

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

TONBRIDGE COMMUNITY FORUM

MINUTES

Monday, 24th February, 2025

Present: Cllr L Athwal (Chair), Cllr D W King (Vice-Chair), Friends of Mill Stream (Vice-Chair), Cllr K Barton, Cllr G C Bridge, Cllr J Clokey, Cllr F A Hoskins, Cllr A Mehmet, Cllr B A Parry, Cllr Stacey Pilgrim, Cllr M R Rhodes, Cllr K S Tunstall and County Cllr M Hood

Together with representatives from:

Angel Indoor Bowls Club
Rotary Club of Tonbridge
Tonbridge Bicycle Users Group
Tonbridge Civic Society
Tonbridge Dementia Friendly Community
Tonbridge District Scout Council
Tonbridge Historical Society
Tonbridge Sports Association

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Cope and R W G Oliver.

TCF 25/1 NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no substitute Members nominated for this meeting.

TCF 25/2 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 25 November 2024 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

TCF 25/3 UPDATE ON ANY ACTION IDENTIFIED IN THE LAST MINUTES

Sally Pearce provided an update on the 'Access to Cash' campaign during which Members were advised that an Independent Assessor had visited Tonbridge and the surrounding villages. The report of the Independent Assessor would be available the following week in the public domain. Initial feedback from the Assessor was that Tonbridge was very diverse and had many independent businesses. Members of the Forum took the opportunity to thank Ms Pearce for her commitment to the campaign.

TCF 25/4 APPOINTMENT OF BARDEN RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

Following a brief overview of the organisation provided by the Chair of the Barden Residents Association at the meeting on 25 November 2024, it was proposed, seconded and unanimously agreed that Barden Residents Association be appointed as a member of the Tonbridge Community Forum.

RESOLVED: That the Barden Residents Association be appointed as a member of the Tonbridge Community Forum.

TCF 25/5 IMAGO COMMUNITY

The item was deferred to a future meeting.

TCF 25/6 SCOTTS PROJECT TRUST

Following an invitation from the Forum, Karen Wallin, Fundraising, Community Engagement and PR Manager provided a brief overview of the organisation during which it was noted that the Trust, based near Tonbridge, was founded in 1990 by Denis and Jill Scott and supported adults with learning disabilities to strive to reach their aspirations and make choices about how they wanted to live their lives.

The Trust offered a secure environment in which a small group of people with learning difficulties could achieve the full development of their individual interests and abilities with maximum involvement in the life and work of the local community and offered them the opportunity to progress to more independent living.

TCF 25/7 S.106 CONTRIBUTIONS

Members of the Forum received a presentation on S.106 contributions from James Bailey, Head of Planning during which reference was made to the Parish Infrastructure Investment Plans and the Council's S.106 Monitoring Officer.

Although it was recognised that Parish Infrastructure Investment Plans were not applicable to Tonbridge, it was felt that the Tonbridge Community Forum was best placed to put forward an infrastructure statement that identified and prioritised key projects which were important to the community.

Members requested that the Highways Improvement Plan be added as an item on the agenda for a future meeting.

TCF 25/8 ARCHAEOLOGICAL KNOWNNS AND UNKNOWNNS

Members received a presentation on Archaeological Knownns and Unknownns, an overview relating to town centre development by

Tonbridge Historical Society. The presentation covered the key proposed development site in Tonbridge Town Centre, the archaeological and historical background relating to the River Centre Car Park, animal remains found during the building of the National Gallery in the 1880's and those found at Canary Wharf, the ruins of Tonbridge Priory, misconceptions concerning Tonbridge and the Molas Report (2024).

TCF 25/9 DEVOLUTION

Members received a presentation from Councillor Boughton, Leader of Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council, on the Devolution White Paper. The presentation covered Government's intent to have elected Mayors and Strategic Combined Authorities and Unitary Authorities for all parts of the country. The presentation provided details of Mayor Strategic Combined Authorities, potential new functions and the offer of additional powers. Details of an indicative timetable were outlined and it was highlighted that the deadline for an Interim Plan for new Unitary Councils to be submitted was 21 March 2025.

TCF 25/10 TOWN CENTRE REDEVELOPMENT

Members received an update on the town centre redevelopment. The Council continued to progress work on the regeneration project and had confirmed that the new Angel Centre building would be sited close to the current site, which provided assurance that a new centre would be built before the old centre was decommissioned, guaranteeing continuity of service.

Over 2,300 residents had responded to an engagement survey which sought to gather views on what residents would like to see in the centre of the town. In addition, an engagement event was held at the Angel Centre to allow specific groups, who might not have found it easy to engage electronically, to contribute. The project team also met with the Tonbridge Civic Society. Further engagement was likely to take place once the Council had considered all of the feedback from the digital survey and face to face group sessions and had evaluated all of the masterplan options.

The Programme Board would meet again in March and would focus on the specific site for a new Leisure Centre.

TCF 25/11 UPDATE ON GRAFFITI

Members received a report that provided an update on graffiti, which detailed how the Council was tackling the problem.

Members had requested that an update be provided following the consultation on graffiti which was reported to the Communities and Environment Scrutiny Select Committee on 22 May 2024 and expressed

concern regarding those sites in the town centre that continued to suffer from graffiti, notably the riverside residential property, Maylams and Medway Wharf.

TCF 25/12 PROMOTION OF UPCOMING EVENTS

(1) Last Night of the Proms

The Last Night of the Proms Concert raising funds for Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells Dementia Friendly Communities would be held at St Peter and St Paul Parish Church, Church Lane, Tonbridge TN0 1DA on 26 April 2025 at 7.00pm. The concert would be featuring The Royal Tunbridge Wells Orpheus Male Voice Choir and Tonbridge Community Singers.

(2) Tonbridge Civic Society Awards 2024

Nominations were sought for the annual Tonbridge Civic Society Awards in the following categories (nominations must be for projects completed within the calendar year 2024):

Design Award - For any major construction or renovation which by its quality and design contributed aesthetically to the pleasure and amenity of the area.

Community Award - For either a permanent or temporary work by an individual or group of people that significantly contributed to the pleasure and amenity of an area.

Street Scene Award – For work that permanently enhanced the character of an area. This could for example include landscaping and planting, a boundary wall, a shop front renovation, the restoration of a historic feature or an improvement to street furniture.

Nominations were requested to be sent to mark@tonbridgecivicsociety.org.uk before the end of March.

(3) Centenary Concert

Tonbridge Philharmonic Society, in association with Tonbridge Rotary Club, would be performing Handel's Messiah at the Chapel of St Augustine on 5 April 2025 at 7.00pm.

(4) Tonbridge Lions Community Fete

The annual Tonbridge Lions Community Fete would be held on the Castle Lawn and would include a parade themed 'Read All About It'. This year, there would also be an attempt at a Guinness World Record for odd socks.

(5) Local Plan

Tonbridge Civic Society talk on 'What's the Plan for Tonbridge' would be held at the Angel Centre on 4 March 2025 at 7.30pm. The event would include a panel discussion on the upcoming Local Plan and Charlie Keeling and Councillor Adem Mehmet had been invited to speak to members about the Local Plan process, and what it might mean for Tonbridge.

(6) Tonbridge Priory

Tonbridge Historical Society would be hosting a talk on Tonbridge Priory – History, Pictures, Maps and Bones, at 7.45pm on 13 March 2025 at the Angel Centre. The key speaker at the event would be George Buswell.

The meeting ended at 9.30pm