

**TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**COMMUNITIES ADVISORY BOARD**

**7 March 2012**

**Report of the Chief Executive**

**Part 1- Public**

**Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision (Decision may be taken by the Cabinet Member)**

**1 KEY VOLUNTARY SECTOR BODIES – REVISED SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS**

**To set out revised service level agreements for Age Concern Malling, Age UK Tonbridge and Sevenoaks and Maidstone and West Kent Mediation Schemes, and to provide an update in respect of agreements for the Citizens Advice Bureau and local volunteering services.**

**1.1 Background**

1.1.1 A report was made to the meeting of this Board in December 2011 regarding the need to update service level agreements for the six key voluntary bodies that the Borough Council supports via annual grant assistance. That report dealt with a number of recent changes to some of the voluntary sector bodies involved including the transfer of volunteering support from Tonbridge and Malling Volunteer Centre to Voluntary Action Within Kent, the merger of Tonbridge Age Concern with Sevenoaks to form Age UK Tonbridge and Sevenoaks and the possible merger of the Tonbridge and Malling Citizens' Advice Bureau with Sevenoaks and Swanley CAB. In the event, the merger between the two Citizens Advice Bureaux did not proceed.

1.1.2 It was agreed that revised service level agreements with the above bodies for the period 2012-2015 be brought to this meeting for formal approval.

**1.2 Age Concern Malling, Age UK Tonbridge and Sevenoaks and local Mediation Schemes**

1.2.1 Updated and revised service level agreements for the above voluntary sector bodies have been drafted and shared with the relevant managers of those organisations for their comments. The agreed SLAs are attached to this report at Annex A.

1.2.2 By and large, the revised agreements represent a rolling forward of the previous agreements with little significant change. However, to address concerns

considered at the last meeting of this Board where an organisation has merged with a neighbouring one and there is a need to ensure that any financial support provided by the Borough Council is ring-fenced to fund services for this Borough only, some additional clauses have been added to address this. This applies specifically to the agreement for Age UK Tonbridge and Sevenoaks.

### **1.3 Volunteering Services**

- 1.3.1 As noted previously, the Tonbridge and Malling Volunteer Centre has now been taken over by Voluntary Action Within Kent. It was anticipated that a new, single service level agreement would be needed within that organisation to underpin the continued funding support for volunteer services including the volunteer drive scheme.
- 1.3.2 It has emerged, however, that Kent County Council (Adult Social Services), who also funds volunteering services in the Borough and elsewhere, has recently decided to award their grant to Voluntary Action Maidstone to provide volunteering services for the Malling area. As Members might be aware, Kent County Adult Social Services has now adopted a 'locality' approach to their funding support which means that, for the Malling area, funding is awarded to Maidstone-based organisations not those located within the Borough. For example, grant to Age Concern (Malling) is now paid to Age Concern (Maidstone) and the two organisations have to agree how that grant is split between them. Such an approach undermines the Borough Council previous ambition to encourage organisations within the Borough to work jointly together to provide borough-services.
- 1.3.3 With regard to volunteering services, discussions have been held with both Voluntary Action Maidstone and Voluntary Action Within Kent to agree how services between the two bodies might now be arranged. For volunteering services generally, it seems sensible that, for the sake of consistency and to avoid any duplication, Voluntary Action Maidstone will provide services to the Malling area via outreach and Voluntary Action Within Kent would focus on the Tonbridge area. Further discussions are required with Voluntary Action Maidstone to agree a defined level of service for the Malling area. A further report will therefore be made to your next meeting. However, a draft agreement with Voluntary Action Within Kent for the Tonbridge area has been drawn up and this is set out at Annex B of this report for the Board's formal approval.

### **1.4 Tonbridge and Malling Citizen's Advice Bureau**

- 1.4.1 Discussions with the Bureau are still on-going. There remain a number of key issues to resolve with them including the cost implications of providing outreach services to the Malling area, the implications this may have for the level of service provided at their Tonbridge offices and what overall level of grant from the Borough Council would be appropriate for 2012/13 and the following two years. A

further update will be made at the meeting. A further report on the above issues will need to be made to your Board meeting in May.

## **1.5 Grant Support for 2012/13**

1.5.1 For those organisations where a service level agreement is now to be approved, it is appropriate also to agree grant awards for 2012/13. It is suggested that these awards should match those provided over the last three years. Given the financial constraints now faced by the Council, it would not be appropriate to offer any uplift at this time. Indeed, Members will note that the service level agreements only specify an award for 2012/13 and that future awards will be 'subject to annual review taking account of performance achieved by the providers and the Council's financial constraints'. This has been inserted to safeguard the Council for the future. With regard to grant support for volunteering services, it is suggested that this be split equally between Voluntary Action Within Kent and Voluntary Action Maidstone.

## **1.6 Legal Implications**

1.6.1 None

## **1.7 Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

1.7.1 As addressed within various service level agreements and at para 1.5.1 above. Budgetary provision has been made within the estimates to accommodate those grants now being offered.

## **1.8 Risk Assessment**

1.8.1 N/A

## **1.9 Equality Impact Assessment**

1.9.1 See 'Screening for equality impacts' table at end of report

## **1.10 Recommendations**

1.10.1 That the draft Service Level Agreements for Age Concern Malling, Age UK Tonbridge and Sevenoaks, Maidstone/West Kent Mediation and Voluntary Action Within Kent **BE APPROVED**.

1.10.2 That grant support **BE OFFERED** to the following organisations for 2012/13:

Age Concern Malling - £10,000

Age UK Tonbridge and Sevenoaks - £10,000

Maidstone/West Kent Mediation - £6,000

Voluntary Action Within Kent - £5,000

1.10.3 That further reports **BE MADE** to the next meeting of this Board regarding grant support for volunteering services for the Malling area and for the Tonbridge and Malling Citizens' Advice Bureau.

The Chief Executive confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and policy Framework.

Background papers:

contact: Mark Raymond

Nil

David Hughes

Chief Executive

<b>Screening for equality impacts:</b>		
<b>Question</b>	<b>Answer</b>	<b>Explanation of impacts</b>
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community?	No	
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality?	Yes	Grant support is provided to voluntary organisations to help those from all backgrounds.
c. What steps are you taking to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?		

*In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above.*