



TENTERDEN
TOWN COUNCIL

THANKYOU!

TO ALL THOSE IN
TENTERDEN AND ST MICHAEL'S
WHO...

- ✓ *Volunteered to help people during lockdown*
- ✓ *Ensured nobody in need was left out*
- ✓ *Helped neighbours who needed support*
- ✓ *Turned up to cheer up those feeling down*
- ✓ *Maintained our key services*

A **BIG Thank you** from everyone at Tenterden Town
Council and all the Community Organisations

WILDLIFE IN
DANGER

COVID-19 UPDATE

NEW TOWN CENTRE
CO-ORDINATOR

SEPTEMBER NEWSLETTER

Thanks to Cllr Sue Ferguson and the Neighbourhood plan team for supplying images



Picture Credit: Cllr Sue Ferguson

A UNIQUE PLAN FOR CHALLENGING TIMES

The unprecedented challenge posed by Covid-19 demanded a unique plan of action from the Town Council to help the town towards recovery and renewal.

Despite lockdown, council and committee meetings went ahead using Zoom video technology, and during the summer, the council's weekly Covid-19 committee agreed a regeneration strategy.

As the lockdown eased, attention turned to supporting the town's retailers, reaching agreement with Ashford Borough Council to release 140 parking bays at the Leisure Centre for all-day free parking, and 16 additional bays in the Station Road coach park with three hours free parking. The agreement was originally scheduled to last until the end of August, but has now been extended to 31 October.

Meanwhile, the council put up banners across the town, reading 'Welcome to Tenterden – Shop Local, Eat Local, Buy Local', and worked with the town's pubs, restaurants and bars to ensure that, if possible, they could put out pavement chairs and tables while maintaining social distancing measures for customers and pedestrians.

The council recognised that not everyone was happy with the barriers. Says Town Clerk Phil Burgess: "We had to bear in mind the needs of our disabled and elderly residents as well as retailers, and it caused occasional confusion.

"But we felt the barriers would help reassure people that Tenterden was a safe town to visit and enjoy".

A new Town Centre and Tourism Co-ordinator for Tenterden has been appointed – a first for the town and a move unprecedented for a Town Council in Kent – whose responsibilities will be to focus on creating and implementing initiatives to help regenerate the High Street, retail and visitor economy.

She is Keli Nolan-Lyons, who joins the Town Council team from the Tenterden Leisure Centre, where she

Pictured: Keli Nolan-Lyons

has been part of the sales and marketing team and sports bursary administrator for the past eight years. She has also worked as a tour guide for Hush Heath vineyard.



Keli brings to her role a wide range of skills. She initially worked in radio and television, including stints as a presenter for Kiss FM, as a producer on BBC Radio 1, and has been in various roles in theatre and TV with stars including Bonnie Langford, Brian Conley, Noel Edmonds and Wayne Sleep.

She subsequently moved into events and artist management with companies such as the BBC, Nike, ECB and the Arts Council.

Her background in the performance and arts field led to her establishing a business as a personal trainer, working for clients in the City and media, including Channel 4 and Universal Music.

With the birth of her daughter Tileigh in 2012, Keli relocated from London to the Weald, where her husband David was born and raised.

The regeneration of Tenterden's retail sector was recently the subject of a three-minute presentation to the Town Council by James Fuller, leader of the Facebook High Street Regeneration group.

After the meeting, Town Clerk Phil Burgess said: "We welcome any and all contributions to the debate about the future of our High Street and the retail sector in general, and the appointment of Keli is a clear signal of our intent.

"We had a very strong candidate list for this job, and Keli's broad experience and people skills made her the ideal choice. It's a vital role in what is undoubtedly one of the toughest trading periods in living memory."

NEW SYSTEM IDENTIFIES OUR VOLUNTEER HELPERS

As the demand for Tenterden volunteers has changed significantly since the early days of the lockdown, when the need to support those particularly impacted by coronavirus was most acute, a new strategy for volunteers has been introduced.

With the easing of restrictions, some volunteers' circumstances may have changed, for instance if they have returned to work. Now, on behalf of the Tenterden Volunteer Centre (TVC), the Town Council has sent out a letter and questionnaire to all those who have volunteered during the Covid crisis to establish their current situation and, if still interested, the type of volunteering they would be interested in.

On completion of the exercise, TVC will have identified all volunteers who still wish to be involved, the aim being to match them with existing or new opportunities, acting as a signposting service for all those still willing and able to help.

