



# AGENDA AND JOINING INSTRUCTIONS

Thursday 17 September 2020 at 6.00 pm  
Virtual Meeting - Online via Zoom

## Agenda

- 1 **Apologies for Absence**
- 2 **Declarations of Substitute Members**
- 3 **Membership Changes**
  - a) Changes to Membership
  - b) New Membership Applications
- 4 **Minutes of the meeting dated 7 July 2020** (Pages 3 - 44)
  - a) Approval of the minutes as a correct record
  - b) Matters Arising from the minutes
- 5 **Update from the Borough Council**
- 6 **Emergency Active Travel Fund Traffic Schemes and Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan**
- 7 **One You Kent**
- 8 **Planning for the Future** (Pages 45 - 46)
- 9 **Clean Air Day (8 October)**  
[Link to Personal Air Pollution Calculator](#)
- 10 **Updates from Local Residents' Groups**
- 11 **Reports from the Town Forum Working Groups** (Pages 47 - 48)
  - a) Strategic Planning Working Group
  - b) Transport Strategy Working Group
  - c) Culture, Leisure and Tourism Working Group
  - d) Wellbeing Working Group
  - e) Finance and Other Issues Working Group
  - f) Water in the Wells Working Group
- 12 **Any Other Business**
- 13 **Future Meetings**  
19 November 2020 (AGM)  
28 January 2021  
18 March 2021

## Joining instructions – by computer

Click on the following to join the meeting:

<https://zoom.us/j/97548061365?pwd=cVBoaDRueDU0Tzl4SFdyWmphNWsyQT09>

Meeting ID: **975 4806 1365** Password: **043955**

(The Meeting code and password are embedded in the above web address. So if using the link you will not have to enter them separately.)

During the 'join in' process please note:

1. Agree to use your computer video
2. Agree to use your computer audio
3. Please ensure your 'registered name' is your own full name and not, for instance, "My iPad" or other unidentifiable object or email address. The name can be altered either before or immediately on entry to the Zoom meeting. People who cannot be identified will be asked to confirm their name.
4. If you have a problem, please enter the system and 'message' on the system direct to Mark O'Callaghan who will be running the system on behalf of the Town Forum.
5. On entry you will automatically be put into a 'waiting room'. If its busy there may be a delay in admitting you but be assured the meeting will not start until everybody waiting has been admitted.

## Joining instructions – by telephone

Should you wish to join the meeting by telephone only, please dial one of the following numbers and add the meeting ID and passcode when requested by the system:

0208 080 6591 United Kingdom

0208 080 6592 United Kingdom

Meeting ID: **975 4806 1365** Password: **043955**

## Important Information on joining

1. The meeting will be recorded and may be made available online.
2. Please mute your microphone when not speaking to reduce background noise.
3. The organisers may mute or unmute all or individual microphones if necessary, but we will try to avoid this.
4. If you wish to speak during the meeting please either type 's' in the chat window or raise your hand using the 'reactions' button. The Chairman will invite you to speak to avoid multiple people trying to speak at once. Please unmute your own microphone when invited to speak by the Chairman and mute again afterwards.
5. The meeting will be open early, from 5.30pm, for those who are not used to Zoom so that you can become familiar with the platform.

## ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS TOWN FORUM

**Minutes of the meeting on Tuesday, 7 July 2020  
held online via Zoom, starting at 4pm**

**Members:** Caroline Auckland (Soroptimist International of Tunbridge Wells and District), David Barnett (Friends of Grosvenor & Hilbert Parks), Jenina Bas-Pendry (Dudley Road Residents' Association), Adrian Berendt (Tunbridge Wells Bicycle Users Group), Lorna Blackmore (Grantley Court Residents' Association), Stephen Bowser (Residents' First), Matthew Brown (Tunbridge Wells Puppetry Festival), Robert Chris (Grove Hill House Residents' Association), Marieke de Jonge (Tunbridge Wells Friends of the Earth), Jane Fenwick (Calverley Park Residents' Association), Margaret Ginman (Friends of Woodbury Park Cemetery), Carolyn Gray (The Forum), Dorothea Holman (Boyne Park Residents' Association), Michael Holman (Tunbridge Wells Twinning and Friendship Association), Delphine Houlton (Hawkenbury Village Association), Brian Lippard (Civic Society of RTW), Katharina Mahler-Bech (Telephone House Neighbours' Association and Royal Tunbridge Wells in Bloom), Don Sloan (Molyneux Park Gardens Residents' Association) Anne Stobo (Friends of Tunbridge Wells Museum, Library and Art Gallery), Alastair Tod (Poona Road Residents' Association), Neil Williams (Warwick Park Residents' Association) and Carol Wilson (Inner London Road Residents' Association and Nourish Community Foodbank).

**Borough Councillors:** Councillors Bruneau (Park), Hickey (Pantiles & St. Mark's), Lidstone (St. John's), Morton (St. John's), Pope (Park), Rands (Culverden), Rutland (Culverden), Scott (Culverden),

**Others in Attendance:** William Benson (Chief Executive of TWBC), Steve Budden (Warden of Tunbridge Wells and Rusthall Commons), Mark Lavenstein (Molyneux Park Gardens Residents' Association), Councillor March (Deputy Leader of TWBC), Councillor McDermott (Leader of TWBC), Councillor Rankin (Kent County Council) and Wendy Owen (Residents Against Ramslye Development)

### APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- 1           The following apologies were received:
- Chris Allen (Nevill Courts Road Committee)
  - Tim Ball (Calverley Park Crescent Association)
  - Mark Booker (Culverden Residents' Association)
  - Angus Stewart (Tunbridge Wells Anti-Aircraft Noise Group)

### DECLARATIONS OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

- 2           The following substitutes were representing their respective member organisations:
- Stephen Bowser (Residents' First)
  - Carol Wilson (Inner London Road Residents' Association and Nourish Community Foodbank)

### MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

#### 3           a) Changes to Membership

- The following changes in membership were noted:
- Warwick Park Residents' Association – Neil Williams replaced John Cunningham as representative with Andrew Hempleman as substitute.

- Tunbridge Wells Puppetry Festival – Matt Brown replaced Linda Lewis as representative with Linda Lewis as substitute.

## **b) New Membership Applications**

New membership applications had been accepted from:

- Nevill Court Roads Committee – represented by Peter de Wit with David Kershaw as substitute.
- One other organisation had made enquiries, their application was pending.

## **MINUTES OF THE MEETING DATED 30 JANUARY 2020**

### **4 a) Approval of the minutes as a correct record**

Councillor Morton had been omitted from the list of those in attendance. Subject to the above correction the minutes were agreed.

### **b) Matters Arising from the minutes**

None.

## **UPDATES FROM LOCAL RESIDENTS' GROUPS**

5 None.

## **UPDATES FROM THE FRIENDS GROUPS - THE COMMONS**

6 Steve Budden, Warden of Tunbridge Wells and Rusthall Commons, presented. Details are set out in the attached notes.

## **UPDATE FROM TWBC ON THE RESPONSE TO COVID-19**

7 William Benson, Chief Executive of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, presented. Details are set out in the attached notes.

## **IMMEDIATE TRAFFIC SCHEMES RELATED TO THE EMERGENCY ACTIVE TRAVEL FUND**

8 William Benson, Chief Executive of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, presented. Details are set out in the attached notes.

