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TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

TONBRIDGE FORUM

Monday, 4th December, 2017

Present: Cllr N J Heslop (Chairman), Cllr C P Smith (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Mrs J A Anderson, Cllr O C Baldock, Cllr P F Bolt, Cllr V M C Branson, Cllr D J Cure, Cllr Miss G E Thomas, Cllr F G Tombolis.

Together with County Councillors Mr R Long, Mr M Payne and representatives from:

Tonbridge Area Churches Together	Tonbridge Philharmonic Society
Tonbridge Civic Society	Tonbridge Rotary Club
Tonbridge District Scout Council,	Tonbridge Sports Association,
Tonbridge Line Commuters	Tonbridge Town Team
Tonbridge Lions Club	University of the Third Age and
Tonbridge Music Club	Women's Institute

Councillors D Lettington and H S Rogers were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs P A Bates, Kent Police (Tonbridge) and Society of Friends

TF 17/9 CHAIRMANS' ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman made the following announcements:

- (1) Tribute was paid to Mr Mike Bull OBE who had sadly passed away in November and whose Thanksgiving Service was held earlier in the day. Mr Bull had been a regular attendee and contributor at the Tonbridge Forum and represented both St Johns Ambulance and the Baptist Church.
- (2) The current Chairman of Tonbridge Angels Football Club (Mr Steve Churcher) had announced his retirement from the role that he actively fulfilled for the last eight years.
- (3) Tonbridge Rotary and Tonbridge Lions were congratulated on an excellent Christmas Lights Switch On. The event held over the recent weekend had attracted a large number of people who had participated in various activities.
- (4) Tonbridge Art Group was celebrating its 50th Anniversary and the Forum noted the organisation's contribution to the town.
- (5) Reference was made to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee review undertaken in 2015/16, in consultation with local community

groups and organisations, regarding the format, membership and frequency of the Tonbridge Forum. It was noted that the layout of the evening's meeting had been changed on an experimental basis, and any feedback to Officers would be welcomed. Members were advised that a further consultation into the format, membership and frequency of the meetings would be undertaken by Officers in due course and proposals reported to a future meeting.

TF 17/10 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2017 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

TF 17/11 UPDATE ON ANY ACTION IDENTIFIED IN THE LAST MINUTES

The Chairman referred to Minute Number TF 17/7 (Kent County Council Services Update) and asked whether the street lights along the foot/cycle path from the Weir to the entrance of the Memorial Gardens had been reinstated or whether this required further action.

In response, the Director of Street Scene, Leisure and Technical Services was pleased to report that these lights had been reinstated as part of improvement works undertaken by the Borough Council.

TF 17/12 REGENERATION AND INVESTMENT IN TONBRIDGE AND PLANNING UPDATE

The Economic Regeneration Officer, the Head of Leisure and the Planning Policy Manager provided an overview of the regeneration and investment activity in Tonbridge over recent years; advised of upcoming initiatives and updated on progress on the emerging Local Plan.

Projects delivered recently to improve the appearance of the town and transport access included work and investment on the High Street, the Memorial Gardens, Town Lock, River Walk and Haysden Country Park. An expanded range of uses and promotion of mixed use development had seen new investment in leisure facilities, greater choice of food and drink outlets and new retail opportunities provided at Cannon Lane. In addition, a number of events and activities, including the Tonbridge Food and Drink Festival, contributed to the overall character of the town. It was reported that by encouraging sufficient footfall into Tonbridge the business and economic regeneration of the town continued to be supported.

Future investment opportunities included improvements at Tonbridge station, increasing capacity of the Leigh Flood Storage Area to protect homes and business and an ongoing review of the Borough Council's property assets. It was noted that the sale of the Teen and Twenty site had enabled the potential provision of a first class medical facility for the

town. Services previously provided at this site had been successfully moved to the Tonbridge Youth Hub.

With regard to the Local Plan, the first major public consultation had concluded in November 2016 with 1,117 responses and 2,482 representations received. Members of the Borough Council's Planning and Transportation Advisory Board had received regular updates on the detail and progress of the Local Plan.

Particular reference was made to recent Government proposals to introduce a standard methodology for estimating future housing needs in Spring 2018. Unfortunately, these proposals could have adverse implications on the Borough Councils' Local Plan programme.

