

TENTERDEN TOWN COUNCIL



MINUTES AND REPORTS OF THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING HELD AT THE TOWN HALL ON 4th APRIL 2016

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, Mrs. E. Hannett, M. Hickmott, R. Isworth, R. Lusty, K. Mulholland, J. Nelson and T. Thorpe.

Town Clerk Mr. P. Burgess, Deputy Town Clerk Mr. R. Parham and Administrative Assistant Mrs. C. Gilbert.

For Kent County Council:

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

For Ashford Borough Council:

Cllrs. P. Clokie and J. Link, and Ms. S. Barber.

For Kent Police:

Sgt. G. Hart and PCSO O. Welch.

Also present:

Reverend Canon L. Hammond and 67 members of the public.

- 236 **WELCOME BY THE TOWN MAYOR.** The Town Mayor was in the chair, and welcomed all attendees.
- 237 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.** Apologies had been received from Town Councillors C. Knowles, Dr. L. Lovelidge and A. Sugden, Ashford Borough Councillor M. Bennett, Ms. C. Fuller and Ms. J. Fox (ABC), Kent Police & Crime Commissioner Mrs. A. Barnes, Chief Inspector K. Dyer (Kent Police), volunteer gardener Mrs. N. Stewart and representatives of the Royal British Legion Tenterden Branch and Tenterden Town Football Club.
- 238 **MINUTES.** The minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 7th April 2015 were proposed by the Town Mayor and seconded by Cllr. Nelson. They were duly agreed and signed as a correct record.
- 239 **MATTERS ARISING.**
- (a) Minute 234(g). Cllr. Lusty stated that there had been no improvement regarding discarded cigarette butts, adding that if anything the situation had got worse. Cllr. Mrs. Ferguson added that chewing gum on the pavement was also a significant problem.

240 **REPORTS FROM LOCAL ORGANISATIONS.**

- (a) Tenterden Town Council. The Town Mayor gave a report on the Council's activities over the previous year.
- Following a slight decrease the previous year, the Town Council's precept had been increased by £65,000.00 (to £368,000.00); this was due to the additional cost arising from the Town Council taking responsibility for the provision of the Tourist Information Centre, the ongoing cost of running the public toilets, and the intention to make additional provision for youth activities in the town. A new storage facility for maintenance machinery was also urgently needed, while financial support from the borough council had been reduced.
- It was planned that the Town Council would take on the contract to maintain the greens throughout the town (those within 30mph speed limit areas), with the intention that the level of service would be greatly improved by carrying out the work locally.
- New litter bins had been installed throughout the town, largely at the expense of ABC. The new standardised size of the bins would provide a financial saving from a collection point of view, and it was hoped that the inclusion of ashtrays would reduce the number of cigarette butts on the street. Dog waste was permitted to be put into the new bins, as the existing dog bin scheme was to be ceased.
- Contracts had been exchanged in mid-March on the Town Council's land included in the Tent 1 development. Proceeds from the sale would go in part toward the restoration of the Town Hall, but the great majority of the funds would be allocated to the participatory budgeting process which would identify local projects on which the public would like the money spent (minute 225(c) refers).
- Parking in the town remained a contentious issue. The parking forum had not met in 2016 due to restructuring at ABC. The Town Council was actively pursuing this as an effective means of addressing various issues related to parking.
- Refurbishment of the pavilion on Tenterden Recreation Ground had led to many bookings throughout the four months that it had been available. It was hoped that this usage would continue to grow, creating an additional revenue stream for the town.
- The Town Council still supported the idea of a cinema opening up in the town, but the Town Hall had been ruled out as a commercially viable venue for this. The concept would of course be kept in mind when considering the refurbishment and reordering of the Town Hall.
- An additional three publicly accessible defibrillators were due to be installed around the town, and introductory sessions (to allow people to familiarise themselves with the equipment) had been organised.
- (b) Tenterden Bowls Club. Mr. R. Walker gave a brief overview of the history of the club and its activities, particularly noting that it was used by all ages from junior school pupils through to retired people, including people with disabilities. It was hoped that, finances permitting, the changing and toilet facilities would be upgraded at the end of the season. He added that if anyone was interested in learning more about the bowls club, they could visit its website.

