

**TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**TONBRIDGE FORUM**

**Monday, 1st September, 2008**

**Present:** Cllr M S Worrall (Chairman), Cllr N J Heslop (Vice-Chairman), Cllr D J Aikman, Cllr A W Allison, Cllr Mrs J A Anderson, Cllr O C Baldock, Cllr P F Bolt, Cllr Ms V Branson and Cllr Ms S V Spence.

Councillors Court, Miss Sergison and Mrs Simpson were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

**Members of the Forum:**

Kent County Councillor Horne together with Representatives of The Bridge Trust, Tonbridge Art Group, Tonbridge Civic Society, Tonbridge Historical Society, Tonbridge Lions Club, Tonbridge Line Commuters, Tonbridge Sports Association and the Women's Institute.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ms Atkinson and Thornewell, County Councillor Dr T Robinson and Kent Fire Brigade, Society of Friends, Tonbridge Secondary School Headteachers, Tonbridge District Scout Council and Tonbridge Music Club.

**ACTION**  
**BY**

**PART 1 - PUBLIC**

**TF**  
**08/016**

**MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on 2 June 2008 were received and agreed as a correct record of the proceedings.

**TF**  
**08/017**

**UPDATE ON ANY ACTION IDENTIFIED IN THE LAST MINUTES.**

No matters were identified.

**TF**  
**08/018**

**INTRODUCTION OF CHIEF SOLICITOR**

The Chairman introduced the new Chief Solicitor and Monitoring Officer, Wendi Batteson, to the Forum and welcomed her to Tonbridge and Malling.

**TF**  
**08/019**

## **KENT COUNTY COUNCIL SERVICES UPDATE**

The Kent County Council Liaison Manager, Loic Flory, provided an update which would be circulated with the Minutes and invited questions from the Forum. The items included within his report related to the Kent Test (11+) moving to September, road repairs in the area and Cold Calling Zones.

Various queries were raised relating to road repairs in Barden Road and Dudley Avenue, the footpath over Botany Stream and overhanging trees along Nelson Avenue and Mr Flory offered to investigate further and report back.

Kent County Councillor Horne took the opportunity of congratulating the Chairman on his OBE and emphasised the County Council's continuing commitment to the Forum, recognising it as an important arena for dealing with matters relating to Tonbridge. He also offered to follow up on the tree overhanging issue on behalf of Mr Flory.

Forum Members were invited to request subjects, via Mr Flory, to be included in future updates.

**TF**  
**08/020**

## **POSITIVE FUTURES - CHARLTON ATHLETIC COMMUNITY SCHEME**

The Chairman welcomed Alan Dennington, Kent Social Inclusion Manager, of Charlton Athletic Community Scheme who gave a presentation on Positive Futures which aimed to reduce youth crime, anti social behaviour and re-offending by engaging with local communities and providing opportunities and activities for young people. Other objectives of this initiative included improved health and school attendance, improved participation increasing social responsibility and improved community cohesion.

Forum Members were asked whether they were aware of any organisations or groups that wanted to become involved in the initiative as it was a scheme for the community. The benefits of partnership working and effective communication with local groups meant that ideas on what activities were needed could be shared and considered. Mr Dennington stressed that the programme was open to any suggestions but that resource and funding was limited.

The Chairman thanked Mr Dennington for his contribution to the meeting recognising that the idea was highly commendable and for the benefit of the local community.

A copy of the presentation would be circulated with the minutes. Mr Dennington could be contacted on alan.dennington@cafc.co.uk

**TF**  
**08/021**

### **HEALTH PROMOTION DAY**

Mr Barrie Bromley of the Tonbridge Lions outlined plans for a Health Promotion Day in Tonbridge organised in conjunction with Tonbridge Medical Centres. This would take place on Saturday 4 October 2008 and would feature local and national organisations including Asthma UK, Diabetes UK, British Heart Foundation, West Kent Health Promotion Unit with their Stroke Prevention and Healthy Eating Units. All of these organisations would provide information on a variety of topics. Members were advised that it was not too late to add issues to the agenda.

