

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

TONBRIDGE FORUM

Monday, 12th September, 2016

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 Ms S V Spence and County Councillor
R Long

Together with representatives from:

St John's Ambulance, Society of Friends, Tonbridge Allotments and Gardens, Tonbridge and Malling Seniors, Tonbridge Art Group, Tonbridge Civic Society, Tonbridge District Scout Council, Tonbridge Music Club, Tonbridge Rotary Club, Tonbridge Sports Association, Tonbridge Theatre and Arts Club, Tonbridge Town Team and Women's Institute

Councillor M A Coffin was also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs P A Bates, D J Cure, F G Tombolis, Kent Fire and Rescue Service, Tonbridge Historical Society, Tonbridge Line Commuters, Tonbridge Lions Club and Tonbridge Philharmonic Society

TF 16/14 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 12 May 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

TF 16/15 UPDATE ON ANY ACTION IDENTIFIED IN THE LAST MINUTES

There were no actions identified.

However, reference was made to the Tonbridge High Street Improvement Scheme discussion at the previous meeting, set out at Minute Number TF 16/12, and the requested response from Kent County Council regarding shared spaces.

The Chairman advised that this would be circulated to all Forum Members out of meeting and apologised for the delay in passing this on.

TF 16/16 FLOODING UPDATE: TONBRIDGE, HILDENBOROUGH AND EAST PECKHAM

The Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health reported on recent progress made towards flood improvement measures within

Tonbridge. As a result of effective partnership working between the Environment Agency, Kent County Council and the Borough Council on funding support and modelling of options there was now a clear way forward with a scheme.

Mr Simon Curd of the EA's Flood Risk Management Team provided a summary of these recent developments and reported that, following an initial assessment stage, it appeared feasible to increase the capacity of the Leigh Flood Storage Area (LFSA) and bring forward a flood und at Hildenborough. This would improve the level of protection to Tonbridge and other communities downstream. Improvements to benefit Hildenborough would need to occur at the same time as those at Leigh. It was explained that extensive modelling had demonstrated that both the LFSA and Hildenborough elements of the scheme needed to be completed together to avoid the increased risk of flooding River Medway into that community.

In addition, the LFSA and Hildenborough schemes had been 'decoupled' from the options for the Rivers Beult and Teise as it was felt that more localised flood defences would be more beneficial for the communities at Yalding, Collier Street and Laddingford.

Funding to improve the LFSA and defences for Hildenborough would be forthcoming from DEFRA with partnership contributions from Kent County Council, Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council and the private sector. In addition, there was a bid to the South East Local Enterprise Partnership which, if successful, would contribute to this scheme and a separate flood alleviation scheme for East Peckham. The EA and Borough Council were optimistic that funding would be secured. It would be known on 23 November 2016 whether the bid for funding had been successful.

The local community would be briefed at a poster exhibition to be held on 20-22 October 2016 at the Angel Centre, Tonbridge between 1400 and 2000 hours on weekdays; 1000 and 1600 hours on Saturday.

Finally, Members were advised that the outline business case was being prepared and would lead to the full business case being submitted to DEFRA in 2018. Once approved the detailed design phase was anticipated to start in 2018/19. Currently, the EA's indicative programme showed construction between 2019 and 2022.

The Forum was also advised of other recent EA investment in Tonbridge at Town Lock and Avebury Avenue.

Members welcomed the positive news regarding improved flood defences and asked that the timetable for the works to be implemented was moved forward as quickly as possible. Mr Curd recognised that the process seemed lengthy and reminded the Forum that the proposed schedule was earlier than that originally promised. The earlier

development of the scheme was as a result of securing funding contributions and the Borough Council's initiative regarding the funding bid to SELEP was recognised. It was also hoped that the timetable could be accelerated as progress was made.

Concerns were raised regarding the lack of flood protection measures in place for Hildenborough whilst the scheme was developed and whether temporary flood barriers could be used. The EA recognised the concerns raised and offered to revisit the potential use of flood barriers although it was not guaranteed that this would be a viable alternative. Further work would also be done to improve communication and early warnings to residents.

The issue of surface water was raised and it was confirmed that Southern Water and Kent County Council had responsibility for this area. Work had recently been completed on clearing the culverts but the EA recognised that the surface water represented a significant challenge and were consulting with Southern Water, via the County Council.

The Chairman thanked Mr Curd for his contribution and asked all Members of the Forum to promote the upcoming workshops in Tonbridge. A copy of the recent EA newsletter would be attached again to the Minutes for information.

