

KENT ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

Tonbridge and Malling Area Committee

MINUTES

Meeting held on

Thursday 17th July 7.30pm at

Ditton Community Centre

- **Present:** Sarah Barker – Chair - Kings Hill, **Sue Butterfill** – Vice Chair -Borough Green, Sarah Huseyin – Secretary – Ightham & Shipbourne, **Anne Adams & Patricia Garrett** – Addington, **Tom Shelley** - Aylesford, Tim Shaw & **Mike Taylor** (TMBC) – Borough Green, **S. Sanghan**- Burham. **Nigel Newman** - Ditton
- **Ray Haffenden**- East Malling and Larkfield, **Ed Bright** – Hadlow, **Cathy Wynne** – Hildenborough, **Rodney Willingham**- Ightham, **Wendy Palmer** – Platt, Harry Rayner – Wrotham, **Peter Morris**- Stansted, **Gwyneth Barkham** - West Malling
Eddy Bell & Caroline Collier-Ward Wouldham

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Jacque Westwood – Birling, Mark Williams & David Seal - East Peckham
Dan Benyan – Plaxtol, Mary Mckinlay – Ryarsh, Sue Bell – Snodland, David Gaunt – Trottiscliffe

2. **Introductions and Announcements**

Chair pleased to see several new members and apologised for the technical issues on the 10th April meeting. Chair announced that Mary Mckinlay has been appointed Vice Chair to represent parishes at PPP and will include her email address: mary.mckinlay@ryarsh-pc.gov.uk so members can forward any issues to be raised.

3. **Speaker: Charmaine Keatley – Chief Executive KALC**

Charmaine gave an update on local government reorganisation (LGR):

KMPG has been appointed to represent authorities, they have a services network nationally and have worked on LGR before. All 14 authorities have signed up which will lead to one evidence base. This is positive as councils have a shared vision and are working in a collaborative manner. Options are for 3 or 4 Unitaries, and will be circulated to parishes beforehand. The final submission is due on 28th November.

The Devolution Bill was formally introduced in July 2025; there will be many stages before it receives Royal Assent.

KENT ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

Tonbridge and Malling Area Committee

The idea of 'double devolution' legitimises towns and parishes to take on services.

Local leaders want LGR to be aligned with the devolution program. Kent isn't on the devolution priority program but are going for LGR.

Reform is against reorganisation but have allowed their deputy to attend meetings.

NALC has raised disposal of assets with central government and officers have been advised to act with caution.

Neighbourhood area committees (NACs) have been set up in areas that have already gone through the process of LGR, ie Cornwall and they collaborate with parishes. KALC is working with Surrey to get terms of reference together, the aim of NAC's is to get training, shared leadership and to pool resources. KALC is building relationships with other counties to gather information.

LGR in Kent will see parishes and towns as equal partners, a new protocol will be required for local government.

KALC has introduced a mediation service for parishes. It is a free impartial service that is all about rebuilding relationships. It has been effective so far and if you need to access the service, contact KALC or Charmaine.

KALC is working to ensure parishes and towns are heard when it comes to LGR and has done a survey, the deadline on Monday. Charmaine will send a link out for parishes to respond. They have worked with districts, county and Unitaries to put together the survey which will form a good evidence base.

KALC hosted an EGM in Ashford in June to discuss LGR and over 200 people attended. Representatives from each principal authority attended and Damian Roberts, Chief Executive of TMBC gave a presentation.

KALC AGM will be held on the 2nd of December and LGR will be the theme. It will be after the submission date so they can give an update.

Training sessions will be available on asset transfers.

KALC has a devolution page on the website which has all information about LGR.

Questions

- Is there an outcome paper from the EGM? Charmaine said that there wasn't an outcome as such but presentations have been circulated. KALC asked delegates to send any questions to Laura Dyer. Chair commented that some of the statements were very long and Charmaine said that in future they would ask for questions in advance.

KENT ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

Tonbridge and Malling Area Committee

- Patricia Garret raised concern that the EGM was held on a weekday excluding some people. Charmaine said that KALC have surveyed parishes and there is a mix of responses.
 - Patricia Garret would like to raise formal objection to weekday meetings that excludes younger working people such as the AGM. Charmaine said that they can revisit but are trying to increase engagement and offer a mix of weekday, weekend, daytime and evening events.
- Mike Taylor asked how big are the neighbourhood groups would be? Charmaine said they would be a district size within each unitary. They have existed since the 90s.
- Harry Rayner reported that he had attended a meeting in London today on LGR and the latest information is that parishes and towns will remain. Unparished areas are where NAC's would come in. Also, it was announced that there would be no new towns or parishes formed in this parliament.
- Chair asked whether there is likely to be 3 or 4 Unitaries and whether there was any indication on proposed boundaries? Charmaine will circulate the information to date. Harry Rayner said a West Kent Unitary would comprise Tonbridge and Malling, Tunbridge Wells, Sevenoaks and Maidstone. If there are 4 it is likely to be:
 - Medway and Swale
 - Dartford, Gravesham & Swanley
 - East Kent- Thanet, Dover Ashford and Hythe
 - West Kent – as above

West Kent looks solid and would give a population size of 540K. The cost of 4 Unitaries would be expensive; the cheapest option would be a Kent-wide unitary. In Hertfordshire they have just one authority.

4. **Approval of the Minutes of 10th April 2025**

The secretary asked for it to be noted that not all members were able to attend the last meeting. The minutes were agreed, and the Chair will sign.

5. **Matters arising from the Minutes not otherwise on the agenda.**

Chair gave apologies to those who couldn't attend the meeting in April and thanks to Wendy for setting up a zoom call.