Helping In Tenterden (HIT) has completed over 1,000 'missions' via its 250 volunteers and help desk team. HIT reports that the greatest demand has been for collection of prescriptions from those unable to leave home, followed by shopping for groceries and essentials, making befriending phone calls to the lonely and isolated, and signposting sources of financial help.

The peak demand for HIT's services was in April, with more than 450 calls for help, although that has now significantly reduced - in July, it fell back to around 50.

Meanwhile, as the pandemic took hold, the Foodbank team experienced an enormous rise in demand. They made some 200 deliveries, particularly during the pandemic's peak, when demand was so intense they were restricted to delivering three-day supplies of essential food instead of the normal five-day delivery.

However, a social media appeal for tins and packets was a huge success, and with the government introducing vouchers to replace free school meals, demand has now stabilised.

But the Foodbank has warned that there is likely to be a renewed increase in demand when the government phases out the furlough scheme, with the potential for job losses.

Says Town Clerk Phil Burgess: "The community has pulled together magnificently throughout the crisis. But we need to be ready for a potential resurgence of Covid-19, and refining our database of volunteers will be an important step in ensuring we have the right people in place to continue volunteering as and when it becomes necessary."

For further information, please visit www.tenterdenvolunteercentre.org.uk



KELI IS OUR NEW TOWN CENTRE AND TOURISM CO-ORDINATOR



PLANS FOR NEW HOMES UNDER CAREFUL SCRUTINY

Tenterden Town Council’s planning committee continues to carefully scrutinise major applications from developers wanting to build significant numbers of new homes in the town, and which are against Ashford Borough Council (ABC) policies and the Local Plan

The Town Council’s policy is to ensure that any new developments do not overstretch the town’s infrastructure and services – Tenterden’s tourism and rural economy are reliant on conserving and enhancing the town and its surroundings.

Current applications and local planning issues include...

WESTWELL COURT

Proposals to build a 56-bed care home, 19 cottages and seven flats on land north of Westwell Court have been unanimously rejected by the Town Council on four separate occasions in the past three years.

The planning committee reported: “We have had more than 300 letters from residents objecting to Westwell Court. Many of them are from retirees who say ‘we simply don’t need this development’”. Concerns have also been raised that approval would result in over-burdening Ivy Court surgery. The application is now with ABC to decide whether it is approved or rejected.

LIMES LAND

Plans to build 250 new homes and a country park on Limes Land and Homewood School football pitch were unanimously rejected earlier this year. This meeting was attended by more than 80

residents who heard that the housing density of 46 homes per hectare was highly intensive, and the site had a rich biodiversity with a significant number of rare and protected species.

Committee chairman Cllr John Crawford described the proposals as “unwelcome, unneeded, unsustainable and unabsorbable”.

Over 400 objection letters have been lodged with Ashford, and it is now their decision whether to approve or reject the application.

SMALLHYTHE ROAD

Proposals to build 54 apartments for older people in Smallhythe Road, on land currently occupied by five houses, have been supported by the Town Council, subject to conditions.

These include additional parking, a contribution of £774,000 in lieu of affordable housing, and a request for payment towards the upgrading of Smallhythe Road from the development to the junction with the A28 (West Cross).

The Town Council has agreed the Smallhythe Road apartments had to be considered differently to Westwell Court, as it was not a care home, and was on a brownfield site (a plot with existing buildings).

As Ashford Borough Council did not rule on the application, it

has now gone to appeal, and the Planning Inspector’s decision is awaited.

TILDEN GILL

Construction work has resumed at Tilden Gill after the Covid lockdown. It will consist of 100 homes, 35 of them affordable.

CHURCH VIEW

Dandara’s proposals to amend the final phase of 36 homes, of which 14 will be affordable, at Church View (Tent 1A), have been supported by the Town Council, although the planning committee has asked for a resolution of the issue of car ports, as some impact the privacy of existing residents.

THE PINES

An application to build up to four homes on a strip of land in Smallhythe Road has been rejected by both Ashford and Tenterden councils. The applicant has taken their application to appeal, and the inspector’s decision is awaited.

