

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

LEISURE and ARTS ADVISORY BOARD

12 March 2014

Report of the Director of Street Scene and Leisure

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 MEDWAY VALLEY COUNTRYSIDE PARTNERSHIP

Summary

This report provides Members with a brief introduction to the Medway Valley Countryside Partnership and updates on progress with work undertaken by the partnership in 2013/14.

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Medway Valley Countryside Partnership is one of seven not-for-profit Partnerships across Kent and the London Borough of Bexley providing a countywide Countryside Management service. The Partnership has continued to develop its service in championing environmental improvement and community engagement since its establishment in 1988 across the boroughs of Tonbridge and Malling and Maidstone. The team currently consists of four members of staff (Partnership Manager, Senior Partnership Officer and two Officers). There is shared management with the North West Kent Countryside Partnership.

1.1.2 Supporting the Partnership are over 65 volunteers undertaking practical, field and office work. So far in the 2013/14 financial year 530 practical volunteer days have been delivered in the Tonbridge and Malling area by the Medway Valley Countryside Partnership. Training opportunities are also provided through student placements (work experience through to graduate level). The key aims of the Partnership are to:

- Create, Sustain and Enhance local Landscape & Biodiversity
- Develop, manage and support community-based environmental initiatives
- Develop, and promote life-long outdoor learning
- Encourage and enhance greater access in the outdoors and relating health benefits

1.2 Borough Council Support

- 1.2.1 The Borough Council has financially supported the work of Medway Valley Countryside Partnership as a Core Funding member since its establishment. Currently this Council contributes £6,000 per annum towards the core funding of the Partnership and this is supported by other core funding contributions from Maidstone Borough Council (£6,000) and Kent County Council (£9,000). The Borough Council has also allocated £4,000 within its revenue budget to support other project work undertaken by the Partnership in the Borough. The Environment Agency has provided project funding of £91,500 for Water Framework Directive delivery (staffing, consultancy and capital works) for 2013/14.
- 1.2.2 This Council's core contribution of £6,000 supports the Partnership's operation and allows it to develop, administer and deliver projects. The funding, therefore, supports salaries, IT and other essentials, such as tools and machinery. This contribution is essential to the existence of the Medway Valley Countryside Partnership and allows it to attract external funding and deliver projects within the Borough.

1.3 2013/14 Partnership Update

- 1.3.1 An update of activities undertaken within the Borough by the Partnership over the past year has been provided by the Partnership Manager, Caroline Drewett, and can be found at **[Annex 1]**. Caroline will be attending the meeting to present the update and this will also provide Members with an opportunity to raise any questions.

1.4 Legal Implications

- 1.4.1 All partners, including Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council are currently signed up to a Memorandum of Agreement until July 2014.

1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.5.1 All activities carried out have been implemented through existing identified budgets. The Partnership has also been successful in attracting significant additional external funding in previous years to support projects in the Borough. It can be seen from the report that the current arrangement provides excellent value for money.

1.6 Risk Assessment

- 1.6.1 All activities carried out by the Partnership have/will be subject to the provision of appropriate risk assessments.

Background papers: Nil

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