- (c) Tenterden & District Museum. Mr. G. Baldwin reported that the museum had experienced a good year so far, with a high number of visitors over the Easter weekend to see an exhibition of paperweights. Thanks to an anonymous donation from a local resident and grant funding, a new piece of equipment had been installed allowing visitors with mobility difficulties to enjoy an interactive virtual tour of the museum's upper floor. A system had been put in place to allow members of the public to browse the extensive archive of documents in digital format. Changes to the electrics in the building had contributed to a significant saving on utilities bills. Mr. Baldwin appealed for volunteers, as the raising of retirement age had affected the museum's intake. A new leaflet had been produced highlighting all of the museums in the borough. An event was being organised for June celebrating forty years of the museum.
- (d) Tenterden & District Chamber of Commerce. Mr. M. Bartlett gave a presentation on the activities of the Chamber, highlighting its high membership numbers which included both small independent businesses as well as national chains. The organisation was run by a committee of volunteer members. Attendance at monthly networking meetings was high. A number of special events were held each year, including the Christmas market, and the committee was working to resolve concerns arising from 2015 ahead of the 2016 event. The "I Love Tenterden" card was organised by the chamber and continued to be popular. The chamber was also responsible for the www.tenterdentown.co.uk website. It was planned that a programme of seminars would be held in the coming year, as well as working with students interested in getting involved with business.
- (e) St. Michaels Village Community Group. Cllr. Mulholland gave a report on the activities of the group, which had approximately 20 members. Two newsletters had been produced and distributed door-to-door. A fun day held in September had been very successful, with the highlight being the tug of war contest between St. Michaels' two pubs, and the Christmas lights switch-on had also been successful. So far £1,500.00 had been raised for cancer research through the sale of the book "St. Michaels Memories". The group had undertaken work to improve the visual amenity of the green area beside the Fat Ox public house, and the dedication of a tree there in memory of the late Sir Donald Sinden (who lived in the area) was due to take place the following weekend. They had sponsored specialist clothing for the junior and infant schools. They aimed to continue their work through 2016, and to be as inclusive as possible to all people of St. Michaels.
- (f) Tenterden & District Twinning Association. Mrs. B. Misselbrook gave a brief report on the association's activities in its 26th year, and described the positive experiences associated with the exchange programme. She hoped that more members would join to take advantage of the benefits of the twinning scheme. Cllr. Edwards added that Mr. B. Wright, a founder member of the association had passed away, and his funeral was to be held the following Wednesday.
- (g) St. Mildred's Church. A written report was circulated giving details of a planned reordering of the church to facilitate greater use by the community. A feasibility study had been carried out, and comments were sought from the community on this.

- (h) 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 2015 and made 16 educational grants totalling £4800.00 and one Relief in Need grant of £150.00.

