meetings and communicating electronically etc. The Parish Council would welcome the new initiative, which is highlighted in 1.2.b – Provide an appropriate Parish Contact Officer within the Communities team to promote partnership working.</p> <p>2. Consultation and Engagement Again, most of this is already in place. However, there were areas that Councillors did discuss further: The Borough Council will...</p> <p>2.2.d – Ensure Parish Clerks and Chairs are notified when matters relating to the Borough Council may affect a particular Parish Council</p> <p>2.2.e – As appropriate and relevant to the consultation process, allow officers to attend Parish Council meetings to explain and discuss policies and plans when a particularly contentious issues cannot be resolved in any other way</p> <p>2.2.f – Post-consultation, Parish Councils that have made a detailed response to the consultation will be notified of the decision and the reasons for the decision. This will be done within two weeks of the decisions being made, except in exceptional circumstances, or in line with existing statutory procedures in relation to Planning The Parish Council will....</p> <p>2.3.d –Work with the Borough Council to seek mutually acceptable solutions to contentious issues</p> <p>The Parish Council does not feel that the points highlighted above are achievable as, in recent months, there have been large scale planning applications submitted in the village, however, there has been no discussion between the Borough</p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>Operational - Task and Finish Group to be established.</p>
---	---	--

	<p>and Parish on these. Several of the proposed developments have been extremely controversial; however, Officers have not contacted the Parish Council to discuss issues. Even when the Parish Clerk has tried to make contact with the Officer, they generally will not return calls or respond to emails.</p> <p>3. Standards and Governance The Parish Council supports this section in its entirety.</p> <p>4. Financial Arrangements The Parish Council supports this section and is pleased that the Borough Council passes on the Local Council Tax Support Grant to Parishes.</p> <p>5. Information-Sharing This was an interesting section as, from Harrietsham Parish Council's view, information sharing has not been very good where Maidstone Borough Council is concerned in recent years. Examples of this would be: 5.2.b Provide a method of priority and timely access to Officers for use by Parish Council Clerks Since the new Planning system was implemented, it is virtually impossible to actually speak to a Planning Officer, many do not even bother to respond to email queries before making decisions. Concerning the Neighbourhood Planning Team, historically they do not appear to want to assist unless you send letters to the Chief Executive, this has improved in recent months, however, support for Parishes is extremely limited. 5.2.e – In order to share information and intelligence, schedule meetings between senior Officers and Parish Council Clerks and Members on a rotational basis, to share information and intelligence. These will take place no less than twice per year and will facilitate an effective approach to partnership working</p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>Operational - Task and Finish Group to be established.</p>
--	---	---

	<p>between the two tiers. The Borough Council will provide accommodation and facilities</p> <p>The Parish Council does not believe that it should only be the Clerk who is given the opportunity to attend meetings. Many Clerks already work over and above the hours that they are employed for and so their available time can be quite limited. If meetings are related to a particular topic i.e. Planning, then members of the Parish Council Planning Committee should also have the opportunity to attend.</p> <p>6. Policy and Service Delivery This section tackles 'effective partnership working' with 'a strong commitment to the principles of Localism', these are positive statements, however the Parish Council would question whether they are actually achievable.</p> <p>7. Learning and Development It is acknowledged that Maidstone Borough Council already arranges some planning and enforcement training which Parish Council representatives are invited to and we would assume that Parishes could request other areas/topics be covered if there was a need. There is one part, which could cause Parishes a problem though: 7.2.c – Offer Parish Councils practical support, access to professional services and specialist knowledge held by the Borough Council at a mutually agreed price.</p> <p>This could be a problem if the money available in the Parish Council budget is tight and does not really go hand in hand with working in partnership and co-operating the Borough Council is going to charge us for requesting information and conflicts with 5.2.b (above) where they are offering access to Officers.</p>	
--	---	--

	<p>Priority Working Areas</p> <p>1. Economic Development</p> <p>This section discusses how Parishes and MBC can work together regarding the businesses in villages as the Borough Council is creating a new Economic Development Business database.</p> <p>1.2.a Share information with the Borough Council on businesses in their areas to help keep the Borough Council’s new Economic Development database up to date and relevant</p> <p>This could be difficult as the Parish Council is aware of larger businesses in the village, however, no information is held and it would be difficult to find out about any smaller businesses that work from residential properties. This would probably work better if this database were to be advertised around the villages for businesses to get involved directly or through any business forums.</p> <p>2. Planning, Development and Environmental Protection</p> <p>This is probably the most controversial section of the Parish Charter for Harrietsham and the areas listed below are of concern to the Parish Council.</p> <p>2a Planning</p> <p>2.a.3.f - Provide guidance and support to Parish Councils on the production of Neighbourhood Plans.</p> <p>2.a.4.b – Actively engage in the process of site allocations through close working with the Borough Council and through the Neighbourhood Plan process</p> <p>2.a.3.g - Within reason, provide Borough Council Officers to assist elected Parish Councillors and their Parish Clerks with enquiries relating to specific planning applications, planning history or relevant policy considerations.</p>	
--	---	--

