

# TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

## GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

3 April 2008

### Report of the Chief Executive

#### Part 1- Public

#### Delegated

### 1 ABANDONED VEHICLES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

**This report advises Members of a significant reduction in the number of abandoned vehicles requiring action by the Council and proposes a relocation of this function and the transfer of the currently vacant post that dealt with the function.**

#### 1.1 Abandoned Vehicles

- 1.1.1 The post of Technical Inspector (graded scale 3/4) recently became vacant. This post is on the Council's establishment to undertake all the duties associated with the statutory and contractual arrangements for removing from the public highway vehicles that have been abandoned by their owners. It is located within the Transportation Service of the Planning, Transport and Leisure Directorate.
- 1.1.2 At one time the abandonment of vehicles was a serious and resource intensive problem for the Council to address. Two factors have significantly reduced the scale of the problem, however. Firstly the success of Operation Cubit in the Borough which has targeted untaxed vehicles and already removed what would have been abandoned vehicles. The second is the impact of the booming economies of China and India which has pushed up the values of all metals such that it is economically advantageous for owners to responsibly dispose of vehicles as they will receive payment for them.
- 1.1.3 The Director of Planning, Transport and Leisure has provided statistics that show a steady decline in the number of reported abandoned vehicles since 2003/04 and a similar trend in respect of the number actually requiring action to remove them. He has concluded that the resources needed to deal with the issue are now comparatively marginal such that it would be difficult to justify appointing to the vacant post.
- 1.1.4 The opportunity has been taken, therefore, to consider whether it would be better to relocate the function to the Director of Health and Housing's Waste Services team, which deals with the vast majority of street scene services and has a team

of Inspectors operating across the Borough. The conclusion reached by the two Directors and myself is that this was the most sensible approach and that the number of vehicles was such that the function could be assimilated without the need for additional resources now that the final phase of green waste expansion had been completed and bedded in.

- 1.1.5 The transfer has been piloted for the past few weeks and the Director of Health and Housing has confirmed that it is operating successfully and has not created any difficulties for the Waste Services Team.
- 1.1.6 The two Directors and I feel we have sufficient confidence in the resilience of the new arrangements that we can now make a formal recommendation that the abandoned vehicle function be permanently transferred to the Director of Health and Housing and the Council's Constitution be amended accordingly.

## **1.2 Community Safety**

- 1.2.1 As has been explained, the vacant Technical Inspector post is no longer required in connection with the abandoned vehicles function. In the ordinary course of events I would be recommending the deletion of the post from the Council's establishment but on this occasion I wish to propose a different approach to this particular opportunity.
- 1.2.2 The Council has a very small Community Safety Team that comprises just three posts:- Crime Reduction Co-ordinator, Crime Reduction Assistant (P/T 30 hours) and Anti Social Behaviour Officer. This small team is managed and supported by the Corporate Services Manager and myself. The vast bulk of the Anti Social Behaviour Officer's time is taken up with dealing with victims and perpetrators of anti-social behaviour and working with other agencies to devise appropriate actions and solutions to these issues. The postholder is not in a position, therefore, to contribute to the main aspects of the work of the team which is to support the work of the Tonbridge & Malling Community Safety Partnership and the new legal framework that has been established and which has been the subject of detailed reports to the Community Development Advisory Board and the Joint Local Board.
- 1.2.3 It is not appropriate to rehearse all of the new requirements here but suffice it to say the workload has increased substantially and the resources we have available are not sufficient to enable this to be managed to the required standard. The calibre and commitment of the officers involved is of the highest order but they are quite literally being swamped by the workload they now have to meet.

- 1.2.4 The Council's budgetary position is well known to Members and against this climate I have deemed it impossible to seek additional resources to support the Community Safety Team. However, a solution to the problem is now available through the transfer and re-designation of the vacant Technical Inspector post at no increased cost to the Council. In effect, this would represent exactly what Council's are exhorted to do by the Audit Commission - the redeployment of resources towards identified key priorities.
- 1.2.5 As Members will know, the Community Safety Team has in the past developed and delivered a range of community projects designed to tackle problems that are creating the conditions in which crime and disorder flourish. It is this aspect of their work that the Team is struggling to deliver and, frankly, this means that initiatives that would make a genuine difference to the communities in the Borough are not being delivered.
- 1.2.6 I am hoping, therefore, that Members will support my proposal to create a new post of Assistant Projects Officer (Community Safety), reporting to the Crime Reduction Co-ordinator. This will allow this important area of work to once again be addressed and provide some much needed relief to the small, hard pressed team.
- 1.2.7 A Job Description for the proposed post is appended for Members' consideration.
- 1.2.8 I believe my proposal is a sensible grasping of an opportunity that has arisen and addresses a serious resourcing problem in the Community Safety Team but without adding additional costs to the Council's budget which would not be viable given the present difficult circumstances.

### **1.3 Legal Implications**

- 1.3.1 The Borough Council has new statutory obligations and it is incumbent upon the Council to ensure that it is adequately resourced to meet these.

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

- 1.4.1 No new budgetary provision is required to implement the recommendations. The grading of the new post has been independently assessed by Personnel Services.

### **1.5 Risk Assessment**

- 1.5.1 The Community Safety Team has insufficient resources currently to meet its workload and there is a risk that the Council's legal obligations are not properly discharged and that its Community Safety Action Plan is not fully implemented.

### **1.6 Recommendations**

- 1.6.1 Responsibility for dealing with the Council's responsibilities in respect of abandoned vehicles is transferred to the Director of Health and Housing and the Council's Constitution be amended accordingly.

1.6.2 The post of Technical Inspector in the Transportation Section of the Director of Planning, Transport and Leisure's service be transferred to Executive Services and be re-designated Assistant Projects Officer (Community Safety).

Background papers:

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Nil

David Hughes  
Chief Executive