

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 26th January, 2016

Present: Cllr A K Sullivan (Chairman), Cllr Mrs A S Oakley (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Miss S O Shrubsole (Vice-Chairman), Cllr P F Bolt, Cllr J L Botten, Cllr S M Hammond, Cllr Mrs F A Kemp, Cllr D Lettington, Cllr P J Montague, Cllr M R Rhodes, Cllr Miss J L Sergison, Cllr Ms S V Spence, Cllr M Taylor, Cllr T C Walker and Mr P J Drury and Mr D Still (Co-opted members)

Councillors Mrs J A Anderson, M A Coffin, Mrs M F Heslop, N J Heslop, S C Perry and H S Rogers were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ms J A Atkinson, M C Base and R W Dalton

PART 1 - PUBLIC

OS 16/1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

OS 16/2 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 15 September 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET

OS 16/3 REVENUE ESTIMATES 2016/17

The report of the Director of Finance and Transformation referred to the responsibility of the Cabinet under the Constitution for formulating initial draft proposals in respect of the Budget. Reference was made to the role of the Committee in assisting the Cabinet and Council in the preparation of the Budget.

Careful consideration was given to both the Revised Estimates for 2015/16 and the Estimates for 2016/17 within the context of the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the Council's priorities.

Attention was drawn to the key messages arising from the provisional local government finance settlement for 2016/17 together with details of

the level of council tax increase above which local authorities would have to hold a referendum. It was reported that the Government had offered a four-year funding settlement to 2019/20 and the report provided illustrative allocations for this period. It was noted that the Borough Council's provisional Settlement Funding Assessment to 2019/20 was projected to be £1,283,705 which represented a cash decrease of £2,394,894 or 65.1% when compared to the equivalent figure of £3,678,599 in 2015/16.

The report provided illustrative figures for the Government's projected allocation of grant under the New Homes Bonus scheme and it was noted that this represented a cash decrease of £768,968 or 24.8% by 2019/20 when compared to £3,101,153 in 2015/16. It was reported that the Total Grant Funding in 2019/20 was projected to be £3,615,890 which represented a cash decrease of £3,163,862 or 46.7% when compared to the equivalent figure of £6,779,752 in 2015/16. Details of the Borough Council's response to the consultation on the provisional local government finance settlement 2016/17 and the offer to councils for future years was set out at Annex 1 to the report.

It was noted that the severity and impact of the reductions in funding set out in the provisional Settlement would require the introduction of a further savings tranche of £700,000 as the overall funding gap now stood at £1.9 million.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the objective set out at paragraph 1.2.2 of the report replace the one starting 'Over the strategy period' set out at paragraph 1.2.1;
- (2) the draft Revenue Estimates contained in the Booklet be endorsed and commended to Cabinet; and
- (3) the Savings and Transformation Strategy be updated to reflect the financial impact of the provisional local government finance settlement.

OS 16/4 CAPITAL PLAN REVIEW 2016/17

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Finance and Transformation which set out progress on the 2015/16 Capital Plan Review.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the recommendations of the Finance, Innovation and Property Advisory Board held on 13 January 2016 be endorsed; and
- (2) the Capital Strategy, as set out at Annex 5 to the report, be endorsed for adoption and publication on the Council's website.

**OS 16/5 REVIEW OF HOLIDAY ACTIVITY PROGRAMMES -
RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE REVIEW PANEL**

Members considered the recommendations arising from the Scrutiny Panel review of the Council's three holiday activity programmes for young people: Activate, Y2Crew and the Summer Playscheme. The full details of each scheme, key issues and options for change considered by the Panel at meetings held on 25 November 2015 and 5 January 2016 were set out at Annexes 1 and 2 to the report.

Members' attention was drawn to the Council's current financial position and the need for further savings of £700,000 to be identified following the local government financial settlement for 2016/17.

