

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
COMMUNITIES and HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

13 November 2017

Report of the Chief Executive

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT WORK – UPDATE ON PROGRESS

To provide an update on community development work taking place in the Borough's three priority communities.

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 Nationally, Tonbridge and Malling is one of the most prosperous boroughs in the country, however this advantage is not shared equally across the borough and there are some communities where real disadvantage persists. The communities of East Malling, Snodland and Trench ward in Tonbridge, are the most deprived areas of the borough, meaning that generally a higher number of people living in these areas have lower incomes, less employment and poorer health than communities elsewhere in the borough.
- 1.1.2 In response to this, community development partnerships have been created involving a range of agencies, for each of the three areas. Each partnership operates slightly differently depending on the nature of the issues raised and the support available for each area.

1.2 East Malling

- 1.2.1 Angela Borsos has been the local community worker in East Malling for many years, with much of the work focused on the residents of the Stepstile and Winterfield estates. The Borough Council currently part funds this post, with support from East Malling and Larkfield Parish Council.
- 1.2.2 Engagement with the community in East Malling is focused around activities in the East Malling Centre. Angela works with partner agencies to coordinate activity at the centre including organising community days and working to engage with residents to tackle health issues, promote employment, build community cohesion, raise aspirations and promote positive activities for children and young people.
- 1.2.3 The current focus for East Malling going forward will be to tackle mental health issues. A sub-group from the main partnership has formed to engage with Mind

and other local providers including local GP practices to assess the level of need as the partnership feels this is an ever increasing barrier for many people locally. The partnership wants to engage more local providers of mental health services to enhance the provision available in East Malling.

1.3 Trench

- 1.3.1 The Trench Partnership is chaired by Cllr Pam Bates and enjoys extensive support from local organisations including the Tonbridge Baptist Church, Hugh Christie Technology College, Tonbridge Angels FC, and Circle Housing. Further support is provided by KCC Early Help and Kent Police. The Borough Council currently funds a community worker for the Trench area, who co-ordinates local activities and further funding has been provided by a KCC Member grant for 2017/18 to extend that role.
- 1.3.2 Over the past year, the main focus of the Partnership has been the delivery of a volunteer project to support local residents with low level mental health issues. It was known that a number of residents lacked confidence, had low self-esteem, had become isolated and rarely left their homes. They therefore did not engage with any formal mainstream support.
- 1.3.3 The 'Listening Ear' project was therefore launched to address these issues and this has proved to be a very successful locally-run initiative. Led by volunteers from the Partnership, informal drop-in events are now running in local venues which are promoted by newsletters and word of mouth. A range of activities are provided at the drop-ins including cookery, work at a local allotment and arts and crafts to build confidence and informally support those who attend. The group have been able to help attendees with a range of issues including health, housing issues and benefits. Referrals to more formal support are also made. 12 local residents have been supported to date and further promotion via social media is being undertaken to widen the numbers attending.
- 1.3.4 Future objectives of the Partnership are focusing on tackling two additional priorities: support for those who are currently workless; and promoting better health/active lifestyles. Sub groups have been established to take forward these important initiatives. In addition, the Partnership has recently formed a shadow community group and are seeking to apply to be a formal 'Community Interest Company' (CIC) in the near future. This will enable a range of additional funding opportunities to be explored which are only available to such formal groups.

1.4 Snodland

- 1.4.1 There has been a long running Snodland Partnership in place for the town with funding from a number of partners. This has focused on supporting good causes within the community.

- 1.4.2 More recently a Snodland Community Development Partnership has been established to address wider community needs similar to those addressed in East Malling and Trench.
- 1.4.3 The Snodland CDP has developed an action plan focusing on addressing poor health, job opportunities, family debt issues, crime and ASB and community engagement. A key project recently developed has focused on addressing issues of low level mental health. This has involved direct liaison with the local GP practice to address issues concerning frequent attenders to the practice, many of whom need ongoing support for mental health problems. A new service has therefore been developed to address this key issue via the 'Live Well' programme a commissioned service delivered locally by Shaw Trust. Using the concept of "social prescribing", GPs are now able to refer relevant patients direct to the programme who then receive one to one support from a dedicated councillor. Early results indicate positive outcomes are being achieved.
- 1.4.4 In addition to this initiative, the Partnership is seeking to address work readiness issues in conjunction with Job Centre Plus and other partners and the Borough Council's' Health Improvement Team is promoting a range of complementary activities aimed at supporting healthy lifestyles via the "One You" programme, including healthy walks, adult and family weight programmes and local exercise classes.

1.5 Legal Implications

- 1.5.1 N/A

1.6 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.6.1 The Borough Council has made budget provision of £15,000 to cover the part time salary costs of the two Community Development posts for East Malling and Trench. In addition, East Malling and Larkfield PC commit £5,000 towards the post at East Malling.

1.7 Risk Assessment

- 1.7.1 N/A

Background papers:

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Nil

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