

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

22 November 2006

Joint Report of Leader of the Council and Chief Executive

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Council

1 PROPOSAL TO FORM A JOINT LOCAL BOARD

Summary

The report advises of a proposal to form a Joint Local Board comprising both County and Borough Members for a pilot period of one year.

- 1.1.1 Members who attended the last meeting of the Management Liaison Panel or who have read the notes thereof will be aware that as a response to the speculation that the White Paper would herald re-structuring of local government in two tier areas, the Kent Leaders initiated several streams of work designed to improve the working of the two tier system in Kent.
- 1.1.2 Even before this, however, the County Council was considering ways of promoting a better and more joined up approach in individual district areas. One such initiative that the County Council has decided to pilot in districts that display an interest is the introduction of a Joint Local Board made up of the County Councillors for the electoral divisions in a district and an equivalent number of district councillors. The concept is similar to the existing Joint Transportation Board arrangements but is intended to operate alongside these and not to replace them.
- 1.1.3 Discussions have taken place with representatives of the County Council and Terms of Reference that we consider are acceptable for the duration of the pilot period of one year have been developed and are appended at **Annex 1**. Clearly, if the pilot is mutually judged to have been successful then the Joint Local Board can be continued indefinitely with refinements made to its Terms of Reference as deemed necessary.
- 1.1.4 One considerable advantage that we see in the proposed arrangement is that the Joint Local Board would replace the existing KCC Local Board for this area, which has been the source of some confusion in terms of precisely how that body interacts with the Borough Council.

- 1.1.5 It will be noted from the Terms of Reference that the Joint Local Board will act in an advisory capacity to the Cabinets of both this and the County Council. The Joint Local Board (JLB) is intended to have a role in reviewing the performance of services provided in the Borough by both the County and Borough Councils and by other public service providers where appropriate.
- 1.1.6 The facility also exists to co-opt additional non-voting members. This could be a useful tool if, for example, the JLB were looking at a particular issue or area.
- 1.1.7 In terms of the membership of the JLB from this Council, we envisage this being determined at the Annual Council meeting and being representative of the political balance in force following the May 2007 elections.
- 1.1.8 It will be noted that it is not intended to appoint to or convene the JLB until after the May 2007 elections. This we believe is a sensible measure and will allow for meetings to be programmed into the Council's calendar of meetings for 2007/08.
- 1.1.9 The delay in commencement will also allow time for consideration to be given to which issues it would be appropriate to consider in its first year of operation and we would wish to afford the opportunity to all of the political Groups on the Council to contribute towards this process.
- 1.1.10 The County Council believes there may be merit in changing the arrangements in both Councils in terms of capital and revenue grants to other organisations. For example, if we were to pool our budgets and use the JLB as the body that considered grant applications it might be possible to bring a more co-ordinated approach to grant aid that both benefits the area overall and individual local organisations.
- 1.1.11 It is right to again re-emphasise the pilot nature of the JLB. At this stage we cannot predict whether it will be successful and add value to the governance of the area although the outcome may largely depend upon the investment each Council is prepared to make. Allowing discussion between County and Borough Councillors in a structured manner does offer real possibilities of better outcomes for the community.
- 1.1.12 We do, however, believe that the JTB has been a success and in principle there is no reason to believe that the JLB cannot be of comparable value

1.2 Legal Implications

- 1.2.1 The creation of a Joint Local Board with advisory functions is permissible under the Local Government Act 2000.

1.3 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.3.1 There will be minimal extra costs for the Council in connection with travelling and venue costs.

1.4 Risk Assessment

1.4.1 There are no significant risks associated with the proposal other than that it fails to achieve worthwhile outcomes.

1.5 Recommendations

1.5.1 Accordingly, we **RECOMMEND** as follows:

- i. the Council **agrees** to participate in a pilot arrangement for a Joint Local Board;
- ii. the JLB should come into existence following the May 2007 Borough Council elections;
- iii. the Borough Council's representation on the JLB **be determined** at the Annual Council meeting in 2007 and in accordance with the normal rules concerning political balance.

Background papers:

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Nil

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Leader

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Chief Executive