

# TENTERDEN TOWN COUNCIL



## **MINUTES AND REPORTS OF THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING HELD AT THE TOWN HALL ON 10<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2017**

### **PRESENT:**

#### **For Tenterden Town Council:**

Town Mayor Cllr. Mrs. P. Smith, Cllrs. M. Carter, Mrs. J. Curteis, H. Edwards, Mrs S. Ferguson, Miss N. Gooch, M. Hickmott, R. Isworth, R. Knight, Dr. L. Lovelidge, R. Lusty, K. Mulholland, J. Nelson, A. Sugden and T. Thorpe. Town Clerk Mr. P. Burgess, Senior Administrator Mrs. C. Gilbert, Accounts Clerk Mrs. J. McCollum and Administrative Assistant Ms. S. Ratcliffe.

#### **For Kent County Council:**

Cllr. M. Hill and Community Warden Ms. J. Vos.

#### **For Ashford Borough Council:**

Cllrs. M. Bennett, P. Clokie and J. Link. Ms. S. Davison and Mr. J. Hann.

#### **Also present:**

26 members of the public.

- 243 **WELCOME BY THE TOWN MAYOR.** The Town Mayor was in the chair, and welcomed all attendees.
- 244 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.** Apologies had been received from Town Councillor C. Knowles, Mr. M. Bartlett of Tenterden Chamber of Commerce, Kent Police, Tenterden Library and Tenterden Town Football Club.
- 245 **MINUTES.** The minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> April 2016 were proposed by the Town Mayor and seconded by Cllr. Lusty. They were duly agreed and signed as a correct record.
- 246 **MATTERS ARISING.**
- (a) Minute 241(d). Mr. R. Finniss of Smallhythe Road requested an update with regard to a survey of the trees in the High Street. The Town Clerk reported that a thorough survey had been completed of the trees on the Council's own property with those trees requiring attention having been dealt with. A maintenance plan had been produced for future care of the trees. The Town Clerk initially misunderstood Mr. Finniss' question and made reference to the Town Council receiving a request from the Chamber of Commerce to take over responsibility for the Christmas lights at the Fairings and above the shops. This would need to go through the Town Council for costings as the lampposts cannot be used this year for electricity (see Minute 246(c) below for more information).

- (b) Minute 241(e). Mr. M. Pearson of High Street requested clarification as to why the precept had dropped 11% this year considering it had been put up substantially last year to fund the new maintenance facility, youth projects and Tourist Information Centre (TIC) which he did not believe have been addressed. The Town Clerk reported that the precept was dropped in anticipation of interest received on the windfall from the Tent1 sale, which is on track. The Council intended to take over the weekend running of the TIC if it could be staffed. The Youth Projects were under consideration; however, the Council was waiting for an application from the Tenterden Youth Project Group.

Mr. Pearson addressed the Mayor and requested that questions be directed to the appropriate Council Chair rather than the Town Clerk having to answer all questions.

- (c) Minute 241(a). A member of the public requested clarification to the Town Clerk's earlier comment regarding power to the Christmas Lights. The Town Clerk reported that Kent County Council were not allowing the attachment of cables to their lampposts due to the damage that can be caused; a KCC Inspector had shown the Town Clerk a photo of a snapped lamppost. Alternative ways of powering the lights were being sought.

## 247 **REPORTS FROM LOCAL ORGANISATIONS.**

- (a) Tenterden Town Council. The Town Mayor provided a report on the Council's activities over the previous year. A review of the Council's income and outgoings had resulted in a 9% reduction to the precept charge this year from £368,000 to £335,000. This was mainly as a result of expected interest income from investments and an overall reduction in spending. With regard to the Public Toilets, the facilities on the recreation ground and Station Road are very well maintained and cleaned. The Council's thanks were recorded to Mrs. L. Napper of Tenterden Twilight Commercial Cleaning Ltd. The toilets at St Michaels have been regularly closed as a result of vandalism. However, they have now been refurbished with automatic doors, anti-vandal sanitary-ware has been fitted, and cubicle sizes greatly reduced to discourage further damage. This is the last chance for the toilets and any further vandalism will result in the toilets being permanently closed.