As a result of this new methodology the housing need for Tonbridge and Malling increased by 163 new homes a year. Over the 20 year plan this equated to an additional 2,360 homes and represented a significant challenge.

The Borough Council would continue to prepare the Local Plan, update any evidence as necessary and look at options for meeting the anticipated housing need. Due to the Government proposals it was expected that public consultation on a draft Plan would be later than originally planned and was likely to be late summer 2018.

In response to a question related to the percentage of housing delivered in Tonbridge it was indicated that this represented approximately 25% of that built throughout Tonbridge and Malling.

A number of organisations, including the Civic Society and Women's Institute, expressed concern about the provision for older persons within the town and felt it was important to reflect the needs of this demographic appropriately. In addition to improving the provision of care homes there was a need to provide smaller accommodation so that people could continue to live independently and downsize.

Particular reference was made to the reduced number of public toilets in the town and the Director of Street Scene, Leisure and Technical Services indicated that general provision of these would be reviewed in due course. One option being explored was for local traders to sign up to a 'community toilet' scheme. Participating businesses would publicise their toilets for public use, which it was hoped would remove the embarrassment some older persons felt when asking to use the facilities.

Members of the Forum asked Kent County Council to consider the following points in relation to Cannon Lane:

- Review traffic movements and consider what traffic control options could be implemented for the safety of pedestrians;

- Improve pedestrian crossings as the introduction of the new retail units had increased footfall to the site;
- Look at opportunities to improve cycling facilities or providing separate cycle lanes

The Women's Institute suggested that two hours free parking could attract extra visitors to the town. In response, the Director of Street Scene, Leisure and Technical Services reminded Members that there was free evening and Sunday parking in Tonbridge. Charges for car parking were also noted as being about managing parking and traffic movement.

Finally, the Tonbridge Town Team commented that events were a good way to encourage visitors to the town and announced that within the town centre it would be organising an English Civil War re-enactment in May 2018. It was hoped that activities of this type would help support the various businesses in the town.

TF 17/13 WASTE SERVICES CONTRACT

The Street Scene Manager outlined proposals for the Waste Services Contract for refuse, recycling and street cleansing as the current contract was due to end in February 2019.

Partnership opportunities for the future delivery of these services were currently being developed with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, Dartford Borough Council and Kent County Council, although the final details were still to be defined and agreed. However, the main aim was to deliver service improvements and efficiencies, greater consistency across the County, increased recycling performance and financial savings to the Borough Council.

The current proposals being considered included a weekly food waste, fortnightly residual waste, fortnightly dry recycling of paper and card and glass, cans, plastics and cartons kerbside collection model. Proposals also included the introduction of a fortnightly garden waste 'opt in' charged service. It was reported that charges were necessary in underpinning the proposed service improvements.

It was indicated that Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council was in the minority of local authorities across Kent that did not currently charge for the collection of garden waste.

Details relating to some services and the introduction of charges for garden waste were yet to be finalised by the Borough Council as some decisions were dependent upon the outcome of the tendering exercise. However, it was noted that the national average charge for garden waste collection was approximately £42 per annum.

Early engagement with potential contractors had been undertaken prior to the commencement of the formal tender process to gauge level of interest. Approximately, 8 expressions of interest had been received.

With regard to recycling rates, the Borough Council had set a realistic and achievable target of 50% which was in line with that achieved by other local authorities in Kent.

It was reiterated that the improved service would be more expensive and the introduction of charging for green waste would help support the enhancements. As part of the tender and contract renewal process an Equality Impact Assessment would be undertaken and any areas of concern, such as discrimination against elderly residents who did not drive, would be identified. However, the Cabinet Member for Street Scene and Environment Services commented that kerbside collections would be beneficial for all residents and particularly those who could not drive to recycling bring sites.

In addition, it was noted that if a contractor offered an option to collect batteries as part of their tender submission the Borough Council would give this full consideration.

Finally, it was noted that good communication, publicity and marketing would be key to resident participation and the success of the new services. The service delivery options around the Waste Services Contract continued and a further update report presented to the Forum.

