

# TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

13 September 2016

### Report of the Chief Executive

#### Part 1- Public

#### Delegated

### 1 PROPOSED SCRUTINY REVIEW PROGRAMME

To set out further topics for review by the Committee.

#### 1.1 Future Reviews

1.1.1 It is recommended that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee now undertake reviews of the following:

- A review of Christmas lighting provision and High Street flower displays;
- A review of the future of the Gibson Building.

#### 1.2 Christmas Lighting and Flower Displays

1.2.1 The Cabinet has recently considered a report regarding the introduction of 'Special Expenses' which aims to achieve fairer charging for a number of services across the Borough. A policy to take this initiative forward is reported elsewhere on this agenda.

1.2.2 The Cabinet considered a number of services which might appropriately be included in the Special Expenses policy. Whilst Christmas lighting arrangements and High Street flower displays were viewed as potential candidates for inclusion given the different arrangements currently in place in Tonbridge and the parished areas, the Cabinet resolved that these items should not be included and that these issues should be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for further review.

1.2.3 Currently, the Council's 2016/17 budget for providing Christmas lighting (which it meets in full) is £16,000pa with on-costs of £5,200. The equipment is owned by the Council and this attracts a further annual renewals cost of c£4,300pa. For the parished area of the Borough, local lighting schemes are delivered by local traders groups and/or Parish Councils. The Council currently contributes a 50% grant to each group with the other 50% being met locally. The groups currently involved in the grant scheme are Martin Square Traders Association, Snodland Chamber of Commerce, Borough Green Christmas Lights Committee, Wrotham Christmas

Lights Committee, Hadlow Parish Council, East Peckham Parish Council, and Aylesford Parish Council. The annual budget to provide these annual grants total £16,000 with on-costs of £1,000. The review will need to involve consultation with the above groups and engagement with Tonbridge traders and the Tonbridge Town Team.

- 1.2.4 The Council's 2016/17 budget for floral displays in Tonbridge High Street is £5,000 plus some on-costs. Additional costs may be incurred in some years if replacement baskets are needed. Parish Councils are responsible for the provision of such displays elsewhere in the Borough.
- 1.2.5 The key issues to address via the review are whether the current grant arrangements for the parished area of the Borough remain appropriate and the extent to which local traders in Tonbridge could help fund the Christmas lights and High Street floral display for the town to achieve greater equity across the Borough.

### **1.3 Review of the Gibson Building**

- 1.3.1 As part of the Council's savings and transformation strategy, we are currently reviewing a number of properties we own, both to achieve savings, generate capital receipts and achieve more efficient ways of working. A recent example of this approach has been the relocation of Citizens' Advice to Tonbridge Castle from their former premises the Council owns at River Walk and the relocation of a private business (also previously located at River Walk) to the Leader's former office in the Gibson Building.
- 1.3.2 As suggested at the previous Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting, it would now be timely to investigate wider options for the Gibson Building (East and West) given that this is our most significant property asset. To inform this work, we will be commissioning an options review from a property consultant to inform the following:
- options available to the Council for future use of both Gibson (East) and (West) including continued use, freehold disposal or leasehold disposal taking into account market viability and any current constraints including the Grade 2 listing of Gibson (West);
  - assessment of likely office space required to accommodate around 240 full staff and likely costs assuming a location either at Kings Hill or Tonbridge.

### **1.4 Scrutiny Review Arrangements**

- 1.4.1 It is suggested that two separate informal Panels, drawn from the membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, should be established to progress these reviews. Each panel would be chaired by a Vice-Chairman of the Committee with the Chairman attending both panels.

1.4.2 The suggested panel memberships are as follows:

Christmas Lighting/Flower Displays

Sarah Spence (Chairman)

Cllr Mrs J A Anderson  
 Cllr M C Base  
 Cllr P F Bolt  
 Cllr J L Botten  
 Cllr R W Dalton  
 Cllr M Taylor  
 Cllr F G Tombolis

Gibson Building

Anita Oakley (Chairman)

Cllr Ms J A Atkinson  
 Cllr T I B Cannon  
 Cllr Mrs S M Hall  
 Cllr S R J Jessel  
 Cllr Mrs F A Kemp  
 Cllr Mrs S L Luck  
 Cllr P J Montague  
 Cllr T C Walker

1.4.3 If any Member would like to swap Panels, they are invited to discuss this with the Chief Corporate Policy Officer. All members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be sent papers for both panels. These will also be available on tablets.

1.4.4 There is a need to progress work on the Christmas Lighting/Flower Displays to inform the budget setting process for 2017/18. Findings of the Panel will therefore need to be reported to the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2017. A date for the first panel meeting has been set for **Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> October, 6.30pm in the Committee Room.**

1.4.5 For the Gibson Building review, a slightly longer timescale is appropriate. The consultant's review of options needs to be completed first. The Panel will then be invited to review its conclusions and agree its recommendations. To give sufficient time for the options work to be undertaken and then assessed by Officers, a date of the first meeting of the Panel has been set for **Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> November, 6.30pm in the Committee Room.**

## 1.5 Legal Implications

1.5.1 None.

**1.6 Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

1.6.1 These issues will be considered at the Panel meetings.

**1.7 Risk Assessment**

1.7.1 As above.

**1.8 Equality Impact Assessment**

1.8.1 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.

**1.9 Recommendations**

1.9.1 That the arrangements for the reviews of Christmas Lighting/High Street floral displays and the future of the Gibson Building, a set out in the report, **BE ENDORSED.**

Background papers:

Nil

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Chief Corporate Policy Officer

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Chief Executive