

# TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

## TONBRIDGE FORUM

Monday, 6th February, 2012

**Present:** Cllr O C Baldock (Vice-Chairman in the Chair), Cllr P F Bolt, Cllr Ms V M C Branson, Cllr Miss J R L Elks, Cllr N J Heslop, Cllr R D Lancaster and Cllr M Worrall.

Councillors Mrs Anderson, Coffin and Rogers were also in attendance pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Members of the Forum: Kent County Councillor C Smith, Kent Police (Inspector Allen), St John Ambulance, Tonbridge Allotments and Gardens Association, Tonbridge Art Group, Tonbridge Citizens Advice Bureau, Tonbridge Civic Society, Tonbridge District Scout Council, Tonbridge Line Commuters, Tonbridge Lions Club, Tonbridge Philharmonic Society, Tonbridge Rotary Club, Tonbridge Sports Association, University of the Third Age, West Kent YMCA and the Women's Institute.

Other organisations present: Tonbridge and Malling Green Party and Pedestrian Action for Tonbridge High Street (PATHS)

Apologies for absence were received from Borough Councillors Allison, Ms Atkinson, Mrs Heslop and Ms Spence, County Councillor Miss Hohler; Kent Community Health NHS Trust (formerly West Kent PCT), Society of Friends, Tonbridge Historical Society and Tonbridge Music Club.

**ACTION**  
**BY**

### **PART 1 - PUBLIC**

**TF**  
**12/001**

#### **MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the Forum held on 12 September be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**TF**  
**12/002**

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

There were no actions identified.

**TF**  
**12/003**

### **COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT FUND**

The Vice-Chairman and Central Services Director were pleased to announce that 100 organisations had been awarded approximately £200,000 of Community Enhancement Funding in recognition of their contribution to the local community.

Community Enhancement Fund certificates were formally presented to representatives of six of the organisations in receipt of this grant funding as follows: -

- § West Kent YMCA: Awarded £2,000
- § Tonbridge University of the Third Age: Awarded £590
- § Rotary Club of Tonbridge: Awarded £750
- § Tonbridge Lions Club: Awarded £3,500
- § Tonbridge Line Commuters: Awarded £300
- § Tonbridge Philharmonic: Awarded £900

**TF**  
**12/004**

### **KENT POLICE UPDATE**

The Vice-Chairman invited Kent Police to provide a brief summary on policing issues in Tonbridge. Inspector Allen referred to the recent internal restructuring and changes to working practice adopted by Kent Police. However, it was hoped that local residents would not be aware of any significant change to the service provided. Inspector Allen was pleased to report that extra neighbourhood officers were on duty. These officers now had a greater degree of local responsibility and ownership of issues. Whilst this created efficiency savings bigger challenges were faced by the increased workload.

Areas of significant local interest that Kent Police had been involved in since the last meeting of the Forum were as follows:

- § Concern had been expressed regarding youth anti-social behaviour around the Angel Centre car parks in the evening. Kent Police were actively working with the owners of Beales and Sainsburys stores and the Borough Council to find a solution.
- § Regular checks at licensing premises continued and Kent Police were attending monthly Pubwatch meetings.

- § The on-line Beat initiative continued to be very successful and the next session would be held on Thursday 9 February between 1900-2100 hours.
- § Inspector Allen was pleased to report that there had been no significant disruption or disturbance as a result of the recent severe weather.

Finally, Inspector Allen reported that from mid March there would be new Police Community Safety Officers located in Castle ward and on the Hadlow - Hildenborough beat.

The Vice-Chairman thanked Inspector Allen for his contribution to the meeting and questions were invited.

Members welcomed the increased police patrols in the town and neighbouring area and were pleased that local police were taking ownership of local issues.

The Women's Institute asked about the correct action to take when house or business alarms were activated. Inspector Allen responded that anything suspicious should be reported to the police using the new local number of 101. Most house alarms were usually turned off after twenty minutes but if this did not happen Kent Police should be called.

**TF**  
**12/005**

### **SOUTH EAST WATER'S CUSTOMER METERING PROGRAMME**

This item was WITHDRAWN from the agenda.

**TF**  
**12/006**

### **BUDGET POSITION – GENERAL UPDATE**

The Central Services Director provided a general update regarding the Borough Council's budget position and set out the following key headline messages: -

- § Budget preparations for 2012/13 were underway on the basis of a contribution from the financial reserve to support service provision.
- § The target of achieving efficiency savings of at least £300k set by Cabinet had been fully met without affecting services.
- § Community Enhancement Funding had been possible due to the New Homes Bonus. This initiative had been very successful and would continue in 2012/13 with a

focus on Diamond Jubilee celebrations.

- § Subject to confirmation at Council projects for improvements at Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground, Tonbridge Swimming Pool, Haysden Country Park and Tonbridge Cemetery would be progressed.
- § Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council had been significantly affected by the cut in grant from Government. This represented a 28% reduction over two years and created a challenging position. It was emphasised that the Borough Council received the lowest grant allocation in Kent, which equated to approximately £35.40 per head of population compared to £41 for the neighbouring authority at Tunbridge Wells. It was noted that the South East average was £44 and this provided an important context to the Borough Council's budget position.

To help preserve services in 2012/13 the Borough Council was using 'reserves'. However, it was necessary to find further savings to reduce the impact of continuing external funding cuts. The Borough Council was facing broader challenges for the future but the current planning provided an opportunity to review and monitor the position.

Members acknowledged the difficulties and frustrations regarding the criteria for allocating central government grant.