TF 17/14 UPDATE ON TONBRIDGE STATION IMPROVEMENTS AND HIGH STREET REVIEW

The Senior Schemes Programme Manager at Kent County Council (Mr Jamie Watson) provided an update on the progress being made on the Tonbridge Station improvements and advised that a review of the recent High Street improvements would be undertaken.

It was reported that funding of £500,000 allocated from the West Kent Local Growth Fund to support this project had to be spent during 2018/19. The aim was to improve interaction between users at the station, provide more space for pedestrian movements and to create an interchange suitable for one of the busiest stations outside London.

Key proposals included relocating the bus lane to allow a wider pedestrian space; a 3 meter wide pedestrian crossing from the station towards Priory Road; 3 way traffic light controls (Waterloo Road, B2260 North and South) to allow safer movement for pedestrians, particularly at peak times; and the existing bus layby outside Lidl to be removed and converted to a new pedestrian area. There were also plans for new bus stops for three buses to be created using some of the existing carriageway space.

Consultation on these proposals for the station would start in January 2018 and finish in March 2018.

In setting out these proposals Mr Watson advised that vehicles would be able to pass buses in both directions along the High Street and a right hand turn would be provided. Local bus operators had confirmed satisfaction with these measures.

A number of points had been raised by residents and included the bus stop outside Café Nero causing traffic delays and the raised table in the High Street being mistaken for a pedestrian crossing. It was reported that a review into the High Street improvements was due to be undertaken in January 2018 and these issues could be revisited as part of this exercise.

Areas of concern raised by the Forum related to the proposed locations for the 'kiss and drop' layby, which was felt to be too distant from the station, the need for disabled parking bays at the station, the raised table in the High Street, the shop fronts at the station and whether bus operators could be encouraged to review their service routes.

In response, Mr Watson explained that:

- The raised table in the High Street was a traffic calming feature intended to encourage drivers to consider their environment. It was confirmed that motorists had priority over pedestrians.
- The shop fronts at the station were not currently part of discussions with Network Rail but could be incorporated.
- Disabled parking bays would be provided by South Eastern at the rear of the station. Details related to these bays would be shared once finalised.
- Bus services and routes could be looked at as part of the High Street review.

Members felt strongly that the current 'kiss and drop' should be retained outside the station as the proposed relocation of the layby to Priory Road was too far and not convenient for travellers. In addition, Members encouraged consideration to be given to improving and supporting taxis.

However, Members also recognised and appreciated that the High Street had been greatly improved and all were encouraged to participate in the consultation.

TF 17/15 TONBRIDGE MUSIC CLUB - RECENT ACTIVITIES

Tonbridge Music Club (Mrs Rena Pope) advised the Forum that the organisation had been founded in 1963. Since that time many excellent and influential international musicians had been welcomed to the town, including 'The Sixteen choir, the pianist Alfred Brendel, the Aeolian Quartet and many others.

The Club hosted six professional concerts a year for residents and visitors to enjoy. In addition, the Club were proud to encourage new talent and hosted a regular series of concerts, named after a former president Clifford Benson, featuring young musicians at the beginning of their music career.

Members were advised that a young bassoon artist, Amy Harman, would be performing on 13 January 2018 and all were invited to attend. The concert would start at 1930 hours in the Parish Church.

Mrs Pope observed that 'the past of Tonbridge Music Club had been marvellous, the present superb and the artists as usual excellent'. However, 'smaller audiences for chamber music and fewer members were making it difficult for Music Clubs to continue'.

Current membership was 150 compared to 350 in 2003 and long serving Members, such as the Treasurer and Secretary, were standing down from their roles. Repeated appeals for new membership had not resulted in people to take on these positions and the Forum was asked to promote not only the concerts but the Music Club. The Chairman, in his capacity as Leader, suggested that the Borough Council's Media and Communications Team could assist with promotion and organisation of a social media campaign.

Tonbridge Town Team referred to the Tonbridge Arts Festival which had covered music, art, literature and theatre and dance and advised that this could be extended to include activities from other organisations. The Town Team were happy to help and support other local community groups.

TF 17/16 KENT POLICE UPDATE

Due to other work commitments Kent Police had submitted their apologies for this meeting.

TF 17/17 KENT COUNTY COUNCIL SERVICES UPDATE

The Kent County Council Community Liaison Officer (Anne Charman) reported on a number of County initiatives and consultations. A Kent County Council Services Update report setting out more details was attached, as a supplement, to the agenda for information.

