

TENTERDEN TOWN COUNCIL – EXTERNAL COMMITTEE

HIGH STREET REGENERATION SUB-COMMITTEE

NOTES OF A MEETING ON THURSDAY, 12 NOVEMBER 2020

Present: M. Bartlett (TDCC), M. Carter (Chair), P. Clokie (ABC), Mrs. J. Curteis, Ms. E. Ditton, Mrs. S. Ferguson, J. Nelson, Mrs. K. Nolan-Lyons (Town Centre & Tourism Co-ordinator) and R. Quinton. Mrs. C. Gilbert (Deputy Town Clerk) took notes.

In Attendance: Cllr. Alan Sugden.

25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

None.

26 MINUTES.

The minutes of the meeting held on 22nd October 2020 were approved.

27 MATTERS ARISING.

- (a) Colour Palette for High Street. It was **NOTED** that the Town Council's Planning Committee approved consideration of a colour palette for Tenterden High Street as part of the Conservation Area Management Plan at their meeting on 2nd November 2020. The relevant organisations will be asked to join the discussion when physical meetings can take place again.

28 ASSOCIATION OF TOWN & CITY MANAGEMENT.

- (a) The Town Council's approval for the membership of the Association of Town & City Management was **NOTED**. Cllr. Mike Carter thanked the Tenterden & District Chamber of Commerce for their donation towards the first year's membership. Keli Nolan-Lyons reported that she had spoken to the ATCM Membership Manager and they are very keen for us to come on board. As we are classed as a small Town, we will have the advantage of the lower membership fee, but with full access to the membership the same as larger towns receive.
- (b) Membership of the Association. Membership of the ATCM can be up to seven members including the Lead Member. It was agreed that the following would become members:
- Cllr. Mike Carter (as Chairman)
 - Keli Nolan-Lyons – Town Centre & Tourism Co-ordinator
 - Claire Gilbert – Deputy Town Clerk
 - Cllr. Sue Ferguson – TTC HSR Sub-committee member & MyTenterden
 - Mike Bartlett – Tenterden & District Chamber of Commerce
 - A second representative from the Chamber of Commerce (Chamber to decide)
 - Seventh member to be left open for future allocation.

29 ELECTRIC BUS SYSTEM FOR TENTERDEN.

Cllr. Nelson asked whether we were reliant on Mr. Edmonds setting this up as part of their approved planning application; Mike Carter confirmed that this was not necessarily the case.

Mike Carter talked about Jo Bamford (Wrightbus owner and JCB heir) and his hydrogen bus campaign. Interesting article here: <http://www.passengertransport.co.uk/2020/06/bamford-steps-up-hydrogen-campaign/> Sue Ferguson reported that back in February 2020 the Government announced that they were funding 50 million towards electric buses. It was agreed that more research into these ideas could be made and brought back to a future meeting. Mike Carter also suggested writing to Jo Bamford to ask for an update on his plans and also how talks were going with the Government. Cllr. Paul Clokie suggested developers as part of their planning applications including greener bus services. Cllr. Clokie also suggested using the Ashford to Tenterden and with outlying villages in between as part of the discussion for coverage.

Keli reported that she had recently met with the Rural Society Network which maybe something different but brings the point on connecting with other businesses. On the RSN they are quite interested in the bus issues currently faced by towns and villages.

It was agreed that both Ashford Borough Council and Tenterden Town Council could look into the idea of electric or hydrogen buses in more detail and also write to Jo Bamford for an update.

30 PROPOSED IDEAS FOR HIGH STREET LAYOUT.

The latest set of drawings regarding ideas for the amendment of the layout of part of the High Street were reviewed. Mike Carter asked the Committee for their opinions on the drawings and ideas on how these could be taken forward.

Mike Bartlett reported that the photos are very appealing in lots of ways. Mike asked what would happen to the bus stop outside The Vine and opposite The Vine; also Bridewell Lane one way system could be affected by the proposed roundabout near the junction. Mike Carter reported that the idea is to get the buses to turn around on the Cranbrook Road junction. There is the possibility to also make the Lemon Tree bus stop more of a major one to save having the one opposite The Vine as well. Mike Carter also reported that the Bridewell Lane one way system and the possible impact due to the roundabout would be for highways to consider.