The responsibility for many of the soft landscaping tasks carried out by Ashford Borough Council and Kent County Council have recently been adopted by the Town Council. The hours of the two part-time maintenance staff have been extended and the Council are confident that the appearance of the town will improve. There may be a short settling in period but please report any issues direct to the Town Council office. An example of the work staff will undertake is:

- Mowing and strimming of all green areas within the parish (mainly within the 30mph zone);
- Maintenance of closed cemeteries (St Michael's, St Mildred's, Coombe Lane and Cranbrook Road);
- Maintenance of shrubs and hedges;
- Clearing gully grates and digging out blocked gullies;
- Make new and/or clear verge grips to aid drainage;
- Cleaning of street furniture.

The Council's new website was launched earlier this month and is clearer and more informative. It is also designed to work well with all devices including tablets and smart-phones. Again, public feedback would be welcomed if any improvements are warranted.

The focus groups are being set up for participatory budgeting for the Tent1 monies. The Council needs more people to come forward, particularly young people, teenagers and young adults. The focus groups available are:

- Tenterden Recreation Ground reordering and youth hub;
- Town Hall repairs, possible extension and possible community hub;
- Potential cinema;
- Outdoor pitches/football hub;
- Community halls and virtual hub.

The closing date for registering is 30<sup>th</sup> April 2017, but this date is flexible. Those interested can either email, phone or pop into Town Hall.

Cllr. Smith recorded a special thank you to Nikki and Jean the volunteer gardeners who look after the Boots and Station Road flower beds and East Cross Garden, and to the Horticultural Society who look after West Cross, which are all looking lovely.

- (b) Kent Police. Cllr. P. Smith presented a report from PCSO Olly Welch: 'Please accept my apologies for not being able to attend the meeting this evening due to pre-arranged appointments. Crime has remained low for the first few months of the year. There have been a couple of low value thefts on the High Street, however offenders have been caught and dealt with. The main events last year, Tenterden and the Folk festival passed without any concerns or issues reported to the police which we hope will remain the same this year. Further in depth crime statistics are freely available by visiting [www.police.uk](http://www.police.uk).

I am pleased to announce that the Tenterden Shopwatch scheme designed by the Ashford & Weald Partnership Against Crime is now available to 'go live' for any shops or pubs wishing to join. This is a scheme that I fully support having seen how well it works in Ashford and other major towns. For more information of the scheme or how to join please contact Rebecca Molloy via email [ashfordpartnership@gmail.com](mailto:ashfordpartnership@gmail.com) or by calling 07711 959711.

I continue to hold my Police surgery at the Zion Baptist Church and the next one will be held on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2017 from 0930-1030. These surgeries are a great opportunity for residents to come and talk to me about any local issues they may have. I am also able to give residents crime prevention and home security advice. From recent surgeries I have gathered some great intelligence to support policing purposes.'

- (c) Tenterden & District Museum. Mrs. D. Greaves reported that the Museum celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary last year. The new interactive system was launched last year and contains twice as much information as before, including hundreds of files and photographs. The museum tour has been enhanced with 360 degree views of the rooms. The digital archive includes local movie films, house and family profiles, pictures of clubs and societies. This year they are introducing a unique Audio Guide which will hugely enhance visitors' experiences. Advanced plans are underway to

improve both the visitors experience and facilities for the volunteer stewards. Over £25,000 needs to be raised for the remodelling of the entrance room, installation of a disabled access ramp to the tapestry room and bringing the stewards facilities up to date. The access ramp will lead to a new exhibition area, to be put in place during the winter of 2019/20, which will encourage people with learning difficulties or dementia to interact with exhibits from the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

The regular streams of income: admissions, membership subscriptions and shop sales were down in 2016 compared with 2015 and donations and bequests were also down on the previous year. Some of the losses were made up with special events and by claiming gift aid. The museum always functions within its budget and keeps an emergency fund, however much fund raising will be needed to make the improvements which will enhance the visitor experience and continue to attract volunteers. To start off the fundraising, a new book has been written for the Museum: 'Forgotten Snippets and Gruesome History of Tenterden & District'.

- (d) Tenterden Bowls Club. Mr. R. Walker had provided a written report which he also presented. Last summer Tenterden Bowls Club had a very happy and successful season. It started well by adding to their membership and they played approximately 90 games, consisting of Friendly, Weald League and Mermaid League games as well as many internal club competitions. They hosted three separate Tournaments as fund raisers, including hosting the Mermaid League Tournament. They also put a team in the Cinque Port Tournament at Faversham Bowls Club on behalf of Tenterden.