Particular reference was made to a number of key messages and these included:

- The points made by the Leader of the County Council advising of continuing budget pressures, focusing on the Council's Autumn Statement.
- The Member Grant Scheme 2017/18 was now opened with £22,000 available to fund both community and highway projects. Tonbridge and Malling County Councillors had a total of £154,000 to allocate in 2017/18. Projects previously supported included the 2018 English Civil War re-enactment and the Tonbridge Christmas Festival. Local County Councillors were also considering road crossing improvements and highway schemes.

Further information was available from local County Councillors or the Community Liaison Officer

Recent consultations included the Draft Budget Strategy 2018/19 and the Community Infant Feeding Support, both of which had ended on 3 December 2017. A consultation related to Gypsy and Traveller Pitch Allocations, setting out proposals related to the introduction of service charges, deposit scheme and changes to the application process, had a deadline for responses of 20 December 2017. In addition, the Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment consultation sought views from health and social care professionals, organisations and local communities on the level of pharmacy services. The deadline for responses was 22 January 2018.

A consultation on Socially Necessary Bus Service funding was due to be launched in January. This would assess the future level of subsidy and the timetable alongside possible withdrawals of subsidies which had the potential to impact on the delivery of some bus services.

All Kent County Council consultations could be viewed online at:

<http://consultations.kent.gov.uk/consult.ti>

Local Members expressed concern regarding on-street parking in the centre of Tonbridge for residential properties and asked that the County Council stand by their guidance of 1 parking space for each individual flat/property. County Councillor R Long advised that Kent County Council were fully aware of the concerns raised regarding parking provision in town centres.

Finally, the Tonbridge Town Team referred to air pollution and the impact 'living walls' were having in improving air quality. Kent County Council and Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council were invited to attend a symposium discussing a number of air quality issues early next year. Details would be shared nearer the event date.

TF 17/18 TONBRIDGE AND MALLING SERVICES UPDATE

The headline messages of relevance to Tonbridge and Malling had been covered in depth earlier in the meeting.

The meeting ended at 9.40 pm

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Tonbridge Forum

Monday, 4 December 2017

Kent County Council Services Update

Key points from the Report by Paul Carter, Leader of the Council to Full Council on 19 October 2017

Mr Carter's report focussed on the autumn budget statement:

- There had been continuous improvements to the delivery of services and progress had been made towards achieving the three strategic outcomes: children and young people in Kent getting the best start in life, older and vulnerable residents being safe and supported with choices to live independently and Kent communities feeling the benefits of economic growth by being in-work, healthy and enjoying a good quality of life.
- Reference was made to unfairness in the current methodology used by the Department for Communities and Local Government and central government in distributing grants to support local government, particularly to county councils such as Kent. Mr Carter reported that he had been lobbying for additional help, in the form of a two-year transitional fund, prior to the introduction of a new funding methodology for local government in 2020/21 and the full repatriation of business rates.
- The existing two-year transitional grant, which had provided an additional £6 million of funding a year, would conclude at the end of the financial year; in addition to other grant reductions including the Revenue Support Grant. Good progress had been made in terms of the authority's submission, in conjunction with the borough and district councils, to become one of the 100% business rate retention pilot areas; the pilot would bring £6m – £7m of additional funding over the next two years.
- Figures were provided to highlight the variation in reductions to the Revenue Support Grant. Mr Carter noted that the average council tax paid per head of population was £185 in Inner London, £241 in Outer London, £260 in metropolitan areas, £290 in unitary areas and £360 in county council areas; £360.09 per head was paid in Kent. Estimated Revenue Support Grant per head in 2018/19: £109 in Inner London, £58 in Outer London, £87 in metropolitan areas, £54 in unitary areas and £24.31 in county council areas; it was estimated that Kent would receive £24.69 per head. There had been a 58.6% reduction to the Revenue Support Grant in Inner London over the past four years, in contrast to county councils, in particular Kent whose grant had reduced to 94.4%. Further, county councils did not fully benefit from the New Homes Bonus, like unitary authorities did, as the bonus was split 80:20 between district and county councils.
- Despite grant reductions, Kent had modernised and transformed through commissioning and procurement and provided a range of non-statutory services, for example the £80m Freedom Pass, £6m subsidised bus routes and £16m enablement service to help and support people as they come out of hospital.
- As part of the proposal to reduce subsidies for uneconomic bus routes, the authority was looking to develop community provision through the potential use of an Uber type technology to allow taxi sharing in rural areas.

