

TUNBRIDGE WELLS BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CABINET ADVISORY BOARD

MINUTES of the meeting held at the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Royal Tunbridge Wells, TN1 1RS, at 6.30 pm on Wednesday, 17 November 2021

Present: Councillor David Scott (Chairman)
Councillors Fairweather (Vice-Chairman), March, Ms Palmer, Ellis, Rutland, Hill, Pope, Allen and Patterson

Officers in Attendance: Jane Clarke (Head of Policy and Governance), Terry Hughes (Community Safety Manager), Paul Taylor (Director of Change and Communities) and Mark O'Callaghan (Scrutiny and Engagement Officer)

Other Members in Attendance: Councillor Pound

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

COM37/21 Apologies for absence received from Councillor Britcher-Allan.

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

COM38/21 There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary or other significant interest made at the meeting.

NOTIFICATION OF PERSONS WISHING TO SPEAK

COM39/21 Councillor Pound was registered to speak as a Visiting Member on item COM42/21 and in attendance to present the report on behalf of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in respect of item COM43/21. There were no members of the public registered to speak.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING DATED 13 OCTOBER 2021

COM40/21 No amendments were proposed.

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting dated 13 October 2021 be approved as a correct record.

FORWARD PLAN AS AT 27 OCTOBER 2021

COM41/21 The Forward Plan was taken as read.

RESOLVED – That the Forward Plan as at 27 October 2021 be noted.

PSPO 2021 CONSULTATION RESULTS

COM42/21 Terry Hughes, Community Safety Manager, introduced the report set out in the agenda, further to which comments were added:

- The council's Parks team supported the dog control measures at Dunorlan Park.
- There was no case for a ban on dogs at The Nevill Grounds, scientific advice was that dog mess was no worse than fox mess.

Councillor Pound had registered to speak.

- Strong support for action being taken immediately.
- No need for further consultation, could implement and withdraw/amend if the situation changed in the future.
- The committee should reject any delay to measure 4.

Debate included –

Measure 1 (reduce the number of roads in Southborough subject to alcohol controls):

- No objections

Measure 2 (introduce dogs on leads in the formal areas of Dunorlan Park):

- Mixed response to consultation
- Enforcement would start to educate dog walkers
- Most dog walkers acted responsibly so this would only affect irresponsible dog owners.

Measure 3 (renew dogs on leads in Nevill Ground):

- No objections

Measure 4 (ASB controls at Sherwood Lake)

- Need to manage expectations of local residents.
- Further work to engage the community in the solution would be welcome.
- The PSPO could be put in place immediately.
- An unenforced order would be undermined.
- The main problems were in the summer so there was time to get the solution right.
- A time limit would focus attention, further investigations should be completed and reported to Cabinet in April.
- A PSPO would be implemented separately to the establishment of a fishing club.
- Need the support of the Police to be effective.
- Concerns that a PSPO would not be enforced should not prevent its implementation.
- Consultations needed to be actioned.

Measure 5 (ASB controls at St John's Park):

- Doing nothing was not an option.
- Youths observed climbing on cars to jump the fences and causing damage.
- Those acting anti-socially were unlikely to follow PSPO without enforcement.
- Need to avoid moving problems into more hidden and unsafe areas.
- The Police would be the primary enforcers during the peak problem times overnight. More work was needed with the Police to maximise effectiveness.

Measure 6 (ASB in multi-storey car parks):

- There was not a significant difference in the issues highlighted in the consultation by men and women.
- Further conversations with community groups would be undertaken to encourage them to not use car parks as meeting places.
- Was important for the car parks to be perceived as safe.
- A trial could be undertaken to make the ground floor of Crescent Road Car Park a safe zone with additional lighting, CCTV and signage.

- The status of the safer parking mark was unknown but could be investigated. The purpose of the report was to tackle anti-social behaviour rather than safety.
- Improvement works would be expensive so proposals should be properly costed before a decision.
- The matter of safety in car parks should be considered in a wider context.
- Anti-social behaviour tended to be a bigger problem in the summer when larger groups of young people were around.

RESOLVED – That the recommendations set out in the report be supported subject to Cabinet taking account of the issues raised during the debate.

POVERTY AND DEPRIVATION: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TFG RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET

COM43/21 Councillor Pound introduced the report set out in the agenda on behalf of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, further to which comments were added:

- It was disappointing that the report had taken so long to come to Cabinet.
- The proposed response to the Scrutiny Committee's recommendations were set out at Appendix B to the report. In response:
 - Response 1 – Stephen McGinnes, Mid Kent Services Director, was nominated as lead on poverty however he had acknowledged that he did not have responsibility for education and training leaving a significant gap in oversight.
 - Response 2 – The Cabinet should be best placed to determine what metrics would most effective.
 - Response 3 – Qualitative research needed to be undertaken by the council, not individual members, to ensure a properly resourced and consistent approach.
 - Response 4 – A stronger commitment to support the Task and Finish Group should be made.

Discussion included:

- The Council recognised that despite Tunbridge Wells being the least deprived district in Kent there remained pockets of poverty needing attention. The pandemic had been especially challenging.
- The Council had undertaken good work to address the issues highlighted in the report but perhaps had failed to communicate those successes.
- Stephen McGinnes would be tasked with oversight of KPIs relating to education and training.
- The Council already held a lot of data on families at risk of financial difficulties and it was more effective to rely on this use real data.
- Undertaking qualitative research would be ineffective, particularly reaching those most in need. A more detailed recommendation as to how this could be achieved would be welcome.
- Response 3 should be expanded to explain why the Cabinet feels qualitative research was not supported.
- If reducing poverty was a priority then consultation should be available, as it is for tackling anti-social behaviour, for example.

- Qualitative research, done professionally, would provide detail and explanation behind the data the Council already had and exposed what interventions could be made.
- Although on average Tunbridge Wells was affluent, the deprivation it had was more pronounced due to the exceptional cost of living. The situation was likely to get worse and firmer action should be taken.
- The Council could better utilise information from other agencies who may be more likely to have engaged with those most in need.
- The Council had access to an information sharing tool which collated data from many sources to identify people in financial hardship, an All-Member Briefing could be arranged.
- Experience on the ground did not match the data. There needed to be better understanding of the real situation.
- The Council could not take on the role of other agencies and had to manage within its means.
- Increasing the housing supply would significantly help with the cost of living.
- The Council could take a coordination role and highlight opportunities for cross-agency interventions.
- Response 3 would be re-written to take account of the debate.
- Qualitative research would be limited to 10 discrete areas in 3 wards.
- The Task and Finish Group would support Stephen McGinnes being nominated as the lead on poverty provided that he is fully enabled to oversee education and training.
- If Cabinet has access to the data then it should identify a dashboard of metrics.

RESOLVED – That the recommendations set out in the report be supported subject to Cabinet taking account of the issues raised during the debate.

CIVIC MEDALLION NOMINATION (DECEMBER 2021)

COM44/21 **RESOLVED** – That the recommendations set out in the report be supported.

Note: The matter was decided in the public session taking the exempt information set out on the agenda as read.

URGENT BUSINESS

COM45/21 There was no urgent business.

DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

COM46/21 The next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday 26 January 2022.

NOTES:

The meeting concluded at 8.30 pm.