

## Borough Report 2015

Yet again all the council's work has been overshadowed by the need to find savings, and once again Tonbridge and Malling have exceeded their target, hopefully pushing back the time when our reserves will be used up and the necessity to borrow to meet our obligations would become another call on our budget. Once again it was deemed prudent to raise Council Tax by 1.99% (1p per day) to protect our services for as long as possible.

Savings of £2.8 million have been achieved over the past four years through shared services, taking advantage of technological changes and doing some things differently. An approach that is independently assessed by our auditors as "a strong focus on effective financial management" and "an effective framework to address financial pressures and to deliver planned savings."

We can be justifiably proud of our recycling service, where we see residents recycle or compost 43% of household waste. Almost 90% of waste collected is made use of through reuse, recycling or energy recovery with only around 10% of waste going to landfill. We can be proud that most of our waste is dealt with locally, with around 85% being dealt with in Kent.

The 'Love Where You Live' campaign continues to inspire local support and activity. This Council is an Ambassador Authority for national Love Where You Live campaign and a lead authority in the Love Kent campaign (with numerous local projects, including: Bash the Trash events; the Street Monitor scheme; Voluntary Litter Code for businesses; Bag & Flag dog fouling events.... to name but a few).

The successful establishment of a new Leisure Trust - achieving annual revenue savings to the Council of circa £500,000 – has meant that exceptionally high standards of service delivery are maintained.

The quality of our leisure facilities and increased leisure activity within the Borough continues to be excellent. The Easter and Summer programmes for young people and the Youth Forum have been maintained.

Sports participation rates across the borough have increased by 6.5% as measured by the Sport England Active People Survey, placing the Borough in the upper quartile in Kent.

Initiatives have included Spring into Sport and the Young Cricket Leader Programme and we have supported voluntary groups in staging the Tonbridge Half Marathon and provided continued support for local clubs.

Local community groups, town and parish councils through the Community Enhancement have been supported, with awards being made to over 200 community and voluntary groups and 20 town and parish councils.

For a second year running, the Council's support to local town and parish councils had included New Homes Bonus income within the overall settlement. Rather than facing a

13.4% reduction or £23,011 in cash terms, our support is a 1.3% increase or £2,232 increase, resulting in a net benefit to the parishes of £25,243.

T&MBC have been key members of the successful lobby group that has secured the dualling of the A21 between Tonbridge and Pembury. And will continue their efforts in securing East Facing Slips of junction of the M25.

Crucially, they have helped secure a total of £4.36M from the Local Growth Fund to improve Junction 4 of the M20 and to enhance Tonbridge High Street, along with a share of a further £4.89M to improve local rail stations including improvements to accommodate new HS1 services at Snodland.

Considerable success has been achieved in securing investment from the government's Affordable Homes Programme. Over £7 million of capital grant funding has been allocated to our housing association partners between 2015 and 2018 to provide new affordable homes. We have seen the highest number of affordable units proposed across the 2015-18 programme, with 283 homes constructed or in the pipeline.

T&MBC has consistently featured within the top three authorities in Kent for the most successful implementation of Help To Buy. And critically, has a local housing allocations policy, bringing practical changes to ensure affordable housing to go to those households who are local and in most need of housing assistance.

The Local Development Framework - has delivered a robust land supply for new development, making sure we have been able to protect the best natural and historic features of this Borough through our Development Control function.

We have continued our strong influence on rail and bus services by lobbying for better public transport services, highlighted by our 'Rail Manifesto' and facilitating new improvements such as the successful bus/rail interchange at West Malling.

We look forward to continuing to work with you and for you for the next four years for the good of our communities and protection of our villages.

Matthew Balfour  
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