

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

TONBRIDGE COMMUNITY FORUM

MINUTES

Monday, 28th November, 2022

Present: Cllr J R S Lark (Chair), Cllr G C Bridge (Vice-Chair), Feast (Vice-Chair), Cllr Mrs P A Bates, Cllr M D Boughton, Cllr V M C Branson, Cllr A E Clark, Cllr M O Davis, Cllr M A J Hood, Cllr F A Hoskins, Cllr D W King, Cllr F G Tombolis, County Cllr P Stepto and County Cllr M Hood.

Together with representatives from:

- EMBER Community Interest Company,
- Friends of Mill Stream,
- Rotary Club of Tonbridge,
- Tonbridge and Malling Seniors,
- Tonbridge Bicycle Users Group,
- Tonbridge Civic Society,
- Tonbridge District Scout Council,
- Tonbridge Historical Society,
- Tonbridge Lions Club,
- Tonbridge Parish Church,
- Tonbridge Sports Association, and
- Tonbridge Town Team

Councillor M R Rhodes was also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21

Reverend Lovelock of Tonbridge Methodist Church was also present at the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J L Botten, A Cope and N J Heslop and from the Tonbridge Dementia Friendly Community

TCF 22/23 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 5 September 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

TCF 22/24 UPDATE ON ANY ACTION IDENTIFIED IN THE LAST MINUTES

(1) TCF 22/22(2) – Tonbridge Post Office

The Leader provided an update on the 'pop-up' service provided at Tonbridge Castle and advised that, to date, the Post Office had not

identified a more permanent site for a post office within Tonbridge. A number of members expressed disappointment and frustration about the ongoing situation and asked that a representative of the Post Office be invited to attend the next meeting of the Forum.

MATTERS RAISED IN ADVANCE OF THE MEETING

There were no matters raised in advance of the meeting.

TCF 22/25 FUTURE OF THE BEALES UNIT - ASPIRATIONS OF THE CIVIC SOCIETY

Mr N Edwards of Tonbridge Civic Society gave a presentation on the Society's aspirations for the future use of the former Beales department store which had been closed for over two years. He explained that the Society hoped that its concept to re-imagine the empty store into a vibrant co-worker space and covered market and the modification of the public car park to a multi-purpose plaza would encourage discussion and collaboration on the future use of this large, vacant retail unit.

The Forum members welcomed the Society's optimistic concept, asked whether any response to their proposals had been received from Sainsburys and generally supported the proposed regeneration of the site and the stimulation of the High Street. It was acknowledged that Sainsburys needed to be encouraged to discuss options for the regeneration of the site with the Council and the local community and it was suggested that they be invited to a future meeting of the Forum.

The Chair thanked Mr Edwards for his presentation which had generated a full and frank discussion of the issues and aspirations for the future use of the site.

TCF 22/26 CHARGES FOR USE OF PUBLIC OPEN SPACES

Further to Tonbridge Scouts' request for an item on the charges levied for the use of the Borough Council's public open spaces and car parks for charity and community groups events, the Leader of the Council advised that full details of the Council's policy were set out in Annex 1 to the report considered at the meeting of the Community and Environment Scrutiny Select Committee held on 19 October 2022 which had been included in the Forum's agenda papers. In response to concerns expressed about levying a charge on Brass Bands raising funds for charity the Leader suggested that the Chair of the Forum, Chair of the Scrutiny Select Committee and the Cabinet Members for Finance and Community Services investigate whether it would be possible to ask the select committee to review the charge applied to brass bands performing at charity events in advance of the 2023 season.

TCF 22/27 CURRENT PROVISION OF CCTV

The Leader of the Council provided an overview of the current provision of CCTV across the Borough and, in response to a comment by the representative of the 'Friends of Mill Stream', outlined the technical and budgetary constraints on moving cameras to temporary locations and/or providing coverage in newly developed areas.

TCF 22/28 BANNERS FOR ADVERTISING EVENTS IN TONBRIDGE AND SITES TO DISPLAY THEM

In response to County Councillor Hood's request for an item on the location of banners advertising events held on Borough Council land in Tonbridge, the Leader advised that there were a number of locations in the town where the provision of digital information boards was being considered, albeit that the funding for this was not available as yet. Following Councillor Hood's clarification that he was seeking the provision of banner frames at the entrances to the town which could be 'sponsored' by commercial organisations, the Leader welcomed the opportunity to advertise local events but expressed concern that both the County Council and the Police would object to additional signage on the roadside. Following comments on the effectiveness of banners placed on roadside railings, the Leader advised that the Borough Council had no authority over these sites and that the Highways Authority (KCC) would often remove these for safety reasons.

TCF 22/29 PROMOTION OF UPCOMING EVENTS

Members noted the forthcoming events to be held in Tonbridge and the surrounding area:

(1) Christmas Festival

The Chair thanked everyone who had supported the Christmas Festival and the representative Tonbridge Lions Club invited everyone to give generously to the Barrel Organ which would be placed in the high street during December.

(2) Repair Café – 3 December 2022

Paul Stepto advised that the Repair Café would be held at St Stephens Church on Saturday 3 December.

(3) Tonbridge Churches

Revd Wendy Carr reminded the Forum that St Philips Church was open on Saturdays for those seeking a warm space throughout the winter. She also advised that the Nativity at St Philips would include live animals. Revd Sharon Lovelock invited the Forum to support 'Action for Children' which would take place between 11 and 17 December. Vice-

Chair Lee Athwal advised that the Feast Community Larders would continue during December and invited members to advise anyone on low incomes that lunches would be held at St Philips Church on 19, 23 and 30 December.

(4) Tonbridge Civic Society

The Civic Society welcomed everyone to a festive drink at Tonbridge Fire Station and advised that details of the dates would be advertised.

(5) Jane Austen

Councillor Branson advised that the birth of Jane Austen would be celebrated at St Peter and St Paul Parish Church on Thursday 15 December.

(6) Tonbridge Folk Club

County Councillor Paul Stepto advised that all were welcome to the Tonbridge Folk Club (Nellies) which meets at Ye Olde Chequers Inn, Tonbridge on the first and third Monday of each month.

(7) Triathlon – 1 May 2023

The representative of Tonbridge Lions Club gave advance warning of a Triathlon to be held on 1 May 2023 and asked that anyone wishing to volunteer to marshal the event contact the Lions Club.

The Chair asked that details of any events and activities be given to the Tonbridge Town Team so that these can be promoted on their website and shared with the wider community.

TCF 22/30 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(1) Membership of Tonbridge Community Forum

In response to a question from Fran Long of the Tonbridge Bicycle Users Group regarding the membership of the Forum, the Chairman stated that everyone was welcome to attend the Forum's meetings which were advertised on the Council's website.

The Chair reminded members that the next meeting of the Tonbridge Community Forum would be held virtually via MS Teams on Monday 27 February 2023. Anyone wishing to submit matters for the agenda should contact democratic.services@tmbc.gov.uk as soon as possible.

The meeting ended at 9.35 pm