CONSTRUCTION HOURS

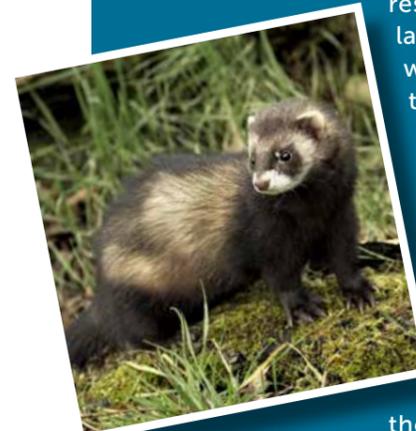
New government rules state that local authorities have to look favourably at building work continuing until 9pm, Monday to Saturday. Residents who are concerned about excessive noise, vibration, odour or dust can ask ABC to investigate, and, if required, take enforcement action.

TENTERDEN NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN UPDATE

As we grapple with the impacts and consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic, we know we’re not the only residents to realise how lucky we are in Tenterden to have so much green space available to walk in.

Over the past few months the health-restoring benefits of being able to get out into fresh air could hardly have been clearer. This recognition of the value of green space to our community lies at the centre of the emerging Tenterden Neighbourhood Plan, with an encouragement for residents to get involved in the planning process.

Our initial consultations with the community have included presentations and exhibitions in St Mildred’s Church in May and November of last year, when



residents and landowners were invited to share their views – with the addition of a ‘visioning workshop’, in which numbers of you recorded thoughts on how you’d wish our town to look and feel in future years, to help us broaden the scope of our

original Plan.

We’ve heard about your most treasured green spaces and favourite building styles, and photographed the views you love and most enjoy. Ongoing fieldwork has introduced our working groups to aspects of ecology and agriculture and a history of our market town that’s rich in detail.

At the invitation of our Biodiversity and Wildlife group, you have helped us to record for the county’s biological records sightings of more than 2,000 species, including the rediscovery of wild polecats which have been absent from Kent for several hundred years.

We remain determined to consult and include the community in all aspects of the Neighbourhood Plan, and are working hard with our town planner, Tony Fullwood, towards its next big benchmark, our first draft of the written Plan – when once again you are to be invited to share with us your views and help to shape the final content of the work.

With constant consultation,

conversation and research, we are learning something new about our parish almost every day.

At times the task before us has seemed daunting. The many volunteers within our working groups and our twelve committee members have worked with steadfast dedication.

Everything we set out in the Plan has to be underpinned by hard evidence, every statement checked and double checked. We do not have free rein, required as we are to conform with and support national planning legislation and the adopted Ashford Local Plan. We’ve been involved with so much statutory guidance, so much detail, that it’s sometimes easy to feel overwhelmed.

Yet in the end we’re confident we will succeed in producing a Neighbourhood Plan for Tenterden that’s worthy of its unofficial title: ‘Jewel in the Weald’.

Report by the Tenterden Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee



KEY PROJECTS A STEP NEARER

There have been major developments in the progress of all three of the town's major capital expenditure projects.

RECREATION GROUND

The exciting plans to re-design the Recreation Ground are being finalised, with Phase One of the project scheduled to be sent to Ashford Borough Council (ABC) for planning permission.

Once permission has been granted, the scheme will be rolled out on a phased basis. Work will start once Ivy Court surgery vacates its temporary offices and The Pavilion – which was initially loaned to them by the council for emergency pandemic use - and moves into its new building.

Phase One of the Recreation Ground project, which includes a skatepark, has been costed at £1.6m.

TOWN HALL

Additional specialist consultants are required to take plans to refurbish the Town Hall to the next stage.

A lighting designer, a 3D survey of the interior and an archaeologist to assess the likelihood of historical artefacts in the car park area are required to help architects Theis and Khan proceed to finalising a planning application for ABC.

The Town Hall improvements, which have been budgeted at £1.75m, include replacing the decayed Kent peg tile roof; providing modest accommodation for Town Council staff at the front of the building, with private and discreet offices at the back; and a multi-functional office and networking/exhibition space available for hire.

CINEMA

A decision on the town's potential new cinema has been deferred for two months.

A key reason is the uncertainty about the viability of independent cinemas following nationwide closures during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Discussions between the Tenterden Cinema Company, which is charged with delivering the project, and the Town Council remain confidential until there is agreement on detailed issues, particularly finances.

Town Clerk Phil Burgess says: "We all need clarity before making any further decisions. We have already pledged £500,000 towards the project, and are mindful this is public money which needs to be carefully managed."



