

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
ECONOMIC REGENERATION ADVISORY BOARD

09 September 2015

Report of the Chief Executive

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision (Decision may be taken by the Cabinet Member)

1 ENHANCEMENT OF LOCAL NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES

To provide an overview of progress made to date on the Local Neighbourhood Centres Programme and an indication of next steps.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Since May 2015, work has been undertaken by the Economic Regeneration Officer to take forward the neighbourhood centres programme, an initiative which seeks to provide grant support to local traders to enable them to agree and implement improvements to those centres. This work has helped to forge a strong working relationship with local traders and raise awareness of the support that the Borough Council is able to offer such small businesses. This programme has followed on from a very successful similar scheme implemented in 2014 for the Borough's larger district centres such as Borough Green, West Malling and Martins Square.

1.2 Progress to Date

1.2.1 To date, 2 local neighbourhood centres have drawn up improvement proposals and have had their proposals approved. They are in the process of implementing these improvements. These two centres are:

York Parade (Tonbridge) – following meetings with local traders in early June 2015, a number of key issues were highlighted that traders felt needed to be addressed. These were:

- Improved lighting around the precinct
- Re-painting of white lines and markings to help mark out parking spaces and re-introduce arrows and markings on road humps
- Tidying up of the green verge outside the precinct

Quotes were obtained from Kent County Council and TMBC Parking Services. Approval to proceed was granted by the Cabinet Members for Economic Regeneration and for Finance on 17 July 2015. Implementation is underway.

Little Market Row, (Leybourne) – following meetings with the local traders, the Little Market Row Management Company and Leybourne Parish Council in July 2015, the following areas for enhancement were identified:

- Anti-skateboarding measures for the parade steps
- A deep clean of the public space
- Installation of planters (maintained by traders)
- Repainting of railings
- Improvements to steps by the newsagents.

Having obtained quotes for all of these improvements, the total came to over £4,500. However, through contributions from the Management Company and in kind support from the traders, the grant requirement was reduced considerably. Approval to proceed was granted by the Cabinet Members for Economic Regeneration and for Finance on 24 July 2015. Implementation is underway.

1.2.2 In addition to the above, a number of other centres are at various stages of progression. The table below gives an overview of progress at the time of writing this report (July 2015):

Neighbourhood Centre	Issues Raised	Next Steps
Quarry Hill Road (Tonbridge)	Raised bed area next to the entrance roundabout looks tired, need to forge an identity – use of artwork/banners, tidying up of some public realm.	Meetings with traders and KCC Highways undertaken and need to review budget before progressing (see section 1.3)
Woodlands Parade (Ditton)	Concerns over upkeep of surrounding area (especially to the rear of the parade) and signage to the shops (to help build awareness amongst local people)	Support for the Community Clean Up day on 17 th August (set up by Cllr Walker). KCC Highways have appointed consultants to take forward improved signage.
Greenacres (Aylesford)	Improved signage to build awareness.	KCC Highways have appointed consultants to take forward improved signage.
Twisden Road (East Malling)	Lack of provision of disabled parking provision, poor state of repair of adjoining steps, need to repaint canopy and columns and need for a bench for elderly shoppers.	Disabled Parking Provision - in the programme for investigation and potential inclusion in a future part of the Local Parking Plan. Circle and Russett Housing have been made aware of the

		condition of steps and will report back to me shortly. TMBC Property approached about repainting work and bench.
Martin Hardie Way (Tonbridge)	Low level anti-social behaviour and parking provision/arrangements (also a concern from some traders about an expanded Co-operative and the impact on parking)	Further consultation with traders required and meeting with Parking Services to look into possible solutions to the parking issues. Need to ensure good links with the 'Shop Local' initiative.
Wateringbury	Initial meeting with Wateringbury Parish Council to take place in September 2015.	To be determined.

- 1.2.3 Due to time constraints, progress has not yet been made with Plaxtol and Hildenborough. Once work has been completed on some of the more advanced projects, then time will be freed up to take forward these two neighbourhood centres.

1.3 Possible Future Alterations

- 1.3.1 A large number of the local neighbourhood centres are, as the title suggests, relatively small scale in nature – comprising 3-5 businesses in most instances, although York Parade and Martin Hardie Way do have many more. However, Quarry Hill Road, which was originally included in the definition of a 'Local Neighbourhood Centre', does not easily fit within this category and could quite readily be considered a 'district centre' due to its scale. On this basis, it is proposed that Quarry Hill Parade now be included within the list of 'district centres' and improvements up to the value of £7,500 be made available to this centre rather than the £3,000 available to 'local neighbourhood centres'.
- 1.3.2 The additional £4,500 can be accommodated within existing budgets due to some underspends in the previous district centre grant scheme.

1.4 Legal Implications

- 1.4.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.5.1 The programme is funded through existing budgets.

1.6 Risk Assessment

1.6.1 Not applicable.

1.7 Equality Impact Assessment

1.7.1 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

1.8 Recommendations

1.8.1 That the progress in the programme be noted and the proposed increase in grant for the Quarry Hill area, as detailed in this report, **BE APPROVED**.

The Chief Executive confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

Background papers:

None

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