## **MAINTAINING AND ESTABLISHING PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY**

9 Adrian Berendt, Chairman of the Town Forum, presented. Details are set out in the attached notes.

## **REPORTS FROM THE TOWN FORUM WORKING GROUPS**

10 Updates were provided by the Leaders of the various working groups. Details are set out in the attached notes.

## **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

11 None.

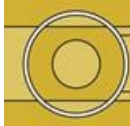
## **FUTURE MEETINGS (PROVISIONAL)**

12                17 September 2020  
                    19 November 2020 (AGM)  
                    28 January 2021  
                    18 March 2021

*Appendix: Detailed notes of meeting*

*Appendix: William Benson's presentation*

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## Notes of Town Forum Zoom meeting July 7 2020, 4pm – 5.30pm

### Update from the Friends Groups – The Commons: Steve Budden, Warden of the Tunbridge Wells and Rusthall Commons

- Steve has been the Warden for the Commons of Tunbridge Wells and Rusthall since 1992 and continues to carry out the management plan for the Commons that was set out post the storm of 1987.
- Until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the Common was a grazed common and the group is trying to get back some of the heather and grass that has been lost in the past 100 years (95% has been lost). They have got back some of the scrub and opened up the rocks and some grazing ponds, but it is a long-term project.
- Over the past few years they have seen some progress and the heather is regenerating quite well and, starting a few years ago, there is now enough to be able to harvest its own heather seeds.
- The Friends of the Commons play a big part in this success, with lots of volunteers that have been involved in such things as 'Tree Poppers', which allows easier removal of invasive seedlings, holly clearance (which had taken over large areas of the Common and reduced its biodiversity) and removing cherry laurel (Rusthall Common is one of the places in the UK that is most infected with cherry laurel).
- Ash dieback has particularly affected Rusthall Common and £10K was spent on this alone last year.
- Much of the budget has been spent on pure maintenance, with funding coming from Friends, freeholders and grants.
- COVID-19 has had an impact on the Commons. It has been far more heavily used during lockdown with huge numbers that saw it being overwhelmed and unable to empty bins fast enough, not enough benches, for example. Also a huge number of people on bikes – although there is a byelaw against this it is not usually enforced but there have been some conflicts recently.
- The numbers now are returning more to normal but post-COVID there are hopes that the greater use will encourage more people to become Friends and increase budgets over the coming years.
- Carolyn Auckland asked specifically about benches as the Soroptimists have undertaken a Benchmarking initiative around the town. These have not been able to be maintained recently and commemorative benches are a particular issue. Some cast iron benches had been found during clearing and a pattern has been made of these in Hastings, they are 'pretty bullet proof' with 2 inch thick oak. Requests for benches can be made via the Commons Facebook group, it has been made clear the cost of refurbishing benches and

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Formed in 2005, the Town Forum is the voice of the 50,000 residents of Royal Tunbridge Wells on issues of common interest

#### Town Forum Management Group

Adrian Berendt (Chair); Alastair Tod (Deputy Chair); Don Sloan (Deputy Chair); Carolyn Gray (Culture, Leisure & Tourism); David Wakefield (Finance); Jane Fenwick (Transport); Marianne MacDonald (Wellbeing); Mark Booker (Strategic Planning); Michael Holman (Water in the Wells)

people have volunteered to help out as they are an important part of the Commons infrastructure. The cost of installing a new bench is £650 plus the cost of a memorial plaque. One issue with these is that people often want them in the same place (around the cricket pitch).

- Adrian commented that Happy Valley looked great. Steve added that it had been seeded but with the recent weather, more may need to be done.
- Adrian extended his thanks to Steve and issued an invite to have him, and anyone from other Friends groups to speak at future Town Forum meetings.
- Michael Holman added that the Friends of Common does a very useful newsletter.
- Steve added that the coffee van on Fir Tree Road is a welcome source of information and acts as an unofficial lost and found.