Sue reported that if the buses have to turn around at the Cranbrook Road junction, then there would need to be a roundabout. The benefit would be that the buses could serve the West Cross end of the High Street as the No. 2 bus currently terminates at The Vine. Sue also reported that High Streets have got to change to remain relevant. The plaza outside the Town Hall was a good addition to the Town. Sue felt that there was no point chasing the traditional method of people coming to shop, as its much more than just shopping; we need to reimagine it and look at café culture, with the need to reclaim the space.

Cllr. Clokie reminded the Committee that the high street is the main road to Hastings and a lot of traffic and lorries go through, especially

deliveries. We have to assume that many people like to stop in the high street for an hour and then move on. Cllr. Clokie felt that the drawings do not allow for this, so it might cut down on the number of shoppers. We are currently considered an attractive town as we are; we must be very sure that people want the huge pavements.

Mike Carter reported that we would not be looking to do this all in one go. The major point is to make the high street safer for people; Mike felt it is currently very dangerous, particularly for the elderly. The zebra crossings proposed would be much better for the environment as well. Mike suggested 'free for an hour' parking in Bridewell Lane car park to attract people could also be considered. Mike reported that we need a workable solution for the Town and the drawings are just ideas for now and a start to the process. He also suggested the need to look at further developing the Tenterden Improved Project, particularly from Church Road down to The Vine as well.

Sue reported that it was great to see additional trees in the concept drawings as well. Mike Carter wondered if the high street could be considered for a reduction in the speed limit from 30mph down to 20mph. Cllr. Clokie commented that it could be applied for. Cllr. Roger Quinton reported that KCC will look at the data for the high street and will not reduce to 20mph unless accidents are shown. Justin asked if there was any legal prohibition on restricting an A Road down to 20mph. The Committee were unsure, but Mike suggested engaging with Transport Engineers to look at the high street ideas and see what can be done.

Roger reported that in the drawings where the road is narrowed outside the White Lion down to Bridewell Lane, there is also the entrance into Central Garage, which is a prime undeveloped site; it needs to be considered that at some stage it could well be developed.

Keli asked whether with the European concept of outside dining, is there anything on the plans so that people can use the outside seating areas all year round and would that be an option.

Cllr. Clokie asked whether it would be possible to hold a public exhibition of the concept ideas to get a feeling from the users, i.e. residents on how they feel about the ideas. Cllr. Clokie felt that once there is support, then the ideas could be developed. Justin agreed that we need to consult with the public and businesses first and get views, then investigate further. Justin also suggested presenting modular sections for people to vote on and make comments.

Emily Ditton was concerned that people could get hung up on the intricacies of the drawings rather than the ideas like having a café culture by the widening of pavements. Emily asked whether there was a way we can talk about it strategically to the public; once we have the strategic points, we can then focus on those. Emily agreed to look into this further. Keli suggested that she added the ideas onto the questionnaire that she completes when meeting with businesses and ask for their input; Keli and Emily agreed to liaise.

Mike Bartlett reported that he thought it was a good idea for residents to look at plans, but maybe we should look at what others towns have done and whether they have been successful, including European towns. Mike

also liked the idea of a plaza outside NatWest which would be great for events as well.

Sue reported that we have to consult with not just businesses but residents too; not everyone can have the vision and without the concept drawings, you would not get the message across as to what is feasible. Sue suggested maybe putting the drawings out into the public forum to give people the idea.

Cllr. Clokie suggested holding an exhibition in May 2021 when all the relevant and updated drawings are complete. Claire Gilbert raised her concerns on the process of releasing the drawings and suggested that rather than showing the public what we have in mind and then consulting KCC afterwards, to check with KCC first and gauge their views before going to the public. It would be better to show the public ideas of what we might be able to do rather than show all the ideas and then down the line say that not many can be done due to not being feasible or that there is no funding.

