

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL



EXECUTIVE SERVICES

Chief Executive

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NB - This agenda contains proposals, recommendations and options. These do not represent Council policy or decisions until they have received proper consideration through the full decision making process.

Contact: Committee Services
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16 March 2015

To: MEMBERS OF THE CABINET
(Copies to all Members of the Council)

Dear Sir/Madam

Your attendance is requested at a meeting of the Cabinet to be held in the Civic Suite, Gibson Building, Kings Hill, West Malling on Tuesday, 24th March, 2015 commencing at 7.30 pm

Yours faithfully

JULIE BEILBY

Chief Executive

A G E N D A

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The Chairman to move that the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting during consideration of any items the publication of which would disclose exempt information.

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14. Urgent Items 119 - 120

Any other items which the Chairman decides are urgent due to special circumstances and of which notice has been given to the Chief Executive.

MEMBERSHIP

Councillor N J Heslop, (Leader)
Councillor Mrs J A Anderson, (Housing)
Councillor J A L Balcombe, (Economic Regeneration)
Councillor M A Coffin, (Finance, Innovation and Property)
Councillor Mrs M F Heslop, (Leisure, Youth and Arts)
Councillor B J Luker, (Environmental Services)
Councillor Mrs S Murray, (Planning and Transportation)
Councillor M R Rhodes, (Communities, Health and Community Safety)

Members of the Council who are not members of the executive may attend meetings of the Cabinet. With the agreement of the Leader, any such Member may address the Cabinet on any item on the agenda but may not vote.

Apologies for absence

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Declarations of interest

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TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

Tuesday, 3rd February, 2015

Present: Cllr N J Heslop (Chairman), Cllr Mrs J A Anderson, Cllr J A L Balcombe, Cllr Mrs M F Heslop, Cllr B J Luker and Cllr Mrs S Murray

Councillors O C Baldock, M A C Balfour and H S Rogers were also present pursuant to Access to Information Rule No 22.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M A Coffin and M R Rhodes

PART 1 - PUBLIC

CB 15/1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

CB 15/2 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 8 October 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE COUNCIL

CB 15/3 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT AND ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2015/16

The report of the Director of Finance and Transformation provided details of investments undertaken and returns achieved in the first nine months of the current financial year together with an introduction to the Annual Investment Strategy for 2015/16.

An explanation was given for the underperformance against budget attributable to the lower than expected return delivered by the external fund manager prior to transfer of the management of core funds in-house from 1 August 2014. Details were given of the current investment position and internal lending list. The Committee was advised that Capita, the Council's treasury advisors, had amended their credit worthiness methodology to a minimum long-term credit rating of Fitch 'A-' or equivalent, rather than Fitch 'A' and this had been included in the Annual Investment Strategy for 2015/16.

The Cabinet was advised that the Audit Committee had reviewed the matters covered by the report at its meeting on 26 January 2015 and the revised arrangements had been commended for adoption.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the treasury management position as at 31 December 2014 be noted;
- (2) the current minimum long-term credit requirement be reduced from Fitch 'A' to Fitch 'A-' or equivalent; and
- (3) the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy for 2015/16, as set out at Annex 3 to the report, be adopted.

***Referred to Council**

CB 15/4 UPDATE OF ANTI-FRAUD POLICIES

The report of the Director of Finance and Transformation gave details of the outcome of a review of the Anti-Fraud Policies of the Council. A number of changes had been highlighted which were recommended for adoption and details of some further drafting amendments identified by the Audit Committee on 26 January and Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 27 January 2015 were noted.

RECOMMENDED: That the Council approve the following:

- (1) the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy subject to the amendment of paragraph 4.12 regarding declaration of gifts or hospitality to be consistent with the Constitution;
- (2) the Housing and Council Tax Benefit Anti-Fraud Policy subject to deletion of the reference to 'Here and Now' in paragraph 5.2 and to an explanation of the removal of paragraph 5.6 regarding the Investigation Manager's quarterly report on the outcome of referrals; and
- (3) the Council Tax Reduction, Discounts and Exemptions Anti-Fraud Policy subject to the corresponding removal of paragraph 5.6 regarding circulation of a quarterly report on the outcome of referrals.

***Referred to Council**

CB 15/5 POLICY IN RESPECT OF DISCRETIONARY COUNCIL TAX AWARDS

Item FIP 15/3 referred from Finance, Innovation and Property Advisory Board Minutes of 7 January 2015.

The Cabinet received the recommendations of the Finance, Innovation and Property Advisory Board at its meeting on 7 January 2015 in relation to the approval of a draft policy in respect of Discretionary Council Tax Awards in order to ensure that any applications were dealt with consistently and equitably.

RECOMMENDED: That the Council approve the Section 13A policy in respect of Discretionary Council Tax Awards as set out at Annex 1 to the report, subject to inclusion in paragraph 7(b) of a requirement to provide a declaration of savings and assets.

***Referred to Council**

CB 15/6 REVENUE ESTIMATES 2015/16

Item FIP 15/4 referred from Finance, Innovation and Property Advisory Board Minutes of 7 January 2015.

The Cabinet received the recommendations of the Finance, Innovation and Property Advisory Board at its meeting on 7 January 2015 in relation to the formulation of initial draft proposals in respect of the Budget. It was agreed that all budgetary matters would be considered in detail at the subsequent Budget meeting of the Cabinet on 12 February 2015.

CB 15/7 CAPITAL PLAN REVIEW 2014/15

Item FIP 15/5 referred from Finance, Innovation and Property Advisory Board Minutes of 7 January 2015.

The Cabinet received the recommendations of the Finance, Innovation and Property Advisory Board at its meeting on 7 January 2015 in relation to the initial stage of the Capital Plan review process. It was agreed that all budgetary matters would be considered in detail at the subsequent Budget meeting of the Cabinet on 12 February 2015.

**DECISIONS TAKEN IN ACCORDANCE WITH PARAGRAPH 4,
PART 3 OF THE CONSTITUTION**

CB 15/8 MOBILE HOMES ACT 2013 - CHANGES TO CARAVAN SITE LICENSING

Item SH 14/26 referred from Strategic Housing Advisory Board Minutes of 10 November 2014

Decision Notice D150007CAB

CB 15/9 LEISURE SERVICES - REVIEW OF CHARGES 2015/16

Item LAA 14/45 referred from Leisure and Arts Advisory Board Minutes of 8 December 2014

Deferred to Budget meeting.

CB 15/10 REVIEW OF FEES AND CHARGES 2015/16

Item FIP 15/6 referred from Finance, Innovation and Property Advisory Minutes of 7 January 2015

Deferred to Budget meeting.

CB 15/11 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REVIEW OF CAPITAL RENEWALS PROVISIONS

Decision Notice D150008CAB

CB 15/12 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REVIEW OF ACTIONS TO RETURN EMPTY HOMES TO ACTIVE USE

Decision Notice D150009CAB

CB 15/13 AIRPORTS COMMISSION - RESPONSE TO PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON SHORTLISTED OPTIONS FOR ADDITIONAL RUNWAY CAPACITY

Decision Notice D150010CAB

CB 15/14 HOUSING ALLOCATIONS SCHEME REVIEW

Item SH 14/28 referred from Strategic Housing Advisory Board Minutes of 10 November 2014

Decision Notice D150011CAB

CB 15/15 LOCAL PLAN UPDATE

Item PE 14/28 referred from Planning and Transportation Advisory Board Minutes of 18 November 2014

Decision Notice D150012CAB

CB 15/16 LOCAL PLAN PROCESS AND PROGRAMMING

Item PE 14/29 referred from Planning and Transportation Advisory Board Minutes of 18 November 2014

Decision Notice D150013CAB

MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION**CB 15/17 MATTERS REFERRED FROM ADVISORY BOARDS**

The notes of the meetings of the following Advisory Boards were received, any recommendations contained therein being incorporated within the decisions of the Cabinet reproduced at the annex to these Minutes. A number of recommendations in respect of Fees and Charges were referred to the subsequent Budget meeting of the Cabinet on 12 February 2015.

Community Safety Advisory Board of 21 October 2014
Strategic Housing Advisory Board of 10 November 2014
Communities and Health Advisory Board of 17 November 2014
Planning and Transportation Advisory Board of 18 November 2014
Leisure and Arts Advisory Board of 8 December 2014
Finance, Innovation and Property Advisory Board of 7 January 2015

RESOLVED: That the report be received and noted.

CB 15/18 MATTERS REFERRED FROM ADVISORY PANELS AND OTHER GROUPS

The Minutes of the meetings of the following Advisory Panels and other Groups were received, any recommendations contained therein being incorporated within the decisions of the Cabinet reproduced at the annex to these Minutes.

Tonbridge Forum of 24 November 2014
Parish Partnership Panel of 27 November 2014
Joint Transportation Board of 1 December 2014

RESOLVED: That the report be received and noted.

CB 15/19 LOCAL INDICATORS 2014/15

The Director of Central Services presented the results for the first half of the current financial year for those local indicators that were monitored regularly. It was indicated that this was the final report to be presented in the current format and such matters would in future be reported to the appropriate Advisory Boards. The Cabinet noted the forthcoming retirements of Bruce Hill, Improvement and Development Manager, and Mick Sayer, Improvement and Development Officer, and expressed appreciation of their hard work and attention to detail and best wishes for the future.

RESOLVED: That the report be received and noted.

CB 15/20 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items considered in private.

The meeting ended at 7.59 pm

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

Thursday, 12th February, 2015

Present: Cllr N J Heslop (Chairman), Cllr Mrs J A Anderson, Cllr J A L Balcombe, Cllr M A Coffin, Cllr Mrs M F Heslop, Cllr B J Luker, Cllr Mrs S Murray and Cllr M R Rhodes

Councillors O C Baldock, M A C Balfour and H S Rogers were also present pursuant to Access to Information Rule No 22.

PART 1 - PUBLIC

CB 15/21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor N Heslop declared an Other Significant Interest in the item on Review of Fees and Charges in respect of the list of concessionary users of Tonbridge Castle Chamber on the grounds of being a member of the Board of the Bridge Trust. He withdrew from the meeting during consideration of this matter and the chair was taken by Councillor Coffin.

DECISIONS TAKEN IN ACCORDANCE WITH PARAGRAPH 4, PART 3 OF THE CONSTITUTION

CB 15/22 LEISURE SERVICES - REVIEW OF CHARGES 2015/16

Item LAA 14/45 referred from Leisure and Arts Advisory Board Minutes of 8 December 2014

Decision Notice D150014CAB

CB 15/23 REVIEW OF FEES AND CHARGES 2015/16

Item FIP 15/6 referred from Finance, Innovation and Property Advisory Board Minutes of 7 January 2015

Decision Notice D150015CAB

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE COUNCIL

CB 15/24 SETTING THE BUDGET FOR 2015/16

The holding report of the Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Transformation updated the Cabinet on issues relating to the setting of the Budget for 2015/16 together with the outcome of the examination of the draft Revenue Estimates and the Capital Plan review process undertaken by the Finance, Innovation and Property Advisory Board and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

A more detailed supplementary report prepared in liaison with the Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Innovation and Property was circulated in advance of the meeting. It highlighted adjustments made to the Revenue Estimates presented to the Advisory Board and Committee in respect of the Business Rates Retention Scheme Reserve and the Capital Plan in respect of the need for greater evaluation of the tenders received for the Tonbridge Town Lock Scheme. The report examined the situation in relation to the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and gave details of the necessary procedure to be followed in order to set the budget for 2015/16.

