

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

TONBRIDGE FORUM

Monday, 18th February, 2013

Present: Cllr O C Baldock (Chairman), Cllr N J Heslop (Vice-Chairman), Cllr A W Allison, Cllr Mrs J A Anderson, Cllr Ms J A Atkinson, Cllr R D Lancaster and Cllr Ms S V Spence.

Councillors Coffin, Cure, Mrs Murray and Rhodes were also in attendance pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Members of the Forum: Kent County Councillor Smith, Age UK (Tonbridge), Kent County Council - Communications and Engagement, Kent Police, St John Ambulance, Tonbridge Allotments and Gardens Association, Tonbridge and Malling Citizens Advice Bureau, Tonbridge Civic Society, Tonbridge District Scouts Council, Tonbridge Historical Society, Tonbridge Lions Club, Tonbridge Rotary Club, Tonbridge Sports Association, Tonbridge Theatre and Arts Club, University of the Third Age and the Women's Institute.

Other Organisations Present: Kent County Council - Highways and Transportation, PATHS, The Courier Newspaper, The Green Party and Tonbridge Town Team.

Apologies for absence were received from Borough Councillors Mrs M Heslop and Trice, from County Councillor Miss A Hohler and from The Skinners Company, Society of Friends and Tonbridge Music Club.

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PART 1 - PUBLIC

TF
13/001

MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on 26 November 2012 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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13/002

UPDATE ON ANY ACTION IDENTIFIED IN THE LAST MINUTES.

No actions were identified.

TF
13/003

POLICE LIAISON

Inspector John Phillips presented an overview of crime and disorder within Tonbridge and advised that there had been a significant reduction in violent crime following a decline in the 'night-time economy' in Tonbridge but that property crime had increased nationally. He advised that, due to partnership working with ShopSafe, shoplifting continued to decrease within the town centre.

He referred to a recent spree of criminal damage within the Pembury Road area and advised that action was being taken to prevent repetition of these offences. He outlined action being taken by Civil Rail Enforcement Officers to prevent thieves travelling into Tonbridge from London.

TF
13/004

ST JOHN AMBULANCE

Mr A McAllister gave a detailed presentation on recent changes to the national and regional organisational structure of St John Ambulance. He advised that this had improved the professionalism of both staff and volunteers and had increased the levels of service available to the local community. He advised that, while a number of health care professionals had been attracted into the ranks of St John Ambulance, it cost £12,000 to fund and train each first aider. He outlined the range of services provided to the community, many in association with the health service and local authorities, and he welcomed the public's support through charitable donations.

TF
13/005

TONBRIDGE TOWN CENTRE

The Director of Planning, Transport and Leisure outlined the regeneration and redevelopment proposals for the 'Botany' area intended to revitalise the centre of Tonbridge. He advised that on 14 February the Council had approved Heads of Terms of agreement with Sainsbury to provide an improved and larger supermarket, build a range of new shops and provide a multi-screen cinema. The Council would be providing a new leisure and community centre on the Bradford Street Car Park which would be constructed prior to the closure of the Angel Centre. He advised that details of the development would come forward for consultation through the planning process.

Ms K Iggulden of the Tonbridge Town Team presented details of the Tonbridge Taster Day to be held on Sunday 23 June 2013 and invited members of the Forum to support

and participate in this event celebrating the town of Tonbridge.

TF
13/006

**PEDESTRIAN ACTION FOR TONBRIDGE HIGH STREET
(PATHS) – MR H PORTER**

Mr H Porter congratulated the Borough Council on its proposals to revitalise the town centre. He gave a presentation on PATHS' proposals for the pedestrianisation of Tonbridge High Street which, he argued, would alleviate the impact of traffic pollution, particularly at the southern end of the High Street. He suggested that the abandoned proposal for a Link Road should be reconsidered by the Council as, in PATHS' opinion, this link would enable any traffic mitigation proposals for the town centre.

Mr R White, on behalf of KCC Highways and Transportation, explained that, while it was not possible to 'design out' significant amounts of traffic from the High Street, the emerging Transport Strategy for Tonbridge aimed to improve the flow of traffic, reduce speed, improve conditions for pedestrians and cyclists and develop the town centre as a significant space. He advised that the County Council was mindful of PATHS' proposals but stressed that KCC needed to focus on schemes which could be practically achieved. Mr C Smith, County Councillor for Tonbridge, advised that if it were possible to re-instate the link road proposal, it was unlikely to be constructed within the next twenty years as no funding was available to progress this project. Mr Smith expressed concern that, due to the constraints of the current road layout of the town, PATHS' proposals could effectively move the congestion and pollution from one site to another rather than solving the problem.

In response to concerns expressed by PATHS regarding SatNav systems directing drivers through the High Street, Mr White offered to investigate the County Council's policy and advise the Forum at a future meeting. PATHS requested that information on the County Council's emerging transport strategy and cycling and pedestrian strategies also be provided. Mr White offered to monitor the effect of the selective removal of traffic/temporary road closure during the Tonbridge Taster Day.

The Chairman thanked the representatives from PATHS, the officers of the County Council and members of the Forum for their contribution to the debate and acknowledged the shared aim of achieving a better,

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integrated environment for the centre of Tonbridge.

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13/007

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL SERVICES UPDATE

The Kent County Council Community Engagement Manager reported that the County Council Member Grant Scheme had supported over sixty projects during the current year and he advised that further funding would be available in the new financial year. He invited members of the Forum to consider volunteering to serve on Education Appeal Panels which independently reviewed decisions made by admission authorities regarding parental preference in the choice of schools. Mr Smith provided details of the County Council's Budget for 2013/14 and confirmed that there would be no increase in Council Tax and no cuts in front line services.

The meeting ended at 2145 hours