

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 PROGRESS PROJECT

To describe a new project being introduced locally which focuses on addressing the needs of families with multiple problems and which seeks to reduce worklessness within such families.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 A new project focused on addressing the needs of 'troubled families' has recently been launched. Within the South East, the Department of Work and Pensions has appointed Skills Training UK to lead delivery of the project across the region. Local contractors are being appointed to cover specific parts of the area. Tonbridge and Malling's local provider is TBG Learning, a local not-for-profit organisation which focuses upon the needs of socially disadvantaged groups in the communities they serve, particularly long-term unemployed people with multiple barriers to employment including low skills, poor self-esteem and lack of self-confidence. The Progress Project is being funded by the European Social Fund. Local partners are not required to make any financial contribution.

1.2 How the Project will Operate Locally

- 1.2.1 Referrals to the programme will be made by a range of local partners, including the Borough Council. Once referred, the local provider, TBG Learning, will meet with the referred family and confirm the eligibility for the programme. In summary, any referred family must have at least one member in receipt of a DWP working age benefit, all participants must be aged 16 or over, and able to take paid employment in a European Union member state. Members of the family who are already in paid employment will not be eligible to take part.
- 1.2.2 The programme is a voluntary one and support can last for up to 12 months. Each family will be allocated a 'Progress Coach' to develop plans for the family and for individuals. Such plans could address, and provide support for, one or more of the following concerns:

- Social inclusion, including budget management, reducing ASB, parenting skills, family relationships
- Health, including alcohol dependency, substance misuse, mental health issues and abuse
- Housing, improved housing conditions
- Employability, literacy/numeracy, IT skills, work placements, volunteering.

1.3 The Role of Local Partners

1.3.1 The key role for local partners is to help identify suitable families for referral. Such referrals might come from a variety of sources including community development workers, the community safety partnership, housing providers such as Russet Homes, Kent adult and family social services and from existing ‘family focus’ initiatives operating locally. The key challenge for local partners will be to engage such families and to persuade them of the benefits to them of taking part. TBG Learning will not be involved in this stage of work. Their involvement will begin when a referral is made to them by a local partner which must have the full, prior agreement of the family already in place. This could present a major challenge for local partners who effectively have to ‘sell’ the programme to potential families.

1.3.2 A start has already been made within the Borough regarding a focus on families with multiple needs. Two ‘family focus’ initiatives are now operating in Trench ward and in East Malling which have engaged a range of local partners in identifying problem families and discussing what actions might be appropriate to take to address their needs. Many of the families being discussed as part of that work are likely to be candidates for the Progress project, if they can be persuaded to take part.

1.3.3 It is suggested, therefore, that the Borough Council plays an active role in the delivery of this important new initiative and ensures that all key local partners are made aware of the opportunity it presents to assist some of the more difficult families they might be dealing with. The Borough Council’s three community development workers, employed by the Beat Project, will have a vital role to play, along with a range of other local partners, in helping to engage the most needy families and then encourage them to take part. Local Members might also have a role to play in helping to signpost the project and potential candidates for it.

1.4 Legal Implications

1.4.1 None

1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.5.1 Our contribution to this project will be via officer time only in helping to achieve referrals to the support offered and encouraging other partners to do the same.

1.6 Risk Assessment

1.6.1 None

1.7 Equality Impact Assessment

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

1.8 Recommendations

1.8.1 That the Progress Project **BE SUPPORTED** and that the Borough Council engages with local Partners to help promote the support which is available.

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

Screening for equality impacts:		
Question	Answer	Explanation of impacts
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	The programme aims to assist families in need from all backgrounds.
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality?	Yes	The programme focuses specifically on the addressing the needs of troubled families.
c. What steps are you taking to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?		N/A

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.