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TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

TONBRIDGE FORUM

Monday, 9th September, 2019

Present: Cllr N J Heslop (Chairman), Cllr J R S Lark (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Mrs J A Anderson, Cllr Mrs P A Bates, Cllr M D Boughton, Cllr V M C Branson, Cllr G C Bridge, Cllr A E Clark, Cllr D W King, Cllr K King, Cllr M R Rhodes and Cllr Miss G E Thomas.

Together with:

- County Councillor M Payne
- Society of Friends
- Tonbridge Art Group
- Tonbridge Civic Society
- Tonbridge District Scout Council
- Tonbridge Historical Society
- Tonbridge Line Commuters
- Tonbridge Lions Club
- Tonbridge Rotary Club
- Tonbridge Sports Association
- Tonbridge Theatre and Arts Club
- Tonbridge Town Team
- University of the Third Age
- Women's Institute

N Foyle, M A J Hood and D Lettington were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors F G Tombolis, Mr R Long, The Bridge Trust, Kent Police (Tonbridge), Tonbridge Area Churches Together and Tonbridge Music Club

TF 19/18 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 2 July 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

TF 19/19 UPDATE ON ANY ACTION IDENTIFIED IN THE LAST MINUTES

There were no updates or actions identified that were not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

TF 19/20 GAS REPLACEMENT WORKS IN TONBRIDGE

Representatives from Scotia Gas Networks (SGN) explained that it was necessary to replace the main gas pipe at one end of the High Street (opposite Tonbridge School) to avoid the risk of failure and leakage. There was concern that increased demand for gas during the winter

months would increase this risk and it was indicated that a planned work programme would be better than an emergency response, which would cause significant disruption.

The Forum expressed disappointment at the poor communication, lack of consultation and the insufficient notice of these proposed works. It was noted that work was originally scheduled for today (Monday 9 September) and this had been delayed in response to the significant concerns raised by the Borough and County Councils.

There were also significant concerns raised related to the proposed diversion route which would have implications for traffic flow and be difficult for buses to navigate.

Following in-depth discussion the Borough and County Councils' preference was for the replacement works to be programmed for early 2020, subject to improved consultation with key stakeholders (Borough and County Councils, all bus operators and local schools), the preparation of a risk assessment and the submission of a detailed traffic management plan setting out diversion routes.

TF 19/21 TONBRIDGE AND MALLING SERVICES UPDATE

The Chairman (in his role as Leader of the Borough Council) presented an update on the new waste services provision, due to start on 30 September, the installation of a replacement bridge at the Swimming Pool (planned for September), events and activities in and around Tonbridge, preparations for Fairtrade Tonbridge renewal and discussions with the Regional Asset Portfolio Manager of the Arch Company related to Railway Approach.

Particular reference was made to the Borough Council's declaration and recognition of global climate change and biodiversity emergencies and the aspiration for Tonbridge and Malling to be carbon neutral by 2030. Services and operations would be reviewed to ensure that policies supported climate change mitigation. A draft Climate Change Strategy would be out for consultation in May 2020 and everyone was encouraged to contribute suggestions.

It was reported that leaflets outlining the waste service arrangements and collection days would be posted to all residents shortly. Take up of the garden waste collection service was over 42% and was the highest in Kent for a similar service. In addition, a number of recycling/bring bank sites were being retained although these would be reduced following the full introduction of the new services. Details were set out in the report of the Director of Street Scene, Leisure and Technical Services considered by the Street Scene and Environment Services Advisory Board on [3 September](#).

In response to a question from the Society of Friends, it was confirmed that tea bags broke down sufficiently to be put into food waste bins.

TF 19/22 KENT POLICE UPDATE

Kent Police were unable to attend the meeting due to operational pressures and their apologies were recorded. In the absence of a representative from Kent Police the report of Inspector Kerry Rothwell, circulated at the meeting, was noted. A copy of the report would be attached to the Minutes.

TF 19/23 KENT COUNTY COUNCIL SERVICES UPDATE

The County Councillor for Tonbridge (Michael Payne) provided details of a number of County initiatives and consultations. The headline messages of relevance to Tonbridge included the County Council's commitment of £250,000 to focus on initiatives to tackle fly tipping and the continuing investment into libraries, especially the refurbishment of Tonbridge library.

A number of issues were raised related to the High Street including the impact of the pedestrian crossing and roundabouts on the flow of traffic, the extension of the 20 mph speed limit, replacement of the trees and the appearance of the footpath near the Castle bus stop. In response, County Councillor Payne advised that the County Council were aware of these issues and mitigation measures would be progressed as soon as possible.