REPORT HIGHLIGHTS MAJOR ISSUE OF AFFORDABLE HOMES

A detailed analysis of the need for affordable housing in Tenterden has been presented to the Town Council.

The 66-page report was produced by Action with Communities in Rural Kent, supported by Tenterden Community Land Trust (TCLT) and Ashford Borough Council. TCLT is the local community organisation aiming to identify ways of providing genuinely affordable homes in Tenterden and St Michael's for residents and workers who need it.

The report resulted from a town-wide postal survey, and the results revealed there was a significant gap between what respondents could afford in comparison with local property prices.

More than half of the respondents, mainly in the 25 to 39-year old age group and living in rented property or with relatives, earned less than £30,000 a year.

However, the report highlighted that at current prices, a one-bed property in the town costs £175,000, requiring a deposit of £26,250, and an income of £42,500; while the cheapest two-bed property was priced at £225,000, requiring a deposit of £33,750 and an income of £54,643.

The report also identified a demand for affordable homes from older residents, wanting to move to downsize or move to a more suitable accommodation for their needs.

The Town Council noted the contents of the report, which will also go to Ashford Borough Council as the principal planning authority.

NEW DISABLED LOOS

New toilets for the disabled and their carers are to be provided on the Recreation Ground by the Town Council.

They will be built next to the existing toilets, on the site of the tractor shed, which is being re-located to the new maintenance building at St Michael's Recreation Ground.

The cost, in the region of £20,000, will be largely met by contributions from developers of new homes in the town.

KEEPING OUR BEES BUZZING!

While residents have been very complimentary about the town's flower displays this summer, the Town Council maintenance team has also been paying special attention to the welfare of our tiniest denizens – bees.

Official notices reading "Excuse the weeds, we're feeding the bees" have gone up along some of the town's verges, which have been designated as areas to encourage the natural growth of wildflowers and grasses, providing shelter for bees as well as butterflies and other insects.

The verges in Craythorne, the meadow at the bottom of St Michael's recreation ground and the small green opposite the Fat Ox pub are already growing vigorously. The verge at Chalk Avenue has recently been cut, harrowed and seeded to encourage wild flowers to grow.

Says Cllr Dr Lisa Lovelidge, who has mason bees in her own garden in Eastgate Road: "Our Kiln Field and wildlife committee has a real commitment to looking after bees and butterflies, which are under threat around the world.

"Many councils have already undertaken to leave verges for wildlife, and I hope that many more will follow".



GOOD PROGRESS ON REPAIRS TO THE TOWN HALL

Work is progressing well on the roof repairs at the Town Hall.

The roof above the Mayor's Parlour, which suffered from rainwater leaks, has now been fixed, and the remaining repairs should be completed in the Autumn, when the scaffolding will come down.

GREASE ON THE GREEN

At the time of going to press, the open-air staging of rock musical 'Grease' on big screen video at the Recreation Ground on 15 August, had raised almost £3,000 for NHS charities.

Tenterden community singing group The Rockits had recorded a 40-minute video version of the musical, with the Town Council providing a grant of £500 towards hiring the giant LED screen.

GREEN TENTERDEN GOES EVEN GREENER!

For years, the attractive grass verges which fringe the High Street have been known as 'Tenterden Greens'. Now Tenterden is going even greener, with initiatives to make the town more environmentally friendly and lovelier than ever.

They include . . .

- A council committee set up to establish targets to help the town meet its commitment to carbon-neutrality by 2030. An air pollution reduction scheme is a priority, focused on local schools, while monitoring vehicle emissions, tree planting and the availability of car-charging points are among top items on the agenda.
- Establishing the town's first wildlife habitat at Kiln Field. Areas of grass are being left uncut to see what plants grow through the seasons, the pond has been cleared and restocked with flora and fauna, and wood from storm-damaged trees and donated logs has been used to create bat boxes and 'bug hotels'. The Town Council has spent £22,000 to date on Kiln Field – with much of the expenditure likely to be covered by contributions from housing developers - and a further £1,000 has recently been secured from Kent County Council for a pond-dipping platform for children.
- Significantly increasing the displays of flowers and shrubs in the town centre.
- Extra measures to recycle green waste – non-green waste is disposed of without going to landfill – and a new water-harvesting system at the St Michael's Recreation Ground maintenance facility.
- St Michael's will also benefit from a community group initiative, supported by the council, which will see many more native species of trees planted on the park.