Financial support had been offered by the Borough Council and the local Kent County Council representative. The Kent and Sussex Courier had been helpful in providing leaflets, flyers and advertisements. Flyers would be delivered shortly and Forum Members were asked to circulate them.

The Vice Chairman suggested that leaflets could be displayed at various Council venues including the Angel Centre, Tonbridge Castle and Library and the main offices at Kings Hill as well as the website.

**TF**  
**08/022**

### **PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM**

The Forum received a presentation from PC Burns of West Kent Special Branch, Kent Police on preventing violent extremism. The current threat to the United Kingdom and the Government Counter Terrorism Strategy was outlined.

The main aim of the Strategy was to raise people's awareness of the current threat and to increase confidence in reporting concerns. Members were reminded not to become drawn in by media images and stereotypes as there was no single accurate profile of a terrorist. It was important to remain open minded and to report anything suspicious to the relevant authorities. The Forum was identified as a wide range of organisations with the ability to reach the hard to reach groups or vulnerable people.

Members were reassured that the current economic downturn was unlikely to increase the threat of extremist violence as it was likely to create a shared experience and reduce perceived inequality which was one of the primary reasons for terrorism.

The Leader confirmed that Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council was committed as an organisation in assisting Kent Police to fight terrorism.

A copy of the presentation would be circulated with the minutes.

**TF**  
**08/023**

### **TONBRIDGE TRANSITION TOWN**

The Forum received a presentation from Mr S Dawe explaining that a transition town was one that took responsibility for dealing with the implications of climate change. Working Groups were being set up to prepare detailed policies to mitigate climate change and reduce dependence on fossil fuels. In future it was hoped to improve the already strong working links with the Borough Council. Members were advised that the launch meeting of the Working Group was scheduled for Saturday 13 September 2008 at the Angel Centre.

Tonbridge Line Commuters reminded the Forum of the reduction in service on the Tonbridge to Redhill line which would result in more traffic on the roads as commuters made alternative travel arrangements. Members were urged to take the opportunity of contacting the Department for Transport to voice their concerns and promote the rail service.

A copy of the presentation would be circulated with the minutes.

**TF**  
**08/024**

### **HOUSING SERVICES UPDATE**

The presentation of the Private Sector Housing Manager updated the Forum on the two key service areas of the Home Improvement Agency and the Homelessness and Housing Register.

She reported that following a Scrutiny Committee review, a decision had been taken by the Cabinet to outsource the Council's Home Improvement Agency. Outsourcing would allow an enhanced service to be provided to residents, offering a handyperson service and greater flexibility to deal with fluctuations in workload. The service in future would be managed by a not for profit company called 'in touch'. Hand over to 'in touch' took place on 4 August 2008.

The Forum was advised that from March 2008 the housing register and homelessness service previously delivered under contract by Russet Homes had been brought back in-

**ACTION**  
**BY**

house. In future any queries from those seeking rehousing assistance should be directed to the Council's Housing options team. Members were reminded, however, that existing Russet Homes tenants should continue to liaise with their landlord over any tenancy/rehousing issues.

The Chairman and Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Mrs Anderson, congratulated the Housing Service on their hard work and commitment to providing excellent housing advice and assistance, noting the greater focus on the prevention of homelessness and improved services for residents.

In response to a question asked by Mr S Dawe relating to empty properties, the Forum was advised that the Borough Council was still active in terms of bringing empty properties back into use and grants were available to assist with this activity.

The Chairman advised the Forum that the Chief Housing Officer, Mr Lawrence Dey, had recently taken up a new position with Woking Borough Council. This vacant role was not expected to be filled until the end of September.

At the request of the Chairman copies of the presentation would be circulated with the minutes.

The Chairman suggested that some of the organisations who attended the Forum be invited to give presentations on their work at future meetings.

The Chairman closed the meeting by thanking everyone for their attendance and contribution and indicated that the next meeting was scheduled for Monday 24 November 2008.

The meeting ended at 2045 hours.