

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

30 March 2010

Report of the Director of Planning, Transport and Leisure and the Chief Leisure Officer

Part 1- Public

Executive Non Key Decisions

1 TONBRIDGE MEMORIAL GARDENS

Summary

This report updates Members on plans to improve the Tonbridge Memorial Gardens in partnership with the local branch of the Royal British Legion. The report highlights the establishment of a Fund Raising Committee and the importance of local consultation and involvement.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 At the January 2010 meeting of the Finance & Property Advisory Board, Members approved the addition of a new scheme for Tonbridge Memorial Gardens to List C of the Capital Plan for evaluation in the forthcoming financial year.

1.1.2 The scheme identified that the Memorial Gardens in Tonbridge are in need of improvement to enable safe access for all, works to ensure that the area meets an appropriate standard for the annual Remembrance Sunday Service and general enhancement to make this important space a more pleasant and higher quality environment.

1.2 Design Criteria

1.2.1 In advance of developing a proposal for the Memorial Gardens and commencing a fund raising initiative, it is important to determine the purpose and nature of any improvements. To this end meetings have taken place with Officers from the Council, the Secretary of the local branch of the Royal British Legion, representatives from Tonbridge Civic Society and Historical Society and a number of individuals to consider this issue.

1.2.2 A general consensus exists that the Memorial Gardens should remain a place for peace and contemplation and should continue to host the town's annual Remembrance Sunday Service. To achieve this it is suggested that there should be at grade level through the Gardens, additional paved areas for people to stand, improved seating, the installation of a power supply, enhanced security, repair of

the Memorial and, in order to improve public awareness, the installation of an interpretation panel.

- 1.2.3 With regard to the overall appearance of the Memorial Gardens, it is felt that a high quality of materials should be used, particularly in terms of the floorscape. The opportunity should be taken to develop a much enhanced space to make a special contribution to the improve the overall appearance of the town centre, bearing in mind the strategic location of the Gardens between the High Street and the Racecourse Sportsground. Some expertise in design of this nature maybe necessary to ensure the ultimate success of the project.

1.3 Fund Raising Committee

- 1.3.1 Longstanding Members of the Council will recall that a Fund Raising Committee was established to raise money for the new War Memorial located on the Watergate Area adjacent to the Big Bridge in 2004. It is proposed that a similar approach be adopted for the planned improvements to the Memorial Garden and that the Borough Council as a major player and landowner would lead the initiative by an initial injection of financial and practical support. At this stage a sum of £25,000 might seem an appropriate amount to be earmarked to ignite the initiative, subject to further evaluation and estimated costs of the project and confirmation through the formal Capital Plan process.
- 1.3.2 The Council is very fortunate to have enlisted the services of Group Captain Patrick Tootal OBE, DL, RAF (ret'd), who has kindly volunteered to chair the Fund Raising Committee. Group Captain Tootal served in the RAF for 33 years and after retiring became the first County Field Officer for the Royal British Legion in Kent. He is currently a Deputy Lieutenant of Kent, Honorary Secretary of the Battle of Britain Memorial Trust and Honorary Secretary of the Battle of Britain Fighter Association. Members of the Fund Raising Committee will also include two representatives from the local branch of the Royal British Legion, a representative from the Clergy, representatives from Tonbridge Civic Society and the Town Wardens, and Member representation from this Council. The Committee would be supported as appropriate by officers.
- 1.3.3 With regard to Member representation on the Fund Raising Committee it is suggested that the Cabinet Member for Leisure, Youth & Arts, or one of his nominees, be recommended to represent the Council.
- 1.3.4 The local branch of the Royal British Legion has kindly agreed to host meetings of the Appeals Committee.
- 1.3.5 Clearly there is some way to go in advancing this project but the consultations to date have been most encouraging. The continuing support of local organisations and people will be critical to the ultimate success of this project and a communications plan including engagement with local media will be established as an early task in parallel with design and fundraising work.

1.4 Timescale

- 1.4.1 Due to the need to raise funds for the project, it is proposed that if there is support for the scheme, works would take place in spring/summer 2011 and be completed in advance of the 2011 Remembrance Sunday Service in November of that year.

1.5 Legal Implications

- 1.5.1 None.

1.6 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.6.1 The financial implications to the Council of the proposal to improve the Memorial Gardens will be considered within context of the 2010/11 review of the Capital Plan, with a report submitted to the January 2011 meeting of Finance & Property Advisory Board.

1.7 Risk Assessment

- 1.7.1 It has been identified that the existing layout and condition of the Memorial Gardens has health and safety implications, which will need to be addressed within any improvements.

1.8 Policy Considerations

- 1.8.1 Asset Management, Community, Health and Safety.

1.9 Recommendations

- 1.9.1 It is **RECOMMENDED** that:

- 1) the design criteria for future improvements to the Memorial Gardens in Tonbridge as outlined in the report be approved;
- 2) the Cabinet Member for Leisure, Youth & Arts and his nominees be confirmed as the Council's Member representatives on the Tonbridge Memorial Garden Appeals Committee; and
- 3) a Capital Plan evaluation report be submitted to the January 2011 meeting of the Finance & Property Advisory Board. In the meantime an initial indication be given that the Council would support the project in the sum of £25,000 subject to the matters outlined in this report.

Background papers:

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Nil

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