

# TENTERDEN TOWN COUNCIL

The Town and Hundred of Tenterden



A Corporate Member of the Cinque Ports

Alan Bates  
Chair of TDRA

24<sup>th</sup> December 2020

Dear Alan,  
I have addressed the points in your recent letter below.

## Covid Impact on High Street

We are all acutely aware of the devastating effect of the pandemic on retail and hospitality businesses. Whilst the Town Council has neither the funds nor the power to assist businesses individually, we have made strenuous efforts to support the High Street during troubled times. Our research indicates that shoppers would only return after lockdown if they felt safe to do so and our barrier policy – reviewed from time to time, ensured social distancing was still possible. In addition to this, the free parking negotiated between TTC with ABC in both the Station Rd Coach park and the Leisure Centre have encouraged the return of shoppers, more than replacing the parking spaces lost to safety measures.

TTC went ahead with recruitment of a Town Centre Co-ordinator despite the pandemic, re-jigging the job description to concentrate on Covid assistance to businesses. Keli has been instrumental in signposting businesses to available grant help from ABC and the help provided under the Ashford Borough Recovery Plan, in close liaison with the Chamber of Commerce. As well as building a strong and productive relationship with TDCC and ABC's Town Centre manager and other useful contacts at the Borough Council, Keli has met almost all the High Street businesses and has been arranging better use of social media and initiatives to assist businesses. Her experience, through talking to independent owners, is that most of them are weathering the storm far better than the chains and once Covid is past, Tenterden's High Street will be one of the first out of the starting blocks. The emphasis of her role will then switch towards attracting tourism to the town which will of course have a beneficial long-term effect on our businesses. The mix of businesses and attracting the young will also be a priority, with the obvious draw of excellent recreational and youth facilities to come shortly on the recreation ground. With this in mind, Keli has already built strong links with Homewood, and has arranged for the students to present the results of a recent youth survey to council in the New Year.

## Projects

Cinema I admit to being a little surprised at the request for an update here as I understand you to be a director of TCL. The offer from the council of £500,000 (less the £42,705 already spent) towards consultancy fees and renovation costs at the Pebbles still remains. Naturally things are in limbo at present because of the uncertainty, but the council will look again at any proposals put forward by the group once we are in better times. Again, the independents are likely to weather the storm better than larger concerns and I have attached for reference my recent correspondence with TCL which you may already have seen.

## Recreation Ground

The Landscape Architects Ground Control circulated an update recently which you will have received as a focus group member. I attach it again here for your information. Almost all of the necessary surveys have been undertaken in advance of the planning application, and the application itself is expected to be submitted early in the new year. Pre-application advice had, of course, already been

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sought. There are potential delays over bat and Great Crested newt surveys for the area, but we hope to break ground in the middle of 2021. This project has received particularly strong support from the public from the outset and the recent vote at council to authorise the move to planning stage was opposed by only one councillor. Expenditure thus far has been £63,856.

## Town Hall

The planning application for this project was submitted on Monday of this week following lengthy consultation with the focus group and negotiation with conservation officers. Expenditure so far is £125,577. The council has agreed an application for Public Works Loan Board funding which will go to public consultation in the new year.

## Overall funding & Expenditure

As I am sure you are aware from your dealings with the Cinema group, all expenditure prior to work commencing relates to professional fees, consultancy and survey costs. All 3 projects follow this pattern.

I have attached the details of funding from the Exhibition in February which best explains the complex breakdown. The changes since that stage include completion of the maintenance facility and the moving of the recreation ground and town hall projects to planning stage.

To summarise:

Town Hall: Project Cost £1.75m (£1m from Tent1a sale £750,000 from PWLB loan)

Recreation Ground: Project Cost £1,622,000 (£569,000 from Tent1a, £603,000 from S106, £450,000 from grant funding)

As the attached funding diagram illustrates, the Cinema and smaller projects also draw on the Tent1a land sale funds and we must retain £350,000 for future projects as the initial public consultation required.

To a large extent many of the fees incurred so far have been met from reserves or cash allocated from the precept specifically for projects. The balance remaining from the £3,500,000 land sale is £3,284,000, a healthy figure when you consider that the recently completed maintenance facility cost £280,000.

The S106 (developer's contribution) which I have taken into account comes only from developments which are in progress (Tent1a and Tilden Gill only). Other developments planned but not in construction (Tent1b for instance) have not been taken into account and will no doubt yield significant sums. We are of course able to claim this targeted funding retrospectively.

In summary, in addition to the project costs (large and small) we have £350,000 for future projects and a healthy developers contribution on the horizon which will be used directly on projects or allow us to reallocate earmarked capital.

Some of this may well go towards assisting the High Street, because although we derive no income from business, the council will consider seriously any initiative to help businesses as a whole

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Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P Burgess', written in a cursive style.

**P Burgess,  
Town Clerk**