The Parkinson Group always bowl at the club every Monday afternoon finishing off their year with a game against Tenterden. Once again Rochester Blind played Tenterden Bowls Club for the 25th year running. They had the pleasure of St Michael's primary school, years 4 and 5 joining them for one afternoon a week as part of their games lesson throughout the summer and were coached by their experienced coach and bowlers at the club. At the end of the season, there is a Presentation Dinner followed throughout the winter with coffee mornings, lunches and other social events. Funding is very important to the club and they wish to thank all our sponsors. Without their help they could not continue to make improvements to the club. This year they have added Hopes Grove Nurseries and Silcocks Farm to their list of sponsors.

They have another full program this season starting on the 23rd April, with the Town Mayor, Cllr. Pamela Smith rolling the first wood of the year. On the 28th April, they will be having a table outside the Town Hall as part of the recruitment drive. There will also be a table on the Recreation Ground at the May Fayre and opening our green for anyone interested to pop along to the club and "have a go". The club is always looking for new members of all ages and genders, whether new to the game of bowls or experienced players wishing to change clubs. There is a coach and experienced players are available to make sure all new members are welcomed. For anybody wishing to find out more about Tenterden Bowls Club, there is a website available. Their aim is to keep the Club going from strength to strength.

- (e) Tenterden & District Day Centre. Cllr. Isworth, appointed as Chairman of Trustees of Tenterden Day Centre in July 2016, reported that substantial reworking of all the administration and staffing of the unit had taken place

over that period and the Centre faced challenges over the coming year as central government funding of £70,000 a year will be open to tender. They are currently refurbishing the interior of the Day Centre and are trying to open it up to others groups who wish to use the space as there was spare capacity on number of days. Cllr. Isworth welcomed feedback from the public as to what people would like the Day Centre to provide above what they do at the moment. The Day Centre is an important facility in town and we need to make sure it continues in the future.

- (f) St. Michaels Village Community Group. Cllr. Curteis reported that it had been a fairly quiet year. They have continued to maintain the flower planters at the Point outside Stanley George DIY in St. Michaels and tidy the green by Silver Hill until maintenance was taken over by the Council. The Tree switch-on event in December was very successful with a Christmas party for the children held at St. Michaels Village Hall with a decorated Santa's Grotto and Ms. Vos the Community Warden as an Elf. There was also a children's entertainer. This year a music event is planned on the St. Michaels Recreation Ground in September and the Christmas tree light switch on in December.
- (g) Tenterden Operatic Dramatic Society. Mr. Fagg reported that it had been a very successful year with three productions. In the Spring: 'Abigail's Party' which was entered for the Kent Full Length Play Festival and did well. In the Autumn: Agatha Christies 'Equally Divided' and in the New Year the musical 'The Pyjama Game'. TODS were finding it increasingly difficult to finance themselves, for example, The Pyjama Game took nearly £4,500 in the box office, but barely made £300 profit in the end. If it had not been for the bar and ice cream sales, they would have made a loss. The reasons for this are that the royalties are so high and the costs of hiring the Town Hall have increased. They are also struggling to recruit new members and need more young people. The next play is on from 27<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> April 2017: 'Entertaining Angel's' which is a witty and thought provoking comedy.
- (h) St. Mildred's Church. A written report was circulated reporting that St Mildred's Church Council (PCC) had continued to progress ideas for the reordering of the church. In the early part of last year, a presentation of those ideas was given at a public meeting. The architect, Mr. J. Bell, explained how the changes proposed could significantly increase the flexibility of the church building to provide for the changing needs of the congregation and to ensure that the church remains at the heart of the local community. Details of the proposals were displayed on the church website ([www.tenterdencofe.co.uk](http://www.tenterdencofe.co.uk)) and remain available there now.

500 copies of a booklet describing the proposals were also produced and distributed widely. They helped inform the public consultation which then took place for 6 weeks in May and June 2016. The consultation results broadly supported the proposals although concerns about a number of issues such as quiet space, location of the organ, types of seating and retention of the Rood Screen emerged. A summary of responses is available on the web site.

