

# TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

## TONBRIDGE FORUM

Monday, 6th June, 2011

**Present:** Cllr M S Worrall (Chairman), Cllr O C Baldock (Vice-Chairman), Cllr A W Allison, Cllr Ms J A Atkinson, Cllr P F Bolt, Cllr Ms V M C Branson, Cllr T Edmondston-Low, Cllr Miss J R L Elks, Cllr Mrs M F Heslop, Cllr N J Heslop and Cllr R D Lancaster.

Councillors Coffin and Rhodes were also in attendance pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No. 15.21.

Members of the Forum: Kent County Councillors Miss A Hohler and C Smith; Kent Police, Tonbridge Art Group, Tonbridge Civic Society, Tonbridge District Scout Group, Tonbridge Lions Club, Tonbridge Line Commuters, Tonbridge Sports Association; West Kent Primary Care Trust, Platform 51 (formerly West Kent YMCA) and the Women's Institute.

Apologies for absence were received from Borough Councillors Ms Spence and Trice; County Councillor Mrs V Dagger; the Society of Friends, Tonbridge Music Club and the University of the Third Age.

**ACTION  
BY**

### PART 1 - PUBLIC

**TF  
11/010**

#### **MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the Forum held on 7 February 2011 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**TF  
11/011**

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

§ Minute TF 11/006 - Tonbridge Station Refurbishment:

Mr J Reynolds of Tonbridge Line Commuters asked if there was any further information on when the renovation works at Tonbridge Station would start.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation, Councillor N Heslop, indicated his belief that the work was

starting in the autumn and progressing through until February or March 2012. However, he offered to make further enquiries from Mr Mike Gibson, Public Affairs Manager, at Southeastern. In addition, the Chairman asked that this enquiry be forwarded to Julie Houghton, Senior Scheme Sponsor, Network Rail who had provided the presentation at the last meeting of the Forum.

**TF**  
**11/012**

### **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman welcomed new Members to the Tonbridge Forum and extended his thanks to the former Vice-Chairman, Councillor N Heslop, who was now the Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation.

In addition, the Chairman introduced the following new Cabinet Members to the Forum: -

- § Councillor O Baldock, Deputy Leader, Cabinet Member for Communities and new Vice-Chairman of the Tonbridge Forum and Parish Partnership Panel
- § Councillor Ms J Atkinson, Cabinet Member for Housing
- § Councillor M Coffin, Cabinet Member for Finance and Health
- § Councillor Mrs M Heslop, Cabinet Member for Leisure and Youth
- § Councillor M Rhodes, Cabinet Member for Community Safety

**TF**  
**11/013**

### **KENT COUNTY COUNCIL SERVICES UPDATE**

The Chairman welcomed Mr Paul Wickenden, Overview and Scrutiny Localism's Manager at Kent County Council, who provided a Services Update. Attention was drawn to the content of a written report which was tabled prior to the meeting, with particular reference being made to the continuing support of local children's centres. It was highlighted that the budget for all of the county's 97 centres had now been agreed and these would remain supported for the foreseeable future.

It was reported that Paulina Stockell had been confirmed as Chairman of Kent County Council for 2011-12. Richard King had been elected Vice-Chairman.

Other issues highlighted included the County Council's commitment that no supported bus service would be withdrawn until 2012 at the earliest and the consultation on adult social care.

Reference was made to the opportunity to take part in the Vision for Kent consultation, taking place between 20 June - 22 August 2011. Kent County Council was asking about the actions needed to grow the economy, tackle disadvantage and to put citizens in control.

Finally, Members were advised that a consultation on Kent Minerals and Waste Development had started on Tuesday 31 May 2011 and views were invited until Tuesday 23 July 2011.

County Councillor C Smith reminded the Forum that there was a small amount of grant funding available, via him and County Councillor Miss Hohler, to support community projects. Members of the Forum were invited to contact the County Councillors c/o Members Desk, Sessions House, County Hall.

Tonbridge District Scout Council commented that the County Member funding had proved beneficial in supporting one of their projects.

The Vice-Chairman referred to the County Council's proposal to close an evening class at the Adult Education Centre. A letter outlining the Borough Council's response would be passed to the County Council and it was emphasised that this issue would not be ignored.

**TF**  
**11/014**

#### **KENT POLICE UPDATE**

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

Inspector Allen referred to On-Line Beat meetings which provided another way for residents to talk to neighbour police officers, tell them what needed to be worked on in the community and to find out what Kent Police were doing about crime and anti-social behaviour in the local area. Live On-line Beat meetings were pre-scheduled and publicised on the homepage of the Kent Police website and via Twitter and Facebook. The new Twitter account had over 200 followers and was a useful tool in keeping aware of issues.

The regular police drop-in surgeries had moved to Cafe Nero and Waitrose and were held on Wednesday between 1600 - 1700 hours. Full details were also available on the Kent Police website.

