

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

TONBRIDGE FORUM

Monday, 13th September, 2010

Present: Cllr M S Worrall (Chairman), Cllr N J Heslop (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Ms J A Atkinson, Cllr O C Baldock, Cllr P F Bolt, Cllr Ms V Branson, Cllr M J Dobson and Cllr Ms S V Spence.

Councillor Court was also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No. 15.21.

Members of the Forum:

Kent County Councillors G Horne, MBE and C Smith; Age Concern, Kent Police, Society of Friends, St John Ambulance, Tonbridge Civic Society, Tonbridge Historical Society, Tonbridge Lions Club, Tonbridge Music Club, Tonbridge Sports Association, West Kent Primary Care Trust and the Women's Institute.

Other organisations in attendance:

Tonbridge Arts Festival and the Kent Police Authority.

Apologies for absence were received from Borough Councillor Thornewell, County Councillor Mrs Dagger, the Kent Youth Service, the Skinners Company, Tonbridge Theatre and Arts Club and the University of the Third Age.

ACTION
BY

PART 1 - PUBLIC

TF
10/018

MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes for the meeting of the Forum held on 24 May 2010 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

TF
10/019

UPDATE ON ANY ACTION IDENTIFIED IN THE LAST MINUTES.

No items were identified.

**TF
10/020**

CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT

The Chairman declared a personal interest in the Pembury Hospital Development Update item as he was a non executive member of the Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust.

**TF
10/021**

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL SERVICES UPDATE

The Kent County Council Community Engagement Manager, Loic Flory, provided a services update and invited questions from the Forum, none of which were forthcoming.

It was reported that fresh action was being taken to avoid congestion during Operation Stack and that joint working by agencies meant that traffic controls would be introduced much quicker. Particular reference was made to the Kent Free Trees Scheme where the County Council were giving away twenty five native trees to organisations free of charge. The closing date for applications for this scheme was 30 October 2010 with trees ready for collection at the beginning of December. Further details could be found on the Kent County Council website.

A copy of the update would be circulated with the Minutes.

County Councillor Horne advised that Kent County Council's Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be examining the future of community hospitals and encouraged the Forum to participate in what was needed from this type of facility. He reminded Members that in the future GPs would be responsible for commissioning health services and suggested that local practices be consulted on their future plans and ideas.

Attention was also drawn to the fact that the reconfiguration of maternity services at Maidstone Hospital was again out for consultation. The MP for Maidstone would be asking a question on this issue in the Houses of Parliament on Tuesday 14 September 2010.

**TF
10/022**

KENT POLICE UPDATE

The Chairman invited Kent Police to provide a brief summary of policing issues within Tonbridge.

Inspector Allen reported that during the World Cup additional foot patrols had been undertaken. No unusual activity had been generated and all licensed premises had been well run. He was pleased to advise that there had been no significant increase in nuisance.

Particular reference was made to the excellent work

undertaken by Special Constables, which included foot patrols in Tonbridge town centre, traffic related issues and responding to calls from the public.

The Forum was advised that the Neighbourhood Task Team would be concentrating on problems related to speeding and nuisance vehicles in an effort to improve targets.

Other initiatives outlined included Op Motor, targeting nuisance vehicles, Operation Bagshot, which ensured as many uniformed officers and PCSOs were on patrol as possible, and projects aimed at improving engagement with young people and schools. It was indicated that appropriate policing measures would also be in place for Halloween, Bonfire Night and Remembrance Day to ensure that these 'events' were without incident.

Inspector Allen finished his summary with a reminder of a local police presence at the Gateway every Wednesday between 1500 - 1700 hours and assuring Members of Kent Police's continued commitment to tackling crime and providing neighbourhood policing.

**TF
10/023**

PERFORMANCE, ENGAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN LOCAL POLICING

The Chairman introduced Area Commander Chief Superintendent Thomas who had responsibility for the police operations in West Kent. He explained how police resources and personnel under his direct command were deployed and delivered a first class service. The police force were supported and directed by the Kent Police Authority and Chief Superintendent Thomas was pleased to report on a strong and professional working relationship between the two organisations.

Reference was made to the annual publication of the Performance Policing Plan which was supported by a local area policing plan. Members were advised that West Kent was one of the safest places to live in the country and that crime had seen a reduction in the last year.

Kent Police worked in collaboration with neighbouring forces in tackling cross border criminality. The type of issues dealt with on a daily basis was briefly outlined and the routine necessary for dealing with road traffic accidents explained.