TF 16/17 FAIRER CHARGING IN TONBRIDGE AND MALLING - UPDATE FOLLOWING PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The Chief Executive referred to the recent public consultation on the proposals for fairer charging in Tonbridge and Malling by the introduction of a Special Expenses scheme. The proposal aimed to achieve savings where possible and to provide equity for residents throughout Tonbridge and Malling.

The consultation had ended on 20 June 2016 with a good response from residents. These responses had been carefully considered by a Special Cabinet meeting held on 28 July and a preferred way forward formulated for recommendation to Council in November. As a result of those considerations a number of changes had been suggested and it was now recommended that Tonbridge Cemetery be removed from any Special Expenses Scheme on the grounds that it was a facility that was available equally to all residents in Tonbridge and Malling.

At the current time, Christmas lighting was not included in the Special Expenses Scheme although the Borough Council recognised that there was an inequity between Tonbridge and the parished areas of the borough as there were differing funding arrangements in place. With this in mind, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would undertake a thorough review and explore alternative opportunities. It was hoped that a new system could be adopted for Christmas 2017.

As a consequence of the suggested changes to the Scheme indicative figures for Special Expenses would be lower than originally estimated but the final sums were still being calculated.

Details of the projected timetable for the proposals were available in full on the Borough Council website but summarised below:

- 13 September: Overview and Scrutiny Committee review proposals for Special Expenses and make recommendations to Cabinet
- 12 October: Cabinet considers proposals and any recommendations from Overview and Scrutiny and makes recommendations to Full Council
- 1 November: Full Council considers final proposals and approves/adopts Special Expenses Policy

A question was asked about financial arrangements for Tonbridge and whether local councillors, or a local Member panel, would be granted delegated authority to make decisions regarding local precepts and funding opportunities. The Chief Executive responded that, under current Borough Council arrangements, those councillors elected to represent Tonbridge residents' interests had the opportunity to do so via the Advisory Board system and the standard budget setting process.

Members were encouraged to read the report on Special Expenses considered by Cabinet on 28 July 2016 via the following link:

<https://democracy.tmbc.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=146&MIId=3006&Ver=4>

TF 16/18 LOCAL PLAN UPDATE

The Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health indicated that the forthcoming Local Plan was a significant document for the Borough Council in identifying and outlining future development for Tonbridge and Malling for the coming years.

Members were advised that a period of public consultation on the Local Plan was expected to start on Friday 30 September 2016 for an eight week period. The closing date was 25 November and this was longer than the minimum statutory consultation period of six weeks.

The main focus of the consultation would be a revised Way Forward document, including an executive summary and map of the potential development strategy; the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping and the Habitat Regulations Assessment reports and an electronic survey setting out 15 set questions to provide consultees with a structure for responding. All of this material could be viewed on the website once

the consultation opened and hard copies would be available at the two main Council offices and libraries. In addition, hard copies would be made available for local organisations.

All Members of the Forum were encouraged to work with their local communities to raise awareness of the Local Plan consultation period and to respond by the November deadline.

There would also be a small number of manned exhibitions around the Borough during the consultation period although the number and duration would have to reflect the limited resources available to the Local Plan team during this busy stage of plan making.

It was also confirmed that traditional methods of promotion and communication would be used in conjunction with the use of social media and the internet.

Following the consultation a revised plan would be prepared to reflect the comments received before submission to Government sometime in 2017. There would be further opportunity for local involvement and contribution as the process continued.

In response to a question from the Forum regarding the scope of the Plan, the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health indicated that currently it dealt with headline development strategy and policies around use of land; protection of the countryside and infrastructure.

Finally, in response to a further question regarding planning policy until the Plan was implemented in 2018, the Policy Manager advised that the Local Development Framework remained extant until the Local Plan was ratified. The Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health was also pleased to report that the Borough Council had an estimated five year supply of housing development available. However, it was important to take some challenging decisions for the longer term.

Members were pleased to see consideration being given to mixed types of housing and asked whether consideration would also be given to community spaces and local shopping. It was confirmed that both of these areas would be referred to in the Plan and that the Borough Council tried to promote the scale of development should be right for the size of the community.

The Chairman closed the discussion by asking all Members to promote the consultation with their local community groups.

TF 16/19 KENT POLICE UPDATE

This item was WITHDRAWN from the agenda.