The Director of Finance and Transformation explained the components of the funding allocation in the final local government settlement published on 3 February 2015 and the position arising from the Government's offer of a council tax 'freeze' grant in 2015/16 (equivalent to a 1% increase in council tax).

Members were advised of the Secretary of State's announcement that the referendum threshold had been set at 2% for 2015/16. It was noted that the summary total for the 2015/16 estimates would be affected by the Council's decision on whether or not to accept the 'freeze' grant and thus the level of overall savings needing to be made.

Attention was drawn to recommendations from Advisory Boards and the decision of the Licensing and Appeals Committee regarding the levels of fees and charges to be implemented from 1 April 2015 which had been incorporated in the draft estimates. Members were reminded of the approach to preparation of the Capital Plan, an updated summary of which was set out at Annex 7 to the report.

The report then described the remaining procedure to be followed in setting the budget for 2015/16 and calculating the council tax. Consideration was given to the updated MTFS based on a council tax increase of 1.99% (the upper limit for referendum purposes) and a council tax freeze. The Cabinet also deliberated on the most appropriate guidance to offer the Council as to the way forward for updating the MTFS for the next ten year period and setting the council tax for 2015/16. Finally, the Director of Finance and Transformation explained the basis on which the statement as to the Robustness of the Estimates and Adequacy of the Reserves had been made.

Members recorded their thanks to the Director of Finance and Transformation and colleagues for their work in bringing forward the budget and to staff for their flexibility in the current challenging circumstances.

RECOMMENDED: That 

- (1) the fees and charges set out in Annex 2 to the report, as recommended by the appropriate Advisory Boards, be endorsed (see Decision Nos D150014CAB and D150015CAB);
- (2) the Capital Plan be updated as set out in paragraph 1.5.13 to the report as follows and adopted accordingly:
 - (i) the position of the existing Capital Plan (List A) as summarised in Annex 3 to the report be approved;
 - (ii) the schemes as detailed in Annex 4 to the report be added to List C or deleted from List C;
 - (iii) the selection of those schemes listed in Annex 5 to the report for evaluation over the coming year be approved including one for fast-track evaluation;
 - (iv) the transfer of the schemes detailed in Annex 6 to the report be approved noting that:

the Tonbridge School Athletics Track Improvements scheme is expected to be progressed in the year 2018/19 subject to the identification of developer contributions / external grant sources;

in respect of the Larkfield Leisure Centre Health Suite Refurbishment scheme, this is an additional funding requirement of £60,000 to that currently reflected in the Capital Plan;
 - (v) the updated Capital Plan (List A) as summarised in Annex 7 to the report be approved;
- (3) the Capital Strategy as presented to the Finance, Innovation and Property Advisory Board on 7 January and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 27 January 2015 be endorsed and adopted by the Council;
- (4) the prudential indicators listed in paragraphs 1.6.4 and 1.6.8 of the report be endorsed and adopted;
- (5) for the financial year 2015/16 the Council's Minimum Revenue Provision, as set out at paragraph 1.6.11 of the report, be endorsed as nil;
- (6) the high level objectives of the Medium Term Financial Strategy be reaffirmed, taking on board the amendment set out in paragraph 1.8.6 of the report, adding the words "Subject to there

being sufficient resources within the capital reserve” to the final objective;

- (7) the updates to the Medium Term Financial Strategy, as set out at Annexes 11a and 11b to the report, based on a council tax increase of 1.99% and council tax freeze respectively be noted including the approach adopted in respect of New Homes Bonus, business rates income and further cuts to government grant funding;
- (8) the Council be recommended to approve a council tax increase of 1.99% (an increase of £3.66 per annum for a Band D property) as the best way forward in updating the Medium Term Financial Strategy for the next ten-year period and setting the council tax for 2015/16; and
- (9) the Statement provided by the Director of Finance and Transformation as to the Robustness of the Estimates and the Adequacy of the Reserves be noted and endorsed.
***Referred to Council**

CB 15/25 SETTING THE COUNCIL TAX FOR 2015/16

The joint report of the Chief Executive, Director of Finance and Transformation, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance, Innovation and Property set out the requirements under the Local Government Finance Act 1992 for a billing authority to set an amount of council tax for each category of dwelling in its area. Members were advised of the position concerning the determination of their respective precepts for 2015/16 by the major precepting authorities.

Consideration was given to a draft resolution identifying the processes to be undertaken in arriving at the levels of council tax applicable to each part of the Borough. Reference was made to the debate that needed to take place regarding the relative merits of a freeze in council tax as opposed to an increase. Accordingly, the resolution and further information regarding the precepts of the other authorities would be reported to the full Council on 17 February 2015.

RECOMMENDED: That the resolution be noted and the Council be recommended to approve a 1.99% increase in the Borough Council's element of the council tax for 2015/16, representing an annual charge at Band D of £187.51.

***Referred to Council**



CB 15/26 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items considered in private.

The meeting ended at 8.03 pm

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Agenda Item 5

The notes of meetings of Advisory Boards are attached, any recommendations identified by an arrow being for determination by the Cabinet. Notices relating to any decisions already taken by Cabinet Members under the arrangements for delegated decision making are annexed to the notes.

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TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

STRATEGIC HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

Monday, 23rd February, 2015

Present: Cllr A G Sayer (Chairman), Cllr Mrs J M Bellamy, Cllr D J Cure, Cllr M Parry-Waller, Cllr Ms S V Spence and Cllr Mrs C J Woodger

Councillors J Atkins, J A L Balcombe, O C Baldock, N J Heslop, B J Luker, Mrs S Murray and M R Rhodes were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D J Trice, Ms J A Atkinson and Mrs B A Brown and also from Councillor Mrs J A Anderson, Cabinet Member for Housing.

PART 1 - PUBLIC

SH 15/1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest in accordance with the Code of Conduct. However Councillor N Heslop referred to a potential interest in any items that might have implications for the Bridge Trust on the grounds that he was a member of its Board.

SH 15/2 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the notes of the meeting of the Strategic Housing Advisory Board held on 10 November 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

SH 15/3 GLOSSARY

The Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health submitted a glossary of terms used within the reports to the Advisory Board.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET

SH 15/4 HOUSING ALLOCATION SCHEME REVIEW

Decision Notice D150016MEM

Further to Decision No D150011CAB, the report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health set out details of the re-evaluation of the proposed financial thresholds and the status on the housing register of households which exceeded those thresholds. A copy of the revised Housing Allocation Scheme was attached at Annex 3 to the report and it was advised that the 13 Private Registered Providers within the Borough and other main stakeholders would be consulted on the proposed revisions to the scheme.

RECOMMENDED that:

- (1) the proposed revisions to the Housing Allocation Scheme be approved;
- (2) the revised scheme be implemented in July 2015; and
- (3) the Chief Housing Officer be authorised, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and the Chairman of the Strategic Housing Advisory Board, to finalise the details of the Housing Allocation Scheme following the consultation with the Registered Providers and other main stakeholders to be undertaken in March and April 2015.

SH 15/5 DAILY BIDDING REPORT

Decision Notice D150017MEM

The report set out details of a proposed amendment to the Choice Based Lettings Scheme to allow the implementation of a daily bidding system.

RECOMMENDED: That the implementation of a daily bidding system for the Choice Based Lettings Scheme be approved.

MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION**SH 15/6 PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING UPDATE**

The report provided updates on the Kent and Medway Sustainable Energy Partnership procurement framework for energy efficiency improvements; Partnership working with Health professionals across West Kent; Winter Warmth Funding; the Collective Switching Scheme; and the Empty Homes Review by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Private Sector Housing Team gave a presentation on the varied and vital work undertaken by the team which illustrated the high level of partnership working between Council services and with external organisations.

SH 15/7 STRATEGY AND ENABLING UPDATE

The report provided an update on progress made by the Council's Registered Provider (RP) Partners to provide new affordable housing within the Borough between 2012/13 and 2014/15 and described the progress on various housing strategy initiatives.

SH 15/8 HOUSING NEEDS UPDATE

The report provided an update on the activity of the Housing Options team to promote the prevention of homelessness and address the housing needs of local residents. It was noted that the number of households seeking advice and/or applying to the Housing Register for social housing remained significantly high.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE**SH 15/9 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

The Chairman moved, it was seconded and

RESOLVED: That as public discussion would disclose exempt information, the following matters be considered in private.

PART 2 - PRIVATE**MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION****SH 15/10 SERVICE OF STATUTORY NOTICES**

(Reason: LGA 1972 Sch 12A Paragraph 3 – Financial or business affairs of any particular person)

The report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health set out details of statutory notices served since the last meeting of the Advisory Board.

The meeting ended at 8.43 pm

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TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

LEISURE AND ARTS ADVISORY BOARD

Tuesday, 24th February, 2015

Present: Cllr Mrs J M Bellamy (Chairman), Cllr Mrs E M Holland (Vice-Chairman), Cllr T Bishop, Cllr P F Bolt, Cllr Mrs B A Brown, Cllr D Keeley, Cllr R Taylor and Cllr D J Trice

Councillors Mrs J A Anderson, O C Baldock, V M C Branson, M A Coffin, Mrs M F Heslop, N J Heslop, B J Luker, Mrs S Murray and M R Rhodes were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Representative: Mr A Nicholl (Tonbridge Sports Association)

An apology for absence was received from Councillor R D Lancaster

PART 1 - PUBLIC

LAA 15/1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

LAA 15/2 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the notes of the meeting of the Leisure and Arts Advisory Board held on 8 December 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET

LAA 15/3 LEISURE TRUST - REVIEW OF CORE CHARGES AND ANNUAL SERVICE DELIVERY PLAN

Decision Notice D150018MEM

The joint report of the Director of Street Scene and Leisure and Cabinet Member for Leisure, Youth and Arts brought forward a review of core charges for each facility managed on the Council's behalf by the Tonbridge and Malling Leisure Trust together with the Trust's draft Annual Service Delivery Plan (2015/16) for consideration and approval.

Members asked a number of detailed questions on the proposed core charges and it was noted that both they and the content of the draft Service Delivery Plan took account of the criteria set out in the Management Agreement between the Council and the Trust.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the proposed Leisure Trust Core Charges outlined in Annex 1 to the report be approved and implemented from 1 April 2015; and
- (2) the draft Leisure Trust Annual Service Delivery Plan for 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016, as set out at Annex 2 to the report, be approved.