Primary School Places

Applications for children due to start primary and junior school in September 2018 open at 9am on **6 November 2017 and close on 15 January 2018**.

You can apply online or by post.

For more information read KCC's [guide to primary school applications \(PDF, 2.5 MB\)](#). Or for advice please call 03000 41 21 21 or email primaryadmissions@kent.gov.uk.

Lorry Watch

KCC works to mitigate the impact of freight in Kent and has introduced a scheme called Lorry Watch to tackle the issue of lorries using inappropriate rural routes in Kent. The scheme aims to support and empower local residents in areas where issues persist with the through traffic of Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs).

In addition, KCC has completely overhauled Kent's lorry-route map and conducted many reviews of lorry directional and regulatory signs as well as updating mapping companies to ensure that the maps on sat navs are accurate.

The Lorry Watch scheme is run by local residents. Community volunteers record details of lorries that are suspected of using unsuitable roads or not sticking to the limits and restrictions.

Once the information is collected, it is passed to Kent Police who can find the vehicle's registered keeper. If the vehicle is ignoring the legal limits and restrictions, the police contact the company and warn them that if they continue, it may result in formal action.

If there is no limit or restriction but the road is thought unsuitable, Kent County Council will contact the company and advise them to use the [Kent Freight Gateway journey planner](#).

Setting up a Lorry Watch. Anyone can set up a Lorry Watch. To do this, follow these steps:

1. You will need at least two volunteers for your Lorry Watch team. They must be aged 18 or over. Parish Councils or other community groups can be good places to find volunteers.
2. Contact Lorry Watch by emailing freight@kent.gov.uk or on 03000 41 81 81 to discuss the idea, after which the necessary equipment will be delivered to you together with safety information and instructions on how the scheme works.

Guide to apprenticeships

For careers advice and information about different types of jobs visit: <https://www.kent.gov.uk/jobs/starting-your-career/be-an-apprentice/guide-to-apprenticeships>

Apprenticeships are an excellent way to get work-based training, working with real employers, training on the job and working towards an industry-standard qualification.

For example:

- start a career and start earning at 16 – the currently weekly wage is £100 at 16 and £170 for 18 and over,
- choose from more than 250 careers - from health and social care to management, construction and engineering to banking and media, leisure and tourism,
- choose from three levels of qualification - from GCSE and A-Level equivalent up to degree level,
- boost career prospects - 85% of former apprentices remain in employment and 32% are promoted within 12 months,
- boost earning potential - former apprentices can earn on average £100,000 more than other employees during their lifetime,
- get the same benefits and discounts as college or university students but avoid the costs of further education.

The 'Made in Kent' campaign continues to encourage employers to register vacancies as numbers of young people registering for apprenticeships still exceeds placements. As part of KCC's 'Made in Kent' apprenticeship campaign, '1,000 Interviews' was launched at Oakwood House recently to give young people the opportunity to experience mock interviews.

Kent Fostering - Open your Heart

KCC urgently needs people to provide children and young people with loving homes. KCC is recruiting 200 new foster carers and urgently needs to fill the remaining 120 vacancies. For more information please contact 03000 420 002 or visit <http://www.kentfostering.co.uk>

Options after 16

Find out about the options available to young people once they turn 16, including education, employment and training:

<http://www.kent.gov.uk/education-and-children/college-sixth-form-employment-and-training>

Kent Public Health Observatory (KPHO) <http://www.kpho.org.uk/>

KPHO provides public health intelligence through data collection, analysis and interpretation. Its library gives access to knowledge, resources and evidence to support public health and social care.

It has a library based in Sessions House, Maidstone. Library membership is open to all working;

- in public health in Kent and Medway
- in social care in Kent County Council
- in Kent County Council

Non-members are welcome to use the library for reference and study purposes, although there may be a charge for this facility.

You can also subscribe to its weekly e-bulletin and receive a weekly summary of what's new with links to new reports, policy and resources organized by topic.