	<p>Harrietsham has been working on a Neighbourhood Plan since March 2012. To date, the assistance offered by the Borough Council has been negligible. Maidstone Borough Council received a grant for £7,000 to assist the Parish Council with Officer time and administration work. On the one occasion that the Parish Council made an administrative request, we were informed that the Borough Council would only supply two maps for use at our Consultation meetings. To date, the Neighbourhood Plan, which was submitted for Regulation 16 in June 2014, has been disregarded by the Borough Council. In addition, Officers have not actively engaged with the Parish Council to discuss amend</p> <p>Since the Borough Council has implemented the new planning system and changed their telephone switchboard over, it is impossible to contact a Planning Officer directly by phone. You go through to the Planning helpline and they usually cannot answer any query, as they have no knowledge of potential issues with live applications. When you leave a message on the telephone of a Planning Officer they rarely return your call and the same can be said about emails. The newer Planning Officers clearly have no regard to Parish Councils so this makes this section unworkable.</p> <p>It also states that Parish Councils should actively engage in the process of site allocations through close working with the Borough Council and through the Neighbourhood Plan process. This simply is not happening and the Parish Council feels that this is not achievable, as the Borough Council has no regard for our views.</p> <p>2b NPPF, Duty to Cooperate and Neighbourhood Planning</p>	
--	---	--

	<p>The first part of this deals with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This section is of concern, as it appears that people who are not actively involved in trying to produce a Neighbourhood Plan within the Borough of Maidstone have created the Parish Charter.</p> <p>2b.4 – Neighbourhood planning was introduced through the Localism Act 2011 to enable greater community involvement in the planning process, so that people can shape their local areas and have a greater say in planning decisions. The Borough Council will take into account the Neighbourhood Planning Guidance Note publishes by DCLG in November 2012 which states: “With a Neighbourhood Plan, communities are able to establish general planning policies for the development and use of land in a neighbourhood. They will be able to say, for example, where new homes and offices should be built, and what they should look like.”</p> <p>2b.5 – It is important that Neighbourhood Plans are in general conformity with the Borough’s Local Plan. This issue is best considered and where possible resolved as part of joint discussion between Parish Council and the Borough Council, even if the final opinion regarding conformity with the Local Plan rests with the Borough.</p> <p>2b.7.a – The Borough Council will provide technical advice, support and assistance to those preparing Neighbourhood Plans in accordance with Neighbourhood Plan Regulations. The Parish Council does not feel that the Parish Charter is a strong enough document to force any change to the current views of the Officers. With the incredible amount of work, which the Parish Council has completed over the past three years, this Charter tries to show a positive ‘partnership working’ between the Borough and Parish Councils; however, this simply is not happening.</p> <p>It is also disappointing to see that, in section 2b.8.d, it is only</p>	
--	---	--

	<p>the Parish Council who needs to be transparent to the public.</p> <p>2c Affordable Housing Development Councillors feel that not enough is done to link Local Needs Housing with Affordable Housing. For villages, the Local Needs connection is vital but the Parish Council has to constantly request that this valuable connection is included within housing developments.</p> <p>2d Environmental Protection 2d.2.d – The Parish Council will seek to purchase goods and services locally, wherever possible, wherever this does not conflict with the objective of securing value for money and behaving transparently.</p> <p>Again, why does the word transparent appear again? The repeated use of this word when referring to Parish Councils almost implies that there is an issue with transparency.</p> <p>3. Leisure, Recreation and Culture 3.1.b – The Borough Council will work in partnership with Parish Councils to promote and strengthen the cultural richness, leisure facilities and green spaces within local communities.</p> <p>This whole section sounds fantastic, however, in practice this probably relates more to activities within the town centre rather than out in rural areas. This draft document does not set out what the escalation process would be if any of the parties involved do not fulfil the content of the Parish Charter, when it is finally adopted. This is something that the Parish Council believes requires further discussion. Whilst there are many positive ideas included, realistically the Parish Council can not see how Maidstone Borough Council intends to actually put</p>	
--	---	--