## **Update from TWBC on the response to Covid-19 including Immediate Traffic Schemes related to the Emergency Active Travel Fund: William Benson, Chief Executive of TWBC**

- TWBC is a Category 1 responder with specific duties in Major emergencies and business continuity. It is part of the Kent Resilience Forum that also includes all local authorities, emergency services, NHS Environment Agency, Utilities and the Coastguard.
- In peacetime each organisation produces its own emergency plans and tests them and undertakes training exercises for this, e.g. disaster that takes out one of your sites.
- At the start of COVID-19, TWBC was part of a Gold Command Group that met every day and a group across the County every single day. It followed all the rules and closed all the services and there was anxiety initially on whether it could continue to run services. Daily updates from staff that were in raised questions of resilience as anyone that contacted COVID had to isolate and, therefore, critical services, such as the crematorium had to stop. Some 25% of staff were redeployed to the crematorium and supporting the finance team to get grants out.
- Current state of services:
  - Bin collections running normally – this has been a real struggle, with staff numbers, then McDonald's opening, then the tip reopening plus new contractors that have had to learn the rounds.
  - Car parks all open except Meadow Road.
  - Environmental protection is open and food safety opening shortly.
  - Licensing not open.
  - Council meetings – partial.
  - Venues (Assembly Halls, leisure centres and Community Centres) shut but the latter can open once approved – most likely to be the creche in the Camden Centre.
  - Not opening Tourist Information as 1) social distancing issues 2) currently just locals not tourists 3) staff redeployed.
  - Toilets have all been open throughout.
- Changes for online demand (via TWBC webpages):
  - Business support and advice up 1000%.
  - Business rates up 400%.
  - Bonfires up 360%.
  - Council Tax support up 320%.
  - Bin collections up 210%.



- COVID-19 has been “Absolutely catastrophic for us financially”. In the past decade central funding has completely gone and the Council is now effectively a business – with revenue from theatres, leisure and car parks. Currently losing £1m a month (£8m this year), with additional costs over the norm, e.g. housing people, running the community hub.
- Particularly adversely affected by cash flow. Bills for Council tax and rates have been issued and the Council has to pay upfront, with monies yet to come in (Council Tax paid over 10 months with February and March as fallow, for those in difficulty, this has been moved to the start of the financial year, i.e. April and May).
- The Government has provided two tranches of funding: £24K in the first tranches did not cover 24 hours of Council costs. The second tranche was £1m and this covered one month. The Government announced last week that it will cover 75% of costs so this reduces the cost from £18m to £2m.
- Support for business:
  - COVID-19 grants.
  - Business rate relief – made 1,952 payments (total of £26m+) to 97% of eligible businesses. Scheme described as “chaotic” changing every 5 minutes, in addition, handed out 125 discretionary grants totalling £1.2m.
  - Flexible on car parking and delivery/collection models and processing requests for on-street furniture. Govt looking at moving street furniture to Council and looking at doing that as a fast track.
  - Business Improvement District (BID): Advice, #twdelivers and reopening kit.
  - Kent and Medway Growth hub: satisfaction rate of 90-95%.
- Support for residents (initial):
  - Housed all rough sleepers and tried to prevent evictions.
  - Flexing with Council Tax (see earlier), advice and support and liaising with Parish Councils.
  - Free parking for NHS and care workers and permit holder use of multi-storey car parks.
- Supporting vulnerable people:
  - Extraordinary support for vulnerable people – set up in 72 hours – to provide emergency supplies, signposting to organisations that can help and providing wellbeing calls to isolated/lonely residents.
  - A 24/7 Kent Together helpline.
  - Volunteer co-ordination and support.
  - Shout out to Nourish and Age UK and MHRC – all of whom benefitted from Lend a Hand crowdfund to raise £10k for those charities.
  - TW social – set up in a matter of weeks.
- Communications:
  - Massively upweighted.
  - Regular updates on social media and through media.
  - Daily briefings with Group Leaders and MP.
  - Extensive member engagement.
  - COVID-19 panel.
  - Weekly parish and town council chairmen meetings.
  - Regular discussions with the Town Forum.
  - Regular meetings with BID, FSB and individual businesses + business phone ins.
  - Facebook Ask Me Anything – reach of 10K+ people.
  - Sent out a leaflet through the Borough.