Fact and Figures about Kent

The Kent County Council Strategic Business Development & Intelligence Unit provides regular monthly updates on unemployment in Kent and other facts and figures, including area profiles, economy and employment data, population and census data, equality and diversity data, children and young people' data, land and property data, energy and environment data and deprivation and poverty data. Visit: <http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/information-and-data/Facts-and-figures-about-Kent>

Sign up to KCC's new mailing list and receive the latest council news in your mailbox

By subscribing to KCC's free emailing service residents can receive important Kent County Council information and news as it becomes available. A valid email address is required and will be used only to provide information on topic preferences subscribed to. For more information visit: www.kent.gov.uk

KCC Highways – report a problem on the road or pavement

KCC Highways, Transportation and Waste welcomes feedback from its customers and has designed a fault reporting tool so that residents can quickly and easily let us know about any problems on the roads and footways or about any equipment such as streetlights, that may not be working.

If you wish to report a fault visit: www.kent.gov.uk/highwayfaults

From here can be viewed all known issues, any planned works, report multiple issues, upload photos as well as track any existing enquiries. Residents can still call to report any complex or urgent matters on 03000 418181 and speak to one of KCC's trained highway specialists.

KCC Combined Member Grant Scheme 2017/18

KCC's Combined Member Grant scheme has now opened with £22,000 available to every County Councillor to fund both community and highway projects in their electoral division. Tonbridge & Malling County Councillors between them have a total of £154,000 to allocate in 2017/18.

For more information on the Combined Member Grant scheme, please contact your local County Councillor or Anne Charman, KCC Community Liaison Officer.

KCC also produces a monthly publication 'Inside Track' which provides information on funding opportunities at a county and national level. For a copy of Inside Track or information on other funding opportunities visit: <http://www.kent.gov.uk/leisure-and-community/community-grants-and-funding>.

Consultations - have your say, your views count

You can view all KCC consultations online at:

<http://consultations.kent.gov.uk/consult.ti>

Signed up to the KCC Consultation Directory yet? It only takes a few minutes to register and gives a full list of past, current and planned consultations and provides an opportunity to feedback on local services and policies. It enables KCC to contact residents when an activity is due to take place or to receive feedback for a particular consultation or involvement activity when it is published on KCC's website.

(Please note there are separate lists for **Traffic Regulation Orders** and **Start of Works Notices** and for **Public Rights of Way Notices**.)

Active consultations:

Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment – 15 November to 22 January 2018

How often do you use your local pharmacy? Does your town need more? These are some of the questions being put to Kent residents in a new consultation.

- On 1st April 2013, statutory responsibility for publishing and updating a statement of the need for pharmaceutical services passed to Health and Wellbeing Boards.
- Pharmaceutical Needs Assessments are used by the NHS to decide whether to approve applications for new pharmacies in an area and by commissioners to identify local health needs that could be addressed by pharmacy services.
- It is now time to refresh the PNA and publish a revised version for April 2018. The Health and Wellbeing Board is therefore consulting with Health and Social care professionals, organisations and people that use pharmacy services

(NB: The important role that pharmacists can play is highlighted in the NHS England 'Stay Well This Winter' campaign which KCC supports, urging people feeling under the weather this winter to avoid A&E, and to instead consider visiting their local pharmacy for quick, early advice. This is especially important over the winter months – when people are more likely to become ill or feel poorly.)

Gypsy & Traveller Site Allocation Policy – 14 November to 20 December 2017

KCC is consulting on proposed changes to its site Allocation Policy, including the introduction of a service charge for site residents and improvements to the application forms.

- **New Service Charge** - the proposed service charge will involve a flat service charge of £25 per week, per pitch, to be introduced from April 2018 (each plot/cost averaged out across all KCC sites).
- **Deposit Scheme** - a new deposit scheme is proposed for all new applicants when they sign the rental agreement. Deposits will be refunded when an applicant leaves or moves on, subject to the pitch being left in the same condition it was at the start of the rental period. The proposed deposit is £500. This amount will be subject to annual review.

- **Application Process** - the application process is being updated to make sure pitches are allocated to gypsy and travellers who meet KCC's policy on eligibility and who are deemed most in need at the time of their application.