	these new processes into practise.	
Mrs Alison Hooker Clerk to Marden Parish Council	<p>Page 2 – Our Commitment: (a) <i>Are all PCs non-political?</i> (b) <i>This gives the wrong impression – many PCs have a number of staff who are professionally competent</i> (c) <i>Primarily – but not totally – PCs are aware of the wider world!</i></p> <p>Page 3 – Signatories of the Maidstone Parish Charter <i>Should each PC sign individually</i></p> <p>Page 4 – Introduction Paragraph 1 – <i>KALC must not be the only means of contact – individual PCs must be directly contacted</i></p> <p>Page 4 – Key Principles <i>This must include the sharing of mapped GIS information. Planning enforcement issues?</i></p> <p>Page 6 – Key Principles Item 1.2(a) – <i>Meetings need to take place with individual parishes not just KALC</i> Item 2.1 – <i>This is not enough. Needs to be on an individual parish basis if appropriate</i></p> <p>Page 7 – Key Principles (contd) Item 2.2(b) – <i>All planning applications? Reserved details applications? These can be a significant impact – must consult PCs if so.</i> Item 2.2(e) – <i>“encourage” officers – not “allow”</i> Item 2.2(f) – <i>How is this done now – does this include all</i></p>	<p>Noted. Updated.</p> <p>Agreed. Noted.</p> <p>Operational - Task and Finish Group to be established.</p> <p>Operational - Task and Finish Group to be established.</p>

	<p><i>planning applications?</i> Item 3.1 – <i>Both MBC and PCs will work together to promote</i></p> <p>Page 8 – Key Principles (contd) Item 3.3(d) – <i>“Ensure” not “encourage”</i> Item 4.3(c) second line – <i>probably, but not exclusively, via Maidstone KALC</i></p> <p>Page 9 – Key Principles (contd) Item 5.1(e) – <i>It may be appropriate for the Parish to provide on occasion</i></p> <p>Page 10 – Key Principles (contd) Item 5.3(b) – <i>where special arrangements are previously agreed eg planning enforcement issues</i></p> <p>Page 12 – Priority Working Areas Item 2a.3(a) – <i>after Maidstone KALC – and directly</i> Item 2a.3(b) – <i>after on behalf of parishes – and individual parishes</i> Additional paragraph – <i>Engage with PCs on the drawing up of S106 agreements to ensure that any gain is appropriate and relevant and to ensure best value to the local community.</i></p> <p>Page 15 – Priority Working Areas (contd) Item 2c.3(h) – <i>and promote local needs housing where people with proven links to the local area are given priority</i></p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Operational - Task and Finish Group to be established.</p> <p>Operational - Task and Finish Group to be established.</p> <p>Operational - Task and Finish Group to be established.</p>
<p>Cllr John Perry Staplehurst PC</p>	<p>I would suggest CIL could be covered in the following general statement of intent which could be a new paragraph 4.4: Parish Councils and the Borough Council will work together to ensure that funds from S106 agreements and the Community Infrastructure Levy are appropriately</p>	<p>Noted. Updated</p>

	<p>distributed.</p> <p>I would also suggest that we incorporate a new paragraph 4.3 which would start with the opening words of the penultimate sentence currently in paragraph 4.2. The new paragraph 4.3 would read as follows: The funding does not restrict a Parish Council from making an application to any other Maidstone Borough Council fund available to support external bodies and projects for other purposes and such applications will be considered on their merits. For example, a Parish Council may wish to provide additional services such as, inter alia, the provision security cameras, street cleaning, provision of bus shelters and real time traffic information. Further details of the scheme can be found at http://services.maidstone.gov.uk/meetings/mgParishCouncilDetails.aspx?bcr=1&SLS=3</p>	<p>Noted. Updated</p>
<p>Mrs Michelle Tatton Clerk to Teston Parish Council</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paragraph 2a.3a should not be restricted to statutory requirements and should include preparation and modification, as well as review of the plan. • Paragraph 2a.3b should state that the guidelines should be produced in a timely manner. • Paragraph 2a.3d should place a time requirement on that consultation e.g. within five days. • Paragraph 2a.3g should not be restricted to existing procedures (unless they are shown to be acceptable to Parishes), but should be an obligation to consult before taking any decision on how to respond. • (New) paragraph 2c.3l should be an obligation to work with Parish Councils in helping developers to shape their plans for housing mix where affordable housing is proposed. 	<p>Operational - Task and Finish Group to be established.</p>