In response to a question on whether speed cameras should be removed, Chief Superintendent Thomas reminded Members that 'speed kills'. He believed that cameras were effective in reducing speed and were a great

deterrent. It was reiterated that the Community Safety Partnership still operated cameras.

The Chairman thanked Chief Superintendent Thomas for his contribution to the meeting and expressed his gratitude for the huge improvement in understanding and co-operation between Kent Police and the Borough Council.

Mr T Thompson was invited to address the Forum on behalf of the Kent Police Authority. He explained that the organisation provided governance and scrutiny arrangements of the police at a local and force level.

Particular reference was made to the threat of cutbacks and the 20% reduction predicted for police forces. It was emphasised that the exact position would not be known until the Spending Review in October was announced. However, any reduction in spending could have implications for law and order. Mr Thompson stressed that front line policing would be protected at all costs and it was hoped to achieve significant savings by collaborating further with neighbouring police forces, implementing other joint working initiatives and 'pooling' resources where appropriate.

The main aim of Kent Police and the Kent Police Authority would continue to be the detection of crime, the improvement of residents' perception of crime and the protection and maintenance of public safety.

**TF
10/024**

UPDATE ON DEVELOPMENT OF PEMBURY HOSPITAL

The Forum received a presentation from Mr Ashley Scarff, the Head of Business and Corporate Planning at the Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust, which updated on progress of the redevelopment of the Pembury Hospital site.

Members were reminded that this was a £226m development scheme with a total of 512 beds, which were all single rooms with en-suite facilities and was the first UK Acute NHS hospital to be configured in this way. Some areas of the hospital were scheduled to open in January 2011 with the rest later that year. There had been significant patient and public involvement in the concept and innovative design, with the National Patient Safety Agency being involved. It was noted that there would be a separation of visitor and patient flows, splitting emergency from elective, patients from visitors, dressed from undressed and facilities management from patients.

The strategic context was outlined which consolidated Kent, Sussex and Pembury Services; centralised some Trust Services; provided modern estate and equipment by

replacing old building stock; improved infection control and maximised therapeutic views from bed.

Reference was made to the sustainable transport and travel plan for the development which included planning obligations for bus services, particularly four improved routes from Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge, Crowborough and Maidstone Hospital. The Trust had also appointed a Travel Plan Co-ordinator to incentivise change and influence staff to consider alternative means of transport. Mr Scarff reassured Members that the NHS Trust took the commitment to improve public transport seriously and there was ongoing dialogue with bus companies and stakeholders. The obvious solution appeared to be an increase in the frequency of bus services, although it was recognised that the current financial climate was difficult. The NHS Trust was not complacent in aiming for improved transport links and would continue to work with travel operators.

The challenges presented by single room nursing were considered. Mr Scarff explained that the Trust was confident that this could be done successfully. However, it was recognised that a large learning curve for staff was necessary, given that this was a completely new and innovative style of nursing. A change in staff culture and working practices would be essential to meet this challenge.

In response to Area Commander Thomas of Kent Police, Mr Scarff advised that security measures had been planned in liaison with officers but he welcomed any further advice and assistance that was offered particularly on violent and vehicle crime.

Mr Scarff answered questions raised by Members of the Forum including clarification on the size of the catchment area for the new hospital and whether increased travel plans were necessary. It was indicated that the NHS Trust had anticipated an increase in admissions due to the attraction of the single rooms and this had been considered in all aspects of the development.

A question was raised on whether the Tonbridge Cottage Hospital could provide a useful remedial stage in the treatment process, especially for those living in the Tonbridge area. It was confirmed that the NHS Trust recognised this type of facility as an important and valuable support for patients leaving Pembury Hospital.

In response to an enquiry, Mr Scarff confirmed that the NHS Trust was looking at accommodating private patients as it was important to optimise income. He also confirmed the Trust's support for improvements on the A228 and

particularly for the A21 dualling scheme as this was a major access route to the hospital and provided an essential transport link.

It was explained that Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council was keen to ensure that the hospital was able to best serve patients and residents and was involved in the A21 Dualling Project Group and instrumental in trying to progress the scheme forward.

The Chairman reminded the Forum that the Government was looking at ways of reforming the Health Service and there was potential for community services to be reconfigured. He warned of the implications on local provision as community services might be available to patients outside the local area. It was to be hoped that an Acute Hospital Trust, if created, could take responsibility for the Cottage Hospital to best serve residents.