LAA 15/4 LEISURE FACILITIES - LEISURE TRUST UPDATE

Decision Notice D150019MEM

The joint report of the Director of Street Scene and Leisure and Cabinet Member for Leisure, Youth and Arts presented details of the recent performance of the Tonbridge and Malling Leisure Trust set out in the latest Annual Service Delivery Plan – Cumulative Quarterly Monitoring Report for Quarter 3 covering the period 1 October to 31 December 2014. Reference was made to the appointment of a new catering services contractor at Poulton Wood Golf Centre and the generally positive results achieved from mystery visits in December 2014.

RECOMMENDED: That the Tonbridge and Malling Leisure Trust Annual Service Delivery Plan – Cumulative Quarterly Monitoring Report for 1 October to 31 December 2014 be noted.

LAA 15/5 TONBRIDGE FARM SPORTSGROUND - USER SURVEY

Decision Notice D150020MEM

The joint report of the Director of Street Scene and Leisure and Cabinet Member for Leisure, Youth and Arts gave details of the results of the 2014 user survey carried out at Tonbridge Farm Sportsground together with potential improvements which would be brought forward for consideration in due course.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the 2014 market survey results for Tonbridge Farm Sportsground User Survey be noted; and
- (2) improvements be considered and brought forward within the consultation draft of the new Tonbridge Farm Sportsground Management Plan 2016-2020.

LAA 15/6 CAPITAL PROJECTS - POST IMPLEMENTATION REVIEWS

Decision Notice D150021MEM

A Capital Plan Post Implementation Review was brought forward for consideration in respect of Hill Top/Priory Wood Children's Play Equipment. It was noted that due to technical difficulties relating to the site the original scheme could not be progressed and alternative works were agreed in liaison with local Members.

RECOMMENDED: That the Post Implementation Review outlined in the report be endorsed.

MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION**LAA 15/7 MEDWAY VALLEY COUNTRYSIDE PARTNERSHIP**

The report provided an update on progress with work undertaken in the Borough by the Medway Valley Countryside Partnership in 2014/15. Particular attention was drawn to the Clare Lake Enhancement Project where total external funding of £32,000 had been secured for restoration works in partnership with the school, East Malling and Larkfield Parish Council and local residents.

LAA 15/8 CAPITAL PLAN UPDATE REPORT

The report gave details of progress with schemes contained in the Leisure Services section of the Capital Plan including a revised scheme for refurbishment of the Health Suite and a new scheme for pool disinfection and back washing at Larkfield Leisure Centre.

LAA 15/9 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE UPDATE

Members were updated on key areas of the children and young people work programme including Activate, the Summer Playscheme, Y2 Crew, the Children's Operational Group and Youth Forum. It was reported that the Easter Activate programme was already 25% booked and details given of a change in one Tonbridge Playscheme venue. The Youth Forum had recently received a presentation promoting dementia awareness and undertaken a litter pick on the Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground.

LAA 15/10 2015 EVENTS UPDATE

The report provided an update on proposed events in the Borough in 2015, some delivered directly and others by community groups with support/assistance of the Council. Particular attention was drawn to negotiations to host open air cinema at Tonbridge Castle. In addition, Members received a schedule of local events notified by parish and town councils.

LAA 15/11 LAST MEETING

As this was the last meeting of the Advisory Board in the current municipal year and before the elections, the Chairman thanked the officers for their help and advice and Members for their support during her chairmanship. She was in turn congratulated on the manner in which she had chaired meetings of the Advisory Board.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE**LAA 15/12 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

There were no items considered in private.

The meeting ended at 8.25 pm

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

ECONOMIC REGENERATION ADVISORY BOARD

Wednesday, 25th February, 2015

Present: Cllr C P Smith (Chairman), Cllr Miss S O Shrubsole (Vice-Chairman), Cllr R W Dalton, Cllr M O Davis, Cllr S M King, Cllr Mrs S Luck, Cllr M Parry-Waller, Cllr A G Sayer, Cllr Miss J L Sergison and Cllr R Taylor

Councillors J A L Balcombe, M A Coffin, B J Luker, Mrs S Murray, M R Rhodes and N J Heslop were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor R D Lancaster

ERG 15/1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

ERG 15/2 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the notes of the meeting of the Economic Regeneration Advisory Board held on 3 September 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET

ERG 15/3 CONSULTANTS STUDY - THE CASE FOR WEST KENT

Decision Notice D150022MEM

The key findings of 'The Case for West Kent' consultant's study into the importance of the West Kent economy, commissioned by the West Kent Partnership, were set out for Members consideration. It was reported that these recommendations would be assessed in detail and an action plan prepared to take them forward.

A review of the structure and Membership of the Partnership would also be undertaken with a view to attracting greater representation from local businesses.

Members noted the need to more actively promote opportunities to attract and retain additional inward investment, the development of a pipeline of projects ready to take forward when new funding became available and the recommendation that local authorities should invest additional resources in economic regeneration. The latter would be

addressed in Tonbridge and Malling by the engagement of an Economic Regeneration Officer.

Finally, the Leader referred to the circumstances regarding Aylesford News Print and advised that the administrators (KPMG) had confirmed that 233 employees had been made redundant with immediate effect; 65 staff would be retained to assist with the sale of assets and decommissioning of the site. The production facility was now closed and had been a victim of the increase of digital media and overcapacity in the print market.

Members were advised that the Borough Council was committed to supporting those affected in co-operation with other agencies. Arrangements had been made for Job Centre Plus to provide drop in centres to offer advice and assistance to those made redundant. A local briefing for key partners with KPMG was to be arranged and the Leader and Chief Executive would participate.

There were likely to be operational and financial implications for the Borough Council and Members would be updated in due course once these were fully understood.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the Case for West Kent consultant's report, attached in part as Appendix 1 to the report, be noted; and
- (2) a further report on the actions arising be made to the Advisory Board in due course

ERG 15/4 DRAFT BOROUGH ECONOMIC REGENERATION STRATEGY

Decision Notice D150023MEM

The report of the Chief Executive presented a draft Economic Regeneration Strategy for consideration and set out arrangements for consultation and adoption.

Members recognised the importance of effective infrastructure to local businesses and suggested that consideration be given to aligning future infrastructure funding priorities to Kent County Council's 'scoring matrix' when developing projects, to improve the chances of securing funding contributions.

As it was important to expose the draft strategy to external scrutiny prior to formal adoption it was suggested that a consultation be undertaken in March/April. Views of key economic partners, including members of the West Kent Partnership, local business support providers, business representative bodies such as the local Chambers and Federation of

Small Businesses and individual local businesses in the Borough would be sought.

Members welcomed the engagement of an Economic Regeneration Officer to support the work of the Strategy and establish effective and interactive communication with local businesses.

RECOMMENDED: That the draft Economic Regeneration Strategy, attached as Appendix 1 to the report, be approved for the purposes of local consultation.

ERG 15/5 BUSINESS LOAN FUNDING SCHEMES - UPDATE

Decision Notice D150024MEM

The Chief Executive reported on the local take up of the Escalate loan fund and set out options for future support. Proposals for the introduction of a small business boost programme to support small and medium sized businesses and encourage more local firms to apply were also presented.

Future funding priorities were outlined and two options being considered included continuing the scheme on the same terms as the original Escalate programme and the introduction of a more focused element of loan funding, aimed at smaller businesses with a more streamlined application process. The latter had operated successfully in East Kent as a 'small business boost' programme.

It was reported that a 'small business boost' approach could continue to meet local needs and potentially encourage more local firms to apply given the small business focus and an easier application process.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the success of the Escalate business loan be noted; and
- (2) the County Council be informed of the Borough Council's preference for the introduction of a 'small business boost' element in any future loan programme.

ERG 15/6 GRANT SUPPORT SCHEME - LOCAL NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES

Decision Notice D150025MEM

Proposals for extending grant support for local neighbourhood shopping centres, building on the district centre grant scheme launched in 2013, were set out in the joint report of the Chief Executive and the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration.

It was noted that a six month deadline for applications to be submitted would be applied. In addition, Members identified Quarry Hill Parade, Tonbridge as a potential eligible neighbourhood retail centre.

The previous scheme had generated a good deal of positive engagement with business communities and a wide range of proposals were developed by local traders' groups, including better signage, promotional materials including new websites and visitor information, and improved street furniture. It was hoped that this new scheme would generate a similar response and would help and support local retail trade. Funding criteria was set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

RECOMMENDED: That the proposed grant scheme to support neighbourhood retail centres, as detailed in the report and its Annex, be approved.

MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION

ERG 15/7 WEST KENT PARTNERSHIP MINUTES

The Minutes of the West Kent Partnership meeting held on 23 January 2015 were reviewed and noted with particular reference made to the work achieved at West Kent College. It was also noted that there was no detailed information currently available on European Regional Development Funds.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE

ERG 15/8 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items considered in private.

The meeting ended at 8.19 pm

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD

Monday, 2nd March, 2015

Present: Cllr M O Davis (Chairman), Cllr S M King (Vice-Chairman),
Cllr V M C Branson, Cllr C Brown, Cllr F R D Chartres,
Cllr R W Dalton, Cllr Mrs E M Holland, Cllr Miss A Moloney,
Cllr Mrs A S Oakley and Cllr Ms S V Spence

Councillors O C Baldock, N J Heslop, B J Luker and M R Rhodes were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ms J A Atkinson, Mrs F A Kemp and D J Trice

PART 1 - PUBLIC

LEM 15/1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

LEM 15/2 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the notes of the meeting of the Local Environmental Management Advisory Board held on 2 September 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET

LEM 15/3 KENT RESOURCE PARTNERSHIP - END DESTINATION OF MATERIALS REPORT

Decision Notice D150026MEM

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Street Scene and Leisure regarding the annual report of the Kent Resource Partnership for 2013/14 which gave details of the end destination of waste and recycle collected by Kent authorities. The report provided a Kent overview and a breakdown for each council from which it was noted that 85% of the Borough Council's waste was dealt with in Kent, 89% turned into a resource and only 11% sent to landfill.

An update was given at the meeting on the situation following news that Aylesford Newsprint had recently gone into administration. Contingency arrangements for paper recycling had been made to ensure no disruption to residents with collected material currently being sent to the Smurfit Mill in Snodland. The Waste Services team were commended

for their speedy and pragmatic response and it was noted that the full impacts of the closure and options for the future were being explored for report back in due course.

RECOMMENDED: That the approach outlined in the report be noted and endorsed in continuing to be open about the Council's waste and recycling material end destination and publicising information through the Kent Resource Partnership.

LEM 15/4 STREET SCENE ACTION PLAN 2014/15 - UPDATE

Decision Notice D150027MEM

The report of the Director of Street Scene and Leisure provided an update on progress with a range of street scene initiatives and projects in the Street Scene Action Plan that were being implemented in 2014/15.

RECOMMENDED: That the approach outlined in the report be endorsed and the projects and progress across a wide range of street scene related initiatives, as set out at Annex 1 to the report, be noted.

MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION

LEM 15/5 'LOVE WHERE YOU LIVE' CAMPAIGN

The report gave details of the past successes and future initiatives involved in the 'Love Where You Live' campaign including the 'Love Kent – Hate Litter' roadside litter campaign, the litter code of practice for businesses, 'Bash the Trash' and responsible dog ownership events and support for wildlife-friendly gardening. Reference was also made to the ongoing programme of educational talks and presentations and involvement in workplace wellbeing and the Kent Healthy Business Award.

