

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

TONBRIDGE FORUM

Monday, 8th February, 2010

Present: Cllr M S Worrall (Chairman), Cllr N J Heslop (Vice-Chairman), Cllr A W Allison, Cllr Mrs J A Anderson, Cllr Ms J A Atkinson, Cllr O C Baldock, Cllr Ms V Branson, Cllr M J Dobson, Cllr Ms S V Spence and Cllr D Thornewell.

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

Members of the Forum:

Kent County Councillor Mrs Dagger, Kent Police, Kent Youth Service, The Bridge Trust, The Skinners Company, St John Ambulance, Tonbridge Allotments and Gardens Association, Tonbridge Art Group, Tonbridge Area Churches Together, Tonbridge Citizens Advice, Tonbridge Civic Society, Tonbridge Historical Society, Tonbridge Lions Club, Tonbridge Theatre and Arts Club and Women's Institute.

Apologies for absence were received from Kent County Councillors C Smith and Horne and the Society of Friends, Tonbridge Line Commuters, Tonbridge Music Club and West Kent Primary Care Trust.

**ACTION
BY**

PART 1 - PUBLIC

**TF
10/001**

MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on 23 November 2009 were received and agreed as a correct record of the proceedings.

**TF
10/002**

UPDATE ON ANY ACTION IDENTIFIED IN THE LAST MINUTES.

No matters were identified.

**TF
10/003**

PEDESTRIANISATION OF HIGH STREET, TONBRIDGE

Mrs H Dawe presented a petition to the Forum, on behalf of Frances Long, urging the closure of Tonbridge High Street to cars and lorries at weekends between 1000 and 1600 hours in order to provide a more pleasant environment in

the town centre.

The Chairman explained that as this was a highway issue the petition should be presented to Kent County Council and Councillor Mrs V Dagger accepted the petition on their behalf, promising that this would be passed to the appropriate Service to be addressed.

TF
10/004

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND THE LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

The report of the Vice-Chairman and Chief Executive provided background information on the adopted Sustainable Community Strategy for the Borough as well as outlining the membership and work of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP).

The overall purpose of the strategy was to identify key issues affecting the borough, informed by consultation with local residents and businesses, and to set out a number of actions to address those issues over a three year time period. Actions set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy covered a wide range of themes including community safety, street scene issues, health, the local environment, transport, the economy and housing.

The Vice-Chairman advised that those actions identified were reviewed six monthly by the LSP to monitor whether targets were being met and issues addressed.

It was noted that the LSP was a good demonstration of effective partnership working with external agencies and voluntary bodies.

TF
10/005

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGY - PRESENTATION BY CAROLYN MCKENZIE

The Chairman introduced Carolyn McKenzie, Head of Sustainability and Climate Change at Kent County Council, who outlined the Environmental Strategy for Kent. It was explained that a quality environment was key to enhancing and sustaining quality of life, with social, economic and environmental issues being of equal importance. The impact of climate change, the changing rural economy, transport and traffic, development pressures and environmental pollution were continuing to affect the environment and there was a responsibility to monitor, manage and minimise these impacts.

The aim of the Strategy was to encourage Kent residents to use less energy and reduce the impact of their everyday life by becoming resource efficient and reducing waste. The Kent Environment Strategy had been produced to bring together a co-ordinated approach to persuade and influence change. A wide range of organisations and partnerships had contributed to the Strategy and responses following a recent consultation with key stakeholders were being considered further. The key commitments of the Strategy included implementing a waste minimisation programme across the County; ensuring the responsible and effective disposal of waste; expanding recycling initiatives; using sustainable management and design principles in all property construction and maintenance; promoting energy and water conservation and introducing technology to reduce consumption.

Ms McKenzie explained that there was high potential within Kent to address energy issues for housing stock, for example increasing insulation, and opportunities to develop the 'green market' by increasing renewable energy options such as solar panels.

The Strategy was currently out for wider consultation via local focus groups and the aim was to develop a final Strategy with the Kent Partnership in the summer. It was intended to have a three year strategy with a one year action plan so that it could evolve and respond to issues.

The Forum welcomed the principle of the Strategy but highlighted the significant amount of energy wasted by businesses. However, it was noted that there was potential to give information to companies encouraging them to provide green services.

