

# **TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## **TONBRIDGE COMMUNITY FORUM**

### **MINUTES**

**Monday, 11th May, 2026**

**Present:** Cllr L Athwal (Chair), Cllr D W King (Vice-Chair), Cllr K Barton, Cllr G C Bridge, Cllr J Clokey, Cllr F A Hoskins, Cllr A Mehmet, Cllr R W G Oliver, Cllr S Pilgrim, 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 (Vice-Chair)

Feast

Hi Kent

Tonbridge Bicycle Users Group

Tonbridge Civic Society

Tonbridge Historical Society

Tonbridge Line Commuters

Tonbridge Parish Church

Tonbridge Sports Association

Tonbridge U3A

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Cope and B A Parry. Apologies for absence were also received from Angel Indoor Bowls Club, Barden Residents Association, Rotary Club of Tonbridge, Scotts Project Trust and Tonbridge Lions Club.

#### **TCF 26/11 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR**

A nomination of Vice Chair from community representatives was received from Mark Ansdell. As there were no further nominations received, the community representatives agreed that Mark Ansdell be duly appointed as the second Vice Chair of the Tonbridge Community Forum.

#### **TCF 26/12 NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

There were no substitute Members.

#### **TCF 26/13 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the meeting held on 23 February 2026 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**TCF 26/14 UPDATE ON ANY ACTION IDENTIFIED IN THE LAST MINUTES**

There were no matters required to be updated.

**TCF 26/15 KENT POLICE UPDATE**

A written statement was provided by Inspector Nick Atkinson to provide members of the Forum with an update on Police activities, with a focus on the Tonbridge area.

The statement outlined neighbourhood team coverage arrangements in Tonbridge, including Beat Team officers and Neighbourhood Task Force officers, and described recent activity to tackle retail theft and anti-social behaviour. Examples included targeted days of action, arrests following intelligence received via the Shop Safe radio system and enforcement activity in relation to drugs, including a stop search which resulted in the seizure of Class A drugs and a subsequent charge and remand.

Furthermore, the statement reported activity to address violence against women and girls, including engagement with local businesses and 'walk and talk' events, and mentioned enforcement action in respect of anti-social behaviour involving youths, including the use of Community Protection Warning Notices. Attention was also brought to the seizure of illegal e-bikes and e-scooters and partnership working with housing associations and the Borough Council's Community Safety Unit.

Members of the Forum were pleased to note that Kent Police would continue to work with partner agencies to address issues affecting Tonbridge, including tackling anti-social behaviour, targeting those responsible for harm and disruption and maintaining a visible presence to provide reassurance and deter offending, with particular reference made to actions towards illegal e-bikes and e-scooters.

A full version of the statement was attached as **[Annex 1]** to these Minutes.

**TCF 26/16 UPDATE ON BANKING HUB**

Members of the Forum were advised that Cash Access had identified a suitable permanent location for the banking hub and that progress was being made to put arrangements in place, but formal announcement of the location would have to wait till the lease was completed. It was indicated that, if all went well, completion of the lease was expected within the next few weeks and that the hub should be ready to open within two to three months following commencement of works to the premises.

During discussion, reference was made to Post Office arrangements for paying in cheques and the banking hub services temporarily provided from Tonbridge Castle. The Chair undertook to make enquiries in

relation to the acceptance of cheques at the Post Office and to share the information once available.

## **TCF 26/17 NEW ANGEL CENTRE**

Members of the Forum received an update on progress of the new Angel Leisure Centre, provided by the Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Tonbridge Regeneration, Councillor A Mehmet, and the Director of Street Scene, Leisure and Technical Services of the Borough Council. It was reported that the project was at Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Stage 4, encompassing the planning stage and technical design, and that the planning application was currently live. It was explained that timescales had been tightened due to Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and that workstreams were being progressed in parallel in order to meet the delivery target of the project programme.

Reference was made to a public consultation undertaken earlier in the year, including engagement at the existing Angel Centre, and members of the Forum were advised that 68% of respondents were in favour of the scheme and 56% considered the design to represent an improvement on the current facility. It was also noted that there was a positive response to the red brick exterior design, which had been changed to reflect architectural character of the local area.

It was reported that feedback from community groups had focussed on the adequacy and flexibility of the three community spaces. In response, design changes had been made, including replacing the fixed wall between Studios 1 and 2 with a demountable acoustic partition to create a flexible combined space, and providing an additional fire exit to increase capacity in Studio 3. Members of the Forum were advised that, with the partition in place, Studios 1 and 2 could each accommodate meetings of up to 60 people and Studio 3 could accommodate 120 people, and that with the partition removed, a flexible space created by combining Studios 1 and 2 could accommodate a meeting of over 300 people. It was also stated that the sports hall could accommodate over 600 people for major events.

In discussion, representatives from the community groups raised concerns about audio-visual performance and accessibility, including for people using hearing aids, and the need to ensure that speakers and screens could be seen and heard in larger room layouts. Members of the Forum were advised that detailed design work was ongoing with the intention to deliver a state-of-the-art facility. It was indicated that, as room specifications were developed, information could be brought back through the Tonbridge Town Centre Programme Board for Borough Council Members to consider and for community groups' requirements to be represented. Additionally, reference was also made to the consideration of options for demountable staging, seating provision and storage.

