

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
COMMUNITIES and HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

25 February 2020

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 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

To provide an update on community development work taking place in the Borough's three priority communities and confirm support to continue this in 2020/21.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Community Partnerships exist in three areas of the Borough; Trench, East Malling and Snodland. Nationally, Tonbridge and Malling is considered one of the most prosperous borough's in the country, however within these three communities real disadvantage persists. In these areas, there are generally higher numbers of people living on lower incomes, less employment and poorer health than in other areas of the borough. For these reasons Community Partnerships have existed for a number of years now, to help tackle the issues and reduce inequality.

1.1.2 The 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 Trench

1.2.1 The Trench Community Partnership (TN10) enjoys extensive support from local organisations including Tonbridge Baptist Church, Hugh Christie Technology College, Tonbridge Angels FC, KCC Early Help and Kent Police. The Borough Council currently funds a community worker for the Trench area, who co-ordinates local activities.

1.2.2 Over the last year, the main focus of the Partnership has been projects to support local residents with low level mental health issues. Projects have been underway to support residents who lack confidence, have low self-esteem, had become isolated and rarely left their homes. They therefore did not engage with any formal mainstream support.

- 1.2.3 In addition to coffee mornings and tea afternoons, there is a community allotment project, which people can attend and have their own small plot and a successful “Listening Ear” project. The Listening Ear project aims to reduce social isolation, anxiety and confidence issues by engaging participants in a range of informal drop in sessions. A range of activities are provided, including cookery, I.T. sessions, quizzes and craft projects.

1.3 East Malling

- 1.3.1 A Community Worker is delivering projects within East Malling and assisting with the organisation of the Partnership. The Council part funds this post with support from East Malling and Larkfield Parish Council.
- 1.3.2 Community engagement within East Malling is focussed around activities in the East Malling Centre. Working with the Partners on the group, over the last year there have been several community days aimed at tackling health issues, promoting employment, building community cohesion, raising aspirations and promoting positive activities for children and young people.
- 1.3.3 The focus for the East Malling Partnership group going forward will be to tackle mental health issues. The group are currently trying to establish a “Wellbeing Café” which would replicate the “Listening Ear” approach adopted in Trench. This would be a monthly drop – in session, with free refreshments to those who came along and a variety of activities and workshops. Partner agencies have pledged support in various ways, such as staff attending the sessions and/or providing resources. The Wellbeing Café would offer a combination of light relief, practical support, training, fun, practical activities and guidance.

1.4 Snodland

- 1.4.1 The Snodland Community Development Partnership addresses community need, similar to East Malling and Trench, however there hasn't been a dedicated community worker in Snodland for some years now. There is a long running Snodland Partnership for the town, with funding from a number of partners, which has ensured that projects and initiatives have continued.
- 1.4.2 A key project has focussed on addressing issues of mental health in Snodland. This has involved direct liaison with the local GP practice who have been able to refer people to various programmes. The most recent initiative was the “Be Me” programme, where girls aged 12 – 15 years were referred by the GP to take part in a supported programme to address confidence and self-esteem issues. The feedback from the attendees and the GP regarding this programme have been overwhelmingly positive and partners have now agreed to part fund additional programmes targeting different profile groups.

1.5 Legal Implications

- 1.5.1 None

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 Trench and East Malling for 2020/21. 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

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 Council continue to **SUPPORT** Community Development Partnerships in each of the priority communities.

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:

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Nil

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Chief Executive