Other issues raised included landscaping at the Botany, in front of St Stephens Church, potential signage advising No HGVs to be erected in areas around the town and Arriva not using the new bus stops. All of these points were noted and would be passed to the relevant organisation for awareness.

TF 19/24 FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Tonbridge Rotary provided details of events that would be held between October – December 2019:

- Half Marathon

This would take place on 6 October starting at 1000 hours in Brook Street. There would be a road closure in place until about 1400 hours. Volunteers to act as race marshals were invited.

The Chairman indicated that he would be running in support of the Mayors Charity (CRY).

- Christmas Festival – Sunday 24 November

Tonbridge High Street would be closed between 1030 – 2030 hours from Vale Road to Bordyke. There would be a variety of stalls and entertainment would be provided on a stage near the river. The fireworks display would start later than previous years at 1900 hours due to an extended programme of entertainment.

- Social Activities in Tonbridge for Older People

The Chairman referred to the social activities financed by Tonbridge and Malling Seniors (TAMS) for 2019. Members were invited to recommend events and/or activities for older people for inclusion in a promotional leaflet for 2020. Tonbridge Town Team offered to promote events sponsored by TAMS in their regular What's On magazine.

The meeting ended at 9.30 pm

Tonbridge Forum – 9th September 2019

Kent Police Services Update

Apologies to the Chair for non-attendance on this occasion. I am happy to receive relevant questions and to answer personally post forum, if contact details can be obtained.

Staff Increases

Tonbridge has seen the introduction of town centre PC Stewart Ballard who has been in post for 4 months.

A further post has been created to have town centres in The Mallings covered by a designated PC. PC Levi Caruana is due to start in November.

PC Hugo Woollam - Police Now is a two-year programme that offers top graduates the opportunity to become neighbourhood police officers and transform communities. A key feature will be analysing problems within the Tonbridge and Malling Borough and leading on problem solving activities. Hugo is undergoing intense training and will join the Community Safety Unit at the end of the year.

PCSO interviews continuing with PCC's pledge to maintain establishment of 300 PCSO's in Kent. Tonbridge and Malling are at full establishment presently and will not benefit from the current in-take, but always under review.

A further role for a Problem solving PCSO role is currently being advertised and this officer will specialise in the use of SARA - A problem solving model.

Travellers

Since the last meeting there have been two unlawful encampments. Firstly at Ightham Recreational ground, S61 served. They then moved on to Platt Memorial Hall playing field where they were immediately issued S61 notices.

Crime Trends

Spike in crime in and around Borough Green/Platt currently– theft from motor vehicles and a spate of shed breaks. Possible suspect being looked at and crime prevention through media, parish alerts, visibility and default patrolling.

Regular discussions are carried out on serious and organised crime. This process addresses the management of recidivists and crime trends.

Good Work

All out day Tonbridge.....PCSO's wardens, police, TMBC CSP and Tom Tugendtat MP took to the streets at end of July

PCSO Coe, in conjunction with a police constable, uncovered a number of stolen motorbikes whilst investigating reports of unlawful and anti-social use of the bikes in and around Hadlow. Persons arrested.

Burglary Attendance

As per local policy PCSO's continue to attend all burglary dwelling victims, safeguarding them where appropriate and offering safety advice.

Safer Towns Manager

Recruited an ex-police officer called Gary Smith to recover a scheme that was left to decline by the previous manager. Will work closely with town centre officer. Might be potential to extend scheme to West Malling should there be any interest as this was explored a number of years ago.

Summer Plan

Focus on Burglary, Nuisance cycling, nuisance vehicles, ASB at Town Lock, ASB and violence, rough sleepers dealt with in Tonbridge, seasonal issues with motorbikes at Oakdene Café, cold caller advice for vulnerable residents through PCSO's, Licencing checks and enforcement, knife crime OP Pulpit targeting those known to carry knives. Lots of positive work. Results will now be subject to review as to what worked well, what could have been done better.

Autumn Plan

Nuisance cycling and motor vehicle use. Burglaries. Violent crime. Anti-social behaviour. Youth engagement. Licencing enforcement. Halloween / Brexit?? Fireworks. VAIO to safeguard potential vulnerable victims.

Truancy 'sweep' was a joint initiative between Kent Police and Youth Groups and work would continue in November supported by Youth Engagement Officer Toni Matthew.

Home Office Funding continues to tackle knife and violent crime across the district.