6. **TMBC Local Planning Authority**

Chair gave thanks to Mike Taylor for a comprehensive update on planning and will circulate his paper separately. Updates included: Local Plan, change to Constitution for speaking at Planning Meetings and 21 Day Rule.

KENT ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

Tonbridge and Malling Area Committee

7. **T&M Community Safety Unit CSU**

The Inspector gave apologies and will circulate a report. It was noted that Beat Officers are still not attending meetings. Chair asked Parishes to let us know if you get regular attendance or contact.

8. **Climate Change in Parishes and T & M**

- **Updates from Parishes who have Climate Change Projects**

Secretary reported that there was a presentation from Climate Action Shipbourne and Plaxtol (CASP) on 28th of June in Plaxtol to launch their Fairer Warmth Platform. The aim is to encourage residents to sign up for the potential free housing assessment and this will help CASP to assess the housing stock and advise on energy sources for the future

Gwyneth Barkham reported that West Malling have purchased a thermal camera for residents to use.

Chair reported that KALC are considering buying a camera.

- **Initiatives from Parishes on CC Action Plans & Carbon Footprint**

Tom Shelley asked whether council grants are still available?

Chair reported that Kings Hill have recently installed solar panels and recommended contacting TMBC about grants.

TMBC have appointed a new Climate Change Officer who will start in October.

TMBC Climate Change and Monitoring Report [here](#)

The next meeting will probably be in the autumn.

Mike Taylor reported that Borough Green PC have converted streetlights to LED's which has resulted in a 70% reduction in energy bills. Contact Mike for further details: mike.taylor@boroughgreen.gov.uk

9. **Transport and Highways**

- Updates on J5 Slips - Tim Shaw gave an overview for the benefit of members and will produce 2 sides of A4 for the next meeting.
- Joint Transportation Board (i) Update on voting rights : Chair thanked Harry Rayner for an update on a voting rights from the new KCC Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation. A recent paper appears to show that Parish Councillors now have voting rights at JTB's. Sue Butterfill recommended attending JTB's to see decisions. Harry Rayner recommended that we put an agenda item to JTB to adopt this paper. Chair recommended that if parishes have highway issues to add to the JTB agenda to contact KALC T&M. Parish Chairs can speak.

KENT ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

Tonbridge and Malling Area Committee

- i. Minutes of meeting held on 16th June 2025

[Printed minutes 16th-Jun-2025 19.30 Joint Transportation Board.pdf](#)

10. Reports from Meetings and Events

- KALC Executive Committee Meeting held on 10 May - Chair

Agenda and Minutes from meetings are available on KALC [website](#). Minutes will be available after next meeting. Members will need a log in and password to access.

- T & M PPP held on 25th May 2025 - No report from PPP as Mary McKinlay was absent. Chair will ask if Mary has anything to add on PPP. [Meeting minutes](#)

11. Updates from those TMBC and KCC Councillors present at the meeting.

Harry Rayner, KCC reported that adult services for years 2024/25 had a major overrun of expenses of £34 million.

The Leader has announced a reduction in £34 million for environmental impact funding.

The sale of Sessions House is not going ahead. The money from the sale was going to renovate Invicta house which is now happening.

The requirement for 500 staff to go back to the office has resulted in several of the senior officers leaving.

Home to school transport costs are being looked at.

KCC are looking to reintroduce Eurostar stops at Ashford and Ebbsfleet.

The KCC Leader has asked central government for money from Dartford tunnel tolls.

Integrated children services are to be brought in-house. KCC has written to the Home Office for funding for asylum-seeking children over 18 as it is costing £250 million.

Lorries travelling from Dover to Calais have to pay £25. KCC is looking to charge the same in reverse.

KCC has written to ask central government to relax rules on applying for visas for care workers.

12. Training & Development

- Details are printed in monthly KALC news and on KALC [website](#)

The Monthly newsletter is circulated to clerks, ask your clerk if you don't receive it. Charmaine said there was a mix of day and evening courses. West Malling requested AI training, there have been some sessions already.

KENT ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

Tonbridge and Malling Area Committee

13. **Proposed Topics for PPP to be held on Thursday 28th August 2025**

- Chair suggested that we request for the PCC to attend the August or November meeting - agreed.
- Chair suggested that we request detailed plans for Reg 18 Consultation - agreed
- Future PPP meetings are being held: 20th November 2025 and 5th February 2026. Chair recommended any items that parishes wish to be raised at PPP should be submitted via Mary McKinlay rather than KALC T&M four weeks before PPP: mary.mckinlay@ryarsh-pc.gov.uk or Roger Dalton roger.dalton@tmbc.gov.uk or Michelle Tatten michelle.tatton@tmbc.gov.uk

14. **Future Meetings of KALC T & M Area Committee**

- Suggested dates for KALC T & M Meeting are
 - i. 9th October 2025 – Mike Taylor agreed to check availability of Potters Mede
 - ii. 15th January 2026 on Teams

15. **A.O.B**

Chair attended a meeting with CSU at TMBC re anti-social behaviour and will circulate information. You can report crime via a QR code.

Chair attended an excellent seminar by John Riviers on asset transfers. The presentation is on the KALC website. Chair encouraged all parishes to look at the asset registers to see what they would like to take over.

Patricia Garret raised the question of holding the AGM on a weekday. Chair would be happy to vote against this.

Respective chairs of KALC areas have been invited to a meeting at Tunbridge Wells. Chair may need to call a Teams meeting to pass on what will be said at the meeting.

Meeting closed at 9:25 PM.

Signed.....

Date.....