

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES AND HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

Monday, 24th July, 2017

Present: Cllr P J Montague (Chairman), Cllr Mrs B A Brown (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Mrs J A Anderson, Cllr Mrs S M Barker, Cllr D J Cure, Cllr S M Hammond, Cllr D Keeley, Cllr Mrs S L Luck, Cllr Mrs A S Oakley, Cllr L J O'Toole, Cllr M Parry-Waller and Cllr T B Shaw

Councillors P F Bolt, O C Baldock, Mrs P A Bates, R P Betts, M A Coffin, Mrs M F Heslop, N J Heslop, M R Rhodes and Miss S O Shrubsole were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs S Bell, V M C Branson and Ms S V Spence

Although not a Member of the Advisory Board, the apologies for Mr A Nichols, Tonbridge Sports Association, were also noted.

PART 1 - PUBLIC

CH 17/15 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Betts declared an Other Significant Interest in the Leisure Trust – Review of Service Fee/Business Plan item on the grounds that he represented the Borough Council on the Tonbridge and Malling Leisure Trust Board. He withdrew from the meeting during discussion of this item. However, Councillor Betts remained in the meeting to hear about the Leisure Facilities – Leisure Trust Update but did not participate in the debate.

In the interests of transparency, 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.

CH 17/16 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the notes of the meeting of the Communities and Housing Advisory Board held on 28 February 2017 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CH 17/17 PRESENTATION BY VICKY BONNER, DIRECTOR OF HOUSING AT CLARION HOUSING GROUP

The Director of Housing (Vicky Bonner) at Clarion Housing Group outlined the key changes during 2016/17, which included a review of all

frontline structures to ensure a more efficient, effective and consistent delivery model; the introduction of a dedicated contact centre in one location to reduce duplication and provide a seamless first response service and focused on delivering excellent services to customers.

Reference was made to current performance and a positive start to the year was reported with rent arrears for Russet at 2.95%; whilst support continued to be given to residents with benefits applications and appeals. The excellent relationship with the Borough Council had resulted in the resolution of a serious safeguarding issue locally and continued to be an important factor in the working partnership between the two organisations.

In view of the recent Grenfell fire tragedy a proactive approach had been taken to reassure residents and an action plan had been implemented to review fire safety advice and practice. It was confirmed that within Tonbridge and Malling there were no blocks of flats over six storeys.

Finally, Ms Bonner summarised the Affordability Strategy which aimed to keep properties affordable for residents, with the need to link rents with local wages recognised.

The Regional Director of Development (Mr Ian Hagger) talked about the development programme in Tonbridge and Malling and reiterated that the Borough remained a core development area for Clarion Housing. There were recently completed schemes at Borough Green, Hadlow and Tonbridge which included rented and shared ownership properties.

Potential future development schemes included sites at Kings Hill but these were subject to final design and planning approval. It was anticipated that a reserved matters application for all the identified sites would be submitted at the same time so it was difficult to predict the phasing of any building works if planning permission was granted.

Members welcomed the ongoing commitment to investment in the Borough and the Leader indicated that he would continue to lobby Government for real affordable housing in the South East.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET

CH 17/18 UPDATE ON WEST KENT HOSPITAL DISCHARGE PILOT AND DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT

Decision Notice D170050MEM

The report provided an update on the various initiatives being piloted using Disabled Facilities Grant funding and sought approval to extend the West Kent Hospital Discharge and Handyperson Scheme until March 2019.

It was also reported that the current arrangement of seconding Occupational Therapists from Kent County Council worked extremely well, as it enabled a more streamlined and responsive service to be offered.

Members welcomed the good news on Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) funding which had seen the Borough Council awarded £1,007,000 for 2017/18 which represented an increase of £90,000 on the previous year. Particularly welcomed was the progress on children's occupational therapists assessments, although it was noted that Tonbridge and Malling continued to receive higher numbers of referrals for children's cases than other West and North Kent Districts with only Maidstone receiving more.

A poster to promote the availability of children's DFGs was being developed in liaison with occupational therapists and Members suggested that this be targeted to the commencement of the new school term in September. In addition, it was suggested that new schools within the Borough could be a primary focus.

RECOMMENDED: That the continuation of the West Kent Hospital and Handypersons Scheme and secondment of Occupational Therapists be approved until March 2019.

CH 17/19 LEISURE FACILITIES - LEISURE TRUST UPDATE

Decision Notice D170051MEM

The report reviewed the recent performance of the Tonbridge and Malling Leisure Trust and provided an update on two key issues; the re-tender of fitness equipment and the proposed extension of the gym at Larkfield Leisure Centre.

Members noted that the satisfaction and cleanliness scores from customers remained high with all facilities achieving above 90%. It was felt that this excellent performance was indicative of the good working relationship between the Trust and Borough Council.

In addition, Members recognised the importance of investing in facilities to attract and retain customers in a very competitive market.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the Trust's performance over the fourth quarter of the Annual Service Delivery Plan (attached as Annex 1 to the report) be noted;
- (2) the procurement process for the fitness equipment be progressed as outlined in paragraph 1.4 of the report; and

- (3) the proposed works to the gym extension at Larkfield Leisure Centre be supported and progressed as outlined in paragraph 1.5 of the report.