In response to a question from the floor regarding the impact on the 'reserves', the Central Services Director explained the Medium Term Financial Strategy which set out planned progress over the longer term. This allowed the budget position to be regularly reviewed. Details concerning the budget would be published on the website once these were finalised.

Finally, in response to the query from the Women's Institute regarding waste collection, it was confirmed that the Borough Council intended to continue with the current fortnightly arrangements. However, the Forum was reminded that food waste could be collected weekly. If the Borough Council was able to apply for grant funding Members were assured that a bid would be submitted.

TF  
12/007

## TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL UPDATE

The Central Services Director referred to a number of issues of interest. The headline messages included:

§ Queen Elizabeth II Fields Challenge:

The Fields Challenge was a national programme to celebrate both the Diamond Jubilee and the London Olympic and Paralympic Games. The aim of the challenge was to permanently protect areas of outdoor recreational space. Two sites at Priory Wood Public Open Space and Woodland Walk, incorporating Scotchers Field and Frogsbridge Public Open Spaces, had been registered by the Borough Council and accepted by the Challenge organisers.

§ Jubilee Celebrations and Community Enhancement Fund:

Enquiries had been received from residents planning to hold local street parties. For further advice and information Members were asked to contact Andy Edwards - [andy.edwards@tmbc.gov.uk](mailto:andy.edwards@tmbc.gov.uk)

The current round of the Community Enhancement Fund was focused on supporting beacons and larger events linked to both the Jubilee and Olympics. The closing date was 1 March 2012 and details were available on the website - [www.tmbc.gov.uk](http://www.tmbc.gov.uk)

On Monday 4 June the Borough Council would help to celebrate the Jubilee by supporting three events in Tonbridge. These were:

- § the annual Scarecrow Trail
- § a free concert on the Castle Lawn with a theme of the monarchy through the years
- § the lighting of a Jubilee Beacon on top of Tonbridge Castle at 10pm in the evening. The lighting of this Beacon was linked to the national event across the country with the Queen lighting the first Beacon in London.

§ Apprentices:

Members were advised that this was National Apprentice Week. The Borough Council actively supported the apprentice scheme to provide opportunities for young people in the community. Out of the six apprentices taken

on in two phases one had gained permanent employment with the Borough Council, three were fixed term paid apprentices, one had moved to other permanent employment and one was leaving at the end of February but had a job offer. Tonbridge and Malling was seeking to recruit three more apprentices via K College.

§ Snow:

The Borough Council had been well prepared for the recent snow and the Central Services Director was pleased to report that all the leisure facilities and Tonbridge Gateway had remained open on Sunday 5 February. All offices were open for business as usual by 0830 hours on Monday 6 February. It was also noted that all refuse collections had been completed on Monday apart from four roads which had remained inaccessible.

**TF  
12/008**

### **UPDATE AND OVERVIEW OF LOCAL PROJECTS**

Mr Marsh of the West Kent YMCA gave a presentation which provided an update and overview of local projects being undertaken. It was explained that the charity provided opportunities for young people by supporting and empowering them, offering training opportunities and a safe affordable place to live. Supportive vocational training was provided by the Horizon Project and this aimed to give 'skills for life' in work and everyday living.

Outreach programmes called U Turn made learning accessible; whilst the Vehicle for Change programme gave opportunities to young people and built bridges with communities and local agencies.

The charity also sold donated unwanted furniture and electrical goods which provided a vehicle for employment and training.

Finally, the Forum was advised that there were four workshops currently operating in West Kent at Shipbourne Road, Cherwood, Cranbrook and Southborough.

The Chairman thanked Mr Marsh for his informative and valuable contribution to the meeting.

**TF  
12/009**

### **SCARECROW TRAIL 2012**

The Rotary Club of Tonbridge gave a brief description of the Scarecrow Trail 2012 setting out its aims, the intended route and organisation involved. The purpose of the presentation was to promote the benefits of the Trail as a community service event to a wider audience.

This year the event would be held over the special Bank Holidays to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee. The theme would be 'Sporting Heroes' and would also celebrate London 2012.

The Community Projects Manager at Hildenborough School explained the effort and enjoyment pupils had in making the scarecrows. Members were advised that 22 schools had committed to producing two scarecrows each and local organisations were invited to participate by placing a figure in their premises windows.

It was noted that this was a joint Rotary and Borough Council event for the benefit of the community. Prize entry forms, available for a small fee, provided clues to find the scarecrows. All successful completed forms would be entered into a prize draw. There was also a prize for the best presented scarecrow.

**TF  
12/010**

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

This item was WITHDRAWN but a written report provided by Kent County Council was circulated for information.

Particular reference was made to the upcoming consultation on library services for the future. It was noted that information toolkits were being prepared to ensure that all the relevant information was available regarding current statistics, stock and costs. These toolkits were still to be received by the Borough Council. However, Members were assured that once these had been received both the Tonbridge Forum and Parish Partnership Panel would have an opportunity to comment. In the meantime, any questions regarding library services and the consultation should be directed to Kent County Council.

Attention was also drawn to the comments made by the Kent County Council Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste (Bryan Sweetland) related to waiving charges for Diamond Jubilee street parties on quiet residential roads and cul-de-sacs. Further information and an on-line application form was available from the County Council on [www.kent.gov.uk/streetparty](http://www.kent.gov.uk/streetparty)

A copy of the Services Update report would be circulated with the Minutes and available to view on the Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council website in due course.

The meeting ended at 2040 hours