

**TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**PLANNING and TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD**

**27 July 2011**

**Report of the Director of Planning, Transport and Leisure**

**Part 1- Public**

**Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision (Decision may be taken by the Cabinet Member)**

**1 PEDESTRIAN GUARD RAIL IN TONBRIDGE – CONSULTATION**

**Summary**

**A report on the responses received to the recent consultation with members the of Area 1 Planning Committee on the County Council's proposals for pedestrian guard rail removal in Tonbridge.**

**1.1 Introduction**

1.1.1 When it met in February, the Planning and Transportation Advisory Board considered a report on the County Council's proposals to remove certain lengths of pedestrian guard rail in Tonbridge. The Board acknowledged that this was a complex matter and concluded that fresh consultation with local Members was essential to reach an informed judgement so that a formal Borough position could be adopted and shared with the County Council. The formal decision was as follows:-

- *Following consideration by the Planning and Transportation Advisory Board, the Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation resolved that the proposals set out by Kent County Council be reviewed in consultation with local Members and the revised response referred to the Advisory Board before final submission.*

**1.2 Member Consultation**

- 1.2.1 The arguments for and against removing each length of guard rail were rehearsed in the report to the previous meeting and it is reproduced for reference at **Annex 1**.
- 1.2.2 To give effect to the Cabinet Member's decision, I circulated fresh information in recent weeks to Members of Area 1 Planning Committee 1 seeking their views on the County Council proposals. The covering letter and supporting documents are attached at **Annex 2**. It is fair to say that some Members feel strongly about retaining certain lengths of guard rail while others consider that there are clear

streetscene benefits in cutting down on street clutter by removing some of them. There are also many Members who have no strong feelings one way or the other which perhaps explains a fairly low response from across the Committee.

- 1.2.3 The submitted responses have been summarised in **Annex 3** and it shows some support for retaining guard rail at certain locations such as the stretch from Brook Street towards Tonbridge Station. At other locations, the feedback would support removal of the guard rail in line with the County Council's proposals. In a parallel exercise, County Councillor Alice Hohler has also been focusing on the proposals and she recently organised a 'walkabout' for local Members to visit the various sites to compare notes and views. I shared the consultation documents with her and she kindly provided feedback which the Board might find helpful. This is included as part of the assessment and summary.

### **1.3 Next Steps**

- 1.3.1 Subject to the Board's consideration of this subject and its detailed recommendation to the Cabinet Member on the proposals for each of the locations in the County Council report, the next step will be to advise the Joint Transportation Board (JTB) about the Borough Council's formal position. This will allow a joint Borough and County Council position for future action at each of the locations to be established when the JTB next meets in September.
- 1.3.2 It is important to reflect on the advice from the County Council officer to the last meeting of the JTB in March. In essence, this guard rail project was cross-Kent in scope and there was funding to implement adopted recommendations in the last financial year. The budgetary situation has undergone fundamental change and this is no longer a separately funded initiative. Instead, implementation will be gradual and incremental, based on reactive response to damage as part of routine maintenance. Consequently, it is unlikely that an endorsement of removal at any particular location will result in early action to bring this about. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile establishing the Borough Council's policy on this matter in view of the implications it has for the streetscene.

### **1.4 Legal Implications**

- 1.4.1 None for the Borough Council.

### **1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

- 1.5.1 This is a County Council initiative so there is no Borough Council financial implication.

### **1.6 Risk Assessment**

- 1.6.1 Risk of retention or removal at any particular location is an integral part of the assessment exercise.

## 1.7 Equality Impact Assessment

1.7.1 See 'Screening for equality impacts' table at end of report

## 1.8 Policy Considerations

1.8.1 Community

## 1.9 Recommendations

1.9.1 Subject to the any further views of the Board, that Cabinet adopts the recommendations in **Annex 3** as the formal Borough Council response to the County Council's pedestrian guard rail removal project and that this be conveyed to the County Council through the Joint Transportation Board.

The Director of Planning, Transport and Leisure confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

Background papers:

contact: Mike McCulloch

Nil

Steve Humphrey

Director of Planning, Transport & Leisure

Screening for equality impacts:		
Question	Answer	Explanation of impacts
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community?	No	This is a response to a set of proposals by the County Council and involves no direct action by the Borough Council.
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality?		It may do but it is not obvious one way or the other.
c. What steps are you taking to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?		

*In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above.*