CH 17/20 CAPITAL PLAN PROJECTS

Decision Notice D170052MEM

The report updated progress on a number of key projects contained in the Borough Council's Capital Plan. In addition, three Post Implementation Reviews were brought forward for consideration and approval.

Particular reference was made to measures to increase parking provision at Leybourne Lakes Country Park. It was noted that this project was currently on List A. In addition, temporary measures were in place to increase car parking at Haysden Country Park. These measures would be monitored over the coming months and the findings reflected in the Capital Plan Evaluation to be considered by Members at a future meeting of the Finance, Innovation and Property Advisory Board.

Finally, local Members referred to the recent improvements made to the play equipment at Larkfield recreation ground, which had been positively received and was a well-used facility.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the updates on the current Capital Plan, as set out in Annex 1 of the report, be noted;
- (2) the Post Implementation Review for Larkfield Recreation Ground Play Improvements, as set out in Annex 2 of the report, be approved;
- (3) the Post Implementation Review for Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground Bridge Renewal/Repair, as set out in Annex 3 of the report, be approved; and
- (4) the Post Implementation Review for DDA Audit Recommendations – Phase 3, as set out in Annex 4 of the report, be approved.

CH 17/21 COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP PLAN 2017-18

Decision Notice D170053MEM

The Community Safety Partnership Plan 2017/18 was presented for consideration. The Plan provided details of the initiatives carried out during the previous year and set out priorities for the forthcoming year.

It was reported that crime levels in the Borough remained low and that Tonbridge and Malling remained one of the safest places in the county. This was despite an increase of 784 offences from April 2016 to March 2017. Recorded incidents of anti-social behaviour had reduced, down to 98, for the same period.

Members referred to the exclusion of hate crime from the six priorities for the Plan for 2017/18 and were reassured this was not a significant issue in the Borough. However, hate crime would be addressed if it became a concern.

RECOMMENDED: That the Community Safety Partnership Plan 2017/18, set out in Annex 1 of the report, be supported and endorsed.

MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION

CH 17/22 HOUSING SERVICES ACTIVITIES 2016-17

The Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health provided an update on the work of the Housing Service for the financial year 2016/17 and the progress on a number of initiatives was noted.

Members were advised that 155 new affordable homes were delivered in 2016/17 of which 71 were low cost home ownership, 71 affordable rent, 5 social rent and 8 discounted market sale homes. This was recognised as a strong performance in a difficult social and economic climate.

In addition, Members welcomed the development of a new domestic refuge being built within the Borough and this was due for completion early 2018.

Homelessness continued to represent a significant challenge and approaches for advice and assistance continued to increase, due in part to welfare reform. The Borough Council was managing to meet the statutory duty obligations and continued to explore alternative, cost effective solutions for temporary accommodation. These included potential options of accessing registered social landlord's stock at reduced rates and leasing from private sector landlords.

CH 17/23 UPDATE ON PUBLIC SPACE PROTECTION ORDER

Members were provided with an update on the Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO), which was approved for Tonbridge and Malling as of 12 April 2017. It was reported that the PSPO had some borough wide restrictions as well as some specific to certain locations. A copy of the PSPO restrictions within the Borough was attached at Annex 1 to the report. Members were reminded that these PSPOs replaced existing orders that were gradually being phased out.

It was noted that there were no additional officers available to enforce any breaches of the PSPO. However, key staff had received training and information on what a PSPO was and what should be done if a breach of the Order was witnessed.

CH 17/24 COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

The Director of Central Services provided an update from the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) and reported on new police staff within the Community Safety Unit, arrangements for domestic abuse commissioning and referrals, the Self Neglect Forum and the Volunteer Community Wardens.

Particular reference was made to the recent complaints of anti-social behaviour around the Town Lock area of Tonbridge. The Community Safety Unit was looking at implementing a number of actions to address this issue, including educational events and the use of Public Space Protection Order if appropriate. It was noted that police resources continued to be under extreme pressure and Kent Police might not be able to attend every incident of anti-social behaviour as attendance was subject to other priorities.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE

CH 17/25 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.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET

CH 17/26 LEISURE TRUST - REVIEW OF SERVICE FEE/BUSINESS PLAN

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

The report of the Director of Street Scene, Leisure and Technical Services brought forward a new 5 year Leisure Trust Business Plan and Service Fee from 1 April 2018. The new Service Fee generated a net annual saving to the Borough Council of £144,850 with no change to existing standards and level of service.

Members were supportive of the proposals set out in the report as the Trust would be able to expand under its own management and reflected the good working relationship between the two organisations.

RECOMMENDED: That 

- (1) the Tonbridge and Malling Leisure Trust's proposed Business Plan for 2017/2022 be approved;
- (2) the Tonbridge and Malling Leisure Trust's proposed Management Fee of zero from 1 April 2018 be agreed; and
- (3) the proposed variations to the existing Management Agreement, set out within the report, be approved and implemented from 1 April 2018.

***Referred to Cabinet**

The meeting ended at 9.29 pm