Following consideration by the PCC, discussions were commenced with the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC). Again, these led to broad support for the changes proposed but with concern over detailed designs, the location of toilets in the church, the location of the organ and the justification required if the Rood Screen is proposed to be removed.

Further detailed discussions will be required if the proposals are to advance.

Progress has been delayed as the BPG wanted to engage with the public consultation carried out by the Town Council on how the TENT1 funds could best be used to meet community needs. The consultation is now closed and there is significant support for the church to function as an arts and music venue in the town whilst maintaining its primary purpose as a place of worship.

With all this support the PCC now feels able to move forward to try and resolve the outstanding concerns and the detailed designs to take us closer to implementation. Inevitably this requires funding to be in place and this is an issue which the PCC will have to address as soon as possible.

- (i) Tenterden Charities. A written report was circulated outlining the work of the Tenterden Charities (incorporating Dr Curteis' Schooling & Clothing Foundation, The Charity of Ann Shelton, Harriot Pomfret, Dame Frances Norton and Jane Maynard). The Trustees had met twice during the course of 2016 and made 11 educational grants totalling £4,400.00 and one Relief in Need grant of £150.00. The Trustees met in March 2016 at which time the accounts for 2015 were approved and signed.
- (j) Tenterden & District Chamber of Commerce. Mr. M. Bartlett was unable to attend the meeting, however, a report was provided for circulation with the minutes.

The Chamber has enjoyed another year of activity and continues to receive numbers of enquiries from potential new members. During the past twelve months several educational sessions for members have been introduced as a part of an ongoing programme to expand member benefits: (a) a series of three talks about legal requirements for business (presented by Whitehead Monckton); (b) a series of three talks about how to make advertising work effectively (presented by Nick Farley); (c) a series of three talks about business accounting and tax requirements (presented by GMP) - the last of these regarding digital taxation to be presented this Thursday. Further seminars will be planned to cover topics such as: (a) how Big Data can be used to business advantage and (b) cybercrime and how to manage it and avoid it.

Networking meetings remain a key activity for members to meet each other informally. These meetings take place normally on the first Tuesday of each month, often at a member's premises. Last year the Chamber continued to provide support for Christmas trees and lights in and around the High Street and in St Michaels. It also promotes the Tenterden Card, with which numbers of member businesses provide benefits for cardholders.

The Chamber's AGM will be held later in May, the success of which will enable another year of activity to be planned.

- (a) Attendance at the Annual Town Meeting. Cllr. Lusty expressed concern that Kent Police were not at the Town Meeting. Mrs. C. Gilbert reported that Kent Police had advised that they require three months notice to attend meetings, but had provided a report from PCSO O. Welch. Cllr. Smith reported that the Police were thin on the ground and that PCSO Welch has a large area to cover.

Mr. Pearson asked the Council to analyse its standing in the Town and question why the Hall was so empty at the Town Meeting. There were no young people at any of the meetings (25 and under). Cllr. Ferguson responded that perhaps residents were happy with what the Council are doing and that is why they are not coming along. Cllr. Knowles, who was in Glasgow, messaged Cllr. Ferguson asking why the audio broadcast of the Town Meeting was not live; the Town Clerk responded that the standard microphones could not be used as there would be wires trailing and people would have to walk up to the microphones instead of using the roving ones available. The meeting was still being recorded and would be uploaded via the Council website.

Cllr. Carter observed that there were approximately 30 councillors/borough councillors at the meeting and approximately 30 members of the public. Cllr. Carter asked the public "what are we doing wrong not to get people here?" Mrs. J. Fagg of Orchard Road suggested that one reason may have been a lack of publicity. Cllr. Smith responded that details of the meeting had been included in the Spring Newsletter but there has been a delay in distribution.

Cllr. Mulholland reported that the 'Money to Burn' headline in the local paper was ingenuous towards the people in Tenterden; people do genuinely care about the Town and what is going on. The regeneration project was advertised well and the consultation extensive. Cllr. Mulholland also mentioned the focus groups which have been set up and advertised but require more public and stakeholders to join them. Cllr. Mulholland urged people to join.