LEM 15/6 PRIVATE WATER SUPPLIES

Members were advised of work recently undertaken by the Environmental Protection team in respect of complying with the provisions of the Private Water Supply Regulations 2009. Reference was made to remedial works required on private water supplies to address failures of the drinking water standards and potential risks to human health as a result of the risk assessments carried out.

LEM 15/7 WASTE AND STREET SCENE SERVICES UPDATE

The report provided an update on a number of waste and street scene services including the Christmas collection arrangements and a green waste container trial. The Council's green waste collection system had been recognised as best practice in an article published in 'Organics

Recycling', a copy of which was annexed to the report. Reference was also made to the encouragement of online reporting of fly tipping and rubbish-related issues with Waste and Street Scene Services being the initial point of contact. Members noted the award for dog warden services and recorded their thanks to the Dog Warden for her commitment and dedication.

LEM 15/8 FOOD AND SAFETY TEAM UPDATE

The report gave an update on recent work of the Food and Safety team including free training for businesses with the lowest hygiene ratings, drop in sessions for food businesses on food allergens and collection of samples from a range of takeaway premises to provide microbiological data as part of a national survey. Members asked a number of questions about frequency of inspections and display of hygiene ratings at premises which, it was noted, was currently not mandatory in England.

LEM 15/9 EXTERNAL CONSULTATIONS

The Advisory Board noted the consultation documents to which responses had been made since the last meeting.

LEM 15/10 SERVICE OF STATUTORY NOTICES

The report outlined the statutory notices served since the last meeting of the Advisory Board. An update was given on the position regarding Drytec which was now subject to legal proceedings in respect of the appeal against the abatement notices. A further meeting of the liaison group was scheduled for the following week and Members expressed thanks to the Environmental Protection team for their ongoing work.

LEM 15/11 PROSECUTIONS

The report of the Director of Central Services gave details of prosecutions undertaken in respect of littering and health and safety offences.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE

LEM 15/12 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items considered in private.

The meeting ended at 8.40 pm

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES AND HEALTH ADVISORY BOARD

Tuesday, 3rd March, 2015

Present: Cllr Ms S V Spence (Chairman), Cllr Mrs C M Gale (Vice-Chairman), Cllr A W Allison, Cllr D J Cure, Cllr Mrs E M Holland, Cllr D Keeley, Cllr Miss J L Sergison, Cllr A K Sullivan, Cllr R Taylor and Cllr D J Trice

Councillors Mrs J A Anderson, O C Baldock, M A Coffin, N J Heslop, Mrs S Murray and M R Rhodes were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors T Bishop and M Taylor

PART 1 - PUBLIC

CH 15/1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made in accordance with the Code of Conduct. However, Councillor Mrs Gale advised that, in respect of the item on Key Voluntary Sector Bodies – Grant Support, she served on the committee of the Maidstone Mediation Service while Councillor Mrs Murray advised that she was a Trustee of Tonbridge and Malling CAB.

CH 15/2 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the notes of the meeting of the Communities and Health Advisory Board held on 17 November 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CH 15/3 THE EXPERT PATIENTS PROGRAMME

The Chairman advised that the presentation by Jane Reynolds of the Kent Community Health Trust regarding the Expert Patients Programme had been withdrawn from the agenda as the Trust had advised that the programme would not be available in the west of Kent after April 2015.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET**CH 15/4 KENT COUNTY COUNCIL CONSULTATION - SHAPING THE FUTURE OF LIBRARY, REGISTRATION AND ARCHIVE SERVICES IN KENT**

Decision Notice D150028MEM

The report of the Chief Executive set out details of the formal public consultation on the future of library, registration and archive services being undertaken by Kent County Council between 12 January and 8 April 2015. The report advised that the consultation focused on the options for service transformation and the County Council's preferred option of establishing an independent charitable trust. Concern was raised about the position of mobile libraries and the future provision of existing services.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) greater clarification should be provided of any future costs or charges associated with using the library, registration and archive services; and
- (2) reassurances should be provided that, if the service is transferred to a charitable trust or another provider, there will be an obligation to maintain the existing stock of libraries.

CH 15/5 KEY VOLUNTARY SECTOR BODIES - GRANT SUPPORT

Decision Notice D150029MEM

The report reviewed the work of voluntary sector bodies which received grant support from the Borough Council and set out details of the proposed grants for 2015/16. Annex 1 to the report contained a brief written review of each of the applicant organisation's activities over the last year. Annexes 2-7 set out details of the proposed one year Service Level Agreements to be undertaken with each organisation.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the one year Service Level Agreements, as set out at Annexes 2-7 of the report, be approved; and
- (2) grants to the following organisations be confirmed for 2015/16:
 - Tonbridge and Malling CAB - £111,000
 - Voluntary Action within Kent - £5,000
 - Voluntary Action Maidstone - £5,000
 - Age UK Sevenoaks and Tonbridge - £10,000
 - Age Concern Malling - £10,000

Maidstone and West Kent Mediation Services - £6,000

CH 15/6 MAIDSTONE AND TUNBRIDGE WELLS NHS TRUST - CARE QUALITY REPORT

Decision Notice D150030MEM

The report set out details of the key findings of an inspection of the Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust undertaken by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) in October 2014. A copy of the Quality Report, published in February 2015, was attached at Annex 1 to the report and it was noted that the Trust had 28 days following the publication of the inspection results to publish an improvement plan to address the recommendations of the CQC.

RECOMMENDED: That the findings of the Care Quality Commission report in respect of the Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust be noted and the Trust be invited to attend a future meeting of the Communities and Health Advisory Board to review progress with its improvement plans.

MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION

CH 15/7 WEST KENT HEALTH AND WELL BEING BOARD

The minutes of the meeting of the West Kent Health and Wellbeing Board held on 18 November 2014 were presented for Members' information.

CH 15/8 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items considered in private.

The meeting ended at 8.11 pm

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TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD

Tuesday, 10th March, 2015

Present: Cllr D A S Davis (Chairman), Cllr M Parry-Waller (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Mrs J M Bellamy, Cllr V M C Branson, Cllr D J Cure, Cllr M O Davis, Cllr Mrs F A Kemp, Cllr D W Smith, Cllr A K Sullivan and Cllr M Taylor

Councillors Mrs S Murray, Mrs J A Anderson, J A L Balcombe, M A C Balfour, N J Heslop, M R Rhodes and R Taylor were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor R D Lancaster.

PE 15/1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

PE 15/2 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the notes of the meeting of the Planning and Transportation Advisory Board held on 18 November 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET

PE 15/3 PLANNING REFORMS UPDATE

Decision Notice D150031MEM

The Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health provided Members with an update on the Government's recent and on-going planning reforms and sought a decision in relation to the negotiation of Affordable Housing contributions.

It was reported that contributions for affordable housing could no longer be sought from developments of 10 units or less. However, in designated rural areas (as defined by Section 157 of the Housing Act 1985) Local Planning Authorities had the discretion to use a lower threshold of 5 units or less. The only such designated rural areas in Tonbridge and Malling were the two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in the north/north west of the Borough and an area south of the Tonbridge bypass.

The consultation 'Stepping onto the Property Ladder' set out Government proposals for a new national starter homes 'exception site'

policy to enable starter homes to be built on under-used or unviable brownfield sites that were not currently identified for housing. An officer led response to the consultation was attached as Annex 1 to the report.

Reference was made to the Community Right to Build, which was reaching the end of its parliamentary process and was likely to be introduced later in the year. This initiative entitled prospective custom build builders to apply to their Local Planning Authority for a suitable plot of land on which to build or commission their own home. It also required Local Planning Authorities to identify and make provision for local demand within Local Plans.

In addition, reference was made to further alterations to the London Plan, which had been formally adopted and included an increase of London's annual housing target. It was also noted that the Capital faced an annual shortfall of approximately 6,000 homes, which could have implications for neighbouring authorities in the South East with regard to the duty to co-operate.

RECOMMENDED: That:

- (1) a threshold of 5 dwelling units for the securing of affordable housing contributions for proposed developments in the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty be endorsed; and
- (2) the response to the DCLG consultation (Stepping onto the Property Ladder) regarding proposals for a new national starter home 'exception site' policy, as set out in Annex 1 to the report, be endorsed.

MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION

PE 15/4 TRANSPORTATION UPDATE

Members received an update on various significant transportation issues affecting the Borough with particular reference to progress on the A21 dual carriageway and Tonbridge town centre regeneration projects.

The Borough Council was preparing bids for funding, via the Local Sustainable Transport Fund, to support improvements at Hildenborough, Snodland and Tonbridge railway stations. The latter provided an opportunity to build upon the improvements in the High Street and pedestrian linkages between the station and the rest of the town centre. Members were assured that all options for improving traffic flow along the High Street would be explored.

It was also reported that Junction 4 of the M20 had been awarded funding of £2.19m from the Single Local Growth Fund. This scheme to

widen the eastern over bridge would be progressed by the KCC Major Projects Team and was programmed for March 2016.

In addition, Members were appraised of recent discussions about traffic conditions on the A20 and adjoining routes and welcomed the prospect of a study to consider the best approach to traffic movement along this corridor, particularly as a result of increasing pressure due to ongoing development.

Particular reference was made to the Lower Thames Crossing. All the options previously considered and some further variations were being reviewed. A key issue for Tonbridge and Malling in consideration of the options would be the potential impacts on transport corridors through the Borough and the communities along those routes, together with the economic development issues that might arise. Members expressed concern regarding the gyratory road system at Bluebell Hill and the impact of 'rat running' on local residents and asked that this issue be raised with Kent County Council and the Highways Agency. Members would be kept informed of progress leading to a likely public consultation by the Highways Agency later this year.

Finally, the Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation referred to the impending retirement of the Chief Engineer (Mike O' Brien) and thanked him for his contribution to the Borough Council and wished him well for the future.

PE 15/5 LOCAL PLAN UPDATE

The report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health set out progress made on the Local Plan since November 2014.

Members noted that the Borough Council had met the Environment Agency in January 2015 to scope the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and that the Middle Medway Strategy would be completed in May. Further modelling work was also being carried out in respect of the tidal part of the Medway from Allington Lock.

PE 15/6 SUSTAINABLE URBAN DRAINAGE SYSTEMS (SUDS)

Members were advised of the new arrangements for requiring Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDs) schemes for qualifying developments, including consultations with Kent County Council, which were due to come into force on 6 April 2015.

The main function of sustainable drainage systems was to slow the rate of surface water run-off and improve filtration by mimicking natural drainage in both rural and urban areas. This reduced the risk of 'flash flooding' which occurred when rainwater rapidly flowed into the public sewerage and drainage systems.

A summary was provided of the Government's response to feedback received during consultation, what this meant for local decision-taking, the practical issues for the management of cases through the planning system and some important issues around cost.

