

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

TONBRIDGE COMMUNITY FORUM

MINUTES

Monday, 1st September, 2025

Present: Cllr L Athwal (Chair), Friends of Mill Stream (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 S Pilgrim, Cllr M R Rhodes, Cllr K S Tunstall and
County Cllr P Stepto,

Together with representatives from:

Angel Indoor Bowls Club
Barden Residents Association
Feast
Rotary Club of Tonbridge,
Tonbridge Historical Society
Tonbridge Line Commuters
Tonbridge Lions Club
Tonbridge Sports Association
Tonbridge U3A

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor D W King,
County Cllr M Hood, TBUG and Tonbridge Parish Church.

TCF 25/28 NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no substitute Members nominated for this meeting.

TCF 25/29 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 19 May 2025 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

TCF 25/30 UPDATE ON ANY ACTION IDENTIFIED IN THE LAST MINUTES

Minute Number TCF25/17 (meeting held on 19 May 2025) – Update on Access to Cash

Sally Pearce addressed the Forum in respect of the Banking Hub during which she advised that although no update was available regarding a permanent banking hub, options were under consideration. Furthermore, consideration was being given to how the temporary hub housed at Tonbridge Castle could be publicised. It was recognised that if the facility were not used sufficiently, there was the risk that it might be

lost, however it was believed that in the short term, it was reasonably secure.

TCF 25/31 MEMBERSHIP OF THE TONBRIDGE COMMUNITY FORUM

Following a brief overview of the organisation provided by Lysette D'Urso, Community Development Co-ordinator, Imago Community at the meeting on 19 May 2025, it was proposed, seconded and unanimously agreed that Imago Community be appointed as a member of the Tonbridge Community Forum.

RESOLVED: That the Imago Community be appointed as a member of the Tonbridge Community Forum.

TCF 25/32 TONBRIDGE U3A

Following an invitation from the Forum, Lionel Shields provided a brief summary of the activities of the Tonbridge University of the Third Age, an organisation which provided opportunities for people no longer in full-time employment to learn for fun and share their knowledge and interests in a friendly environment.

TCF 25/33 NEW ANGEL CENTRE

Members were presented with an overview of the new Angel Centre by Councillor Adem Mehmet, Lead Cabinet Member for the Project, and Darren Lanes, Head of Street Scene and Leisure. The presentation encompassed the project's objectives, the alternatives considered, the progress achieved to- date, the project timeline, the current status, and the financial aspects, including project costs, funding, and viability.

In terms of public engagement, over 900 responses had been received to the consultation to date, which would close on 24 September 2025, of which 35% were non-users of the current Angel Centre, indicating effective outreach. Councillor Mehmet encouraged members to participate in the consultation to assist the Council in understanding the priorities of residents, users and local groups.

Members raised questions about the consultation design, particularly the use of closed questions though some queries related to the separate consultation undertaken on the broader Town Centre Redevelopment proposals. It was explained that it was important to ensure that expectations were effectively managed and outcomes were realistically achievable and all initiatives were both viable and deliverable. Members were asked to share any further concerns with Councillor Mehmet, who would then convey these to the project team.

Members commented on the commercial viability, expressing concern that this might impact community value, especially as most income would derive from usage fees. They also emphasised the importance of

maintaining the centre's role as a community service, as with the existing Angel Centre. Concern was noted regarding access for groups if facilities became less affordable for non-commercial users. It was additionally suggested to consider whether proceeds from the sale of the current Angel Centre site could be allocated to the new centre or towards reducing loan amounts.

Councillor Mehmet advised that the facility needed to be independently viable, flexible, adaptable and accessible for community use, with financial viability being supported through sufficient income generation and efforts were being made to maintain continuity of service.

Clarification was sought about potential Council revenue from the redevelopment of the current Angel Centre site once the new site became operational. It was noted that, due to the long-term nature of planning, no conclusive answer could be provided at this stage, but the Council remained responsible for managing public funds appropriately.

Members were informed that the Forum would receive an update on progress in six months.

TCF 25/34 TONBRIDGE TOWN CENTRE REDEVELOPMENT

Members received an update on the Tonbridge town centre redevelopment programme during which Councillor Adem Mehmet reported that the consultation had recently concluded and had received 1,500 responses. The majority participating in the process expressed positive views about the town's future plans and there was strong support for developing Riverside Park as an asset for the town, as well as retaining parking at Sovereign Way West; both elements would be considered for inclusion in the master plan. Additionally, ways to support medical services and the expansion of facilities were being explored to assist in reducing patient waiting times. Over the coming weeks, the feedback would continue to be analysed and key findings would be incorporated into the master plan.

Members raised concern regarding the potential loss of 20% of parking spaces, including accessible parking and displaced parking overflowing into residential areas. Councillor Mehmet emphasised the importance of not reducing parking to avoid negative impacts on the town centre and, although analysis was ongoing, it was not expected that there would be a significant reduction in overall parking.

Furthermore, concern was expressed about how funding for the park path would be secured and reassurance sought that the proceeds from the sale of any Tonbridge town asset would be reinvested in the town.