- (b) Tenterden Community Emergency Plan. Cllr. Mulholland reported on The Emergency Plan which is in place to cover major emergencies (i.e. flood, power cuts, extreme weather, etc.) and the Steering Group are asking for volunteers (Community Liaison Volunteers) to come forward. Forms are available from the Town Council's website or from the Town Council office. No specific skills are required, but would be an advantage.
- (c) East Cross Clinic. Cllr. Isworth reported that East Cross Clinic, located next to Ivy Court Surgery, was largely unused but paid for by the tax payer. It is owned by NHS Property Services. Currently in the press, the Health Service was issuing a Sustainability and Transformation Plan and East Kent have done this. High on the list was treatment of patients locally, i.e. not having to go to district general hospitals. The public are enjoined to contribute to commenting on this plan and there are a large number of meetings being held which are advertised in the press and on websites to seek your views. It would be helpful if people in Tenterden who feel that an NHS building that they pay for should actually be used for patients comment on the plan. With the building of Tent1 and other developments, and a potential 20% increase in usage of the GP Surgery, there appear to be no plans to provide the medical facilities to cover this. The more the public enjoin these groups/meetings the better.

Mrs. Crickmore-Porter of High Street commented that this issue had been a sore point for many years and the Surgery should have put forward their points in the beginning. It was vital that provision be made now for the increase in residents rather than wait two years down the line. Cllr. Isworth responded that he was a member of the Ashford Rural Stakeholders Group and joined just over a year ago; the group deals with medical facilities in rural areas. So far they have had many meetings, but no actual action has been taken. There are currently three completely unused consulting rooms in East Cross Clinic. Cllr. Isworth had dealt with six different NHS organisations over the last year to find out how to actually use these rooms, but has so far got nowhere.

Mrs. Crickmore Porter suggested compulsory purchasing. Cllr. Isworth responded that NHS Property Services will not sell the building as they require a footprint in Tenterden, even if the building is underused. Mrs. J. Fagg of Orchard Road asked that if Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG) were composed of doctors, why does the Surgery not do something about it. Cllr. Isworth responded that the CCG was made up of doctors from all areas not just Tenterden.

Ms. S. Davison of ABC reported that there was an Ashford Health & Wellbeing Board and on that Board was the Ashford & Canterbury Clinical Commissioning Group. At the next meeting in a couple of weeks time the Estate strategy would be on the Agenda and it includes Tenterden. It is a public meeting and residents can attend. *The meeting is to be held in the Council Chamber at Ashford Borough Council, Civic Centre on Wednesday, 26<sup>th</sup> April 2017 at 9.30 am.*

- (d) Tent1 Funds. Mr. R. Finniss of Smallhythe Road asked whether the Council intended to spend all the money acquired from Tent1 or has any been put aside for future contingency? The Town Clerk responded that, as a result of the consultation process, the public would prefer some to be put aside, so it will not all be spent at once. Mr. Finniss reported that the local paper had intimated that all the money would frittered away. Cllr. Carter responded that the paper should be ashamed of the article. The Town Clerk observed that although the article was sensationalist, it may have moved people to join the focus groups.

Mr. Finniss enquired if the Council might consider investing in property in the Tent1 development; maybe a couple of houses or flats be made available for the youngsters of Tenterden as he was aware that in the past they have not met the criteria set down by Ashford Borough Council (ABC) on subsidised housing in Kent. Cllr. Smith reported that as part of the Tent1 development it was proposed that 33% would be social housing and they would be taken off the waiting list.

Cllr. Ferguson reported that the Council had in the past received information regarding the procedure for applying for social housing, however, she suggested that ABC send it again in order for it to be available to the young people. Cllr. Clokie reported that there was a very strict points system which must be adhered to and people gain points dependent on their personal situations. Cllr. Clokie suggested that the rules should include an applicant's location attached to their age and he would advise ABC to consider this. He said that local people who qualify would be offered the houses first. Cllr. Smith suggested that the guidelines be added to the Council's website.

Mrs. T. Hoyland of Orchard Road asked a few questions regarding the Tent1 monies. She requested clarification as to whether the findings of the focus groups would go to Council and the Council then vote on how it's going to spend the money. Mrs. Hoyland also enquired whether there was a time limit on when the money will be spent and whether the 3.6 million included the Section 106 funds or were they separate. Mrs. Hoyland questioned the cinema being included on the list of focus groups as the Lipton Report indicated that it did not seem to be public will that the money be spent on a commercial venture. The Town Clerk responded that Section 106 funds were separate to the 3.5 million. The Section 106 funds have not been issued yet and are predetermined and allocated for specific services. However, there may be some crossover with some of the Town's projects. With regard to the cinema, the Town Council investigated the option and found that, at the time, it was not a viable proposition. The Consultants investigated this and came to the same conclusion. However, if the focus group found a suitable commercially viable scenario which does not commit the Council to large spending in the future then it could be considered.

