

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

TONBRIDGE COMMUNITY FORUM

MINUTES

Monday, 4th September, 2023

Present: Cllr G B Hines (Chair), Cllr D W King (Vice-Chair), Cllr K Barton, Cllr G C Bridge, Cllr J Clokey, Cllr A Cope, Cllr F A Hoskins, Cllr A Mehmet, Cllr R W G Oliver, Cllr B A Parry, Cllr M R Rhodes, Cllr K S Tunstall, County Cllr P Stepto and County Cllr M Hood

Together with representatives from:

- Friends of Mill Stream
- Rotary Club
- Tonbridge Bicycle Users Group
- Tonbridge Civic Society
- Tonbridge District Scouts
- Tonbridge Line Commuters
- Tonbridge Lions Club
- Tonbridge Sports Association
- Tonbridge Town Team

Councillors K Barton, M D Boughton and S Crisp were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor L Athwal, Tonbridge Dementia Friendly and Tonbridge Parish Church

TCF 23/17 APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR (COMMUNITY GROUPS)

A nomination for the appointment of Vice Chair from community representatives had been received for Mark Ansell. As there were no further nominations received by the deadline, the community representatives agreed that Mark Ansell be duly appointed as the second Vice Chair of the Tonbridge Community Forum.

TCF 23/18 NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no substitute Members nominated for this meeting.

TCF 23/19 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 12 June 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

TCF 23/20 UPDATE ON ANY ACTION IDENTIFIED IN THE LAST MINUTES

There was no update on any actions identified in the minutes of the previous meeting.

MATTERS RAISED IN ADVANCE OF THE MEETING**TCF 23/21 KENT POLICE UPDATE**

Members received a verbal update from Inspector Newman on recent initiatives.

Inspector Newman reported that staffing was currently at 50% and that following a recruitment drive, there would be a full complement of staff by October 2024.

There had been issues with e-bikes in the locality and the approach taken was to deal with these in a positive way. There had been a number of arrests in the town parks following drug related incidences and anti social behaviour.

An overview of crime in the area was provided and noted that there had been an increase in reported crime over the rolling year, partly due to the proactiveness of the neighbourhood team. It was highlighted that there had been a reduction in robbery and violence against the person and an increase in shoplifting and calls related to antisocial behaviour.

TCF 23/22 TONBRIDGE POST OFFICE

Members received an update on service provision from the Post Office during which they were advised that applications had been sought for a post office in Tonbridge since January 2022 and a number of locations in the town had been considered and although there had been interest, the challenge was finding the right premises. In Spring 2023, a successful applicant had identified a premise on the High Street, however it had been decided not to proceed with the premises. The Post Office were working with the applicant to identify alternative premises and negotiations were ongoing in regard to a lease agreement on a premise which had been assessed to be accessible and in a viable central location.

Members expressed concern if the current identified premise was not be financially viable and were advised that the business plan had been assessed and scrutinised. If determined not to be viable, discussions would be held with the applicant.

TCF 23/23 RAILWAY TICKET OFFICES AND THEIR POTENTIAL CLOSURE

Mr Robert Mansfield, representative of Tonbridge Line Commuters, brought members attention to the public consultation on Southeastern

and Southern Rail's ticket office closure. The proposals were to move staff out of ticket offices and onto station platforms and concourses to support better, face-to-face interactions, with the potential to close ticket offices in a number of locations, including Tonbridge. Members were invited to respond to stage 2 of the consultation when the consultation became live.

TCF 23/24 UPDATE REGARDING THE ROSE AND CROWN HOTEL

The Leader of the Borough Council provided an update on the Rose and Crown Hotel during which he reported that he had met with the new owners of the premises in July 2023 at which point their plans were in the early stages of development. Two phases of work were envisaged, firstly to the rear, followed by work to the front of the building. The expectation was for a planning application to be submitted detailing the intended changes and the applicant had been encouraged to seek pre-application advice from the Borough Council.

TCF 23/25 UPDATE ON THE BUS STOP OUTSIDE CAFE NERO

County Councillor Mark Hood explained that the Borough Council had a contract with an external provider for the bus stop outside Café Nero and the income from advertising space went towards the cost of infrastructure and maintenance. A bench had been installed in the interim to address concerns raised by the Community Safety Partnership and there were ongoing discussions with the Borough Council to resolve the issue.

TCF 23/26 PROMOTION OF UPCOMING EVENTS

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

(1) Angel Indoor Bowls Club Open Weekend

Angel Indoor Bowls would be holding an open weekend on 16 and 17 September 2023.

(2) Armed Forces Day Concert

Plans were underway for an Armed Forces Day concert in Tonbridge in 2024. Businesses were invited to sponsor the event or to place an advertisement in the programme.

(3) Tonbridge Half Marathon

The annual Tonbridge Half Marathon event, run by Tonbridge Lions and the Tonbridge Rotary Club, would be held on 1 October 2023, commencing at 9.00am, and there would also be an opportunity to enter a 5km and 10km run.

(4) Mass Bicycle Ride

The next mass bicycle ride organised by the Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells Bicycle Users Groups in support of the A26 Tonbridge to Tunbridge Wells cycle route would be held on 8 September at 6.30pm, starting from Quarry Hill Road.

TCF 23/27 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Councillor Dennis King raised concerns regarding graffiti in Tonbridge Town Centre and the surrounding area and reported that his concerns had been raised with the Borough Council who would be approaching landowners to offer assistance in removing graffiti and the Communities and Environment Scrutiny Select Committee would be asked to consider a report detailing the different approaches the Council took to remove graffiti in the town.

The opinion of Members on advertisement banners was sought. During discussion, it was recognised that local events were good for the economy, however some banners remained for a significant period of time following the event or were for an event outside of the area.

The meeting ended at 8.38 pm