Draft Budget Strategy 2018/19 – 12 October to 3 December 2017

KCC is consulting on its draft budget strategy for 2018/19 and the associated council tax proposals.

KCC prioritises spending on services that:

- make sure children and young people get the best start in life
- communities feel the benefit of economic growth
- vulnerable residents are supported to live independently.

As the funding from government decreases and demand for services increase, savings need to be made through prioritisation of services and transformation efficiencies. To date £589m savings have been made over the past seven years but there still remains a significant funding gap that KCC wishes to consult on.

For full information on KCC's budget strategy and for information on how to take part in this consultation, please visit: www.kent.gov.uk/budget

KCC news

To view the latest news and releases from KCC visit KCC's Media Hub at <https://kccmediahub.net/>

Recent media releases

KCC 'disappointed' at delay of planned Thameslink service to Maidstone East

Kent County Council is extremely disappointed at the announcement this week by Govia Thameslink Railway of their decision to delay even further the start of the planned new Thameslink service to Maidstone East.

Once again Maidstone has been put to the back of the queue, with a delay of a further year from December 2018 to December 2019.

Kent County Council has been determined to have a branch of Thameslink services terminating at Maidstone East, and has campaigned over several years, with other councils and rail travellers' associations, to get the planned terminus for Thameslink services transferred from Tunbridge Wells to Maidstone East.

Kent County Council has always regarded this new service as a critical enhancement in the overall capacity in Kent's rail network, with the stops at West Malling (for Kings Hill), Borough Green & Wrotham, and Otford (for passengers from the wider Sevenoaks area) being essential to re-balance the travel flows between mid-Kent and the City of London

Furthermore, even the existing Thameslink service from Sevenoaks via Bat & Ball will now be truncated at Blackfriars for the period May 2018 to May 2019, further reducing the availability of through rail services between Kent and areas north of London.

Kent County Council will be writing to the rail minister to express our frustration at these further delays by the Department for Transport.

UK first to clamp down on illegally parked HGVs

Kent County Council and Ashford Borough Council have joined forces in a UK-first to clamp down on illegally parked HGVs.

The scheme, which allows the authorities to clamp and fine drivers, has been developed by working with the Department for Transport (DfT).

The DfT agreed to change the current clamping policy for HGV's so that a clamp can be fitted for first time offences.

Supplementary information provided to the Tonbridge Forum – 4 December 2017

Kent County Council Bus Funding Review

A report to the [Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee](#) on Thursday (November 30) included a proposal for members of the committee to agree to go out to consultation on Socially Necessary Bus Service funding.

It was agreed that in January, a consultation will be launched to assess the future level of subsidy and the timetable alongside possible withdrawals of subsidies which may impact on the delivery of some bus services.

The contracts under discussion could refer to the whole service, some evening journeys, weekend journeys, diversions off of the route or journeys at specific times. The specific journeys affected will only be those subsidised by Kent County Council and will be detailed in the consultation documents.

At present it is proposed to reduce the budget for Socially Necessary Bus Services (SNBS) by £4 million over the coming two years at a time when budgets are extremely tight.

The proposal has identified bus contracts, supported by KCC, which, subject to the consultation, could be withdrawn – it does not necessarily mean the whole service will go. KCC for instance, may fund a late-night service or Sunday journeys. It is also possible that well-used services will now be considered commercially-viable and be taken over by bus companies.

Supporting SNBS – which make up 3% of Kent's buses – is a discretionary activity by the county council – there is no statutory requirement to provide the funds for these bus services to run.

However, KCC recognises the significant importance of these bus contracts affected by the proposals which account for 1.6 million journeys.

We would encourage anyone affected by these proposals to take part in the consultation to ensure your views are known before a final decision is made later next year.

The meeting can be watched again [here](#).

For more information on any of these subjects please contact:
Anne Charman, KCC Community Liaison Officer
anne.charman@kent.gov.uk or 07717 665893

*KCC's **Community Liaison Team** covers all 12 district council areas in Kent supporting local County Councillors in their role as community leaders and administering their grants. The team works closely with partners from the public, private and voluntary sectors, to help ensure Kent's residents and local community groups are kept well informed about KCC's services and are given the opportunity to influence decisions.*