Members suggested that a demonstration on adapting properties to become energy efficient would be beneficial in explaining what options were available, the costs associated with 'retro fitting' and how these were achieved.

The Chairman welcomed this approach and suggested further liaison with colleagues in Environmental Health and Housing Services to schedule a demonstration at a future meeting.

In finishing her presentation Ms McKenzie asked for feedback on a continual basis reminding the Forum that active engagement was encouraged.

TF
10/006

UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

Members approved, and welcomed, the University of the Third Age as a new member of the Forum.

Mr R Hoare provided a short summary on the work of the organisation explaining that Universities of the Third Age were self-help, self-managed lifelong learning co-operatives for older people no longer in full time work. It provided opportunities for their members to share learning experiences in a wide range of interest groups and to pursue learning not for qualifications but for fun. It was also noted that the organisation was a charity run by volunteers.

The Tonbridge group was founded in 2000 and now had a membership of 900 with interests ranging from mah jong, Greek, music, book circles, bridge and active travel and theatre groups.

The Forum recognised that continued learning improved mental alertness leading to better health.

Further information on the University of the Third Age could be found in their handbook available on-line at www.tonbridgeu3a.org

The Chairman suggested that information on the University of the Third Age be included in the Borough Council's Here and Now magazine to promote their activities.

TF
10/007

YOUTH CAFE FACILITY AND THE PROPOSED STREET PASTOR SCHEME

The Reverend Thornecroft of Tonbridge Churches explained that the Youth Café facility was a way of offering a meeting place for young people in a safe environment and off the streets. Suitable premises for providing this drop-in centre were still to be identified.

Members were advised that the Street Pastor Scheme was an inter denominational Church response to urban problems, particularly the night time economy, engaging with people on the streets to care, listen, offer support, comfort and assistance and to be a calming influence. Volunteers usually worked in a team of four which offered a reasonable amount of security for individuals participating in the Scheme. It was stressed that regular contact with the Police was maintained and appropriate training on handling situations provided.

The Scheme was pioneered in London in January 2003 by the Reverend Les Isaac, Director of the Ascension Trust, and had resulted in crime reduction in areas where Street Pastors had been operating.

Members were advised that Tonbridge Churches were willing to create a Street Pastor Scheme in Tonbridge and were prepared to look into this further.

TF
10/008

KENT POLICE

The Chairman introduced and welcomed the new Borough Commander for Tonbridge and Malling, Jon Kirby, to the Forum and expressed his gratitude and good wishes to the outgoing Borough Commander, Dave Pate, who had moved on.

The Borough Commander advised that crime within Tonbridge and Malling continued to decrease with a 10.2%, or 474 offences, reduction. He was pleased to report that excellent progress was being maintained and that Tonbridge and Malling was the second highest in terms of crime reduction in Kent. Anti-social behaviour had seen a significant reduction, especially in problem areas such as Snodland, East Malling and Larkfield. It was noted that confidence and satisfaction of residents within the Borough consistently headed the table within the County. The important and effective contribution of external partners in addressing crime issues was recognised by Kent Police.

The Borough Commander acknowledged that the Street Pastor Scheme could be beneficial in improving issues related to young people loitering.

Kent Police would continue to hold regular PACT panels and surgeries, recognising their importance in improving feedback and communication with residents. The Forum was also advised that the Neighbourhood Task Team were proving effective in addressing anti-social behaviour and criminal damage by targeting hotspots and problem areas.

Initiatives for 2010/11 were briefly outlined and included Community Safety Partnerships, a Safer Town Coordinator and the continuing reduction in crime and anti-social behaviour. It was noted that Kent Police were in a similar financial position to many public organisations with less funding and resources available.

ACTION
BY

The Vice-Chairman thanked the Borough Commander for his presentation which was reassuring for residents. He expressed his appreciation for the close working relationship between local members and Police Community Support Officers (PCSO) and sought assurance of their continuing role. The Borough Commander confirmed his commitment to maintaining the role of PCSOs as they were effective in addressing community issues.

A brief discussion followed on the effectiveness of alcohol control zones and neighbourhood watch within Tonbridge.

The Chairman thanked Borough Commander Jon Kirby for his contribution to the meeting.

Members were reminded that the next meeting of the Tonbridge Forum was scheduled for Monday 24 May 2010.

The meeting ended at 2110 hours.