The Committee supported the opinion of the Review Panel that the Borough Council should withdraw from direct provision of the Activate Programme and the Summer Playscheme and noted the positive responses received from private providers and the parish councils. The Committee noted the Panel's conclusion regarding the retention of support for the Y2Crew programme and its concerns to ensure on-going support for families on low incomes via the Council's Leisure Pass Scheme. Additionally, Members suggested that, if required, administrative support by the Borough Council's officers be offered to the private providers during the transitional period in 2016 to preserve and improve the service provided.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the Borough Council withdraw from the direct provision of the Activate Programme but set aside a sum of £3,000 to provide support for leisure pass holders at the current rate to access programmes provided by other agencies;
- (2) the Borough Council's financial support for the Y2Crew programme be retained subject to other partners providing continued financial contributions;
- (3) the Borough Council withdraw from the direct provision of the Summer Playscheme from Summer 2016 and seek the support of external providers to take over these schemes subject to the following:
 - (a) Leisure Pass concessions for Playscheme attendance initially be amended to provide a 50% reduction per child per week;
 - (b) a sum of £18,000 be set aside to provide continued support for Leisure Pass holders to access schemes at the current 12 sites;

- (c) a future review of the level of support given to leisure pass holders be undertaken in the light of the Council's current financial position;
 - (d) the retention of directly provided Playschemes in the priority communities of Trench, East Malling and Snodland for 2016 if other providers are unable to deliver these for that year; and
 - (e) if required, the Council offer administrative support to the private providers for the transitional period in 2016; and
- (4) the consideration of the Public Sector Equality Duty be noted and financial provision be made, as set out at paragraph 1.6.4. of the report, to mitigate any impact on children with disabilities who require 1-2-1 support. A review of the equality impact assessment to be completed and reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee within one year.

OS 16/6 REVIEW OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT - RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE REVIEW PANEL

The report of the Chief Executive presented the findings of the Community Engagement review group which had examined the mechanisms through which the Council engaged with parish and town councils and with community groups in Tonbridge through the respective meetings of the Parish Partnership Panel (PPP) and the Tonbridge Forum. The review group had focussed on attendance levels over the last two years and had found that, on average, less than half the membership, excluding Borough Councillors, had attended most of the meetings. The review group had met on 21 July 2015 and determined that all members of the Forum and PPP be sent a questionnaire inviting comments on format and any changes they would like made. The responses were considered by the review group at a meeting on 6 October 2015.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) in respect of the meetings of the Tonbridge Forum
 - (a) the Tonbridge Forum be retained but reduced to two meetings each year. Meetings to be held in the Council Chamber, Tonbridge Castle at the earlier time of 6 pm.
 - (b) a review of the Tonbridge Forum membership be undertaken to enable members to withdraw from the Forum if they wish to do so or to confirm their continued membership.
 - (c) consideration be given to a reduction of Council Members attending to allow for a more informal community meeting rather than a formal Council 'Panel' as at present.

(d) the format of future meetings be changed with a view to implementing a 'round table' style of meeting with community members encouraged to raise items.

(2) in respect of the meetings of the Parish Partnership Panel

(a) the meetings be retained at the current frequency (four per year) on the understanding that, if insufficient items were put forward, the meeting would be cancelled.

(b) meetings to be chaired by the Leader or Cabinet Member and to be held at the earlier time of 6 pm.

(c) to encourage greater participation the parish/town councils to be given a longer 'lead in' time to suggest agenda items. It was recognised that some area specific issues would be relevant/of interest to a wider area and should be included on the agenda.

(d) rather than providing presentations the KCC and Police representatives be invited to submit brief reports, highlighting relevant updates and contact details, to allow parish and town councils to follow up on any issues should they wish to do so.

OS 16/7 DRAFT SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Executive which set out details of the proposed Safeguarding Policy and Reporting Procedure for Children, Young People and Adults at Risk. The Committee noted that the draft policy aimed to ensure that an overarching approach to safeguarding was embedded within all Council services and that staff, elected members, volunteers and those delivering services on behalf of the Borough Council had a good understanding of safeguarding guidelines and good practice.

RECOMMENDED: That the Draft Safeguarding Policy and Reporting Procedure for Children, Young People and Adults at Risk be endorsed and commended to Cabinet for adoption.

MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION

OS 16/8 SCRUTINY REVIEW PROGRAMME

The report of the Chief Executive set out proposals for future reviews to be undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, together with details of the membership of the review groups.

RESOLVED: That the review topics and panel membership be noted.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE

OS 16/9 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items considered in private.

The meeting ended at 9.07 pm