TCF 25/35 COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

Jeremy Whittaker, Strategic Economic Regeneration Manager, provided an update on the outcome of the consultation in respect of a Community Governance Review into a town council for Tonbridge, which showed a strong support from 72% of the 3,257 respondents for establishing a Tonbridge Town Council.

A full report on the results of the consultation would be presented to the next meeting of Council on 28 October 2025 and Full Council would be asked to agree the next steps of the Review process. The review would conclude at the end of February 2026, with a final report being taken to Full Council to agree whether a Town Council should be established. Subject to approval by Members, legal orders would be prepared and elections for the new town council could take place in May 2027, aligning with the local election cycle.

TCF 25/36 SPEED LIMIT ON LOWER HAYSDEN LANE

The item was deferred to the next meeting.

TCF 25/37 KENT POLICE UPDATE

Members received an update from Kent Police on neighbourhood policing and recent initiatives and operations.

In summary, in terms of community engagement, the Neighbourhood Task Force had expanded, increasing visible patrols in key areas to address anti-social behaviour (ASB) and youth issues. Licensing checks and education for taxi drivers had been implemented after concerns were raised about women being refused short taxi rides at the station and there had been participation in multiple community events and school initiatives, delivering educational sessions on hate crime, knife crime and ASB. Tonbridge Pride had been supported by police and LGBT+ Network, with positive engagement and a focus on hate crime prevention and recruitment. Finally there was ongoing communication of policing successes and partnership work shared with local community via media channels.

With regard to business engagement activities, Trading Standards and Youth Harm Reduction Officers had carried out checks at local businesses to ensure alcohol licensing compliance and the prevention of underage sales. Hotels had been tested for child safeguarding awareness and there had been visits to vape stores focused on compliance and education regarding vaping regulations. Furthermore, Licensed premises were visited by police teams, resulting in positive outcomes and improved behaviour in venues previously linked to high drug use.

Members received an update on current crime and ASB statistics, noting that ASB trends were comparable to the same period last year and there was no single event or incident identified as causing this trend. A slight increase from previous months aligned with patterns typically seen during the summer and school holidays and the area between the High Street and River continued to be a key location. With regard to shoplifting, there had been a reduction compared to previous years and since the start of the current year, which might be attributed to targeted police interventions, including hotspot patrols and plain clothes operations. In terms of serious crime and violence, numbers remained significantly low.

TCF 25/38 PROMOTION OF UPCOMING EVENTS

(1) Council Events

Members were advised that all events booked in with the Council to be held on its open spaces were available to view on the Council's website – <https://www.tmbc.gov.uk/events>. Particular attention was brought to the following events:

- Tonbridge Lions Dragon Boat Race – 7 September 2025. All proceeds from the event would be donated to local charities and good causes.
- Music@Malling Festival – 19 - 27 September 2025. A unique festival bringing world-class music to stunning historic venues in Kent.
- Outdoor Cinema – 26 September 2025. An invite was extended to view the 80s blockbuster adventure film The Goonies, at Tonbridge Castle.
- Tonbridge Castle Artisan Market – The market would be held on 28 September and 26 October 2025.

(2) Tonbridge Historical Society Talk

The Tonbridge Historical Society would be hosting a talk on Carve their names with pride – Female Secret Agents in the Second World War, at 7.45pm on 11 September 2025 at the Angel Centre. The key speaker at the event would be Julliette Pattinson, Professor of War Studies at Kings College, London. A full programme of events would be available on the society's website from mid-September.

(3) Tonbridge Folk Club

The Tonbridge Folk Club continued to meet at Ye Olde Chequers Inn on the first and third Monday of a month, 7.30pm to 10.30pm.

(4) Tonbridge Music Club

A distinguished programme of exceptional music, acclaimed artists and memorable events for 2025/26 was available on the Tonbridge Music Club website. The season included full-length formal evening concerts and shorter concerts as well as a participatory workshop for Low Brass players of all ages and stages.

(5) Tonbridge Repair Café

Members noted that the Repair Café would be at St. Stephen's Church on 13 September 2025, 10.00am - 12.30pm.

(6) Tonbridge Half Marathon

The Tonbridge Half Marathon, in partnership with Tonbridge Rotary Club and Tonbridge Lions, would take place on 5 October 2025.

(7) Tonbridge Rotary Christmas Festival

The Rotary Christmas Festival event would be held on 30 November 2025. The event would include a Christmas market, food and bars, a stage with performances by local acts and a low noise firework finale.

(8) Diabetes Screening

Diabetes screening would be available on 13 September 2025, 8.30am to 4.30pm at the Big Bridge, Tonbridge. The test would be carried out by health professionals and the facility was organised annually by Tonbridge Lions. Donations would be welcome to help the Tonbridge Lions with their charitable works.

(9) Tonbridge U3A Open Afternoon

Tonbridge U3A would be holding an open afternoon on 1 October 2025, 2.00pm – 4.00pm at The Angel Centre, Tonbridge. The event would provide an opportunity to meet members and explore the organisation's wide range of interest groups.

The meeting ended at 8.56 pm