

# TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

18 June 2020

### Report of the Chief Executive

#### Part 1- Public

#### Delegated

### 1 REVISED OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PROGRAMME

To provide an opportunity for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to re-scope their work programme aligned to the recovery phase of the Covid-19 pandemic.

#### 1.1 Background

1.1.1 Members will be aware that in light of the Council's role in the emergency response to Covid-19, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee schedule was placed on hold. As the lockdown situation begins to ease and planning for the recovery phase begins, it is now considered an appropriate time to re-establish a programme of meetings for this Committee.

#### 1.2 Topics previously identified on the work programme

1.2.1 To recap, the following topics had been assigned to the work programme for this committee:

- Review of the Council's Public Health Function
- Review of Disabled Facilities Grants and Hospital Discharge Scheme
- Review of Community Safety and CCTV
- Review of Anti-Social Behaviour in Housing Association Properties
- Review of Council Marketing (website/social media)
- Review of Grant Support to Voluntary Sector Organisations and Groups

1.2.2 Whilst work to scrutinise some of the above topics was already underway, the Covid-19 crisis has had a huge impact on work streams for all areas of the Council in addition to dramatically changing the landscape for our Community. It is accepted that a return to a "business as usual" approach is unlikely and instead

the Council needs to focus on a “new normal”. With this in mind, the Committee may wish to reconsider the themes outlined above in 1.2.1. as follows:

- 1.2.3 Review of the Council’s Public Health Function: This review was underway and focussed particularly on the role of the “One You” health team. At the time of the initial Scoping Report, options were being explored to alter the way the service was delivered in our community, to provide efficiency savings and improved ways of working. Throughout the pandemic, the One You team has taken on a pivotal role in the emergency response. The team are trained and experienced with knowledge of local health support networks. They have been well placed to support the work of our Community Hub, assisting the most vulnerable residents throughout the “lockdown” phase. Given their existing workload and the likely necessity to be able to provide health based support to residents throughout the recovery phase, it does not now feel like an appropriate time to make any changes to this service. However, the principle of developing the service model through improved ways of working, including changes to IT systems and virtual delivery of services, is still considered to have huge potential benefits including improved outcomes and efficiency savings. As such, officers intend to continue to work with KCC Public Health and West Kent partner boroughs to look at likely future grant levels and operating models. This work will be reported in due course to the Communities and Housing Advisory Board.
- 1.2.4 Review of Disabled Facilities Grants and Hospital Discharge Scheme: Again this review was underway, with much of the focus from the initial Scoping Report looking into the costs surrounding the Hospital Discharge Scheme. As this review wasn’t concluded, it was agreed that the Hospital Discharge Scheme and associated Handypersons scheme be extended until the end of the financial year. This was an officer decision as it fell within the existing approved revenue budget. Throughout the health emergency, many more patients have been discharged from hospital and were able to access additional support through both of these schemes. As such, officers will be considering the Better Care Fund allocation for 2020/21, which has remained at a similar level to the last 3 years despite an expected drop, to consider whether these schemes can continue to be funded beyond the end of 2020/21.
- 1.2.5 Review of Community Safety and CCTV: This review was underway and Members had agreed that in respect of the Community Safety Partnership growth to the Borough Council’s budget for 2019/20 and 2020/21 should be accepted and that the provision of the Community Safety Services should be retained at the current level of resource. In relation to CCTV, a decision regarding the level of operation was deferred pending the outcome of letters sent to the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and Clarion Housing regarding their levels of financial contribution towards both the operation of CCTV and the level of contribution to the Community Safety Unit. Prior to the pandemic, these responses were to be reported to Cabinet before the Overview and Scrutiny Committee can consider this further.

- 1.2.6 Review of Anti-Social Behaviour in Housing Association Properties: This review had not yet commenced prior to the Covid-19 emergency and is not now considered a priority. Given the current situation and the fact that this review will require input from relevant Housing Associations, it is suggested that this review be deferred until 2021, with a revised scope to include wider issues that impact tenants.
- 1.2.7 Review of Council Marketing: This review had not yet commenced and was due to focus on the website and social media. The Committee may consider it more appropriate to defer this review to later in the year and combine with a wider review of our Covid 19 response and the role of media?
- 1.2.8 Review of Grant Support to Voluntary Sector organisations and groups: This review was partially underway. Decisions had been taken in regard to some Key Voluntary Sector organisations, who opted to take a reduced grant, in favour of the security of four year funding. This has now been completed, for those organisations who chose this offer. Two remaining organisations - Age UK Sevenoaks and Tonbridge and Citizens Advice North and West Kent (CANWK) opted to participate in a more detailed review of their operation by this Committee. Given the significant financial difficulties that we know the voluntary sector will now be faced with, it does not seem appropriate to put forward any options to reduce grants. A wider review around recovery for the voluntary sector may be more appropriate?
- 1.2.9 Going forward, it is suggested that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee re-scope their programme of work aligned to the three themes adopted by the Council to provide a framework for the recovery phase:
- Review – how did we respond to the pandemic emergency and what have we learnt from this
  - Re-orientation – how might we re-position the Council's finances and operations to be fit for purpose in the “new normal”
  - Recovery – how to work with others to encourage recovery in our communities and economy, in adapting to both the transition period and into the “new normal”
- 1.2.10 Focusing on Review, Re-orientation and Recovery, future reviews could include an investigation into the Council response to Covid-19. Members may wish to consider the following: the Community Hub set up, the discretionary business support grants, the role of media and communications, the role of the One You health team to support recovery, homeworking and virtual meetings.

### **1.3 Legal Implications**

- 1.3.1 None.

## 1.4 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.4.1 The Covid-19 emergency has had huge ramifications on the Council's budget. Finance implications surrounding any of the suggested review topics will need to be highlighted and assessed in detail as topics are reviewed by the Committee.

## 1.5 Risk Assessment

- 1.5.1 N/A

## 1.6 Equality Impact Assessment

- 1.6.1 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.

## 1.7 Recommendations

In respect of each of the original reviews outlined in 1.2.1, Members **ADOPT** the following amendments;

- 1.7.1 Review of the Councils Public Health Function – to focus on the role of the “One You” health team throughout the Covid-19 crisis and future support that can be offered by this team to aid the recovery process
- 1.7.2 Disabled Facilities Grants /Hospital Discharge Scheme – to be deferred pending consideration of the Better Care Fund allocation for 2020/21
- 1.7.3 Review of Community Safety and CCTV – to be deferred pending further consideration by Cabinet
- 1.7.4 Review of Anti-Social Behaviour in Housing Association Properties – defer this review with a revised scope to also include wider issues that impact tenants.
- 1.7.5 Review of Council Marketing/Media – Consider this topic as part of a wider review of the Council's response to the pandemic
- 1.7.6 Review of Grant Support to Voluntary Sector organisations and groups– Consider this topic as part of a wider review focussing on recovery for the voluntary sector

In respect of future reviews, Members **AGREE** the following;

- 1.7.7 Bring forward a revised programme of meetings which focus on Review, Re-orientation and Recovery and include the following topics:
- Community Hub
  - Business Support
  - Recovery for the Voluntary and Community Sector

- Media and Communications
- One You health team – recovery support
- Homeworking and virtual meetings

Background papers:

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Nil

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