

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

TONBRIDGE COMMUNITY FORUM

MINUTES

Monday, 5th September, 2022

Present: Cllr J R S Lark (Chair), Cllr G C Bridge (Vice-Chair), Feast (Vice-Chair), Cllr M D Boughton, Cllr V M C Branson, Cllr A E Clark, Cllr A Cope, Cllr M O Davis, Cllr M A J Hood, Cllr F A Hoskins, Cllr Miss G E Thomas, Cllr F G Tombolis and County Cllr P Stepto and County Cllr M Hood.

Together with representatives from:

- Angel Indoor Bowls Club,
- EMBER Community Interest Company,
- Friends of Mill Stream,
- Rotary Club of Tonbridge,
- Tonbridge and Malling Seniors,
- Tonbridge Bicycle Users Group,
- Tonbridge Civic Society,
- Tonbridge District Scout Council,
- Tonbridge Historical Society,
- Tonbridge Line Commuters, and
- Tonbridge Town Team

Councillors D Harman, M R Rhodes and J L Sergison were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs P A Bates, J L Botten, N J Heslop, D W King and the representatives of Tonbridge Dementia Friendly Community, Tonbridge Lions Club and Tonbridge Parish Church

TCF 22/17 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 9 May 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

TCF 22/18 UPDATE ON ANY ACTION IDENTIFIED IN THE LAST MINUTES

(1) TF 22/13 – Charges for use of Borough Council Public Open Spaces and Car Parks for Charity and Community Groups

The Leader had asked for a review of charges for the use of public open spaces to be undertaken and an update would be provided at the next meeting of the Tonbridge Community Forum.

(2) TF 22/16 – Current Provision of CCTV

Following a recent review of CCTV provision in the Borough, the Cabinet Member for Community Services and relevant Officers would be invited to the next meeting of the Tonbridge Community Forum to provide an update.

MATTERS RAISED IN ADVANCE OF THE MEETING**TCF 22/19 TONBRIDGE TOWN CENTRE ASSET REVIEW**

The Tonbridge Historical Society asked for more information in respect of the recent Asset Review undertaken by the Borough Council. The particular question related to identifying and promoting the historical value of buildings in Tonbridge for the longer term protection of these sites.

Members were advised of the work undertaken by an external consultant (Mace) engaged to review those assets in the ownership of the Borough Council. The final report provided an analysis of the town centre and identified the scope, aims and objectives of a review into the Borough Council's land and property assets in Tonbridge town centre. Project objectives and recommended next steps to progress the review were also presented to Cabinet on 5 July 2022. Details of the recommendations and the Asset Review were available on the Borough Council [website](#). The Leader also advised that further work related to the Asset Review would be undertaken in conjunction with the Local Plan.

Finally, the Forum asked whether there was any way to protect other sites in the town there were not in the ownership of the Borough Council so that the character of the town could be preserved. Members were reminded of the process to nominate an asset of community value and/or urban green space which offered an opportunity to 'protect' buildings, areas, playing fields considered to be valuable to the community. Further information was available on the Borough Council [website](#).

TCF 22/20 BUS SERVICES IN THE AREA

The representative of Tonbridge and Malling Seniors (TAMS) outlined concerns about the current level of service provided by bus operators in Tonbridge and the surrounding area. There were particular issues with timetabling and running of services between Tonbridge, Paddock Wood, Pembury Hospital and East Peckham, the increasing ticket prices and recurring delays due to traffic congestion.

In response the County Councillors recognised the concerns raised and offered to clarify the timetable for the 128 and 129 service. Information would be circulated to Members in advance of the next meeting.

County Councillor Stepto reported that approximately 80 routes across Kent were expected to be cut by operators as they were considered no longer commercially viable due to falling passenger numbers, raising fuel costs, inflation and the finishing of covid related grant funding.

In addition, the proposals of the County Council to cut subsidised services to reduce expenditure were outlined. However, any changes to these subsidised routes were in abeyance until December 2022 to enable further work to be undertaken. Unfortunately, the County Council were unable to use recently allocated Government funding to subsidise current bus routes as this was available to support fast track dedicated bus lanes.

Concern was expressed about the ongoing threat to bus services as these were considered counter productive in meeting carbon neutral targets and avoiding isolation. It was also harder for residents in smaller communities to access services in Tonbridge without an adequate bus service.

Tonbridge Line Commuters advised that they were working with Arriva to ensure that electronic boards at bus stops displayed correct timetable information. The value of printed timetables was also commented upon as not everyone had access to online information. County Councillor Hood offered to raise the issue of printed timetables with Arriva again so that these could be placed at locations around the town.

Finally, the recent announcement of the then Secretary of State for Transport (Grant Shapps MP) to cap bus fares at £2 over the winter was noted.

TCF 22/21 PROMOTION OF UPCOMING EVENTS

Members noted the forthcoming events to be held in Tonbridge and the surrounding area:

(1) Tonbridge Half Marathon – 9 October 2022

The Rotary Club and Tonbridge Lions asked for volunteers to act as marshals for this event. Anyone interested should contact barry.ednie@gmail.com The Chair reminded Members that this event raised a significant sum of money for charities.

(2) Tonbridge Food and Drink Festival and Dragon Boat Race

Tonbridge Town Team referred to the events held over the recent weekend and thanked Tonbridge Farmers Market and the Tonbridge Lions for their organisation.

(3) What's on Tonbridge Guide

The next edition covering the period November – February was preparing for publication and organisations were asked to contact the Tonbridge Town Team in the next few weeks if they had any events they wanted listed.

(4) Remembrance Day

The Forum were advised that there was a new co-ordinator for the Poppy Appeal and organisations were reminded to contact these directly. Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council (Leisure Services) continued to be involved in Remembrance Day activities.

(5) Christmas Festival – 27 November 2022

Following the successful event held in 2021, the Rotary Club and Tonbridge Lions were preparing for the Festival in November 2022. Flyers in respect of road closures and an itinerary for the day were due to be published shortly.

Those organisations who had requested a stall at the event would be contacted soon to advise if they're application had been successful.

Finally, the Chair advised that Tonbridge Parish Church would be re-opening the Open House community space at St Philips Church (Salisbury Rd) 10-12 every Saturday starting this week. This might be helpful for those seeking a warm space throughout the winter.

TCF 22/22 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**(1) Beer Cellar**

It was with regret that the Forum noted that the Beer Cellar had closed with effect from today (Monday 5 September).

(2) Tonbridge Post Office

Members expressed concern at the lack of a Post Office in the Town. This position was supported by the Borough Council and County Councillors. It was noted that the public meeting held on Friday 2 September 2022 had been well attended and demonstrated the depth of feeling of local residents. The Post Office indicated its desire to have a post office in the town, subject to identifying a suitable premises.

In the meantime, the Borough Council remained committed to enabling a pop up service to be provided from Tonbridge Castle. An update on the situation was requested for the next meeting.

It was also noted that a representative of the Post Office had been invited to attend a Borough Council Scrutiny Select Committee in November.

(3) Diabetes Screening

It was noted that screening would take place in Tonbridge on Saturday 9 September 2022.

The Chair reminded Members that the next meeting of the Tonbridge Community Forum would be held in person on Monday 28 November at the Tonbridge Methodist Church Hall in Higham Lane. Anyone wishing to submit matters for the agenda should contact democratic.services@tmbc.gov.uk as soon as possible.

The meeting ended at 9.00 pm