

## TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

### TONBRIDGE FORUM

**Monday, 8th September, 2014**

**Present:** Cllr O C Baldock (Chairman), Cllr N J Heslop (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Ms J A Atkinson, Cllr P F Bolt, Cllr Ms V M C Branson, Cllr Miss J R L Elks, Cllr Mrs M F Heslop and Cllr C Smith.

Together with representatives from Kent Police (Tonbridge), Skinners Company, Tonbridge Art Group, Tonbridge District Scout Council, Tonbridge Historical Society, Tonbridge Music Club and Women's Institute

Councillors Mrs P Bates and M R Rhodes were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A W Allison, Mrs J A Anderson, Ms S V Spence and D J Trice, County Councillor R Long, Kent Fire and Rescue Service, Society of Friends, Tonbridge Line Commuters, Tonbridge Rotary Club and Tonbridge Sports Association

#### **TF 14/15 CHAIRMANS ANNOUNCEMENT**

The Chairman referred to the sad news regarding the recent death of Mr Russell Dorling and paid tribute to his enthusiasm and contribution to the Tonbridge Forum. Mr Dorling was also a former Mayor of Tonbridge and Malling and had served as a Borough Councillor.

Condolences were passed to Mr Dorling's family and friends.

#### **TF 14/16 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the meeting held on 30 June 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### **TF 14/17 UPDATE ON ANY ACTION IDENTIFIED IN THE LAST MINUTES**

There were no actions identified.

#### **TF 14/18 PRESENTATION FROM SEVENOAKS MIND**

The Chief Executive of Sevenoaks Mind (Ms Jill Roberts) explained that the organisation was one of over 180 local Mind associations which were affiliated to the national charity. The organisation was the leading mental health charity in England and Wales and offered a range of activities and groups to support people with different mental health problems, help them move forward, make new friends and rebuild skills and confidence. It was indicated that stigma and discrimination

associated with mental health remained significant and it was essential to tackle this as it prevented people from seeking help.

A number of services and initiatives offering mental health and wellbeing support were planned for Tonbridge and to reflect this cross boundary working the organisation would be renamed as West Kent Mind.

Advice and support was offered in a confidential environment. In recognition of the important link between physical and mental wellbeing health trainers, a team of NHS professionals, worked with local communities to help people make positive lifestyle changes to improve long term health and wellbeing. These included healthy eating and weight programmes and advice on stopping smoking.

Training could be provided to give everyone the knowledge and confidence to recognise signs of mental health problems, encourage some to seek the right help and to reduce the stigma around mental illness. Visits to local schools had taken place as it was important for young people to recognise the signs of mental health.

Further details of community groups, training and support courses were available on the website [www.sevenoaksareamind](http://www.sevenoaksareamind)

Members were advised that the organisation offered small grants to sufferers and/or carers of £5,000 across Kent to promote personal development of those directly, or indirectly, affected by severe or persistent mental health problems.

Finally, particular reference was made to World Mental Health Day on 10 October 2014 where there would be local event in Tonbridge arranged in conjunction with local authorities.

In response to a question from the floor on how to address the stigma attached to mental health, it was felt that meaningful conversation with a sufferer could make a difference in helping other people understand. The importance of volunteer staff in supporting community events and talking to people was extremely valuable to the charity and their ongoing work.

## **TF 14/19 KENT COUNTY COUNCIL SERVICES UPDATE**

The Kent County Council Community Engagement Manager referred to the ongoing transformation agenda and advised that Phase 1 reviews were nearing completion. Significant budgets savings had been achieved and Phase 2 reviews were due to commence shortly.

It was reported that the Care Act 2014 introduced major changes to adult social care from April 2015, although some of the key changes would not come into effect until April 2016. Some of the benefits included clearer financial arrangements, better information and advice,

improved support for carers and greater choice of services. It was reported that local authorities would have legal duties to provide information and advocacy to prevent care needs; together with powers to delegate social care functions to another organisation, except safeguarding, decisions on charging and integration.

The Kent County Council would arrange a number of engagement and briefing opportunities over the next six months to raise awareness of the changes to partners and residents. A programme of events was being prepared, including workshops and presentations, and any ideas were welcomed and invited.

Finally, Members were advised that the new Member Grant Scheme was now open and more details were available from local County Members or from the Community Engagement Manager ([james.harman@kent.gov.uk](mailto:james.harman@kent.gov.uk))

With regard to the superfast broadband initiative (the Kent and Medway project) the Chairman asked when this would reach rural communities such as Hadlow and East and West Peckham. The schedule of works for the borough was unknown and the Community Engagement Manager offered to pursue this with relevant officers and also to clarify which areas superfast broadband might not reach.

Members asked for further information on the 'befriending' initiative aimed to combat loneliness and the Community Engagement Manager offered to invite a representative to the Tonbridge Forum where the issue could be discussed in more detail.

#### **TF 14/20 KENT POLICE UPDATE**

Inspector Hutcheon, Community Safety Manager, provided an overview of the achievements of Kent Police and recent crime trends since the last meeting of the Forum in June.

Reference was made to a new way of recording using 'anticipated', or estimated, levels of crime taking account of seasonal trends and peaks and troughs over a 5 year period. This type of analysis proved useful in understanding the reasons behind causes of crime, informed where to direct resources and focused on a longer term strategy.