Concern was expressed at the 'new burdens' that the proposed system would have on local planning authorities, particularly the demands around significant new work and administration, as well as potential financial implications. To demonstrate the point regarding the financial burdens, a letter from the Local Government Association to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs was attached as Annex 1 to the report. It was reported that various lobbying initiatives were in hand by the District Councils' Network and others on this important point and arrangements had been made to ensure that the Borough Council's interests were reflected.

Members noted there was a risk that Borough Council decisions on planning applications on qualifying development could be challenged if they did not comply with the requirements of the revised National Planning Practice Guidance that was due to take effect from 6 April 2015.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE

PE 15/7 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items considered in private.

The meeting ended at 8.50 pm

Agenda Item 6

The minutes of meetings of Advisory Panels and Other Groups are attached, any recommendations being identified by an arrow.

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TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

TONBRIDGE FORUM

Monday, 9th February, 2015

Present: Cllr O C Baldock (Chairman), Cllr N J Heslop (Vice-Chairman), Cllr P F Bolt, Cllr V M C Branson and Cllr Ms S V Spence; County Councillor C Smith; together with representatives from:

The Bridge Trust
Kent Community Health NHS Trust
Kent Fire and Rescue Service
Kent Police (Tonbridge)
Skinners Company
Tonbridge Art Group
Tonbridge Area Churches Together
Tonbridge Civic Society
Tonbridge Line Commuters
Tonbridge Rotary Club
Tonbridge Theatre and Arts Club
Tonbridge Town Team and
University of the Third Age

Councillor Mrs Murray was also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs J A Anderson, Mrs M F Heslop, D J Trice, Mr R Long and Society of Friends

TF 15/1 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

TF 15/2 UPDATE ON ANY ACTION IDENTIFIED IN THE LAST MINUTES

There were no actions identified.

TF 15/3 TONBRIDGE HIGH STREET REGENERATION

Representatives from Kent County Council provided an overview of the Tonbridge High Street regeneration project, which aimed to improve the appearance of the town centre, improve traffic movement and reduce congestion and make the town an attractive place for both businesses and visitors.

It was reported that £2.62 million had been secured to fund the regeneration of the High Street and the County Council would be working in partnership with Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council.

Plans were available for public viewing until Friday 26 February at Tonbridge Library and everyone was encouraged to comment.

The project was due to start in summer 2015 and would see pavements widened; a new road surface and improved pedestrian crossings. Free flow of traffic would be encouraged by creating delivery loading areas, rather than bays, to prevent vehicles obstructing the High Street. A 20mph speed limit would be enforced from the roundabout near the library to just beyond the junction with Church Lane. The one way system encompassing Bradford Street, River Walk and New Wharf Road would also be included in this zone.

Members were advised that while the scheme was being built some disruption was expected but this would be kept to a minimum where possible. In addition, it was planned to stop works during the Christmas period so as not to interfere with business. Kent Highway Services would communicate regularly with local traders so that they were fully informed of potential disruption, although it was hoped that access to businesses would remain possible.

Consideration was given to a number of issues raised by the Forum including disability access and public transport movements along the High Street. In response, it was explained that there had been direct engagement with disability groups to understand what was required by those with lack of mobility and to see what options could be found to resolve any concerns. Buses would continue to travel along the High Street and ways of managing these movements and routes would be monitored as the scheme progressed.

Reference was made to public open space and the potential for it to be used for activities and/or street art. A consultant had been engaged to look at opportunities for maximising the space.

Further details could be found on www.tonbridgehighstreet.org Comments could be left on the website, or in writing at Tonbridge Library or by writing directly to Kent County Council.

TF 15/4 STOP SMOKING SERVICES

Natalie Ayles of the Kent Community Health NHS Trust advised that Stop Smoking was a Kent wide service that delivered a range of interventions to help people stop smoking. These included One-to-One sessions, quit clubs and virtual groups.

The service was free, although prescription charges could apply in some circumstances. A number of programmes were offered including a seven week quit programme, behavioural support and nicotine replacement therapy. In addition, 400 people in local communities had received training to provide additional help in delivering the programmes.

Particular reference was made to a number of areas in the Borough where Stop Smoking was having difficulty engaging with the local communities. It was reported that Trench and Judd had a high prevalence of smoking and these areas were being targeted.

The Service was keen to encourage communities to participate and especially welcomed local knowledge, information and promotion of the programmes available.

Finally, Members were advised that a 'no smoking day' initiative was being held in Tonbridge High Street on Wednesday 11 March 2015.

The referral line number for the Stop Smoking Service was 0300 123 1220 which was free of charge.

TF 15/5 KENT POLICE UPDATE

Inspector M Hutcheon provided an overview of the achievements made in performance and neighbourhood policing. It was reported that Tonbridge and Malling remained a low crime area and that victim based crime had reduced by 1.1%.

The current policing model provided challenges around crime series investigation and Tonbridge and Malling were using innovative approaches to address these.

Recent initiatives included Op Heath, a multi-agency taxi enforcement operation in support of the Borough Council; Op Caddy, a drugs dog visit to local schools and colleges and speed enforcement at Red Hill, Wateringbury and Stocks Green Road, Hildenborough. Future events and initiatives would be advertised on the Kent Police website.

Members referred to the increase in cybercrime and it was recognised that improving education around personal safety and security online was an important factor in addressing this trend.

TF 15/6 KENT COUNTY COUNCIL SERVICES UPDATE

The Kent County Council Community Engagement Manager reported that a 12 week public consultation on proposals to modernise libraries, registration and archives service had begun. Views could be registered online at www.kent.gov.uk/libraries ; whilst an explanatory booklet and questionnaire were available in county libraries. The following Drop in sessions were also arranged:

- Thursday 12 February 1000-1900 hours - Tonbridge Library
- Thursday 26 February 0900-1230 – Larkfield Library
- Thursday 26 February 1400-1700 – Paddock Wood Library

The consultation closed on 4 April 2015.

Reference was made to the public consultation on the County's draft corporate outcomes framework and comments were invited on the draft strategic and supporting outcomes and how the County Council should measure progress in achieving these. The document was available on www.kent.gov.uk/corporateoutcomes until 20 February 2015.

Kent County Council had agreed to progress converting its stock of 120,000 street lights to LED. This improvement would help reduce the street lighting energy bill by around 60% which meant that all night lighting for residential areas could potentially be reinstated.

Finally, Members were invited to comment on proposed changes to Hugh Christie Technology College. This consultation would run from 4 February to 25 March 2015 and further information was available on www.kent.gov.uk/schoolconsultations

TF 15/7 TONBRIDGE AND MALLING SERVICES UPDATE

The Chief Executive provided an update on key points relevant to Tonbridge and Malling and referred to the recent airport consultation which had ended on 3 February 2015. It was confirmed that Borough Council Members had endorsed opposition to a second runway at Gatwick and support for a second runway at Heathrow.

'Web chat' had recently been trialled on the Borough Council's website to support and assist customers online by offering guidance on how and where to self-serve and signposting to relevant departments. The service had received a positive reaction with over 800 visitors in a few weeks and this would shortly be expanded to other Services.

Details were given on a number of Love Where you Live initiatives across the Borough, including a number of specific projects in Tonbridge.

The meeting ended at 8.55 pm

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

PARISH PARTNERSHIP PANEL

Thursday, 19th February, 2015

Present: Cllr N J Heslop (Chairman), Cllr M A Coffin (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Mrs J A Anderson, Cllr J Atkins, Cllr M A C Balfour, Cllr Miss A Moloney, Cllr H S Rogers, Cllr A G Sayer and Cllr Mrs C J Woodger.

Together with Addington, Birling, Borough Green, Hadlow, Kings Hill, Platt, Plaxtol, Snodland and Trottiscliffe Parish and Town Councils and County Councillors Balfour and Mrs Hohler.

Councillors O C Baldock and M R Rhodes were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J A L Balcombe, Mrs J M Bellamy, D Keeley, M Parry-Waller and East Peckham Parish Council.

PART 1 - PUBLIC

PPP 15/1 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 27 November 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

PPP 15/2 UPDATE ON ACTION IDENTIFIED IN THE LAST MINUTES

There were no actions identified.

PPP 15/3 CENTENARY FIELDS

Mr T Houseden (Development Manager) of the Fields in Trust gave an introduction to the Centenary Fields programme, which was a countrywide joint initiative with the Royal British Legion, aimed to safeguard, improve and protect open spaces for future generations and to commemorate World War 1.

To be eligible for nomination and dedication a Centenary Field needed to have a significant link to World War 1 and should be:

- Used principally for outdoor recreation, sport or play
- Accessible to the public
- Affordable for the local community

Sites with an existing or planned War Memorial; memorial garden or area for contemplation; plus amenities such as pavilions, village halls,

indoor leisure or heritage facilities used for community recreation could be included.

It was reported that the Borough Council had identified the recently refurbished Tonbridge Memorial Garden as a site to be nominated for dedication under this scheme. Parish and town councils were encouraged to protect at least one suitable site and were invited to make nominations. From February 2015 it was hoped to have 'Field Day' events to carry out dedication or commemoration events.

In response to a question, the Panel was advised that robust methods of protection were used, such as charitable or contract law, but some flexibility could be retained for the benefit of a changing community. It was reiterated that management and ownership of the site did not change and the initiative was a valuable tool in safeguarding open space.

As a beneficiary of the previous Queen Elizabeth II Fields Challenge, Snodland Town Council welcomed this new initiative and highly recommended the programme. It was also noted that improvement funding to support and benefit the community could be available via this new scheme.

PPP 15/4 CHANGES TO THE CARE ACT 2014

This item was WITHDRAWN. However, a Frequently Asked Questions sheet had been provided by Kent County Council which had been circulated and tabled at the meeting. This information would also be attached to the Minutes and, therefore, available on the website.

[NB. Information correct as at 4 March 2015 but subject to change]

PPP 15/5 KENT POLICE SERVICES UPDATE

Chief Inspector Gill Ellis, Borough Commander for Tonbridge and Malling, provided an overview of the achievements made in performance and the neighbourhood policing agenda.

It was reported that the overall position in the Borough remained good with a reduction of 0.4% in victim based crime. Excellent partnership working with the established CSU at Kings Hill and other partners continued. Public satisfaction with local policing in the Borough, as at December 2014, was 83% and this was slightly higher than the force average.

Recent initiatives included Op Heath, a multi-agency taxi enforcement operation in support of the Borough Council; Op Caddy, a drugs dog visit to local schools and colleges and speed enforcement at Red Hill in Watlingbury and Stocks Green Road in Hildenborough.

Reference was made to Oakdene Café and it was anticipated that following the success in 2014 agencies, including Kent Fire and Rescue Service and the Community Safety Unit, would again work in partnership to minimise anti-social behaviour.