In finishing his presentation Mr Scarff was optimistic that the hospital would open on the dates announced as it was unlikely that the Spending Review in October would affect the project.

The Chairman invited Mr Scarff to give a similar presentation to the Parish Partnership Panel on Thursday 2 December 2010. The Members of the Forum expressed an interest in visiting the hospital once the development was complete and before it was open to patients.

Mr Scarff was thanked for this valuable contribution to the meeting and the Chairman thanked him and NHS staff for their commitment and dedication and wished them well for the future.

**TF
10/025**

MEDWAY VALLEY COUNTRYSIDE PARTNERSHIP

The presentation of Mary Tate, Partnership Officer, set out the aims of the Medway Valley Countryside Partnership, which were to create, sustain and enhance Kent's landscape and biodiversity; develop, manage and support community-based environmental initiatives; develop and promote life long outdoor learning; encourage and enhance greater access in the outdoors and the corresponding health benefits and ensure the Partnership had the resources for effective development and operation.

Various initiatives such as the River Warden Scheme, working on the Medway between Tonbridge and Maidstone and in the Medway Gap, were highlighted.

Future projects included Kent's Orchards, Allington to Aylesford public rights of way enhancements and Kent's

Heritage trees.

Members asked whether consideration had been given to providing cycle access along the River Medway. Ms Tate replied that work was ongoing and that an area between Allington and Aylesford had been identified as suitable for a cycle path. The Partnership hoped to have a complete cycle path from Maidstone to Rochester in the future.

The Chairman thanked Ms Tate for her valuable contribution to the meeting. Copies of the presentation would be circulated with the Minutes.

**TF
10/026**

TONBRIDGE ARTS FESTIVAL

Mr Andy Brett, Chairman of the Tonbridge Arts Committee, announced that the town's first ever art festival would begin on Friday 15 October 2010. Tickets were on sale now and could be booked by contacting the Angel Centre in Tonbridge. The Festival brought together a variety of local amateur and professional artists, with events taking place at various venues across the town including Tonbridge Castle, the Angel Centre, West Kent College, Hillview School for Girls and Tonbridge Library.

The Festival had been arranged in co-operation with several local organisations and Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council. Mr Brett thanked the Borough Council and the business sponsors for their contribution.

Borough Councillor Branson took the opportunity of referring to an upcoming Jane Austen event and was pleased to announce the return of George Austen's bible to Tonbridge for a short visit.

The Chairman wished the inaugural Tonbridge Arts Festival every success and indicated that Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council was pleased to be involved.

**TF
10/027**

CHARACTER AREA APPRAISALS SPD

Members of the Forum were invited to comment on a series of Character Area Appraisals, which aimed to identify the character and good and bad points of nearly every street in Tonbridge.

The Senior Planning Officer explained that the Borough Council already had an adopted planning policy which aimed to protect and enhance the existing character of an area but these new appraisals would highlight the detailed character of each area and influence future development.

The Appraisals could be viewed at an exhibition at the

Angel Centre, Tonbridge from 1200 pm on Wednesday 15 September to 1200 pm on Wednesday 22 September during normal working hours. The Appraisals could also be viewed at Tonbridge Castle, at the library and via the Borough Council's website at www.tmbc.gov.uk

Members were encouraged to attend the Exhibition and comment on the Appraisals.

The Chairman reminded the Forum that the Borough Council had planning policies in place that reflected what the public wanted. He strongly urged Members of the Forum to express their views believing it was a worthwhile and important exercise.

**TF
10/028**

2011 CENSUS UPDATE

The Information Technology Manager gave a presentation which outlined the process for the Census in 2011. This would take place on Sunday 27 March 2011 and would gather information which identified services and facilities required, enabled population comparisons, identified changing characteristics of populations and helped determine central government funding levels for local authorities.

Particular reference was made to the job opportunities available, full details of which could found at www.censusjobs.co.uk from 20 September 2010.

Members of the Forum were asked to publicise the 2011 Census locally and encourage residents to complete the Census questionnaire in March 2011. As there was potential for a large funding deficit it was important to improve and maximise the questionnaire return rate.

Further advice and assistance on the 2011 Census could be obtained from www.census.gov.uk or from the Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council Census Liaison Manager, Alan Burch, on alan.burch@tmbc.gov.uk

Copies of the presentation would be circulated with the Minutes.

The meeting ended at 2125 hours