Violent crime on people was lower than 'anticipated' although burglary from a dwelling represented a slight increase. However, Members were advised that all crime within Tonbridge and Malling continued to reduce although the position was getting more difficult to maintain. The overall position remained positive but Kent Police recognised that they could not be complacent.

The strategic principles of the recent Kent Police restructure were set out and included a focus on maximising officers in frontline roles,

reducing unnecessary demand and retaining a reactive and proactive capability to tackle crime. It was reported that Tonbridge remained a main reporting station and the Community Safety Unit, based at Kings Hill, was the 'hub' of local policing activity. Further savings were likely to be necessary as a result of continued financial monitoring and remodelling.

Successful recent initiatives within the Borough included Operation Horizon, tackling nuisance vehicles at Oakdene Café in Wrotham; crime prevention measures and promotion at Sainsbury; Police Contact Points hosting a range of initiatives such as bike marking; Operation Gear, tackling criminals using the rail network and a multi-agency Water Safety Day of Action to raise public awareness at Town Lock.

Reference was made to the DVLA changes to the taxing of vehicles, which came into force on 1 October 2014, and the Forum was advised that members of the public could search on the DVLA website to check if vehicles were taxed and/or insured. It was recommended that the best way to access the website was via [www.you.gov.uk](http://www.you.gov.uk) as this would ensure that a legal site was used.

In response to a question, it was indicated that crime related to scrap metal had fallen possibly due to the lower value of materials. The Forum was reminded that it was a legitimate trade, licensed by local authorities and monitored and policed by the Borough Council and Kent Police.

#### **TF 14/21 TONBRIDGE AND MALLING SERVICES UPDATE**

The Director of Street Scene and Leisure provided an update on key points relevant to Tonbridge and Malling. The headline messages included:

- Community Enhancement Fund

The Borough Council had launched a new round of funding aimed at supporting projects from community groups. The deadline for submissions was now closed and Members of the Council would consider the applications later this month. However, funding would be awarded for one-off purchases or projects.

The excellent job and valuable role that local organisations and volunteer groups provided was recognised by the Borough Council.

- South East Local Enterprise Partnership funding awards

The Borough Council had recently submitted bids for the Regional Growth Fund and had been successful in securing funding for two key local projects:

- (1) Improvements to Junction 4 on the M20 (£2.19M)

- (2) Tonbridge town centre High Street improvements (£2.37M), which could now proceed to the detailed design stage.

- Healthy Living

A range of health improvement programmes was delivered by the Borough Council's Healthy Living Team, such as adult weight management and family based healthy lifestyle programmes. Many of these initiatives were held at the Angel Centre and Larkfield Leisure Centre.

Details of all programmes were available online.

- Christmas Refuse and Recycling Collection Arrangements

It was reported that the majority of residents would see no change to their regular service. However, those who had a Thursday collection, due to Christmas and New Year's Day falling on that day, would experience a temporary suspension of their green waste service. Details would be communicated to residents via the website, a calendar delivered during October and the festive bin hangers delivered in December.

In addition the current street monitor guidance for use by local organisations and the wider community in reporting a range of street scene related issues was in the process of being updated and would help maximise use of online reporting systems.

- Housing

It was announced that for the period 2015/18 over £7 million of capital grant had been allocated to the Borough Council to provide affordable housing in Tonbridge and Malling. This was the highest level obtained for any local authority in Kent and reflected the work with partners in bidding for schemes.

- Tonbridge Case Medieval Fair

This was a family friendly event and was now in its seventh year. There was no charge to attend and it ran from 10 – 5 on Saturday 13 and Sunday 14 September.

- Tonbridge Town Team's Dragon Boat Race

This was arranged for Sunday 14 September and this year there were 13 teams taking part including organisations such as Tonbridge Round Table, Tonbridge Rock Choir, Tonbridge School, Tonbridge Juddians and the Sevenoaks and Tonbridge Concert Band.

- Heritage Open Days

Events celebrating England's architecture and culture would take place during the weekend of 13 and 14 September. Further information could be found online at [www.tmbc.gov.uk](http://www.tmbc.gov.uk)

- Tonbridge Memorial Garden

The work on the Memorial Garden was nearing completion and a formal opening was arranged for 22 September 2014.

- Avebury Avenue Bridge

This was due for full replacement and access over the current bridge was now closed for health and safety issues. Work was due to start on site in early October and anticipated to take up to seven weeks. Members were reassured that regular dialogue continued with the Environment Agency so that any flood improvement work in the area would be co-ordinated.

On behalf of Tonbridge Rotary, Members were reminded that the Tonbridge half marathon would be held on 28 September. It was also noted that Tonbridge Park Run continued free of charge every weekend.

In addition, Members were advised that the Royal Mail were operating a pilot Sunday opening at the Tonbridge sorting office between 12 – 4 for the collection of parcels.

#### **TF 14/22 TONBRIDGE AND MALLING SENIORS FORUM**

The Tonbridge and Malling Seniors (TAMS) Forum provided a brief update on a number of local events for those aged 50 or over. These were free of charge and offered information and advice on health, benefits, housing and local clubs and societies. A number of promotional leaflets were available for collection at the end of the meeting.

TAMS was run by a team of volunteers and meetings took place at the Age UK hall in Bradford Street, Tonbridge. Representatives from local hospices would be speaking on 26 September, with Kent Fire and Rescue, Kent Police and the Environment Agency speaking on 28 November and anyone was welcome to attend.

Finally, the organisation was aware that many small community groups might require funding support and this was being explored further.

The meeting ended at 9.00 pm