Members expressed concern regarding the enforcement of speed limits in rural locations and asked that additional 'ad-hoc' operations be undertaken. Chief Inspector Ellis assured the Panel that Kent Police took this issue seriously and referred to the recent initiatives in Watlingbury and Hildenborough where traffic offence reports had been issued. However, if parish or town councils identified a speeding problem within their villages they could contact Chief Inspector Ellis directly on Gillian.ellis@kent.pnn.police.uk requesting speeding initiatives be undertaken. Kings Hill Parish Council referred to a previous offer of funding speeding enforcement operations with overtime. This position would be clarified by Chief Inspector Ellis.

Concerns regarding legal highs and site specific issues were also noted.

Finally, Snodland Town Council thanked Kent Police for their recent funding contribution towards equipment for a local club using the Police Property Fund.

PPP 15/6 KENT COUNTY COUNCIL SERVICES UPDATE

The Kent County Council Community Engagement Manger reported that a 12 week public consultation on proposals to modernise libraries, registration and archive services had begun. Views could be registered online at www.kent.gov.uk/libraries ; information and feedback forms were available in all libraries, Register offices and mobile libraries. The following drop-in sessions were also arranged for Thursday 26 February:

- 0900 -1230 hours at Larkfield Library
- 1400-1700 hours at Paddock Wood Library

The consultation closed on Wednesday 8 April 2015.

Reference was made to the public consultation on the County's draft corporate outcomes framework which focused on what the Council was seeking to achieve rather than specifying the detail of how services were designed and delivered. This ended on 20 February 2015 and further details could be found at www.kent.gov.uk/corporateoutcomes

Kent County Council had agreed to progress converting its stock of 120,000 street lights to LED. This improvement would help reduce the street lighting energy bill by around 60% which meant that all night lighting for residential areas could potentially be reinstated. Members expressed a preference for these lights to be dimmed and this could be arranged by contacting the local County Councillor.

Inspections of Children's Centres in Tonbridge and Malling had taken place in November/December 2014 and significant improvements in all areas had been reached. It was reported that the number of families registered at centres had significantly increased but further improvement to reach 70% was required. Parish and town councils were encouraged to support and promote Children's Centres.

Finally, Members were invited to comment on proposed changes to Stansted School. This consultation would run until Friday 6 March 2015 and further information was available on:

<http://consultations.kent.gov.uk/consult.ti/StandedSchool/consultationHome>

The Panel expressed concern and sadness regarding the potential future of the school and the County Member for Malling North (Mrs S Hohler) advised that all options would continue to be explored, including 'free school' status.

PPP 15/7 TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL SERVICES UPDATE

The Director of Finance and Transformation provided an update on key points relevant to Tonbridge and Malling. The headline messages included:

- Airport Consultation:

The Borough Council remained opposed to a second runway at Gatwick and supported a second runway at Heathrow.

- Love Where You Live Initiatives:

Details were given of a number of initiatives planned for February and these included events in Larkfield, Mereworth, Platt and Snodland. National Spring Clean Day was Saturday 21 March 2015.

- Webchat:

This had recently been trialled on the Borough Council's website to support and assist customers on-line by offering guidance on how and where to self-serve and signposting to relevant departments. The service had received a positive reaction with over 800 visitors in a few weeks and this would shortly be expanded to other Services.

- Council Tax:

Council tax bills for 2015/16 were now being produced and would be received by households in March. Reference was made to changes to discounts and exemptions applicable to empty homes that came into

effect from 1 April 2015. Affected residents had been contacted to advise them of the forthcoming changes and to encourage these properties back into use. Members were advised that the long term empty properties, those longer than 2 years, would now be charged council tax of 150%; whilst the period for short term empty properties was reduced from 3 to 2 months.

The meeting ended at 9.05 pm

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TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

24 March 2015

Report of the Management Team

Part 1- Public

Executive Non Key Decisions

1 COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT FUND

To consider proposals to make appropriate use of residual community enhancement funds.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 The last (and final) round of the community enhancement fund, as reported to the Communities and Health Advisory Board in September and October last year, resulted in awards totalling approximately £215,000. If all of these latest awards are taken up in full, there remains some £31,000 unspent in the community enhancement pot from the original allocation of £500,000. The purpose of this report is to set out proposals for the use of this residual funding.

1.2 RBLI Garden of Remembrance

1.2.1 Members will be aware of this key local project aimed at providing a fitting memorial to honour those who have served and also to provide a much needed space for reflection and the enjoyment of local residents. We have recently been asked by the RBLI to consider whether the Borough Council could make an additional contribution to the costs of this project. The total cost of the project is £300,000 and to date, £275,000 has been raised. Further fund raising to meet the gap is now underway. The Borough Council donated £5,000 from the community enhancement fund last year. It is suggested that a further £5,000 now be offered to help the RBLI complete this important community project.

1.2.2 Two other war memorials were also awarded funding last year. Borough Green Parish Council received £5,000 towards the costs of designing and erecting a new war memorial for the village (total cost £30,000) whilst a grant of £2,500 was awarded to Burham Parish Council to refurbish their existing memorial gardens (total cost £16,000). If Members are minded to give additional support to these two projects, it is suggested that Borough Green PC be offered a further £2,500 and Burham PC be offered an additional £1,250.

1.3 Residual Funding

- 1.3.1 If the above additional awards are agreed, there would be approximately £22,250 left in the community enhancement fund. We suggest that this funding now be set aside to create a small reserve to help fund future community development work in the Borough. Community development, particularly focused on our more deprived local communities, is an important strand of work for the Borough Council but one which has traditionally depended in the past on support funding being made available by partner organisations. Whilst some partner funding remains, Circle Russet Homes, for example, continue to help fund our community development work and the community safety unit, some reserve funding using residential CEF monies would enable this important work to continue in the future. A fuller report on the future of the Borough Council's community development work will be made to the appropriate board following the local elections.

1.4 Legal Implications

- 1.4.1 None

1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.5.1 As set out in the above report.

1.6 Risk Assessment

- 1.6.1 The establishment of a community development funding reserve will reduce the risk of such important work being curtailed or reduced in scale.

1.7 Equality Impact Assessment

- 1.7.1 Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups, and (iii) foster good relations between people from different groups. The decisions recommended through this paper directly impact on end users. The impact has been analysed and varies between groups of people. Work to support our more deprived communities impact directly on both (ii) and (iii) above.

1.8 Recommendations

- 1.8.1 That the following grants to support the further enhancement of war memorials **BE APPROVED:**

RBLI - £5,000

Borough Green PC - £2500

Burham PC - £1250

1.8.2 That a Community Development reserve **BE ESTABLISHED** using remaining CEF monies.

Background papers:

contact: Mark Raymond

Nil

Julie Beilby
Chief Executive

On behalf of the Management Team

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TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

24 March 2015

Report of the Director of Finance and Transformation

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 WELFARE REFORM UPDATE

A report advising members of the progression and impact of the Government's Welfare Reform Agenda

1.1 Universal Credit

- 1.1.1 Universal Credit is a fundamental and radical element of the welfare reform agenda. It provides a single replacement for the six largest working age benefits, Jobseekers Allowance (JSA), Income Support (IS), Working Tax Credits, Child Tax Credits, Employment & Support Allowance (ESA) and Housing Benefit, now known as the legacy benefits. Claims for Universal Credit are made on-line and payments are made monthly, in arrears. Once fully rolled out, approximately 8 million households across the country will claim Universal Credit.
- 1.1.2 Universal Credit has been designed to simplify the complex web of benefits which currently exists, where claimants may need to make claims with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and local Councils. Claimants must declare changes in circumstances to each organisation and the amounts of individual benefit awards can affect entitlement to each of the other benefits, understandably creating confusion. It is difficult for someone to see the total effect on their benefits when faced with job opportunities. Financial incentives are relatively low, each stand alone benefit may stop or reduce, creating times with little or no income for the person to struggle through.
- 1.1.3 Universal Credit is an 'in or out' of work benefit, meaning the financial transition for a claimant is smoother when taking a new job or increasing hours. It is administered by the DWP. The benefit provides greater financial incentives to move into work and is easier to understand, with a single taper applied to income. The thinking behind monthly payments in arrears is that it mimics salary payments, encouraging and educating out of work claimants to budget, providing familiarity and confidence for the transition into work.
- 1.1.4 Universal Credit can include an element for housing costs, replacing housing benefit. The housing cost element will be calculated using the same rules as

housing benefit but in most cases will be included as part of the single monthly payment made to the claimant.

- 1.1.5 The Universal Credit project started with Pathfinder sites in the Northwest of England in 2013. Since then, the number of sites has been gradually extended. The original timetable programmed the start of national roll-out to Jobcentres in October 2013, but the schedule significantly slipped.
- 1.1.6 At the time of writing this report, the project has its seventh lead director. It was so far off-track from the original plan, that, following some highly critical independent reports, it was 'reset' in 2014, providing a new timetable.
- 1.1.7 Since the reset, the project appears to be going well. A careful and methodical approach to national roll-out is now underway, starting with the simplest of claims. From February 2015, waves of Jobcentres have started to administer Universal Credit claims for single claimants who would otherwise have claimed JSA, with or without housing benefit. The roll-out is scheduled for completion by March 2016, with Jobcentres and local Councils placed into phased 'tranches'. Our Borough is scheduled into tranche 3, meaning it is likely we will see Universal Credit introduced around October 2015 for single persons. From that point on, a single person who would have previously made a new claim for JSA and housing benefit will make an on-line application for Universal Credit including a housing cost element. The Council will no longer calculate housing benefit but may be called upon by the DWP for advice and information regarding individual claims.
- 1.1.8 The initial impact of the introduction of Universal Credit on my Benefits Service will be minimal. The number of single person new JSA claims is surprisingly low, over the course of a year the number is usually below 80. In addition, the Government has proposed to scrap housing benefit for 18 – 21 year olds.
- 1.1.9 Moving forwards, new Universal Credit claims for couples will start a national roll-out to Jobcentres later this year, followed by new claims which include children. Once the new claim processes for all types of claims are in place there will be a phased conversion from existing legacy benefits to Universal Credit. Completion of the project is scheduled for late 2019.
- 1.1.10 Although difficult to accurately predict, it is estimated that 13,500 homes in the Borough will be supported by Universal Credit.
- 1.1.11 Local Councils will continue to administer housing benefit for vulnerable adults in supported accommodation and all pension age claims. This represents over half of our current caseload of claims. The administration of council tax support will also remain.
- 1.1.12 There are still questions and concerns over the Universal Credit project, the main ones focussing around:

- A simple IT system was developed for use in Pathfinder sites, not originally designed for national use. A 'digital' IT system is in development that is intended for national use but will not be ready until May 2016. The digital service provides an on-line account for each claim. There may be severe delays or failures in administration.
- Making payments for housing costs to claimants will create a higher risk in the occurrence of rent arrears and homelessness. Most tenants in housing association accommodation currently choose to have housing benefit paid directly to their landlords.
- There is an expectation for local Councils to support residents with Universal Credit. The type of assistance required will be: help making new claims, help maintaining claims, money advice and work related support.