Inspector Allen reported that there was an ongoing and active investigation into incidences of graffiti in Tonbridge town centre and Hildenborough.

Particular reference was made to speed checks undertaken in the area which had resulted in the issuing of several fixed penalty notices and a licence endorsement.

Special constables continued to foot patrol every Friday and Saturday evening and Kent Police were grateful for their assistance. There had been no major incidents reported during the Royal Wedding celebrations and in October Kent Police would be looking ahead and planning resources for the Golden Jubilee.

Another successful initiative held during May had been Operation Escort which targeted anti-social behaviour and nuisance vehicles.

In addition, Inspector Allen reassured Members that the upcoming Tonbridge Carnival and Freedom March would be patrolled rigorously to ensure a safe event.

Finally, brief reference was made to the police restructuring and Inspector Allen was pleased to confirm his reappointment as Inspector for the Tonbridge area. Members welcomed this news along with the sensible approach to policing in Tonbridge and Malling.

Members expressed concern about a perceived increase in youth gangs with a specific example in Hildenborough highlighted. Inspector Allen offered to take further details of the problems out of the meeting and reiterated that foot patrols would continue.

Inspector Allen and the Cabinet Member for Community Safety also noted an issue regarding cyclists regularly using the pavements in the Dry Hill Park Road and Shipbourne Road areas creating a hazard for both pedestrians and cyclists.

The Chairman thanked Inspector Allen for his contribution to the meeting and referred to the recent announcement regarding an increase in neighbourhood police officers. Inspector Allen confirmed that there was a substantial

increase in officers, moving from 16 to approximately 45, but there would also be a substantial increase in workload. He offered to provide further information at the next meeting of the Tonbridge Forum.

**TF**  
**11/015**

**PLATFORM 51**  
**- PRESENTATION BY JANE COOMBES, PROGRAMME**  
**MANAGER**

The Chairman invited Jane Coombes, Programme Manager, to give a presentation on the services and support offered by Platform 51.

Members were advised that Platform 51 had been formally rebranded from YWCA in December 2010 and that the new name reflected that 51% of people were female and girls and women used the charity as a platform for having their say. The organisation was also one of the Mayor's chosen charities for Tonbridge and Malling this year.

Reference was made to the fact that girls and women today faced problems that were often subtle or misunderstood. Despite shifts in attitude women were often unheard and could feel isolated. Platform 51 supported girls and women as they took control of their lives. The services offered were designed to change the lives of girls and women, raise their self-esteem and aspirations, provide programmes and activities and support them to make informed choices and deal with low level mental health and emotional issues.

Platform 51 West Kent welcomed all girls and women to its centre in Tonbridge and ran programmes for young women who might have dropped out of school or faced other extreme pressures such as abuse, isolation, poverty, discrimination, sexism, sexual violence or racism. Women and girls were encouraged to have a go at new things, gain qualifications, to take part in events and campaigns, to volunteer, speak up, make decisions and share their opinions.

A group of young women shared their experiences and benefits gained from participating in a variety of activities, including campaigning projects and making DVDs based on personal safety. Particular reference was made to the publication of a magazine called 'Be True Be Yourself' which was written, researched, edited and designed by young women for young women. Funding to produce the next edition of the magazine and to run a counselling service was being sought. Ms Coombes hoped that the Members would promote and support Platform 51 so that

more girls and women could benefit from the services provided. However, the charity understood that these were challenging and uncertain economic times.

Members were impressed with the presentation provided and with the range of services and support offered. In particular, Members commended the enthusiasm of the young women and felt they represented the organisation very well.

In response to a question raised by Members, it was explained that the YWCA did not provide funding and that Platform 51 were required to be self-sufficient. Unfortunately, long term sustainable funding was lacking and the charity was facing a difficult period of uncertainty.

In addition, Members were pleased to see reference made to training and asked whether work place development opportunities were available. At the present time work placements with employers were not available but the charity was keen to pursue this idea further. Councillor N Heslop, in his capacity as the Borough Council's representative on the Education Area Briefings, offered to address this outside the meeting.

The Chairman thanked all those representing Platform 51 for the impressive and educational presentation and their valuable contribution to the meeting.

**TF**  
**11/016**

**OVERVIEW OF LONDON 2012 OLYMPICS  
- PRESENTATION BY STEPHANIE HOLT, KENT  
COUNTY COUNCIL**

Ms Stephanie Holt of Kent County Council was invited to outline Kent's campaign to maximise the benefits and legacy to the county from being on the doorstep of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Kent 2012 was working with a wide range of partners across key sectors of sport, tourism, arts, business, volunteering, young people and transport. The aim was to maximise the impact and long term legacy of the Games. Ms Holt was pleased to report that Kent was one of only five local authorities in the country to be recognised as a 'beacon' authority by the Government for its work in achieving legacy for the London 2012 Games.