With regard to the question about the focus groups, they are there to fine tune the findings of the Lipton Report, not rewrite them. The final decision would rest with the Council. The Council would rather spend the majority of the funds than have it sitting in the bank.

- (e) Tenterden Regeneration Project Consultations. Dr. R. Crawford of Shoreham Lane had attended the first of the Lipton consultations and he knows he was not alone in feeling that their minds were already made up. Dr. Crawford was interested to know if councillors had heard similar. There did not seem to be much listening and for the Council to say that to ignore the Consultation Report would be undemocratic, he doubted that. Dr. Crawford also report that many local residents felt they were being short changed on the consultation; there was very much an impression that on a lot of important issues residents were being told what they needed and were not being listened to.

Cllr. Smith responded that the Council had employed the Lipton Group as a professional body and needed to take on board their findings and go from there. Cllr. Carter expressed concern with turning the Town Hall into a post office, community hub, etc. and believed there should be a more lengthy consultation on this and then for it to go back for public consultation. He stated that all the material and analysis that the Lipton Group produced should be in the public domain for analysis.

Ms. J. Vos, Community Warden, commented that she had been to the consultations as well and the way the consultants asked the questions gave you the option to choose.

Mr. M. Pearson reported that he had put his name down for the focus groups. He commented that the Consultants questions were loaded and the Lipton's had their minds made up before they started. Mr. Pearson wanted to be on the focus groups to make sure that if necessary some of the items can go back to the public for opinions.

Cllr. Mulholland commented that he thought the Lipton report was a top level strategic document and the fine tuning will come via the focus groups themselves. It does not mean the Council will follow the report word for word, but the harder work now comes when the focus groups can

refresh some of the ideas and get to the solutions that everyone would be more than happy with.

Ms. M. Knight of Haffenden Road attended one or two of the consultation sessions and felt that the Council were very lucky to have anyone at the Town meeting. Ms. Knight felt the Consultants were very negative towards those over 60, and yet that age group are the only ones who seemed to care and turn up at meetings. Cllr. Smith was not happy with the Consultants age negativity and particularly their negativity towards the Bowls Club.

Mrs. J. Crickmore-Porter of High Street agreed with the above comments. The meetings were pathetic and she gained nothing from them and does not believe the Consultants took anything away with them. Mrs. Crickmore-Porter commented that the Consultants had a vested interest in skate parks. The Town Clerk responded that when all the contractors were approached to make a bid, they all had a vested interest in a way as they all dealt with the whole process, therefore the initial drive was to deal with someone who knew the final stages of the operation. All of the contractors would have had a vested interest as they all provide that service as well.

Mrs. J. Fagg reported that she must have been one of the only people at the Town Meeting that thought the Consultants did a good job. Mrs. Fagg went to several of their meetings and they seemed to be chaired quite well and seemed to go through all the age groups. Mrs. Fagg did not feel discriminated against and she felt that the Council had done a good job at appointing someone to look at it; it was a big topic and required someone who had a more professional idea about finding the views of people. The Consultants seemed to have taken a big cross section of opinion on different things. Cllr. Smith responded that again it was uptake on attending the consultation meetings; the number of young people and young parents who attended was low, therefore, this was obviously why it was biased.

Cllr. Clokie agreed with Mrs. Fagg in that he thought the consultation was quite good. The Consultants were very keen on the youth and covered the town very well; the Consultants were recognised very quickly. They spent some time with the youth seeing where they spent their time. Cllr. Clokie asked if the Council were going to allow a person to be on more than one focus group and asked if another focus group might be added if a subject that perhaps was not mentioned came to light. Cllr. Smith responded that people are welcome to join all of the groups and the Council welcomes new ideas. The young people of the Town are welcome to join any group as well, not just those that might be age related.