241 **QUESTIONS, COMMENTS & SUGGESTIONS.**

- (a) Christmas Lights. Mr. T. Clarke of Henley Meadows stated that the display of Christmas lights was very good in 2015, but asked why certain trees such as that opposite the entrance to the Waitrose car park been lit, but not other more prominent trees. The Town Clerk explained that the choice of which trees to light was dependent on the proximity of a suitable lighting column. An electrical failure in one lamp post shortly before the switch-on had prevented the lights in one tree from functioning, but the Clerk assured Mr. Clarke that the tree in question would be lit for the 2016 Christmas season.
- (b) Volunteer Litter Collections. Mrs. J. Fagg of Orchard Road expressed dissatisfaction regarding the advertising of a recent volunteer litter collection day run by Transition Town Tenterden (T³), and urged the Town Council to ensure that such events were publicised more thoroughly in future, including involving schools in the events in order to discourage littering by students. Cllr. Nelson reported that the event was a joint venture between the Town Council and T³, and conceded that the publicity had been lacking. He confirmed that every effort would be made to improve the advertising for the next event, which was expected to take place in the autumn.
- (c) Town Hall Renovation. Ms. C. Parkin of Ashford Road asked what portion of the funds arising from the sale of the Town Council's land as part of the Tent 1 development would be assigned to the refurbishment of the Town Hall. The Town Clerk replied that some money would need to be spent to renovate the Town Hall which was in a severe state of dilapidation. It was intended that grant funding would be secured as part of the project to repurpose the rear part of the building. The great majority of the remaining moneys would be used to fund community projects through consultation with residents. A specific figure had not been ascertained at that point, but this would be dealt with in a transparent way to ensure that the community was kept informed.
- (d) Tree on Tenterden Recreation Ground. Mr. R. Finniss of Smallhythe Road asked that a thorough survey of the trees in the High Street be carried out, following the loss of a tree on the recreation ground in strong winds over the Easter weekend.
- (e) Increase to Precept. Mr. M. Pearson of High Street asked what services the Town Council would have had to cut had it not raised the precept, as had been reported in the local press. The Clerk stated that the long-overdue construction of the new maintenance storage facility was the main additional expense, as well as provision of additional funding for youth projects and the running of the Tourist Information Centre. Had the precept not been increased, the money for these would need to be taken from existing budgets, causing cuts elsewhere.

- (f) Street Market Signage. Mr. Pearson stated that he felt that the banner which the Town Council had purchased to advertise the Friday street market was both unattractive and a waste of money. The Town Mayor replied that the banner had been purchased in response to the market traders themselves having created their own makeshift signage. The replacement banner was thought to be more in keeping with the image Tenterden sought to present. Cllr. Mrs. Ferguson added that she had seen nothing but positive responses to the banner on social media.
- (g) Newsletter. Mrs. J. Crickmore-Porter of High Street expressed concern that a newsletter had not been distributed since summer 2015. The Town Mayor assured her that one was in production and would be distributed soon.
- (h) Tent 1. Mrs. Crickmore-Porter asked stated that the information on Tent 1 displayed on the website did not appear to be up to date. The Clerk apologised that the page had not been updated, explaining that the key development, namely the exchange of contracts, had only taken place in the last two weeks, and a thorough update was pending (although a thorough release had been supplied to the press). Details would be included in the forthcoming newsletter.
- (i) Greens Maintenance. A resident of Rolvenden Road asked whether the possible takeover of the contract to maintain verges would take in those along Rolvenden Road, some of which she felt were very untidy and did not represent Tenterden in a positive light. The Clerk replied that the contract would cover all areas within a 30mph speed limit as a matter of safety. A particular piece of land referred to by the resident was in private ownership, and as such would not fall under the contract, however it was hoped that in the future, where appropriate, the Town Council may approach owners of untidy/unkempt land and offer to take action at the landowner's expense, although this would not take place in the first instance.
- (j) Litter Bins. Mr. R. Parkin stated that the replacement litter bins were more attractive and applauded the plan to remove the unsightly dog waste bins from the greens. However, he had read in the local press that the Town Council was intending to replace the bins at some stage anyway, as were ABC, and he felt that this represented double taxation. He also expressed concern that the recycling bins were too similar to the standard bins, making them impossible to distinguish between by those who could not read. He asked whether the removed litter bins could be installed at other locations which needed them. The Clerk responded that the recycling bins showed the recycling symbol. He confirmed that ABC had funded the majority of bins, while the Town Council had bought the bins on its own property (the recreation grounds and gardens). The "retired" bins could be considered for other locations as necessary, if this did not compromise the financial benefits of standardised bins. Mr. Parkin identified the corner of East Hill and Appledore Road as needing a litter bin.
- (k) Policing. Cllr. Mrs. Ferguson asked the representatives of the police for a report on policing in the area. Sgt. Hart reported that crime in the town was on a decline, which he attributed to the efforts of PCSO Welch, who had once again been assigned to cover only Tenterden.