<p>Mrs Amanda Broadhurst, Clerk of West Farleigh Parish Council</p>	<p>Consultation and Engagement</p> <p><i>2.2.f – Post-consultation, Parish Councils that have made a detailed will be notified of the decision and the reasons for the decision. This of the decisions being made, except in exceptional circumstances, or procedures in relation to Planning</i></p> <p>This is an interesting addition to the Parish Charter as Cllr En that this is already happening in Maidstone Borough Council, i planning decisions as he regularly receives an update at his particular planning decisions are made. West Farleigh Parish any such update from Planning Officers when decisions are ignoring the views of the Parish Council. This is disappointing who may have local knowledge which appears to be completely Therefore, if this is Parish Charter is approved, it will be a posit achieve ‘cooperation and close partnership working’.</p>	<p>Operational - Task and Finish Group to be established.</p>
--	---	--

2.3.d – *Work with the Borough Council to seek mutually acceptable solutions*
Over the past 18 months the Parish Council has repeatedly tried to persuade the Borough Council to find solutions to several extremely contentious issues. Unfortunately, the Parish Councillors have found that the Borough Council simply will not listen to the information which is given to them, even if the Parish Council has been providing supporting documentation. This can be extremely frustrating as it often seems that the Borough Council's views are irrelevant, even though we are the tier of government closest to the residents directly affected by the issues raised. It is also often the case that we have a meeting with staff who clearly have no respect for Parish Council views in a condescending manner which implies that we are simply an inconvenience. The fact that the new arrangement within the Parish Charter is seen as a positive step forward, indicates that some officers will need to change their mind set when working with the Parish Council.

Financial Arrangements

4.2 – discussing the Parish Service Scheme – *A contribution towards the costs of services carried out by the Parish Council is provided to the following services (including the (grass and trees) maintenance, allotments, war memorials, noticeboards, and administration costs.*

'Administration costs' used to be a heading within the Concurrent Fund but was removed when the service moved over to the new Parish Council. There is a thought to including money towards these costs, though it is not clear how to come this, as the Clerk's workload is forever increasing and so it is becoming harder each year to fund the work required.

	<p>Information-Sharing</p> <p>5.2.b <i>Provide a method of priority and timely access to Officers for</i> West Farleigh Parish Council would be very interested to und Council intends to put this into practice. The parish Council ap Borough Councillors alike are extremely busy; however, on oc repeatedly ignored when queries are raised or telephone calls a new telephone system has been introduced it is impossible to Planning Officer. All calls are redirected to the Planning Helpde extremely helpful, they generally are unable to answer the que cations.</p> <p>Priority Working Areas - Economic Development</p> <p>1.2.a <i>Share information with the Borough Council on businesses in</i> Borough Council's new Economic Development database up to date a Having discussed this whole section with Councillors, we are u sist greatly with this. Businesses in the village do not tend to lia and so, whilst we would be happy to assist with limited knowled sist the Borough Council with their Economic Development Busi</p> <p>Planning, Development and Environmental Protection</p> <p>Whilst the Parish Council welcomes working in partnership wit area, as a small Parish, we do not feel any comment can be Neighbourhood Planning process.</p>	
--	---	--

	<p>Affordable Housing Development</p> <p>The Parish Council acknowledges that affordable housing particularly in West Farleigh. The Parish Council has requested a Needs Housing Survey historically, although there did not progress with this survey. The Parish Council has now contacted Rural Kent to see whether they can assist the Parish Council to identify what are available for the village.</p> <p><i>2.c.4 Parish Councils will identify any potential rural local housing needs through Appraisals, Neighbourhood Plans or similar exercises</i></p> <p>Whilst the Parish Council would try to identify a need, we believe with the support of Officers to undertake this work, this would involve a significant amount of time to Parishes to actually assist them.</p> <p>A couple of further observations: The word ‘transparency’ was mentioned several times, should apply to <u>all</u> parties and not just the Parish Council. The Parish Council would like to understand what the procedure made against the Chief Executive of the Borough Council. Any information that can be supplied on this point would be much appreciated.</p> <p>In summary, whilst the Parish Council views this Parish Charter as a move to partnership working, Members of West Farleigh Parish Council will consider whether it is actually achievable.</p>	
<p>Sue Whiteside MBC Spatial Policy</p>	<p>Page 12 para 2a.3 The Borough Council will:</p> <p>a. In line with statutory consultation requirements, involve, where appropriate, Parish Councils, via Maidstone KALC, in the review of the Local Plan and its associated policy</p>	<p>Noted. Updated</p>

documents **in accordance with the adopted Statement of Community Involvement and the Constitution;**

Page 12 para 2a.4 Parish Councils will:

- a. Respond to all consultations in relation to the Local Plan within the Borough Council's deadlines **in accordance with the adopted Statement of Community Involvement and the Constitution;**