It was explained that the Olympic and Paralympic Games together were considered as one games and that Tonbridge and Malling was very active in promoting and supporting the

equality of the events.

The timetable for the Games was as follows: -

- § Olympic Torch Relay - 18 May to 27 July
- § Olympic Games - 27 July to 12 August
- § Paralympic Torch Relay - 13 August to 29 August
- § Paralympic Games - 29 August to 9 September

The local picture regarding benefits and opportunities were highlighted and it was noted that a number of pre-Games training camps for visiting Olympic and Paralympic teams had been established in the borough.

Particular reference was made to the Olympic Torch Relay which would be passing through the county. There would also be community stops en route which were still to be finalised and announced. The Chief Leisure Officer indicated that Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council was very proactive in pursuing potential opportunities to bring the torch relay to Tonbridge and Malling. An official announcement regarding the final route and community stops of the Olympic Torch was expected in November.

Nominations for torch bearers were now open until the end of June. Particular focus would be on young people with 50% of torch bearers being between 12-14 and the other 50% being those that inspired young people. This was a unique opportunity which residents were encouraged to take.

The Chief Leisure Officer urged the community to get as involved as possible in the build up to the Games and the Members of the Forum were encouraged to look at the official website to make nominations for the Torch Relays.

**TF**  
**11/017**

### **FREEDOM PARADE AND FORTHCOMING EVENTS**

The Central Services Director drew attention to the Freedom Parade in Tonbridge on Sunday 19 June 2011. Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council was proud to welcome the 2nd Battalion of the Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment. The Parade would start at 1400 hours from Tonbridge School, along the High Street to the Vale Road roundabout and then back up to Big Bridge for the Salute. Bands, weapons display, face painters and jesters would be on the Castle Lawn after the Parade. Members of the Forum were asked to promote the event and encourage residents to meet and support the troops.

The Forum was advised that the Summer Playscheme would be operating as usual during the summer and further details were available on the website. Details of Active8 would be available shortly.

Particular reference was made to the Tonbridge Castle Festival of Music and the Opera Brava events scheduled for July. Tickets were now available to book online at [www.operabrava.co.uk](http://www.operabrava.co.uk) or from Tonbridge Castle. Members were asked to help promote these events.

Members were reminded that the digital tv switch over would start in the south east this time next year. Full details could be found on the digitaluk website. The Central Services Director referred to the National Switch Help Scheme run by the BBC to help older and disabled viewers. Community organisations had an important role to play in ensuring that residents were aware of the support and assistance available. The Cabinet Member for Communities had invited digitaluk to a future meeting of the Communities Advisory Board and any learning from that presentation would be shared.

Finally, the Central Services Director referred to the Community Enhancement Fund, which had been newly created to support local community groups and projects. The criteria would be determined at a Cabinet meeting on 22 June and more information would be circulated when available. It was anticipated that the bidding process would be opened by the Summer.

**TF**  
**11/018**

#### **GATEWAY UPDATE**

Members were reminded that the Gateway offered a 'one stop shop' to a wide range of public and voluntary services. This was based at Tonbridge Castle and was run in co-ordination with Kent County Council.

Services provided by external partners included Catch 22, Citizens Advice Bureau, Connexions, Hi-Kent, HM Revenue and Customs, Kent Community Wardens and Tonbridge and Malling Community Unit, Porchlight, Tonbridge Debt Advice, Kent County Council Contact Centre and many more. Details of surgeries run by these organisations were available on the website.

The Central Services Director was pleased to report that following customer satisfaction surveys, Tonbridge and Malling had received 94%, which was the highest score across Kent. It was noted that the overall average rating for



the county was 90%.

Members of the Forum were encouraged to make use of and promote the services available in the Gateway.

The Chairman thanked the Central Services Director of her role and commitment in developing the Gateway.

**TF**  
**11/019**

**COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP ACTION PLAN**  
**2011/12**

The Corporate Services Manager presented the Community Safety Partnership Action Plan 2011/12, which set out the actions that the Partnership would take to address crime and anti-social behaviour issues in the borough over the coming year. The Forum was advised that there was an opportunity to comment on the draft document before it was finalised. Responses could be directed via the Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Councillor M Rhodes, or via [csp@tmbc.gov.uk](mailto:csp@tmbc.gov.uk)

Overall, crime levels within Tonbridge and Malling continued to fall and the borough was a relatively safe to live. As well as the low levels of crime, residents within the borough also felt the safest in Kent when asked how safe they felt in the daytime, walking alone.

Priority issues for 2011/12 had been identified as substance misuse, domestic abuse, anti-social behaviour and young people's issues.

The Corporate Services Manager reported that as a direct result of comments raised at the Parish Partnership Panel of 27 May 2011 the Action Plan would be made easier to read and a glossary of terms would be included.

The Chairman made particular reference to page 21 of the document which highlighted the membership of the Community Safety Partnership and demonstrated a good example of partnership working.

The meeting ended at 2100 hours