

## BRENCHLEY PARISH COUNCIL: STRATEGIC STATEMENT

### Overall Goals of the Parish Council

The purpose of the Parish Council is to promote the well-being of the community of Brenchley and Matfield, both immediately and for the longer-term future. In order to do this, we:

1. Represent and advocate, especially with other parts of Government, the interests of the community as a whole on issues affecting their well-being;
2. Provide effective and transparent delivery of the services for which the Parish Council has responsibility.
3. Work to maintain a balance between safeguarding what is valued about the parish and supporting or encouraging changes that meet the needs of the community for employment, housing and services.

### Key priorities to 2021

- **Influencing the rate and type of housing development.**  
Planning decisions are made by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. We will seek to influence them, in line with our policy statement, 'Shaping The Future', (Annex 1). This acknowledges the need for some development, but aims to safeguard the character of the parish and protect the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. In line with the views expressed in the Parish Plan Survey, we will advocate smaller scale developments and meeting the need for affordable housing and down-sizing.
- **Seeking action on community concerns about speeding, HGV traffic and parking**  
The Parish Plan Survey showed that these issues are major concerns of the community. Speed limits on local roads and any controls on HGV traffic are set by the County Council. In conjunction with interested community groups, we will explore and promote setting and enforcing appropriate speed limits and parking controls and limiting the impact of HGVs. These concerns are shared by many other communities, so we will seek to learn from their ideas and experience.
- **Delivering or promoting solutions on other ideas and concerns emerging from the Parish Plan Survey**  
The Parish Council will pursue other elements of the Parish Plan Survey with wide support which are within its power and are achievable. As one example, the Parish Council has already encouraged the formation of a litter picking group. We will also consider what further improvements might be made to the Brenchley playground and explore how best to meet the expressed need for a playground in Matfield.
- **Maintaining and improving community assets and services**  
The Parish Council owns Matfield Pavilion and land within the Parish such as the village green in Matfield, the 'Drying Ground' opposite, the playground in Brenchley and the playing field in Petteridge. We will maintain and improve these so that they continue to benefit the community. We will continue to maintain the War Memorials and provide or contribute to a variety of other local services and activities. These include allotments, bus shelters, car

parks, footpaths, rubbish collection and litter bins, public toilets, street cleaning and lighting and youth projects.

- **Encouraging greater involvement in community activities**

Local governance and activities work better with, and often depend on, strong community involvement. We will therefore encourage such involvement, while respecting residents' decisions on how active they wish to be in the community.

- **Responding to changes in Government, County Council and Borough Council policies and plans**

We aim to identify and respond to policies, plans and events in the wider world that may impinge on the well-being of the parish. We will collaborate with other Councils to identify and promote effective Parish responses to opportunities and issues arising from changes to devolution and the role of different authorities.

### **How we will work to achieve our objectives**

- **Effective communication and consultation**

We see engagement with as wide as possible a cross-section of the community as critical to our effectiveness. We will therefore further improve timely communications, through both traditional and social media and through public meetings, in order to keep the community informed and to listen to and understand concerns, suggestions and priorities.

- **Maintaining the highest standards of transparency and accountability**

We embrace the need for transparency on what the Parish Council is doing and for us to be accountable for what we do and the use we make of resources. We will follow best practice on these issues to enable our performance to be assessed.

- **Working efficiently and effectively**

We will be clear on our collective and individual responsibilities. While respecting agreed procedures, we aim to make prompt decisions with minuted and time bound, action points which are subsequently monitored. In its discussions, the Council encourages free and informal expression, while respecting and negotiating differences of view and maintaining our collective support and responsibility once decisions are made. We will be open to involving others outside the Council with relevant experience.

September 2017

## BRENCHLEY PARISH COUNCIL

### SHAPING THE FUTURE: THE COUNCIL'S STRATEGY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF OUR PARISH

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#### **A pragmatic approach to development**

With the development of a Local Plan for our area, Councillors are mindful of their responsibility to speak-up for the interests of the community. Our aim is to ensure that any development which is proposed for our parish takes place only in the locations considered appropriate for development, and on a scale in keeping with the character of our villages and hamlets.

The purpose of this strategy document is to set out the principles that will guide our approach to pursuing that aim. We believe that it represents a realistic and pragmatic attitude to the development "agenda", and reflects commitments made by the Council in previous statements.

#### **Sharing the burden**

There is currently pressure across the country to increase housing supply. That pressure is particularly acute in the South-East where housing shortage is most pronounced. Given that the borough of Tunbridge Wells is in one of the most prosperous corners of the region, it is inevitable that the district will be obliged to deliver its share of government-imposed targets.

However, we will aim to ensure that the impact on Brenchley and Matfield, in the pursuit of those targets, does not destroy the character, heritage, and sustainability of our settlements. Alongside that, we will support development that adds to the vitality of the parish and which enhances the social infrastructure to underpin the well-being of the community.

#### **Our promises to the community**

1. All planning applications will be assessed on their own merits, and will be subjected to careful scrutiny, having regard to planning policy, both national and local.
2. We will robustly resist inappropriate or harmful developments, including developments that:
  - a. are considered too large, in terms of the numbers of units, having regard to all local circumstances, but particularly the site location;
  - b. are high-rise, or in prominent positions;
  - c. generate heavy traffic, lead to a greater erosion of road safety, and cause further parking problems;
  - d. are unsympathetic in design; and which
  - e. have the potential to reduce existing business capacity.
3. We will seek to protect the character of the village centres and Conservation Areas by limiting development in or near those areas, by inter alia, supporting appropriate sustainable development along the A21 corridor, where it crosses the Parish.
4. We will support appropriate small-scale developments in sustainable locations, particularly of smaller units suitable for first-time buyers, renters, and down-sizers - as indicated by residents in the Parish Plan Survey.
5. We will support Affordable homes specifically for local need, as identified in a Housing Needs Survey to establish the extent of the provision that is required.
6. We will oppose the loss of sustainable commercial or agricultural premises to housing.
7. We will seek to secure appropriate community benefits, to accompany relevant development.
8. We will defend the integrity of the AONB, and promote the rural environment that is such a key element of the Parish's character; in particular, will aim to protect the Limits of Build Development of both villages.
9. We will pursue the preparation of a Development Design Statement, to influence the design of developments.