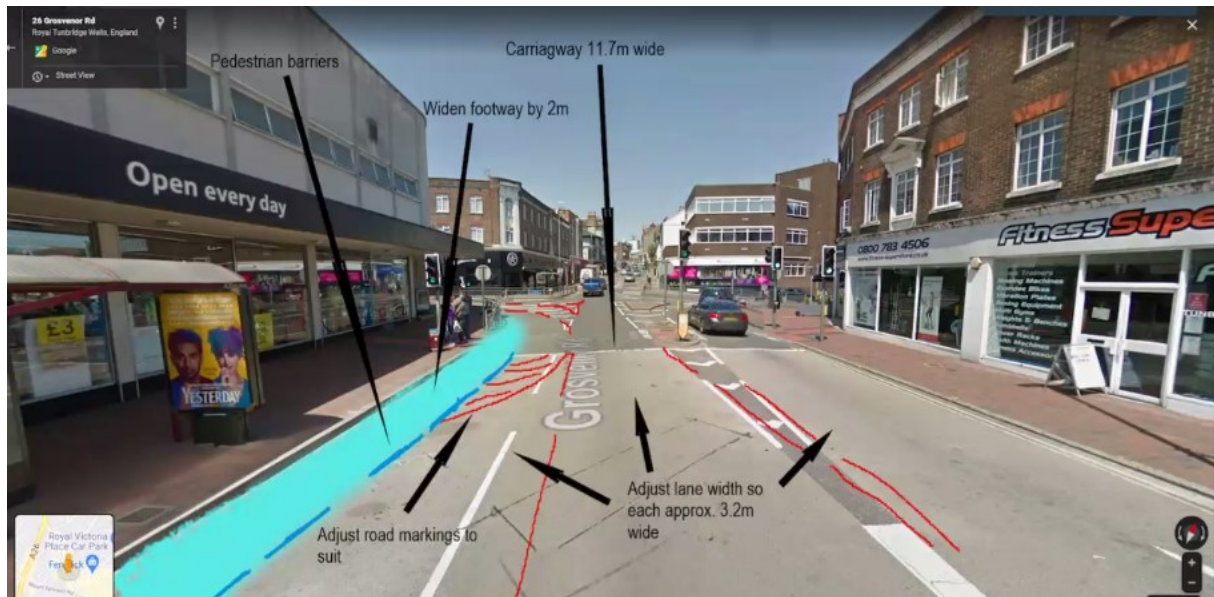
- Reopening and recovery:
  - Recovery the likes of which the Council has never usually encountered.
  - There are two phases running side by side, i.e. response and recovery and never had a response phase that has gone on for 100 days. Public health team believe this will not be over until a vaccine is due, prompting a second wave, plus the UK is overdue a severe flu outbreak and then there is the consequence of Brexit.
  - Locally though Cabinet and Scrutiny Board a set of overarching principles for recovery have been identified.
  - Businesses to return to operation and survive in the most challenging economic times.
  - Support residents that are affected and the restrictions placed on them.
  - Health and safety of Council staff – while maintaining and prioritising Council services.
  - Protect the vulnerable.
  - There have been some positive outcomes in terms of reduced traffic and better work-life balance and community spirit has been fantastic.
  - Council to remain financially solvent.
- Support for business:
  - Worked with BID on reopening kits and had ambassadors/information officers in town.
- Changes to High Street:
  - Back at beginning of May Govt announced it would make sizeable monies to local authorities to make changes to the High Street.
  - They announced it and then 3 weeks later we get details and allocations and rules - £8m for Kent but only 20% upfront. Kent got totality of Kent of £1.6m. TWBC put forward a long list.
  - KCC looking to take forward:
    - One way system for High Street to allow pavement widening.
    - Modal filter on Reynolds Lane (Southborough) A26 Cycle route – allow safer walking and cycling.
    - Commercial Road Paddock Wood – one way northbound – to allow pavement widening.
    - 20mph zone in town centre – tribute to the working group of the COVID panel to get all of this.
  - TWBC are also looking to take a couple more forward: Grosvenor and Camden Roads (see later).
- Culture and Arts:
  - From the earliest stages of the pandemic TWBC has raised concerns about the impact on culture and arts as impact has been cataclysmic. Raised at every contact with minister, Council and co-ordinating group etc. Really pleased that the £1.57bn has been announced but we need to see detail.
  - Leisure not resolved and query is that is covered by funding package.
- Sustainability of financial support:
  - The monies last till the end of March.
- Statistics:
  - Finance: Council tax down nearly £900K in May, due to flexing of Council Tax in April and May so this should increase in June.

