

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

3 September 2008

Report of the Chief Executive

Part 1- Public

Executive Non Key Decisions

1 MATTERS ARISING FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – REVIEW OF FUTURE GRANT ARRANGEMENTS WITH KEY VOLUNTARY BODIES

To consider and endorse the recommendations arising from the above review and to set out further issues to implement the recommendations.

1.1 Recommendations from the Review

1.1.1 The Scrutiny Committee has completed a review of grant arrangements with the following voluntary bodies: the Citizen Advice Bureaux, the Volunteer Bureaux, Age Concerns, Mediation Schemes and Voluntary Action West Kent. The recommendations arising from the review as endorsed by the Scrutiny Committee at its meeting of 5th August 2008 are as follows:

- (a) In light of the decision by the Malling CAB to cease operating from 2009/10, the Borough Council invites the Tonbridge CAB, in liaison with Age Concern Malling and other potential agencies, to consider detailed plans for providing a borough-wide CAB service based on the issues raised at paras 3.7 to 3.10 in the final report to be developed in consultation with Citizens Advice (CitA).**
- (b) Any savings identified as a result of the reconfiguration of CAB services be re-invested in additional support for other key local voluntary bodies, subject to the overall budget position of the Borough Council.**
- (c) The two Age Concerns serving the borough be invited to enter into separate negotiations with the Borough Council over future service provision for a three year period from 2009/10 subject to the terms of agreed service level agreements with each organisation focusing on Kent Agreement targets.**
- (d) The Tonbridge Volunteer Centre be invited to enter into a three year service level agreement with the Borough Council over the provision of volunteering services for the whole borough from 2009/10.**

- (e) **Future grant funding for Voluntary Action West Kent be withdrawn and any savings be re-invested in voluntary services made direct to the community.**
- (f) **Maidstone and West Kent Mediation Services be invited to consider which organisation should provide a lead for such services across the Borough and for that organisation to be invited to enter into negotiations on behalf of the other leading to the development of a single service level agreement commencing in 2009/10.**
- (g) **A review of the Borough Council's voluntary and community sector grant budget be undertaken to identify the scope for the reallocation of a proportion of this funding to the service level agreements covering Age Concerns, Volunteer Bureaux and Mediation Schemes.**
- (h) **Kent County Council be approached with regard to the development of a co-ordinated approach regarding development of the SLAs as noted above and to further explore the potential for support funding being made available to the borough-wide CAB service.**

1.1.2 Cabinet is invited to endorse the above recommendations to enable work to commence on changes to the grant arrangements in time for the 2009/10 financial year.

1.2 Implementation Issues

1.2.1 The above recommendations will result in some significant changes to the way in which the Borough Council gives support to its key voluntary bodies. Implementation of those changes will therefore need to be carefully managed.

1.2.2 Recommendation (h) regards the need to involve KCC in joint discussions over service level agreements and funding of the CAB service. A meeting with KCC officers has recently taken place and the following issues are being taken forward

- We have been invited to submit a formal written request to Cllr Roger Gough re KCC support funding for the borough-wide CAB service. Evidence received from Martin of Hart of CitA indicates that some county councils contribute significant sums to their local CAB services (see Annex 1). A request to assist with funding for a specific service such as debt counselling may have more weight than a request for general funding
- Kent County Council are willing in principle to consider the development of joint SLAs to cover services of Age Concern and the Volunteer Centre. However, it is unlikely that this could be achieved until 2010/11. To progress the recommendations of Scrutiny Committee, therefore, the Borough Council might wish to develop an interim SLA with those bodies for 2009/10 pending further work on a joint SLA with KCC

- KCC are currently reviewing the funding they give to voluntary sector infrastructure bodies, including VAWK. They have been made aware of the Scrutiny Committee's recommendation to divert Borough Council funding to those bodies providing direct services to the local community.
- We have been invited to write to KCC to seek support for the development of a borough-wide volunteering service to be led by the Tonbridge Volunteer Centre.

1.2.3 In addition to the above, a number of meetings are being arranged with the voluntary bodies involved in the review to take forward the recommendations and deal with any operational issues which might arise. Where more significant changes to service arrangements are being proposed, in particular, in respect of volunteering and citizens' advice, the aim should be to adopt an incremental approach. For example, whilst there are aspirations to secure improvements to such services over and above existing arrangements, the aim should be to seek to achieve such improvements over the next three year period. Thus, it should be an objective to ensure, in year 1, that any new service provided by these two agencies is as at least effective as the service it has replaced enabling those new service providers sufficient time to cope with an expansion into new areas and involving new partners, before consideration is given to further expansion of those services.

1.3 Funding Issues

1.3.1 As set out in the Scrutiny Report, the development of a new borough-wide CAB service may generate scope for making savings against the existing CAB budget and to enable some re-investment of funding to other agencies. For 2009/10 the CAB budget, assuming the normal 2.5% annual uplift would be £146,300. It is also suggested in the review that the existing voluntary sector grant budget of c£48,000 could be top sliced (by say, £20,000) to enhance funding to these agencies now to be the subject of an SLA.

1.3.2 Taking into account the incremental approach to the development of new services as outlined above, for 2009/10, the following indicative budget split could be achieved, subject to further negotiation with the agencies involved:

Agency	Service	Proposed Budget for 2009/10
Tonbridge CAB	New Borough-wide service	£120,000
Age Concern Malling	Enhanced local service	£10,000
Age Concern Tonbridge	Enhanced local service	£10,000

Tonbridge Volunteer Centre	New Borough wide service	£10,000
Maidstone Mediation	Joint service with West Kent Mediation	£6,000

1.3.3 The total cost of the above grant distribution would amount to £156,000 for 2009/10. The combined existing CAB budget and the £20K top slice from the voluntary sector grant budget would total £166,300 and therefore this arrangement could deliver a corporate saving of some £10,000. However, as negotiations with the voluntary bodies proceed, further revisions to the above allocations may be required.

1.3.4 It is suggested that an update report be brought to the October meeting of the Community Development Advisory Board on the progress being made with the development of new services and emerging service level agreements.

1.4 Legal Implications

1.4.1 None, other than as already addressed as part of the review process.

1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.5.1 The outcome of the scrutiny review has been to enhance funding to those voluntary agencies providing a direct service to the local community. In addition, it has the potential to generate overall savings to support the Council's budget prioritisation exercise and, in so doing, contribute towards addressing the budget funding gap.

1.6 Risk Assessment

1.6.1 Risks to service users will need to be addressed in the development of SLAs with the agencies involved. The minimum requirement will be to ensure that any new service at least matches the standard of service provision achieved in 2008/9 leaving scope for enhancements to those services to be brought forward in 2010/11 and 2011/12.

1.7 Recommendations

1.7.1 That the recommendations of the scrutiny review of future grant arrangements with key voluntary bodies **BE ENDORSED**;

1.7.2 That negotiations **BE UNDERTAKEN** with relevant voluntary bodies regarding revised service provision for 2009/10 and for the next two following years;

1.7.3 That a report **BE MADE** to the Community Development Advisory Board on the progress of such negotiations and discussions.

Background papers:

contact: Mark Raymond

Nil

David Hughes
Chief Executive