

Downs Ward Borough Councillor's Report 2010

The past year at Tonbridge & Malling has once again been overshadowed by the appalling financial situation. You should know that the Government values each person in Tonbridge & Malling with a support grant of £56.20, the second lowest in Kent and about half of the per person grant going to Thanet. T&M is already the "leanest" district council in Kent and there is no "fat" to cut so everyone has been working hard to find savings that do not affect our frontline services, regrettably this has meant some redundancies as well as the total cessation of Capital Grants to Parish Councils. We have also had to look very carefully at our support for local charities, making sure that your money is spent on services within the borough and again we have had to look carefully at the Rate Relief that we were giving to certain local businesses and in particular to Village Halls. All these cuts have been made with deep regret, especially as we know how difficult it is for small parishes to fund their aspirations for their communities.

As always, planning has played a major part in our work for our parishes, with several controversial applications and several difficult enforcement cases to chase. We always try to do what is best for our communities, preserving the special nature of the villages with their conservation areas and precious Green Belt. We welcome the input that we have from the Parish Council on all these matters. We are very pleased that the latest Managing Development and the Environment plan has been agreed by the Secretary of State because it will help in our being able to control some of the recent detrimental policies emanating from government .

The recent bad weather was a challenge for us all, but the services of Tonbridge and Malling continued to work well, we thank you all for your patience and understanding with regard to the disruption of the rubbish collections.

Our services for young people continue to expand, with the holiday play schemes and Activate programmes both being well supported, and this year for the first time the Y2 Crew programme had a venue in Borough Green.

Our leisure service venues continue to be well used and popular, they are continually updated and plans are afoot for the under used squash courts at Larkfield to be turned into exercise/dance studios, there are also plans for toilet facilities within" Larkabout".

The coming year is likely, as in the Chinese saying", to be interesting. The inevitable reduction in public spending will hit hard at a local level but there is a slim chance that a new government may allow more decisions to be taken locally rather than nationally or regionally. We are very grateful for your support and will continue to do all we can to keep up the highest standards at Tonbridge & Malling.

Ann Kemp & Matthew Balfour