Emily suggested producing a 'visual sense strategy' rather than a final drawing otherwise this invites criticism; she suggested showing the public the images, but put other mood images in with it. Emily also suggested that the presentation should be a bit ambiguous so people can bring their own ideas.

Cllr. Clokie reported that it might be worth talking to KCC in the first instance to check if it would be viable, given that it is a trunk road. It would also be useful to know what we can do so that we do not ask peoples' opinions on what is impossible. There also needs to be the thinking behind the drawings.

It was agreed to approach KCC on the concept ideas with the possibility of holding a public consultation in April/May 2021. This recommendation will be made to the External Committee on 14th December 2020.

31 LINK FROM RAILWAY TO HIGH STREET.

Mike Carter reported that there is approximately £15,000 available towards the installation of a footpath in Coombe Lane Cemetery to provide a safe link between the Railway and high street. Justin reported that at present, until the Town Council own Coombe Lane Cemetery, there is not much we can do as we are only contracted to cut the grass.

It was agreed that the Town Council could write to St. Mildred's Church to see if it would be possible to reinstate the footpath. Mike Bartlett reported that at some point the footpath would need to be lit as currently it is quite dark in the cemetery. Roger enquired as to how the path would link to the Railway; Cllr. Curteis reported that it comes out into Coombe Lane at the bottom end, which belongs to the Edmonds brothers who have said they would be happy for it to be used as a link to the Railway rather than people going up and down Station Road.

32 BRIDEWELL LANE & HIGHBURY LANE.

(a) One way system with Bridewell and Highbury Lanes.

Mike Bartlett reported that this was an excellent idea, especially with Highbury Lane becoming one way. Mike did raise his concern with Bridewell Lane becoming one way, particularly for businesses and their access to their premises, including delivery vehicles.

Sue asked if the questionnaire circulated to the relevant residents and businesses included a question asking which way they would prefer; Claire reported that it did not ask the question, however, the accompanying letter did make the suggestion of 'in' Highbury Lane and 'out' Bridewell Lane. It was agreed to recommend to the Town Council that the one-way system is pursued with KCC and ABC and that the preferred option would be 'in' Highbury Lane and 'out' Bridewell Lane.

- (b) Automatic Number Plate Recognition parking at Bridewell Lane car park.

Mike Carter reported that the allocated funds for an ANPR parking system for Tenterden should be due soon. It was agreed that ideally this would be put in place at the same time as setting up the one-way system for Bridewell and Highbury Lanes. It was agreed to recommend to the Town Council that both the ANPR installation and one-way system be pursued with KCC and ABC for implementation by the end of 2021.

33 UPDATE FROM ORGANISATIONS.

- (a) Tenterden & District Chamber of Commerce. Mike Bartlett provided an update from the Chamber.

- (i) The Chamber had agreed to pay 50% of the membership cost to the Association of Town & City Management for the first year.
- (ii) With regard to trying to get the high street going again, the Christmas trees above the shops will be going up from week commencing 16th November 2020. C. S. Mitchells might not be able to access all the businesses for the electric installation, therefore, they may have to return after lockdown to complete.
- (iii) The Chamber have agreed to run a Christmas Shop Window competition with the Town Mayor as the judge. The prize would be £100 for the best window.

- (b) Tenterden Town Council. Keli provided a report on a couple of items.

- (i) Keli was looking into maybe videoing the Christmas lights going on to do a 'virtual' switch-on online.
- (ii) Keli had started attending weekly Covid businesses meetings with ABC which are really progressive and she is keeping in touch with all Tenterden businesses and circulating any useful links and information. Keli reported that the Government's final points of funding should come out tomorrow or Monday, which Keli will share as soon as available with businesses. At the weekly meetings, they also touched on help the other side of lockdown and helping

businesses one to one which included Tenterden as well as Ashford businesses.

34 ANY OTHER BUSINESS.

None.

35 DATE OF NEXT MEETING.

Thursday, 17th December 2020 at 7.00 pm.