

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
CUSTOMER SERVICE IMPROVEMENT ADVISORY BOARD

2 December 2009

Report of the Central Services Director

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision (Decision may be taken by the Cabinet Member)

1 TONBRIDGE GATEWAY – PROGRESS REPORT

1.1 Current position

- 1.1.1 Tonbridge Gateway opened 3 July 2009 initially with our own Customer Services staff, who were then joined by KCC contact centre, Kent Registrars and Kent Police. By September Royal British Legion Industries: Pathways and Workstep also the Tonbridge branch of Royal British Legion, Citizens Advice Bureau, Tonbridge Volunteers, T&M District Partnership, Headway, KCC Community Wardens had also joined. The anticipated cross referrals between agencies, that was hoped for is now being achieved by those present at the Gateway and several case studies are being recorded. The Changing Place facility is successful and will receive more publicity once the operational protocols have been fine tuned. Three individuals have registered as Changing Place users and we have received a request from a day care organisation that has more than 70 people that require this type of facility.
- 1.1.2 Tonbridge Gateway has been advertised through the civic opening, radio advertising, press releases, Here & Now, website coverage, word of mouth (through presentations to local groups) and partner advertising. The increased footfall of over 1,000 customer visits during September up on last year illustrates increased demand generated by service design and advertising. Tonbridge Gateway had the second highest footfall out of the 7 Gateways. Considering its small size compared to Maidstone, Thanet and Tunbridge Wells it has become very successful in a short time. A queuing system will monitor footfall, and help place staff where needed for assisting with vital services during busy periods.
- 1.1.3 Staff and partners have received “gateway” training, which is ongoing. The first of these took place in June 2009, just before opening, and was well received by all who attended. The second session was arranged for October but the trainers cancelled due to ill health. The next session is planned for December 09/January 10. All staff are fully trained by their own organisations to deliver

defined services, the challenge is to expand knowledge and training of services provided by all agencies in the Gateway to ensure appropriate cross referrals.

- 1.1.4 Partner feedback has been positive on the whole. Regular communication is encouraged between managers and staff to ensure that any issues are dealt with quickly.
- 1.1.5 A customer satisfaction survey was carried out in all Gateways for one week in October the results are being collated by KCC and are not yet available but those which were collected at Tonbridge Gateway were positive. Customers were asked to score between 1 -10 with 1 being totally dissatisfied and 10 being totally satisfied. There were no scores under 4 and 50 of the returns (80%) scored 10 (maximum satisfaction) in convenience, accessibility, comfort, facilities offered, length of time waited, opening times, professionalism and attitude of staff and whether their enquiry was dealt with.

1.2 Future Plans

- 1.2.1 By mid January 2010 Tonbridge Gateway will also be hosting Hi Kent, Victim Support, Kent Adult & Children's Social Services and West Kent College. Some interest from other organisations has also been shown but it was decided that a review will take place in January 2010 to consider our options as we are almost running at full capacity. When we have had time to review the situation we will be in a better position to give a firm response.
- 1.2.2 A county-wide Gateway managers group has been set up to share experiences and learning. The first of which is to be held on the 26 November 2009. These meetings will be held in the afternoon following the Kent Customer Services Network Group (KCSNG) meeting to avoid any duplication of topics and share learning with those authorities who do not yet have Gateway. The items discussed will be around subjects such as managing the Changing Place facility, recruitment of Gateway staff, customer satisfaction, statistics, training and development, future plans.
- 1.2.3 Other initiatives will continue including one-off events. For example on 9 December the Child Employment & Children in Entertainment organisation will offer advice and support to parents and teachers.
- 1.2.4 Further promotional activity is being planned in partnership with Gateways across Kent.

1.3 Legal Implications

- 1.3.1 This activity is undertaken under the Council's general powers to do all things calculated to facilitate the discharge of its functions contained in section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972.

1.4 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.4.1 The revenue costs for the Tonbridge Gateway have been quantified and a bid for funding submitted to KCC. The revenue costs falling on this Council for the Gateway will be no higher than the existing operating costs of the previous Customer Services operation at the Castle.

1.5 Risk Assessment

- 1.5.1 The legal documentation have been developed which minimise risk of any partner failing to fulfil their core requirements and responsibilities.
- 1.5.2 The full operating documents are awaiting signature by KCC.

1.6 Policy Considerations

- 1.6.1 Customer Contact – The Gateway provides enhanced public access to a wide range of services provided by a wide range of agencies. The services are designed to deliver services that are appropriate to individuals in a tailored and joined up way.
- 1.6.2 Equalities/Diversity – The Tonbridge office is DDA compliant for the first time and this is supported by ongoing staff training and service design to meet the needs of individuals.
- 1.6.3 Communications – The Gateway is supported by a communications plan aimed at customers, particularly those most in need. The promotion of Gateway will enable us to communicate the availability and content of a wide range of services.
- 1.6.4 Asset Management – The development of the Gateway gives a high quality enhancement and added value the building.

1.7 Recommendations

- 1.7.1 That the progress in respect of Tonbridge Gateway be noted and endorsed.

The Central Services Director confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

Background papers:

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Nil

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