- (l) Schedule of Meetings. Cllr. Lusty raised concern, on behalf of a member of the public, that a proposed change to the time of planning committee meetings (to a consistent 6 o'clock start time) would not allow members of the public to eat dinner before the meetings. He explained that the rationale behind this proposed change was to save members of the public a long wait (sometimes up to 2 hours) for applications to be discussed; a 6 o'clock start time would mean that the applications would all be discussed by 7 o'clock, rather than planning following other meetings which started at 7. Mr. Pearson suggested that members of the public may not be home from work by 6 o'clock.
- (m) Parking Arrangements for the Christmas Market. Mr. R. Parsons of Cherry Orchard asked what plans were to be put in place to ease the impact on the town of the parking for the Christmas market, which had resulted in near gridlock in 2015. Mr. Bartlett of the Chamber of Commerce reported that the Chamber had been actively pursuing means of reducing the impact on the town, including possible use of the KESR car park (by moving the event to the previous week to the KESR's own Christmas event) and a park and ride shuttle scheme from the Homewood School car park. The Town Mayor added that this date would also tie event in with the Town Council's planned date for the switch-on of the Christmas lights. Mr. M. Everett of Ingleden Park Road added that the main problem he had seen at the 2015 event was vehicles parked dangerously across footpaths and verges; he stated that he felt that if the Council were to address this issue, it would largely alleviate other traffic problems.
- (n) Mr. M. Everett of Ingleden Park Road asked for specific dates when the participatory budgeting process (for the allocation of funds arising from the sale of the Town Council's share of the land forming the Tent 1 development) would begin, and also whether rumours, that all residents over the age of ten years old would participate in the process, were true. The Town Clerk confirmed that it was common practice for children to be involved in this kind of process, and their input was sought to attempt to ensure that all sectors of the community were represented. The process, and the timescale, would be established through the guidance of a professional company appointed to manage the process. Mr. Everett also expressed concern at the low number of respondents to a questionnaire sent out by the Town Council to all homes in the town. The Clerk stated that these low response numbers were a contributing factor to the decision to appoint a specialist firm who could work directly with community groups to identify the improvements which would be most useful. Mr. Everett also asked what was the remit to be given out to companies for the reordering of Tenterden Recreation Ground. It was reported that possible changes to the ground would be based upon the consultation carries out by the successful firm, rather than going into the project with predetermined ideas of how the ground should be changed; this would ensure eligibility for various sources of grant funding for the relevant community groups.
- (o) Mrs. R. Winter of Beacon Oak Road raised concern over an annual bike race which travelled along her road and caused damage to the highway and vehicles parked there, and the risk to life as the road was not closed for the event. She asked whether it would be possible for a road closure to be put in place to prevent a serious accident taking place. Cllr. Mrs. Ferguson reported that a cycling strategy steering group had been set up to look at ways to improve conditions for cyclists in the town, but that it's focus was on casual local cycling, rather than road races.

- (p) Mr. R. Finniss of Smallhythe Road asked whether an additional football pitch would be acquired by the Council to free up that area of the recreation ground. The Deputy Town Mayor responded that developments in this area were largely down to the progress of the independent Sport Tenterden, and the participatory budgeting process. However, he anticipated that the football pitch at Tenterden Recreation Ground would be retained in any case.
- (q) Mr. B. Carley of Smallhythe Road voiced the concerns of residents of Austens Orchard that new parking restrictions prevented residents and their visitors from parking near their homes. He asked why scrubland at the entrance to the road could not be purchased and turned into parking for residents. The Town Mayor confirmed that the Town Council was aware of the problem and it would be raised for consideration at a future meeting of the Parking Forum. Cllr. Clokie reported that the restrictions had been put in place as a result of complaints from residents about the number of commuters parking there; restrictions had been put in place at the corners to ensure access to the road was not blocked.
- (r) Cllr. Nelson reported that the Town Council was looking for volunteers to act as coordinators and community liaison officers as part of the emergency plan which had been put together. The role would be to convey information between relevant parties in the event of an emergency. Forms had been distributed which interested parties could complete and return.

242 **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 8.57pm.

The foregoing Minutes and Reports were confirmed and signed at the Annual Town Meeting on 10th April 2017.

Chairman (10.04.2017)