

**KENT COUNTY COUNCIL      LOCAL BOARDS**

**NOTES OF MEETING**

**TUNBRIDGE WELLS LOCAL BOARD**

**Date Wednesday, 14 May 2008**

**Venue: St Barnabas CE Primary School, Quarry Road, Tunbridge Wells TN1 2EY**

**Present:**

**Local Board Members: John Davies (Chairman), Roy Bullock, MBE, Kevin Lynes, Roger Manning and James Scholes**

**Apologies for absence: Alex King, MBE**

**Presenting Items: Gill Bromley MBE (Strategic Library Development Manager, KCC Communities Directorate), Tom Phillips (KCC Community Liaison Manager, Tunbridge Wells & Sevenoaks)**

**Other attendees: 22 others, including local residents, local young people, representatives of local organisations, Borough and Parish Council representatives.**

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| <b>A1.</b> | <b>Welcome to the meeting</b>  |  |
|            | Local Board Chairman, John Davies, introduced the County Councillors present at the Local Board meeting. He thanked the Head Teacher of St Barnabas CE Primary School for agreeing to host the meeting.  |  |
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| <b>A2.</b> | <b>Declarations of Interest by Members in Items on the Agenda for this Meeting.</b>  |  |
|            | No declarations were made.   |  |
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| <b>A3.</b> | <b>Notes of Local Board meeting held on 26 February 2008 and progress on any actions agreed.</b>   |  |
|            | The notes of the meeting held on 26 February 2008 in Hawkhurst were agreed.  |  |
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| <b>A4.</b> | <b>Welcome to our Neighbourhood</b>  |  |
|            | <p>Father Ed Tomlinson, of the St Barnabas Church, gave a presentation about the local neighbourhood, its main features, people and current issues. <i>[A copy of the presentation has been placed with the record copy of these notes]</i> The area had always been one of the poorer areas of Tunbridge Wells, and was generally far less affluent than much of the St James' Ward, in which it was located.</p> <p>The local primary school catered for a very high percentage of children with special needs, and more than a third of local families has English as an additional language. Access to pre-school provision was extremely low compared to most of the rest of Tunbridge Wells, with three-quarters of local children not benefiting from a pre-school place. This meant that almost 70% of children in the St Barnabas area reached school age with no early education experience. There was also a local lack of mother</p> |  |

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|                   | <p>and toddler provision, only being addressed since the beginning of 2007. The area also had a poor overall level of educational attainment amongst its adult population, and suffered from much poorer access to healthcare facilities than other parts of the town.</p> <p>There was a considerable local need for a community space, as an initiative to give a multi-use heart to the local community. Plans had been drawn up for a community centre, based on a redevelopment of the existing St Barnabas Church Hall. Formal costing and fund-raising for this was currently taking place. It was hoped that this community hub could provide a base from which many agencies could work, and reinforce the centre's role in the community. Local pre-school provision had begun a few months previously in the existing Church Hall, and was growing rapidly. However, despite good progress with fund-raising to date, a considerable capital investment would need to be made if the local plans were to be achieved.</p> <p>A good relationship had been struck with local housing developers, and it was hoped that development contributions could be used towards the local plans.</p> <p>The St Barnabas area was also planning a Community Play, and other neighbourhood activities, based around the Camden Road area. John Oram, organiser of the Community Play spoke briefly to the Local Board meeting about this.</p> |  |
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| <p><b>A5.</b></p> | <p><b>The National Year of Reading</b></p>   |  |
|                   | <p>Gill Bromley, Strategic Library Development Manager from KCC's Communities Directorate gave a presentation about the National Year of Reading 2008, and its relevance to local communities. <i>[A copy of the presentation has been placed with the record copy of this meeting.]</i></p> <p>The aim of the National Year of Reading (NYR) was to create a powerful national focus of opportunities and activities, so that children, families and adult learners understand the benefits that reading – both for pleasure and for purpose – can bring, to change their lives for the better, now and in the future.</p> <p>Nationally and locally there were some “priority audiences” for NYR2008, which included children and teenagers, looked after children specifically, disabled children, black and ethnic communities, parents and carers of younger children, “Dads and Lads” and adult learners. The aim was that NYR 2008 would become a continuing event, beyond the end of the year, and become embedded in activities keyed to the Cultural Olympiad, for example.</p> <p>Many activities linked to NYR 2008 were planned all around the Tunbridge Wells Borough area, including a high profile</p>   |  |

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|            | <p>Children's Summer Reading Challenge.</p> <p>Points raised in discussion following the presentation included the need to ensure there was some focus on reading for the older population. Points were also raised for and against increased internet access in public libraries, and there was discussion of the current usage of libraries and the review of their role and services, which had been taking place in Kent for some while.</p>  |  |
| <b>A6.</b> | <b>Question Time</b>  |  |
|            | <p>Questions were raised about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding arrangements for pedestrian crossings. Prioritisation of crossing provision fell to the Tunbridge Wells Joint Transportation Board, and not the Local Board, and was a difficult issue, as there were many areas who felt they had a priority case for a crossing, but resources to meet these were limited.</li> <li>• Parking by taxis on private roads. This was an issue which needed to be raised with the Borough Council, and was not one for which KCC had a responsibility.</li> <li>• The need to update the Kent Road Safety Plan on the KCC web site. As Chair of the KCC Highways Advisory Board, Roger Manning agreed to respond to that issue outside of the meeting.</li> <li>• The reorganisation of Kent Highways Services. This question had also been raised at the previous meeting of the Local Board, and was referred to in the notes of that meeting. The reorganisation continued.</li> </ul> <p>Local young people present at the meeting were also invited to give their general views on facilities for young people in Tunbridge Wells. They felt that the town lacked good general leisure facilities, and that the facilities which did exist tended to be sport-specific. Like many areas, the town area lacked places where young people could congregate without being seen as a local nuisance, and affordable local transport, particularly for those who did not qualify for the KCC Freedom Bus Pass, which only covered school pupils up to the age of 16.</p> |  |
| <b>A7.</b> | <b>The Annual Report of the Tunbridge Wells Local Board for 2007/8</b>  |  |
|            | <p>Tom Phillips, Community Liaison Manager, referred to the Annual Report of the Tunbridge Wells Local Board for 2007/8, which had now been published. This included details of the recommendations the Local Board had made for grants totalling almost £130,000 in that year. He noted that in the four years in which the Tunbridge Wells Local Board had existed, it had made grants to local and community organisations and activities totalling more than £500,000. The three grant schemes for 2008/9 which were managed by the Local Board had also just been</p>  |  |

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|            | launched.  |                     |
| <b>A8.</b> | <b>Future Local Board Meetings in 2008 – Dates, venues and possible agenda topics.</b>   |                     |
|            | It was hoped that the next meeting of the Local Board would take place in the early autumn, and that it could be linked in some way to Local Democracy Week, in October. | <b>Tom Phillips</b> |
| <b>A9.</b> | <b>Any Other Business</b>  |                     |
|            | None was raised.   |                     |