



Tonbridge Grammar School

Local Residents' Meeting

Mon. 4th Oct. 2021 17:30 – 18:30hrs

The following are not contemporaneous minutes, but rather notes taken during the course of the meeting. These are, however, intended to be a fair representation of discussions which occurred.

17:30 Welcome and introductions. No apologies for absence received prior to the meeting.

Present from the School: Mrs Joyce, Head Teacher, (HT), Mr Jeremy Kenyon, Facilities & Estates Manager. (FEM)

Representatives from TMBC: Councillors Franni Hoskins & Garry Bridges

As the last Residents' Meeting was in Jan 2020, the FEM began with a review of the past 18 months.

While the NHS & Healthcare sector bore the initial brunt of the pandemic, it has also been widely acknowledged that the Education Sector was also hugely impacted. Having to completely transform the way in which we deliver a meaningful education to young people – almost overnight – was an enormous challenge.

That challenge did not stop with the return of students, but necessitated a whole new regime, re-formatting teaching and learning spaces, how students move around the site, year group bubbles, changing the way we provide physical education, food provision, enhanced cleaning, Mass Testing Arrangements, Risk Assessments, close contact racing etc.

In summary – incredibly challenging and still ongoing and the FEM asked for residents' understanding if communications had been slower than usual.

17:45 **Traffic & Travel Update**

TAG Meeting Postponed in July. The original intention was to re-schedule for early in the Academic Year (Sep/Oct.) but it was felt better to hold the Residents Meeting first as more overdue.

The School Travel Plan has expired and requires a review and update. Process will be to take staff & pupil survey, then conduct week's traffic count at the gates. Once data is collected, this can inform what is achievable/proportionate with an updated Travel Plan. (Plan is subsequently submitted to KCC.)

KCC push for fixed percentage improvements on every element annually, but this does not take into account individual challenges for each school, such as location, demographic, accessibility of the site and local transport links. The School proposes to focus on those areas where we can directly influence and drive improvements rather than unrealistic sweeping changes across the board, as this rather sets the plan up to fail.

There was an open discussion about the increased traffic in Deakin Leas. Councillor Hoskins has been engaging with TMBC and KCC Highways about potential amendments to the current design, including further parking restrictions, temporary one-way systems during peak hours etc. Any proposed changes have to go through extensive consultation and would require funding allocation.

A resident suggested whether a traffic island at the Baltic Rd./Deakin Leas junction would help, as may deter vehicles attempting to U-turn in the junction. It was also commented that the temporary signs the School had placed at that junction had been moved, so the FEM committed to return these to their previous location.

A number of residents had also observed cars waiting with their engines running, which is disruptive to neighbours and environmentally damaging. Councillor Hoskins offered to speak to TMBC colleagues to see if signs can be erected in proximity to the School drive to deter this practice. The School would support this proposal and would look to install similar signage within the Car Park.

The FEM informed the meeting that as part of the School's focus on Environmental and Sustainability issues, 4 x Electric Vehicle Chargepoints had been installed at the School site. It is hoped that by installing the infrastructure to support EV charging, this may encourage staff to consider Electric Vehicles as and when they look to replace their current vehicle.

18:00

Lettings & Events Update

Community Lettings were slowly starting to return. Barracudas Easter & Summer Camp took place over the course of the year. A resident enquired as to whether vehicle traffic could be prevented from accessing the site, with parents/carers parking outside of the site and walking in. The FEM responded that he felt this would not be viable, as many parents arrived with younger children/babies, who were not attending the Camp, but obviously could not be left in vehicles parked on the street.

The gate timings had been previously adjusted to let Camp Staff access via the Pedestrian Gate only at 07:30hrs, with the main Vehicle Gates being opened at 08:00hrs for parent drop-off's.

Over the previous 18 months, a number of established Lettings had ceased to attend, with some new ones replacing them.

Lost: Open University

Lost: Little Kickers

Lost: Hula fit

New: BasketBall Youth Practice (Wed. evening)

New: Yoga on Mon & Tue evenings

Right Tuition and Active Gymnastics continue on a Saturday.

All are small classes organised for and by members of the local community and car-sharing/walking are actively encouraged.

The FEM also confirmed that for the foreseeable future, the decision had been made to conduct Parent Consultation evenings remotely. The HT also shared with the meeting the plans for the Open Events, which for the first time would be ticketed events.

It was also the intention not to operate a minibus shuttle service for this year. This was primarily due to Covid concerns but also it was felt that operating a vehicle collection service potentially undermined our key messaging – which was to park in Tonbridge at the Angel Centre and walk to the School site. As this is a fundamental change to how these busy events have historically been operated, there is some uncertainty as to how successful this may be, but the events will be reviewed thoroughly afterwards and any lessons learnt can be implemented for the future.

18:10

Building Development / Planned Maintenance

- Environmental and BioDiversity space adjacent to the all-weather pitch. (Wild flower Meadow)
- Dining Extension – on hold. In the interim looking at the provision of a number of smaller additional covered seating areas at a number of locations around the site. (In the form of open air sail structures or covered wooden shelters)

18:20

A.O.B.

Trees

Cllr Hoskins had received some queries from residents concerning tree growth and the School's maintenance policy. The FEM responded by stating that the School conducts an Annual Tree Survey by a qualified arborist, advising on potential issues/risk. (£5K was spent in Sep on remedial tree works.) The issue of heights and screening are always subjective, with residents often asking for opposite actions to be taken. The School relies on

professional advice regarding the health of the tree and any potential safety issues first and foremost, but will always take neighbours requests into account.

Perimeters, Banks and Borders.

The FEM explained that the School is engaging with Kent Wildlife to look at improving natural habitat for wildlife and plants within the grounds. Historically there has been a rather “scorched earth” regime, whereby the long grasses and perimeter bushes and shrubs are heavily cut back by a tractor and flail annually. This year the perimeters and banks have been allowed to flourish naturally, and this will be reviewed with guidance from Kent Wildlife.

Meeting closed at approximately 18:30hrs, and the FEM and HT thanked everyone for their time and input.