

28 July 2015

Dear Geraldine,

Re: Consultation – Maidstone Borough Council's Parish Charter refresh

Following the consultation on Maidstone Borough Council's Parish Charter undertaken in April and May this year, the consultation responses have now been collated and reviewed.

The Borough Council was pleased to receive responses from Boxley, Broomfield and Kingswood, Coxheath, Downswood, Harrietsham, Marden, Staplehurst, Teston and West Farleigh Parish Councils.

Many responses had already been received and included in the draft through the work of the Parish Charter working group, involving members from KALC, Teston and Staplehurst Parish Councils. Discussions between Cllr John Perry, council officer Sarah Robson and Parish Councils through their individual parish meetings, have also been fed into the draft.

Having reviewed the consultation feedback, many comments have been included into the latest draft version of the Charter, which I have attached for your attention. However, many comments related to service and operational issues, highlighting communication between parish councils with both the Borough Council and KALC, with a focus on improvement.

Whilst I feel the Charter is now at a stage where it can be presented to Committee and Full Council for endorsement, I would like to capture and address the feedback received regarding communication (for example, planning, but also other areas such as finance, environment and consultation) between partners. Therefore, I would like to propose the establishment of a Partnership Task and Finish Group to bring together key stakeholders. This would enable effective dialogue between the Borough Council, KALC and those Parish Councils keen to be involved; in particular, those who specifically responded to the consultation raising the issue of communication. I hope you feel this is a positive step forward.

In terms of feedback to parish councils, it would be helpful if KALC could lead on communicating the latest draft and next steps to the parishes, including the establishment of a Task and Finish group to discuss the wider issues raised by the recent consultation.

My colleague, Paul Taylor, Director of Shared Services, has agreed to ensure this work is taken forward following my departure from the Borough Council this week and will arrange a meeting in the next few weeks to discuss this further.

Yours sincerely

Zena Cooke
Director of Regeneration and Communities