

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

03 December 2020

Report of the Chief Executive

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet

1 RECOVERY FOR THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR

This report provides an update to the previous scoping report with updates to be provided by a number of speakers who will be attending the meeting.

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 The scoping report which was discussed at the previous Overview and Scrutiny Committee in October 2020, recognised the huge impact of the pandemic and the fact that the voluntary and community sector had been particularly hard hit. Unfortunately as we go through a second set of national restrictions, difficulties are likely to be compounded and we know that there will be challenging times ahead as the sector continues to offer services to support residents.
- 1.1.2 It was agreed at the previous meeting that the Committee would hear presentations from three speakers to provide a greater insight into the issues they are facing. Most organisations have had to adapt their core offer to continue to deliver services and support the people who need them. It will be useful to hear how this has been achieved, the likelihood that new ways of working will continue post pandemic and if there are any significant issues.

1.2 Presentations from Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations

- 1.2.1 We have invited three organisations to attend the meeting; Kent Community Foundation, West Kent Mind and Citizens Advice North and West Kent (CANWK). The presentations will identify the services being provided, highlight how they have been affected by the pandemic and how they have adapted their service accordingly.
- 1.2.2 Josephine McCartney is the Chief Executive of Kent Community Foundation (KCF) and also chairs the “Voluntary and Community Sector Recovery Cell”. An updated Action Plan from the Voluntary Sector Recovery Group is included as Annex 1 to this report. KCF have recently undertaken a survey of voluntary sector organisations and the findings include details of a potential overall shortfall in

income by March 2021 of 27% or £135m. Significant challenges face the sector and KCF will be leading a new Voluntary Sector Steering Group for Kent.

- 1.2.3 Stevie Rice is Chief Executive of West Kent Mind and is also a member of the Recovery Cell. The increase in stress, anxiety and mental health issues have been well documented over the past few months. West Kent Mind transferred all of their face to face services to online and telephone support and since April attendances in the support groups has increased by 142%. The presentation that Stevie will be giving at this meeting will outline how WK Mind have navigated their way through Covid-19 to date, the impact on mental health and how they are planning for the future.
- 1.2.4 Angela Newey is the Chief Executive of CANWK which is one of the key voluntary sector bodies supported by the Council. Annex 2 provides an update from the CAB which illustrates the challenges of adapting the service to offer support via telephone and email. It is noted that in some respects the changes have been beneficial and some residents have found the new ways of working more accessible. This is particularly relevant for those in the north of the borough who previously would have had more difficulty accessing a face to face service. The changes to the service do not seem to have prevented people accessing support and it is noted that the organisation feels the new approach is more efficient.

Legal Implications

- 1.2.5 None

1.3 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.3.1 Emergency Assistance Grants – as mentioned in the previous report, the Council received Government financial support in the form of a “Local Emergency Assistance Grant”. For Tonbridge and Malling the allocation was £47,355.61. This (aside from a reserve balance of £3,748.61) has now been allocated to local voluntary and community sector organisations who are offering ongoing support to assist vulnerable households.
- 1.3.2 At the time of writing it is unclear if the Government will be providing funding to specifically support the voluntary sector. We continue to receive updates and clarification of funding streams and will provide an update at the meeting should the scenario change.

1.4 Risk Assessment

- 1.4.1 N/A

1.5 Equality Impact Assessment

- 1.5.1 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.

1.6 Policy Considerations

1.6.1 Business Continuity/Resilience

1.6.2 Community

1.7 Recommendations

1.7.1 That the Council continues to work with voluntary and community Sector organisations, developing opportunities to support the sector and explore new opportunities to provide assistance where appropriate.

Background papers:

contact: Gill Fox

Nil

Julie Beilby
Chief Executive