Mr. J. Crawford of Stace Close had read the Lipton Report and broadly agreed with what needed to be done. Mr. Crawford agreed with Cllr. Carter that some of the suggestions were not appropriate for the Town Hall and this was where the focus groups come in to make recommendations to the Council. Mr. Crawford raised his concerns that

strong governance needs to be put in place for the 3.5 million plus Section 106 monies and how the money is going to be spent; to date he had not seen how this was going to be achieved. He expressed his concern that it needs to be sorted within the next 3-6 months. Cllr. Smith responded that the Council agreed.

- (f) Loss of Businesses across the Town. Cllr. Ferguson did not want the Town Meeting to finish without everyone thinking about the High Street. Cllr. Ferguson had counted the empty shops and with Lloyds pulling out soon, it would be the 17<sup>th</sup> shop/business that has closed and remained empty. Cllr. Ferguson was very worried and commented that it was unfortunate that the parking charges went up on 1<sup>st</sup> April, although understands that certain things need to be paid for. The Town needed help from Ashford Borough Council now. Tenterden has always been the Jewel in the Weald. The focus of ABC had been towards Ashford Town Centre, although they too are being devastated with empty shops. However, the cafés in Tenterden all seem to be thriving. Cllr. Ferguson indicated that parking charges were concerning people in the Town. The Parking Forum originally requested to ABC that a business parking scheme be introduced at Bridewell Lane, but it was dismissed by ABC. Monies were put aside, which Cllr. Ferguson was unsure as to whether they were still available. In Ashford 'free after three' parking was introduced, which Tenterden originally declined as the business parking in Bridewell Lane was proposed. However, it was brought up at the last parking meeting that Tenterden would now like the 'free after three' parking option.

Cllr. Ferguson reported that ABC had approved the Timpsons hub outside Tesco, even though Tenterden Town Council had asked for the decision to be made by their Planning Committee, which it was not. The Timpsons hub would have a large impact on many independent shops in the Town.

Cllr. Smith commented that as a shop owner, she understands that the rents and rates are very high in Tenterden. There were issues with the parking facilities and the vigilant traffic wardens were also a problem. There was not enough advertising that Bridewell Lane is free on Sundays. Not enough is being done to make our Town appear friendly. Cllr. Ferguson commented that Bridewell Lane car park was 75% full on Sunday so the signs that are up are helping. However, everyone needed to be very aware that more needed to be done.

Cllr. Knight reported that he had a retail business in the Town and it came down to market forces as well; high rent was not the only issue. Cllr. Knight suggested that Tenterden was obviously not providing the sort of shops or services the clientele want. It would be down to the local community as much as anyone to support the local businesses. Cllr. Knight suggested putting up maps at certain cut off points to let people know that more businesses were further up (i.e. near Boots indicating towards the top of the Town and near the Gateway indicating towards the bottom of the Town).

Mrs. J. Sugden of Rogersmead commented that it would help if people could pay as they left the car parks and suggested that it would help if the

parking prices did not keep increasing. Ms. S. Davison of ABC responded that it was unfortunate that ABC had to put parking charges up, but they had not done so for six years. ABC had given a commitment not to put them up for another three years. Ms. Davison commented that it was difficult, but costs do go up to the councils and Ashford do not necessarily own those car parks and have to pay rent too, so it was difficult for everyone.

Ms. Davison advised that with regard to the High Street problems, we do all have to work together. The parking charges do help to encourage a turnover of parking into the Town which helps to drive new customers into the Town, so it is very complicated. Ms. Davison also reported that ABC was very open to new ideas for parking. If the community come to an agreement first as to what they want, this would help before taking it to ABC. All parking terminals have been replaced and people can pay by credit card. There was also a telephone service for topping up. A member of the public asked if a surcharge was going to be made to people using credit cards. Ms. Davison responded that ABC will be paying the surcharge, not the public. Another member of the public asked if all new car park meters took the new pound coins and Ms. Davison responded that the machines are all ready. Mr. J. Hann of ABC reported that some machines were still waiting to be updated with the new software changes, but they should all be done within the next two weeks.

249 **CLOSE.** There being no further business the Town Mayor thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting. Attendees were invited to remain for refreshments.

**The meeting opened at 7.30pm and closed at 9.00pm.**

The foregoing Minutes and Reports were confirmed and signed at the Annual Town Meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2018.

Chairman ..... (14.05.2018)