1.1.13 As mentioned at paragraph 1.1.7, it is the DWP's intention to expand the national rollout of Universal credit for new single claimants of Job Seekers Allowance (JSA). A letter was received from the Director General of the UC Programme on 16 February (ANNEX 1) listing TMBC as being in tranche 3. A meeting took place in early March between key Council officers and DWP staff to discuss implementation of Universal Credit in the Borough, and I can advise that the DWP's intended implementation date within tranche 3 is 12 October. There is a resource input from the Council in supporting this roll out and agreements to sign up to. It is currently early days as we have had little opportunity yet to consider the issues and I shall keep Members informed as to how this is progressing.

1.2 Local Support Services Framework – Universal Support

1.2.1 In 2013 the Government published 'Universal Credit Local Support Services Framework'. The document set out in detail how local Councils will work together with the DWP to form delivery partnerships, providing and commissioning a wide range of services to support claimants in the transition to Universal Credit.

1.2.2 The proposed services focus on 'triage and re-orientation, on-line assistance, money advice, alternative payment arrangements and work related support. Frameworks should 'build on existing services for supporting claimants locally'.

1.2.3 An update to the document 'Universal Credit Local Support Services Update and Trialling Plan' was published later in that year. It contained a large amount of information specifying what is to be considered as good practice.

1.2.4 The document can be found at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/263490/universal-credit-local-support-services-update-trialling-plan.pdf

1.2.5 It also sets out how such a framework may be funded and made proposals for trialling opportunities.

1.2.6 In October 2014 a guidance document called 'Universal Support – delivered locally: information for local authorities' was published by the DWP.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-support-delivered-locally-information-for-local-authorities/universal-support-delivered-locally-information-for-local-authorities>

1.2.7 The guidance informed us that the Local Support Services Framework is now known as Universal Support and confirmed the trialling sites, with trials due for completion by September 2015.

1.2.8 The focus of the trials is on three main elements:

- Triage
- Digital inclusion
- Financial inclusion

1.2.9 The recognition that particular claimants will have complex needs and vulnerabilities which can be addressed through the formation of locally tailored, co-located partnerships is encouraging. In practice, this is not unlike our Gateway model. I am certain that the experience of our Gateway will enable us to develop our other front line offices and surgeries to meet the needs of Universal Support. Due to the proximity of local Jobcentres to the Borough, excepting Tonbridge, it is likely the Council's front line services will see an increase in number of customers and more complex enquiries.

1.3 Reforms to Housing Benefit

1.3.1 In 2004/05, the Council paid £15,600,000 of housing benefit to 4600 claimants. 10 years on and we will pay over £36,000,000 to 6,600 customers. The marked disproportionate increase in the level of payments is due to rapidly rising rents over that time. Rents have increased across the board, both in the private and social sectors, far exceeding national inflation figures.

1.3.2 The Government has introduced several measures to curb the spiralling national cost of housing benefit payments, starting with Local Housing Allowance (LHA) from April 2008. LHA provided a new housing benefit scheme for new claims in the private sector. Fixed maximum benefit levels were set monthly, initially based on a median average of local market rents. Since introduction, the mid-point average has been reduced to the 30th percentile and from April 2013 a move took place to uprate LHA annually, first by the Consumer Price Index and since April 2014, a maximum of 1%. These changes have significantly reduced the correlation between LHA rates and actual local market rents.

- 1.3.3 LHA also removed the choice for claimants to have payments made directly to their landlords. Only in limited specified circumstances can payments be made to landlords.
- 1.3.4 There is plenty of anecdotal and factual evidence to demonstrate that, for those on low incomes, the introduction of LHA has caused a reduction in the numbers of affordable private homes to rent in the Borough, further raising demand for social housing. It is fair to say that there has been a strong message from private sector landlords that they are reluctant to let to tenants who need support from benefits.
- 1.3.5 In turn, the number of people becoming homeless and placed in temporary accommodation by our Council's Housing service has risen since the introduction of welfare reforms, although few cases are directly attributable to any changes. Temporary accommodation is used as an interim solution when the Council has a duty to assist or investigate circumstances of homelessness. The number of placements has plateaued through careful management but costs to the Council continue to rise due to the increased lengths of stay as it becomes harder to find suitable, affordable homes for families to move on to.
- 1.3.6 The following table shows the numbers of claimants placed in temporary accommodation and housing benefit paid:

Year	No. HB claims for temporary accommodation	Total HB expenditure £
2011/12	36	76,302
2012/13	55	90,652
2013/14	47	143,424
2014/15 (as at 19/02/15)	49	214,743

- 1.3.7 The Council is reimbursed by Government for the housing benefit payments on temporary accommodation at a rate of approximately 60%.

1.4 Social Sector Size Criteria Restrictions

- 1.4.1 In April 2013, the Government introduced 'social sector size criteria restrictions' to housing benefit, otherwise known as the 'bedroom tax'. The legislation set out rules for the numbers of bedrooms needed by family compositions and deductions to housing benefit entitlement if the household has more bedrooms than deemed necessary. Housing benefit is restricted by 14% of the rent (not the housing benefit entitlement) if there is one spare room and by 25% if there are two or more

spare rooms. The restrictions apply to social (housing association) tenancies only and just to working age claimants.

- 1.4.2 The new legislation required the Council to collect data from social landlords to establish the number of bedrooms for all properties with working age housing benefit claims. Once all the records were complete and relevant exemptions applied, such as claims from supported accommodation, the rules have been relatively simple to administer.
- 1.4.3 The restrictions have generated an increased level of customer contact, both from claimants and landlords. Many discretionary housing payments (DHP) have been made to households to help those facing shortfalls. Landlords have reported increased levels of rent arrears due to the restrictions. They are having to work hard and engage with tenants to reduce the risk of rent arrears.
- 1.4.4 The following table details the numbers of restrictions applied:

Date of restrictions	No. of 14% restrictions	Average weekly restriction £	No. of 25% restrictions	Average weekly restriction £
1/10/13	499	16.72	106	31.54
1/10/14	485	16.60	86	33.60
26/02/15	461	17.57	86	33.51

- 1.4.5 Unfortunately it is not possible to state the total number of restrictions that have been applied, only the number in effect at a given date, but the figures do show a decline in the number of restrictions.
- 1.4.6 There are currently 244 households on the Council's housing register looking to downsize. Although not directly comparable due to some policy changes, the figure for 31 March 2014 was 185 households and for 31 March 2013, 114 households. The figures give a strong indication of the measure taking effect.
- 1.4.7 In 2013/14, 53 known households downsized their homes. Between 1 April 2014 and 31 December 2014 there were 40. Most social landlords now operate incentive schemes to encourage tenants to move into suitably sized homes when over accommodated, however, any move is reliant on the availability of suitable accommodation.

1.5 Benefit Cap

- 1.5.1 Another Government measure to restrict housing benefit payments, the benefit cap, commenced in the Borough in July 2013. The cap operates by looking at the sum of benefit payments received by an out of work household and limiting the total to £500 per week. The figure of £500 represents the average income for

working households, £26,000 per annum. The restriction is only applied by the Council to any housing benefit in payment, on the say so of the DWP. Receipt of certain benefits, such as disability living allowance or personal independence payments exempt households from the cap.

- 1.5.2 Since its introduction, a total of 38 households have had their housing benefit payments capped. The restrictions tend to apply for relatively short periods of time, often the claimant or partner will find work, removing the cap. Half of the restrictions have been made to single parent households, all of the restrictions are on claims including between 3 and 6 children. Three quarters of the households live in social housing.
- 1.5.3 At the time of writing this report there are 18 households restricted by the benefit cap. The highest restriction is £220.62 per week, the longest duration of the cap being applied for the current cases is since September 2014.
- 1.5.4 Discretionary housing payments can be used to mitigate the effects of the benefit cap. Surprisingly, there have been relatively few claims or awards of DHP for this reason. The Government has pledged to reduce the cap level to £23,000 later this year.

1.6 Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)

- 1.6.1 The Government provides an annual discretionary housing payment fund to local Councils. Councils can choose to make a contribution to further top up the fund. The fund provides additional financial assistance to housing benefit claimants on a discretionary basis. Assistance can be made on a weekly 'top-up' basis, if there is a shortfall between housing benefit payments and rent, or may be 'one-off' lump sum payments, made for example, to help clear rent arrears or assist moving to more affordable accommodation.
- 1.6.2 Payments of DHP have become a key tool in the prevention of homelessness. The Council has a DHP policy which sets out the objectives for our local scheme:
- To prevent homelessness
 - To support vulnerable households
 - To provide support at a time of crisis
 - Provide temporary assistance to households affected by the welfare reform changes
- 1.6.3 The policy is available on the Council's website:

http://www.tmbc.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0011/90479/Discretionary-housing-payments-policy_1.pdf

- 1.6.4 The Government has provided a significant increase in DHP funding to local Councils to help with the transition to reduced benefit rates through welfare reform. Individual DHP awards are made on a claim basis, decisions usually based on an affordability assessment. The large increase to the fund has gone hand in hand with a large increase in applications and awards. The administration of the fund has become a key function of the Benefits Service, ensuring the funds are fully and appropriately spent each year.
- 1.6.5 The following table shows the national and local DHP funds, together with the number of successful and unsuccessful applications:

Year	National fund £	Government contribution to TMBC £	No. claims paid	No. claims refused
2011/12	30m	32,834	105	15
2012/13	60m	41,969	131	49
2013/14	160m	129,610	400	177
2014/15	165m	165,494	445	116
2015/16	125m	140,671		

- 1.6.6 During 2013/14, restrictions due to the 'bedroom tax' accounted for 86% of applications. This year, the proportion has dropped slightly to 79%. The majority of awards are made for a period of three months. Awards are frequently made with conditions, such as the claimant registering with Housing services to downsize. Some further awards are made in succession to an original payment if the claimant can demonstrate that he or she has made an effort or there has been some activity to improve the situation. Help to clear rent arrears and help with rent in advance payments to assist claimants in moving accounted for £44,858 of the DHP fund in 2013/14, this year that figure is £61,820 at the end of February.
- 1.6.7 A handful of long term awards have been made. These have been to households that have been adapted to meet the needs of a disabled resident. The cost to the DHP fund to top-up a shortfall in benefit would be far outweighed by the practical and financial costs of moving to a smaller home.
- 1.6.8 Since the abolition of council tax benefit, discretionary housing payments can no longer be used to provide financial assistance for council tax.

1.7 Other State Benefits

- 1.7.1 Disability Living Allowance (DLA) is being replaced with Personal Independence Payments (PIP) for people aged 16 to 64. New claims for PIP began, and DLA

ceased to be available for new working age claimants, from April 2013. Like DLA, PIP provides non means-tested support for additional living costs arising from long-term health conditions or disabilities. It is available to people who are in or out of work. PIP has different qualifying rules, assessments are made against a set of criteria in relation to 12 everyday activities:

- Daily living activities – preparing food, washing, dressing, making decisions about money, communicating verbally, reading, incontinence, therapy, nutrition and mixing with others
- Mobility activities – planning and following a journey and moving around

1.7.2 Unlike DLA, almost all claimants must undergo a face to face medical consultation and awards will be reviewed on a regular basis. Rates of PIP are similar to DLA, although there are fewer rates available and it is anticipated that fewer claims will be successful.

