

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

11 September 2024

Report of the Chief Executive

Part 1- Public

Delegated

1 SCOPING REPORT – REVIEW OF TONBRIDGE COMMUNITY FORUM

1.1 Background

1.1.1 The former Chair of Tonbridge Community Forum requested that a review be undertaken in relation to the venue and operation of Tonbridge Community Forum. This has been raised at a previous Tonbridge Community Forum meeting and partner organisation (who were present), agreed with the principle of looking at options for change.

1.1.2 Suggestions put to Forum members, from the former Chair were as follows:

- How often meetings take place
- Should all meetings take place in person
- Where should the venue be
- Do all groups meet agreed criteria of the TCF

1.2 Meeting Frequency, Format and group criteria

1.2.1 Following the last review of the Forum in 2021, it was agreed that meetings would increase from twice per year to four times per year and they would alternate between in-person meetings held at the Angel Centre and virtual meetings held via MS teams. The move to virtual meetings was to encourage greater participation and means that these can be livestreamed for the benefit of the wider community.

1.2.2 The meeting programme for 2024-26 was approved by Annual Council on 14 May 2024 and adding additional meetings will create capacity issues within Democratic Services. Therefore, any changes to the programme need careful consideration if this were something that Members would like to progress. There will also be staffing and cost implications if all meetings are held in person, especially if Members wished for these to be livestreamed.

1.2.3 If Members wish to consider alternative venues to hold all meetings in-person, a range of options can be presented at the next meeting, along with the associated costs. It will need to include any arrangements around hall/seating set up and who will be available to undertake this.

1.2.4 Regarding the agreed criteria for groups, if Members wish to review the current membership, and/or invite other interested groups to join, a simple form can be promoted/shared and added to the council website, as detailed in the suggested draft form (Annex 1).

1.3 Review of Parish Partnership Panel

1.3.1 Previously changes to Tonbridge Community Forum (agreed by Overview and Scrutiny Committee in October 2021) were considered alongside a review of Parish Partnership Panel. If Members opt to review the frequency, format and criteria for Tonbridge Community Forum, it may also be timely to consider if any changes are required to Parish Partnership Panel.

1.4 Legal Implications

1.4.1 Tonbridge Community Forum is not a decision-making body.

1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.5.1 Current room hire costs at the Angel Centre and the cost of audio/visual equipment for the in-person meetings, total £763. In addition, there are costs incurred in relation to staff time (administration).

1.5.2 If Members wished to livestream meetings external audio/visual support would be required, subject to facilities at venues, and this could be a significant cost.

1.6 Risk Assessment

1.6.1 Members should note that any risk related to the use of venues and equipment will need to be managed if using buildings that are not owned by the council. Council owned buildings are routinely checked by the Health and Safety Officer, the Head of Administration and Property and Head of IT to ensure that all appropriate safety checks are undertaken.

1.6.2 There is a potential health and safety risk when using other venues and there is a requirement for appropriate safety checks and forms to be completed. Currently, this is a function that is outside of the role of Democratic Services and consideration would need to be given on how to address these concerns.

1.7 Equality Impact Assessment

1.7.1 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.

1.8 Policy Considerations

1.8.1 Communications

1.8.2 Community

1.9 Recommendations

1.9.1 Members to consider the frequency, format and criteria issues raised in section 1.2 and **ENDORSE** further investigation into associated costs of venues and staff resourcing issues.

1.9.2 Members to **CONSIDER** if a review of Parish Partnership Panel is also required, with options to be presented at the next meeting.

Background papers:

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Nil

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