Members of the Forum continued to discuss access arrangements including cycle storage, pushchair parking and the potential to reinstate a marked cycle and pedestrian route between the Angel Centre and the river. It was suggested that these matters could be considered alongside wider work around the riverside area.

A copy of the presentation slides was attached as **[Annex 2]** to these Minutes.

#### **TCF 26/18 TONBRIDGE TOWN CENTRE REDEVELOPMENT**

Members of the Forum received an update on the overall Tonbridge Town Centre Redevelopment project, including progress on a linear riverside park. It was reported that work was underway to prepare a masterplan for the riverside area, including the space in front of the current Angel Centre and between the building and the river, and that the intention was for the area to be landscaped into a new riverside park and public open space once the current Angel Centre was removed. It was suggested that cycling and walking routes discussed under Item 9 on this agenda be considered as part of the wider piece of work. The opportunity to review and feedback on the draft masterplan when design work reached an appropriate stage was welcomed by the Forum.

Finally, a suggestion for an update on the wider Tonbridge Town Centre Redevelopment programme, including progress on the new Angel Leisure Centre, to be provided at alternate Forum meetings going forward was supported.

#### **TCF 26/19 TONBRIDGE INFRASTRUCTURE STATEMENT SUB-GROUP**

The Chair provided an update on the Tonbridge Infrastructure Statement Sub-Group and advised that a meeting had been held with those who had expressed an interest in participating.

It was reported that a range of potential projects had been considered and that five proposals had been selected to take forward for costing and further development at this stage. These were the provision of a secure storage box for parkrun organisers, consideration of a multi-sensory fidget wall near the children's play area at Tonbridge Racecourse, exploration of a flexible community space in Tonbridge capable of supporting multiple initiatives, consideration of water bottle filling points in Tonbridge and Hildenborough, and a proposal for a footpath connection between the motorbike gates on London Road and Tonbridge Angels Football Club to address an identified gap of approximately 120 metres.

Members of the Forum were advised that the intention was to obtain costs and complete the statement by June 2026, so that the proposals could be put forward for consideration by the Borough Council. It was explained that the purpose of the statement was to provide a mechanism

for community-led priorities to be available for consideration in discussion with developers, including potential funding through Section 106 (S106) contributions. The Chair also advised that the statement could be reviewed and updated over time and that community engagement in future work on the statement was encouraged.

During discussion, reference was made to the condition of certain paths, including areas near a railway bridge, and associated challenges posed by land ownership and maintenance responsibilities. It was noted that although volunteer efforts had helped improve some areas, issues remained and could be challenging to resolve.

## **TCF 26/20 PROMOTION OF UPCOMING EVENTS**

### (1) Tonbridge Historical Society – Tonbridge Historical Weekend

- 10 am Saturday 23 May 2026 – Walking the Fosse with Mark Ansdell (Walk 1), starting from The Big Bridge (fully booked)
- 1 pm Saturday 23 May 2026 – Lost Pubs of Tonbridge with Cathy Rishman (Walk 2), starting from Tonbridge Railway Station
- 11 am Sunday 24 May 2026 – Medieval Tonbridge by George Buswell (Talk 1), at Tonbridge Castle
- 1 pm Sunday 24 May 2026 – The Worthies of Tonbridge by Pat Mortlock (Talk 2), at Tonbridge Castle
- 12 – 4 pm Monday 25 May 2026 – Exhibition of artefacts and images, at Tonbridge Castle.

### (2) Tonbridge Lions Club

- Saturday 16 May 2026 – free Prostate Specific Antigen Testing, at the Angel Centre, Tonbridge
- Friday 19 June 2026 – ‘It’s a Knockout’ event tailored for adults with physical or mental disabilities, at the Angel Centre, Tonbridge
- Sunday 19 July 2026 – Classic and Sports Car Tour, starting from Tonbridge School
- Sunday 26 July 2026 – Community Fete and Parade 2026, at Tonbridge School
- Saturday 12 September 2026 – Diabetes Screening, at The Big Bridge, Tonbridge

- Sunday 4 October 2026 – The Tonbridge Half Marathon 2026 (jointly with Tonbridge Rotary Club), starting from Brook Street.

### **TCF 26/21 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

(1) Enforcement of Safety Works at Rose and Crown Hotel, Tonbridge

The Chair provided an update, drawn from information in the public domain, on urgent works requested in relation to the portico of the Rose and Crown Hotel in Tonbridge. It was reported that the Borough Council's Building Control Team had required the owners to carry out identified actions under Section 77 of the Buildings Act 1984 relating to dangerous structures, allowing seven days to comply in order to reduce risk to the public and avoid legal action. It was further reported that additional works had been identified as urgent in relation to the column's flat roof and the shield/coat of arms, and that these matters had also been referenced in a recent listed building notice.

During discussion, members of the Forum noted that activity had been observed at the site and concerns were expressed about the standard of works. The Chair indicated that Building Control was engaged and that any concerns could be raised with Borough Council Members for onward consideration.

The meeting ended at 8.33 pm