

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

TONBRIDGE FORUM

Monday, 7th September, 2020

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, Cllr Miss G E Thomas, Cllr F G Tombolis.

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

- Kent Police (Tonbridge),
- Tonbridge Civic Society,
- Tonbridge District Scout Council,
- Tonbridge Historical Society,
- Tonbridge Sports Association,
- Tonbridge Town Team and
- University of the Third Age

Councillors M A J Hood, D Lettington, H S Rogers and J L Sergison were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Apologies for absence were received from The Bridge Trust, Society of Friends and Tonbridge and Malling Seniors

TF 20/8 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 24 February 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

TF 20/9 UPDATE ON ANY ACTION IDENTIFIED IN THE LAST MINUTES

There were no items identified that were not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

TF 20/10 BOROUGH COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19 AND REVIEW, RECOVERY AND RE-ORIENTATION

The Chairman welcomed members to the first virtual meeting of Tonbridge Forum and invited the Chief Executive to provide an overview of the Borough Council's response to the pandemic and outline the proposed way forward. The Chief Executive drew attention to the report of the Management Team considered at an extraordinary meeting of Cabinet on 19 May which had provided a strategic overview of the Borough Council's response to the national emergency, the impacts on service delivery, the introduction of priority initiatives and financial

impacts. The development of a future recovery plan had been considered at Cabinet of 3 June which had approved a one-year addendum to the Borough Council's Corporate Strategy. This would provide a framework within which to consider a wide range of issues in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Reports to the Cabinet of 30 June had assessed the impacts, both immediate and longer term, on the Council's finances, the Medium Term Financial Strategy and Savings and Transformation Strategy and allowed the Cabinet to review progress with the Corporate Plan – Addendum at a strategic level. She explained that the Addendum contained three strategic themes – Review, Re-orientate and Recovery (i.e. what has been learnt, what changes are required and what will be different) and it was noted that these were evolving processes.

The Chief Executive was pleased to report that the Borough Council had been well prepared for remote working, with 95% of staff working from home where possible. In addition, a number of staff had been redeployed to support the work of the Community Support Hub which had been established to support vulnerable residents by providing essential food supplies and telephone befriending services. The Borough Council had worked with community groups and voluntary organisations to identify and signpost to long term support networks.

Reference was made to the financial support distributed to local businesses via rate relief and the delivery of Small Business Grants and Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grants. It was reported that £20.4M had been distributed to 1,670 businesses across the borough.

TF 20/11 KENT POLICE UPDATE

Sergeant Turtle provided a verbal update on the achievements made in the performance and neighbourhood policing agenda. Particular reference was made to an increase in calls relating to anti-social behaviour and initiatives undertaken with the CSU in the area of Town Lock and with Clarion on the Summerhill Estate.

TF 20/12 KENT COUNTY COUNCIL SERVICES UPDATE

The County Councillors for Tonbridge (Michael Payne and Richard Long) provided an update on County initiatives and consultations with particular reference to the trial schemes funded through Tranche 1 of the Government's Emergency Active Travel schemes. County Councillor Payne advised that, following the expression of concern about the layout on the works at Quarry Hill, he had asked that officers demonstrate that the proposed layout of the cycle lane was safe. He further advised that if this was not the case the trial layout would be removed by 30 September 2020. County Councillor Payne responded to a number of questions and comments on the scope of the town-wide 20mph zone and encouraged the submission of comments/concerns to Kent Highways during the 6 month trial period.

TF 20/13 TONBRIDGE AND MALLING SERVICES UPDATE

The Chairman (in his role as Leader of the Council) provided an update, by way of a PowerPoint presentation, on key issues relevant to Tonbridge. Particular reference was made to the level of interest from independent retailers in the Shopfront Improvement Scheme, the Economic Recovery Strategy (as part of the Kent and Medway Economic Renewal and Resilience Plan) and the Borough Council's Climate Change Strategy. It was noted that a report on the Climate Change Strategy would be submitted to the meeting of Street Scene and Environment Services Advisory Board on 5 October 2020.

In addition, the Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure (Councillor David Lettington) presented an overview of the Government proposals to reform the planning system in England contained in the 'Planning for the Future' White Paper. The Borough Council would consider its response at an extraordinary meeting of the Planning and Transportation Advisory Board scheduled for 29 September 2020 and residents were encouraged to submit comments via Ward Councillors.

The meeting ended at 9.36 pm