

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

TONBRIDGE FORUM

Monday, 25th November, 2013

Present: Cllr O C Baldock (Chairman), Cllr N J Heslop (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Mrs J A Anderson, Cllr P F Bolt and Cllr Ms V M C Branson.

Councillor Mrs Murray was also in attendance pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21

Members of the Forum: Kent County Councillor Smith, Kent Police, The Skinners Company, Tonbridge Art Group, Tonbridge Civic Society, Tonbridge Historical Society, Tonbridge Line Commuters, Tonbridge Music Club, Tonbridge Rotary Club, Tonbridge Round Table, Tonbridge Sports Association and Tonbridge Theatre and Arts Club.

Other organisations present: Tonbridge Town Team

Apologies for absence were received from Borough Councillors Allison, Ms Atkinson, Edmondston-Low, Mrs Heslop, Ms Spence and Russet Homes, Society of Friends, University of the Third Age and Women's Institute.

ACTION
BY

PART 1 - PUBLIC

TF
13/026

MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 9 September 2013 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

TF
13/027

UPDATE ON ANY ACTION IDENTIFIED IN THE LAST MINUTES.

§ Minute TF 13/020 - Town Team Initiatives

Howard Porter of the Tonbridge Town Team reported that since the launch of the loyalty card scheme on 1 October, 58 businesses had registered and were currently participating. The scheme was proving very successful and highlighted the strength of community spirit in the town.

ACTION
BY

The Town Team were pleased to announce that a special Christmas gift voucher was being developed. These would cost £10 and be available from the High Street. A full list of businesses participating was available at www.tonbridgetownteam.org.uk

TF
13/028

TONBRIDGE FORUM MEMBERSHIP

The Chairman proposed and it was agreed that the Tonbridge Town Team be confirmed as a new member of the Forum.

TF
13/029

MAPPING THE FUTURE: SETTING OUT FUTURE PROJECTS AND LAUNCH OF WEBSITE

The Chief Officer for NHS West Kent Clinical Commissioning Group (Mr Ian Ayres) set the financial context behind the mapping the futures exercise. It was reported that if delivery of health services remained unchanged there would be a widening gap between income and spend. West Kent had an ageing population that was increasing by 2.5% per year and the challenge was how to deliver more with the same amount of money.

Reference was made to the need for additional investment in community support services and mobile health care, which could prevent a need for an A and E admission being required. It was explained that the greatest savings were likely to come from reducing emergency admissions by taking proactive measures.

Members were reassured that hospital closures were not being considered.

Mr Ayres indicated that other Clinical Commissioning Groups in Kent were undertaking similar exercises and common themes and approaches were likely to be adopted. Therefore, it made sense to work closely with these Groups. It was also important to work with local authorities and other agencies, such as the voluntary sector, to streamline services.

The full presentation would be available to view on the Tonbridge and Borough Council website in due course.

The Chairman thanked Mr Ayres for his valuable contribution to the meeting.

TF
13/030

KENT POLICE UPDATE

The Chairman welcomed Inspector Hutcheon, who had recently taken over responsibility for Tonbridge, to the meeting and invited him to update on issues relating to Kent Police.

It was reported that the Christmas Festival and switching on of the lights, held on Sunday 24 November, had been a successful event with no incidents over and above normal police duties.

In the lead up to Christmas Members were warned of a potential increase in theft. Additional staff were being deployed into Tonbridge to discourage theft and opportunistic crime. Measures were also in place to increase police visibility.

Members were reminded to keep an eye on personal possessions and to be aware of distraction thefts.

Another initiative operated in the town recently was Op Pilot which involved a passive drug dog targeting areas to detect drugs. This had resulted in two arrests and a formal warning.

Extra patrols had been used to deal with a recent spate of burglaries and offenders were now awaiting trial.

Reference was made to Police Contact Points which was a mobile police station funded by the Police and Crime Commissioner to visit rural areas to provide a police presence. Unfortunately, there had been limited uptake at the present time and these were likely to be reviewed. Members suggested that communities needed time to get used to the new initiative and hoped that contact points would not be withdrawn too soon.

Finally, the next step of the comprehensive spending review was ongoing and although the final detail was still to be announced, further reductions were anticipated.

In response to a question from the floor, Inspector Hutcheon indicated that catalytic converter thefts appeared to have stopped for the time being although no arrests had been made.

The Leader of the Borough Council expressed appreciation

for the work of the PCSOs, particularly in support of the litter enforcement work undertaken by borough council staff.

The Chairman thanked Inspector Hutcheon for his contribution to the meeting.

TF
13/031

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL SERVICES UPDATE

The Kent County Council Community Engagement Manager reported on the key points of the Transformation Programme which proposed different thinking surrounding service delivery and expenditure. It was reported that residents were at the very heart of the transformation plans and services would be redesigned according to the needs of customer groups. The programme included a change to top tier management post and directorate structures.

In addition, the County Council had launched its 2014/15 budget consultation and residents and partners were invited to comment on the proposals by 13 December. Details of the consultation were available on:

www.kent.gov.uk/your_council/council_spending/budget_consultation.aspx

Reference was made to the Warm Homes scheme which provided eligible households with energy saving improvements at no cost to the resident. Members were pleased to note that the initiative was now available in Tonbridge and Malling. Further details were available from the Kent County Council website or by calling 0800 521 660

Finally, reference was made to the proposal to enlarge Slade Primary School to address a continued and significant increase in primary pupil numbers. Details of the related consultation were available on www.kent.gov.uk/consultations The deadline for responses was Friday 29 November.

Serious concern was expressed over the consultation process, particularly the lack of promotion to nearby residents and the lack of detailed information on the website. These concerns were noted and would be reported back to the consultation authors. In addition, the Chairman proposed that further discussions took place after the meeting so that the full concerns could be understood.

TF

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING SERVICES UPDATE

13/032

An update on recent events and other key points relevant to Tonbridge and Malling was provided by the Chief Executive. The headline messages included:

- Troubled Families: Members were advised that officers dealing with the delivery of this programme at a local level were based at the Borough Council offices in Kings Hill. The Royal British Legion was also developing a Military Mentoring pilot and the Chief Executive was pleased to report that this would take place in Tonbridge and Malling. This was a good example of partnership working between County and District councils.

- Christmas Festival and Lights: The success of this event demonstrated the important contribution of community groups.

- Leisure Trust: It was confirmed that the Trust was now operating the Borough Council's leisure facilities and that customers should not be aware of any change.

- Tonbridge Town Centre development: The Chief Executive thanked the many visitors who had attended the public exhibition or viewed the proposals on line. A detailed response to the comments received was currently being considered.

- Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council website: Recent developments included 'My account' which provided regular updates on a range of issues or initiatives related to a postal code area, including bad weather arrangements.

'My location' provided information on nearby interests such as current planning applications and nearest recycling points.

Members were encouraged to visit the website and register.

<https://www.tmbc.gov.uk/my-account>

The meeting ended 2120 hours