1.7.3 There is no automatic qualification to PIP for existing DLA recipients. The DWP will write to everyone currently getting DLA giving 28 days to complete a new claim form for PIP. If the form is not completed and returned then payments will most likely be suspended, potentially leading to cancellation of the claim.

1.7.4 The reform to DLA originally included an assumption that PIP would be fully implemented, including reassessment of existing DLA claims, over three years from 2013. However, mainly due administrative delays and backlogs in face to face assessments, the roll-out has changed to ensure it only takes places in areas where there is capacity to do so. Areas will be selected by postcode until October 2015 when a random selection will start, with completion aimed at late 2017.

1.7.5 The DWP recently announced that waiting times for assessments for new claims has reduced from 30 weeks to 14 weeks and the number of claims cleared per month has risen from 14,000 to 60,000.

1.8 Council Tax Support

1.8.1 From 1 April 2013 Councils had to set up local council tax reduction schemes to replace the national council tax benefit scheme. Rules stated that pensioners could not lose out under local schemes. Funding to Councils was cut by approximately 10% in comparison to funding for council tax benefit.

1.8.2 We established a scheme based along the lines of council tax benefit but reducing entitlement for working age claimants by 18.5%. During the first year, the Department for Communities and Local Government provided some transition funding enabling our reduction to be capped at 8.5%. From the 1 April 2014, the full 18.5% reduction came into effect.

1.8.3 At the introduction of our local scheme, approximately 2,500 households received council tax bills with a balance to pay when, under the 'old scheme' they would not

have had anything to pay because their benefit entitlement covered their full council tax liability. Nearly all of these households are out of work and receive Jobseekers Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance or Income Support.

- 1.8.4 Not unexpectedly, the additional council tax has proven challenging to collect. Changes have been made to our recovery procedure, introducing a 'soft reminder' stage and all round recovery and customer contact has become much busier.
- 1.8.5 The following table shows the council tax collection rates for the current and previous financial years for working age council tax accounts with council tax support.

Date	Liability £	Payments £	% Collected
1/03/15	1,541,540	1,192,894	77.4
1/03/14	1,103,775	876,111	79.4

- 1.8.6 The average amount to pay for a year for the 'first time payers' has risen from around £90 to £190. In 2013/14, the final collection rate for accounts with council tax support was 85.20%. It is likely that the collection rate will be lower this year although the difference will be relatively small. In comparison, the overall collection rate for council tax last year was 98.3 %.
- 1.8.7 Our local council tax reduction scheme is about to enter its third year. Its design is largely constrained by computer software. Using rules and parameters common to both housing benefit and council tax benefit has called for relatively few changes to systems, the approach that nearly all Councils have taken. Housing benefit shares an application form with council tax support and assessments are made by processing one set of data for each application, creating an efficiency that would otherwise be lost.
- 1.8.8 It looks set that housing benefit for pension age claims and claims from supported accommodation will remain with local Councils for at least a further six years. Administration subsidy from Government shrinks year on year making a radically simpler scheme attractive at first sight, but design and implementation would bring with them large IT costs and introduce greater risk of success.

1.9 Housing Services

- 1.9.1 The number of customers contacting the housing options team for advice continues to be high. Not only are presentations increasing but the nature of the enquiries continues to be complex with affordability issues still very prevalent. More generally in terms of affordability, the private rented sector is becoming increasingly challenging to access as landlords are able to achieve rental values well in excess of the Local Housing Allowance.

- 1.9.2 Members may recall that in the last Welfare Reform report to Cabinet in June 2014 officers reported the emerging issue of the affordability of social housing specifically for single person households under 25 years of age in receipt of Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) or Employment & Support Allowance (ESA). Although receiving assistance with covering rent payments through housing benefit, this client group cannot afford to cover the cost of daily living such as groceries, utilities and council tax payments within their JSA or ESA of £57.35 a week.
- 1.9.3 In response to this the Council has been working in partnership with Circle Housing Russet to address the issue. An existing three bedroomed Circle Housing Russet property in Tonbridge has been converted to a house in multiple occupation and will be available as a house share for four sharers aged between 18 and 25 years. These sharers will be applicants who have applied to the Council's housing register which will include those ready to move on from the Young Persons supported accommodation scheme on New Wharf Road. The scheme is targeted at those applicants who are in receipt of Job Seekers Allowance, or economically active on low wages who in reality would not be able to afford to sustain a self-contained home. It is anticipated that the property will be ready for occupation within the next few weeks.
- 1.9.4 Members will recall that in the autumn of 2013 the Council reviewed its Housing Allocations Scheme in line with the Localism Act 2011. Immediately following the review the number of households on the register had reduced from circa 1,600 to just fewer than 1,000. However, demand has continued to increase with the numbers now in excess 1,300.

1.10 Family Focus Initiative

- 1.10.1 As reported to a recent meeting of the Communities and Health Advisory Board, good outcomes have been achieved from the first three-year family focus programme.
- 1.10.2 Of the 197 borough families that have been referred to the programme, 132 have now been supported with their outcomes now met and a further 43 are currently receiving support and successful outcomes for these should be achieved shortly. There are 22 cases where the intended outcomes have not been met.
- 1.10.3 The new 5 year phase two programme is now being launched and for Tonbridge and Malling, the target number of families to be tackled totals 612. The criteria which governs entry to the new programme have been considerably widened which will give partner organisations increased flexibility to make referrals. Issues of poor health, domestic violence and financial exclusion are now included as entry criteria. There is, however, a 50% reduction in Government funding for the new programme which will present challenges. To overcome this, existing family intervention resources are to be supplemented with resources from existing KCC's early help teams.

1.11 Welfare Reform Officer Study Group

- 1.11.1 The Welfare Reform OSG continues to meet on a regular basis. The group comprises relevant Council officers and officers from organisations such as Jobcentre Plus, the Citizens Advice Bureau and Circle Housing Russet. Together we aim to keep abreast of the impacts of welfare reform, sharing information and implementing strategic and operational changes to meet or assist changing demands.
- 1.11.2 Achievements so far include the Burham Open Day and introduction of the Nellbooker multi-agency referral system.

1.12 Channel Shift – Further progress

- 1.12.1 Cabinet will recall that ‘channel shift’ is achieved when a customer accesses a lower cost channel than they might otherwise have done. The highest cost transactions are ‘face-to-face’, then telephone, then email, and the least costly is where the customer is able to self-serve (mainly through a digital/internet route).
- 1.12.2 Encouraging self-service through use of the council’s web site has been the focus for our recent activity and, to that end, there have been two recent developments that members should be aware of.
- 1.12.3 The first is a stronger **social media** presence with the creation of corporate twitter and facebook accounts, the prime purpose of which is to pro-actively promote content on the web site and drive customers to it, negating the necessity for customers to phone or email for further details. The success of this largely depends upon the number of customers that ‘follow’ or ‘like’ these feeds. It is early days and the effect of this strategy on channel shift will only become apparent when the number of ‘followers’ has substantially increased, and we will be monitoring this closely
- 1.12.4 The second initiative, **web chat**, has had a more immediate effect. Web chat was introduced to the council’s website from 7 January 2015, with the intention of trialling its use by customer services staff and gauging the customer response to such a service. Web chat is about providing support to website users, helping them complete their business with the council whilst they are online, even when they reach a point where they are not clear as to how to proceed. Staff can chat with customers while they are online, helping to guide them through online processes and preventing the need for the customer to telephone or visit in person. Staff can deal with multiple enquiries simultaneously, making web chat much more efficient than traditional forms of customer contact. The first four weeks of operation have seen encouraging usage figures and positive feedback from customers. Total chats for the period were 829 (averaging approx.40 chats per day). Approximately half of these interactions concerned Waste, Planning and Council Tax. Not every chat results in a ‘shift’ as it may be appropriate to invite the customer to email or ring to deal with their query appropriately, but many of these interactions result in the customer being given a link to the appropriate page on the web site, encouraging them to self-serve.

1.13 Legal implications

1.13.1 None in respect of this report

1.14 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.14.13 None in respect of this report

1.15 Risk Assessment

1.15.1 Welfare reforms increase the risk of homelessness, leading to higher levels of customer contact for Customer Services, Housing and Benefits staff. The cost to the Council for the provision of temporary accommodation is increasing. The heavier workload has an adverse impact on performance across the Services

1.16 Policy Considerations

1.16.1 Community; Customer contact

Background papers:

Nil

contact: Sharon Shelton
Andrew Rosevear
Satnam Kaur
Mark Raymond
Charlie Steel

Sharon Shelton
Director of Finance & Transformation

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Department
for Work &
Pensions

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For the attention of:
Chief Executives,
GB Local Authorities

16 February 2015

Universal Credit national expansion – Tranche Three and Four rollout locations

Dear Colleagues,

I would first like to start by thanking you and your colleagues for the time and effort you have provided in working with the Department over the scheduling of the national expansion for Universal Credit for new single claimants who would otherwise be eligible for Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) including those with existing Housing Benefit and Tax Credit claims.

Following feedback from the Local Authority Partnership forum that it would help local planning, I am writing to inform you that today, we have placed a complete list, based on the latest planning assumptions, of Tranche Three and Four local authorities and Jobcentre areas onto GOV.UK, alongside lists of Tranches One and Two. All four Tranches of national expansion can be accessed here and are attached as an annex to this letter:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-credit-national-expansion>

The introduction of Universal Credit is the biggest welfare reform change in a generation and we are already seeing the positive effects that Universal Credit is having.

We are publishing research today from the first 6000 Universal Credit cases that show, compared to JSA, claimants are doing more jobsearch activity, finding work quicker, staying in work longer and earning more. It is early days for the reform but this is very encouraging and is why we are keen to roll out the service to everywhere in Great Britain as soon as possible. You can read the full report here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-credit-at-work>

For national expansion in 2015/16, the Department is putting in place funded arrangements between Jobcentre Plus and local authorities to make available support for those needing extra help.

These interim arrangements will apply for national expansion only. For later roll out of Universal Credit – when we expect to include all claimant groups, including those in more vulnerable and complex situations – we will be developing arrangements under the Universal Support – delivered locally framework. We are now trialling key aspects of Universal Support in partnership with local authorities, to inform the shape of future delivery.

Today also marks the beginning of national rollout, a milestone in the growth of Universal Credit. There is, of course, still more to do as we expand to more people across Great Britain. Your help, support and dedication to partnership working will help to achieve this.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Neil Couling', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Neil Couling
Director General, Universal Credit Programme

Annex A – Tranche One and Two

Annex B – Tranche Three and Four

Agenda Item 9

Any other items which the Chairman decides are urgent due to special circumstances and of which notice has been given to the Chief Executive.

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Agenda Item 10

The Chairman to move that the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting during consideration of any items the publication of which would disclose exempt information.

**ANY REPORTS APPEARING AFTER THIS PAGE CONTAIN EXEMPT
INFORMATION**

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Agenda Item 14

Any other items which the Chairman decides are urgent due to special circumstances and of which notice has been given to the Chief Executive.

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