

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

TONBRIDGE FORUM

Monday, 9th February, 2015

Present: Cllr O C Baldock (Chairman), Cllr N J Heslop (Vice-Chairman), Cllr P F Bolt, Cllr V M C Branson and Cllr Ms S V Spence; County Councillor C Smith; together with representatives from:

The Bridge Trust
Kent Community Health NHS Trust
Kent Fire and Rescue Service
Kent Police (Tonbridge)
Skinners Company
Tonbridge Art Group
Tonbridge Area Churches Together
Tonbridge Civic Society
Tonbridge Line Commuters
Tonbridge Rotary Club
Tonbridge Theatre and Arts Club
Tonbridge Town Team and
University of the Third Age

Councillor Mrs Murray was also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs J A Anderson, Mrs M F Heslop, D J Trice, Mr R Long and Society of Friends

TF 15/1 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

TF 15/2 UPDATE ON ANY ACTION IDENTIFIED IN THE LAST MINUTES

There were no actions identified.

TF 15/3 TONBRIDGE HIGH STREET REGENERATION

Representatives from Kent County Council provided an overview of the Tonbridge High Street regeneration project, which aimed to improve the appearance of the town centre, improve traffic movement and reduce congestion and make the town an attractive place for both businesses and visitors.

It was reported that £2.62 million had been secured to fund the regeneration of the High Street and the County Council would be

working in partnership with Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council. Plans were available for public viewing until Friday 26 February at Tonbridge Library and everyone was encouraged to comment.

The project was due to start in summer 2015 and would see pavements widened; a new road surface and improved pedestrian crossings. Free flow of traffic would be encouraged by creating delivery loading areas, rather than bays, to prevent vehicles obstructing the High Street. A 20mph speed limit would be enforced from the roundabout near the library to just beyond the junction with Church Lane. The one way system encompassing Bradford Street, River Walk and New Wharf Road would also be included in this zone.

Members were advised that while the scheme was being built some disruption was expected but this would be kept to a minimum where possible. In addition, it was planned to stop works during the Christmas period so as not to interfere with business. Kent Highway Services would communicate regularly with local traders so that they were fully informed of potential disruption, although it was hoped that access to businesses would remain possible.

Consideration was given to a number of issues raised by the Forum including disability access and public transport movements along the High Street. In response, it was explained that there had been direct engagement with disability groups to understand what was required by those with lack of mobility and to see what options could be found to resolve any concerns. Buses would continue to travel along the High Street and ways of managing these movements and routes would be monitored as the scheme progressed.

Reference was made to public open space and the potential for it to be used for activities and/or street art. A consultant had been engaged to look at opportunities for maximising the space.

Further details could be found on www.tonbridgehighstreet.org Comments could be left on the website, or in writing at Tonbridge Library or by writing directly to Kent County Council.

TF 15/4 STOP SMOKING SERVICES

Natalie Ayles of the Kent Community Health NHS Trust advised that Stop Smoking was a Kent wide service that delivered a range of interventions to help people stop smoking. These included One-to-One sessions, quit clubs and virtual groups.

The service was free, although prescription charges could apply in some circumstances. A number of programmes were offered including a seven week quit programme, behavioural support and nicotine replacement therapy. In addition, 400 people in local communities had received training to provide additional help in delivering the programmes.

Particular reference was made to a number of areas in the Borough where Stop Smoking was having difficulty engaging with the local communities. It was reported that Trench and Judd had a high prevalence of smoking and these areas were being targeted.

The Service was keen to encourage communities to participate and especially welcomed local knowledge, information and promotion of the programmes available.

Finally, Members were advised that a 'no smoking day' initiative was being held in Tonbridge High Street on Wednesday 11 March 2015.

The referral line number for the Stop Smoking Service was 0300 123 1220 which was free of charge.

TF 15/5 KENT POLICE UPDATE

Inspector M Hutcheon provided an overview of the achievements made in performance and neighbourhood policing. It was reported that Tonbridge and Malling remained a low crime area and that victim based crime had reduced by 1.1%.

The current policing model provided challenges around crime series investigation and Tonbridge and Malling were using innovative approaches to address these.

Recent initiatives included Op Heath, a multi-agency taxi enforcement operation in support of the Borough Council; Op Caddy, a drugs dog visit to local schools and colleges and speed enforcement at Red Hill, Wateringbury and Stocks Green Road, Hildenborough. Future events and initiatives would be advertised on the Kent Police website.

Members referred to the increase in cybercrime and it was recognised that improving education around personal safety and security online was an important factor in addressing this trend.

TF 15/6 KENT COUNTY COUNCIL SERVICES UPDATE

The Kent County Council Community Engagement Manager reported that a 12 week public consultation on proposals to modernise libraries, registration and archives service had begun. Views could be registered online at www.kent.gov.uk/libraries ; whilst an explanatory booklet and questionnaire were available in county libraries. The following Drop in sessions were also arranged:

- Thursday 12 February 1000-1900 hours - Tonbridge Library
- Thursday 26 February 0900-1230 – Larkfield Library
- Thursday 26 February 1400-1700 – Paddock Wood Library

The consultation closed on 4 April 2015.

Reference was made to the public consultation on the County's draft corporate outcomes framework and comments were invited on the draft strategic and supporting outcomes and how the County Council should measure progress in achieving these. The document was available on www.kent.gov.uk/corporateoutcomes until 20 February 2015.

Kent County Council had agreed to progress converting its stock of 120,000 street lights to LED. This improvement would help reduce the street lighting energy bill by around 60% which meant that all night lighting for residential areas could potentially be reinstated.

Finally, Members were invited to comment on proposed changes to Hugh Christie Technology College. This consultation would run from 4 February to 25 March 2015 and further information was available on www.kent.gov.uk/schoolconsultations

TF 15/7 TONBRIDGE AND MALLING SERVICES UPDATE

The Chief Executive provided an update on key points relevant to Tonbridge and Malling and referred to the recent airport consultation which had ended on 3 February 2015. It was confirmed that Borough Council Members had endorsed opposition to a second runway at Gatwick and support for a second runway at Heathrow.

'Web chat' had recently been trialled on the Borough Council's website to support and assist customers online by offering guidance on how and where to self-serve and signposting to relevant departments. The service had received a positive reaction with over 800 visitors in a few weeks and this would shortly be expanded to other Services.

Details were given on a number of Love Where you Live initiatives across the Borough, including a number of specific projects in Tonbridge.

The meeting ended at 8.55 pm