However, the following local concerns were raised and these would be forwarded to Kent Police, via the Community Safety Partnership, for addressing:

- Nuisance vehicles along Yardley Park Road (Councillor V Branson)
- An outstanding enquiry regarding enforcement around speeding in Barden Road and speeding along the Ridgeway (County Councillor R Long and Councillor N Heslop)
- Anti-social behaviour around fishing

In addition, the following concern had been raised at the Parish Partnership Panel on Thursday 8 September regarding youths loitering and smoking cannabis in Tonbridge. At that meeting Kent Police (Inspector R McNeil) confirmed that drug issues were always taken seriously and dealt with appropriately. There was work undertaken with local schools and youth teams on education around drug use. However, it was important to report incidents as they occurred as it was difficult to deal with issues retrospectively. Dispersal orders were also an effective tool in preventing youths loitering and taking drugs but represented a challenging situation with reducing resources.

TF 16/20 KENT FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES UPDATE

Apologies had been received from the Kent Fire and Rescue Services Group Manager (C King) due to another work commitment and this item was WITHDRAWN from the agenda.

TF 16/21 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 to the agenda for information.

Members were advised that by subscribing to Kent County Council's free emailing service residents could receive important information and news as it became available. A valid email address was required and would be used only to provide information on topic preferences subscribed to. For more information visit: www.kent.gov.uk

All KCC consultations could be found online and Members were encouraged to sign up to the consultation directory:

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

Finally, feedback on the format and future content of the Services Update report was invited.

The Women's Institute thanked the County Council for the installation of the pedestrian crossing at Hunt Road. The Chairman indicated that this had been funded from the Combined Member Grant Scheme and thanked the local County Councillors (R Long and C Smith) for their contribution.

Gratitude was also expressed for the new bench seats along the Tonbridge High Street.

In response to a query from the Society of Friends regarding the Cycling Strategy Consultation result, the Community Liaison Officer indicated that the outcomes would be available on the website in due course and offered to follow this up out of meeting.

Finally reference was made to a pilot programme for Volunteer Community Wardens being run by Kent County Council and everyone was asked to promote this new initiative. Full details were not yet available but information would be placed on the website in due course. Any information forthcoming in the near future would be circulated with the Minutes.

TF 16/22 TONBRIDGE AND MALLING SERVICES UPDATE

The Chief Executive and the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health provided an update on key points relevant to Tonbridge and these included:

- Hive Lotto

The Community Lottery had been launched on Friday 2 September and was a fundraising scheme to help local good causes. It was reported that six partners were on board, including the Bridge Trust, West Kent Mind, Spadeworks and Tonbridge Angels, and all were encouraged to support, promote and participate.

Details were available on: www.hivelotto.co.uk and more information around the launch of the community lottery could be found on the Borough Council's website:

<http://www.tmbc.gov.uk/news/archive-2016/launch-of-hive-lotto-marks-start-of-funding-boost-for-good-causes>

- River Walk Improvement Scheme

This was a project to improve and enhance the River Walk area up to New Wharf Road and a partnership approach between the County and Borough Councils would be adopted. It was intended to be a high quality scheme and had been 'fast tracked' to take advantage of a funding opportunity. Works were anticipated to start on site in

November. More detailed information would be presented to the Borough Council's Finance, Innovation and Property Advisory Board on 21 September and the report could be viewed on the website via the following link:

<https://democracy.tmbc.gov.uk/documents/s18537/Report%20of%20Director%20of%20Street%20Scene%20Leisure%20and%20Technical%20Services.pdf>

TF 16/23 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

(1) Tonbridge and Malling Seniors advised of a TAMs Open Day on 29 September in the Medway Hall, Angel Centre between 1000 – 1400 hours. This would promote initiatives and provide advice and guidance for the over 50s.

(2) Tonbridge Rotary announced the following two events:

- Tonbridge Half Marathon on Sunday 2 October, which was a joint venture between the Rotary and Tonbridge Lions.
- Tonbridge Christmas Festival on 27 November which would provide entertainment and stalls around the formal turning on of the Christmas Lights. Activities were due to start at 1400 hours and would end with a firework display on the Castle Lawn.

Finally, the Chairman thanked the Tonbridge Town Team for a successful Dragon Boat Race at the weekend (Saturday 10 September) and the organisers of the Medieval Fayre (Sunday 11 September), both of which had been well received by visitors.

The meeting ended at 8.45 pm