- Unemployment: Usually around 1% it has gone up to over 5% and largest increase in younger age group. Resolution Foundation has shown a third of young people have either lost their jobs or being furloughed and that is double other groups.
- Empty business properties: has increased from just over 315 in Feb to around 338 in May.
- Car parking – usually £350K a month and practically nothing in April/May but spending £100K on business rates for car parks and the same on maintenance.
- Planning applications – bellwether for the local economy – number of major projects validated in May is lower than for the same month for the past two years.
- Homelessness has been rising.
- Deliveries by Nourish - peaked in April at 1000 for the month and declining to 800 in May – but still double the average.
- Wider recovery issues:
  - The end of the furlough scheme in October – businesses will go under and unemployment will spike.
  - The Council – sustainability of financial support.
  - The Community – there are some scary stats on children going back to school and inequalities and digital divide.
  - Locking in the good, e.g. environment and sustainability.
- Road Changes:
  - Camden Road: One way and widen pavement to allow businesses to expand onto pavement.

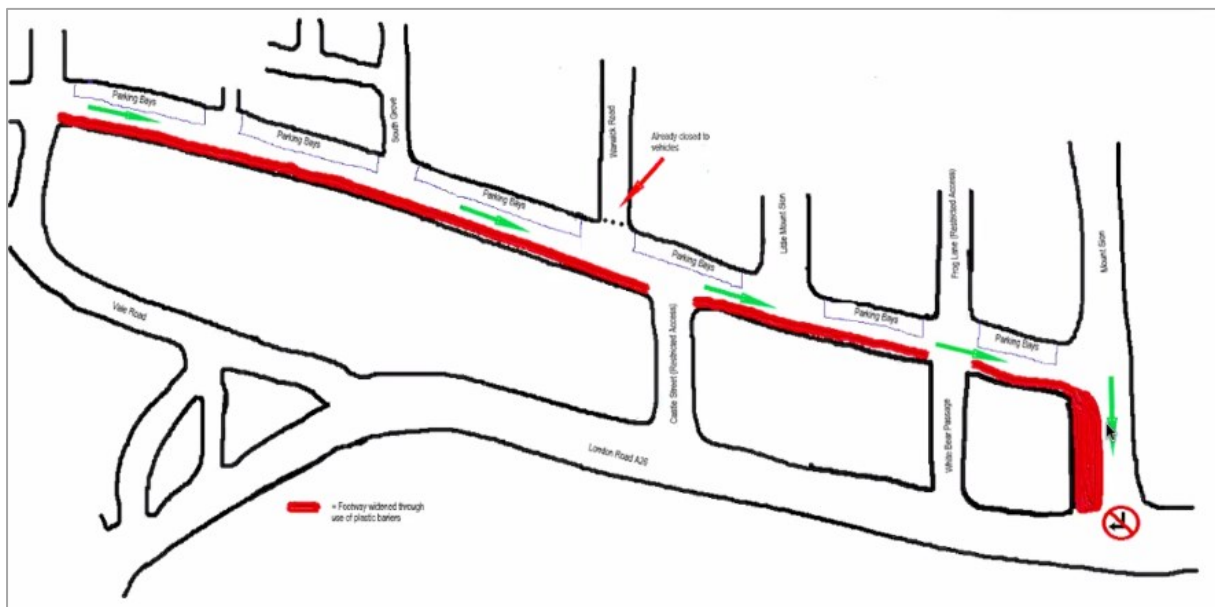




- Grosvenor Road – widen pavement there.



- High Street – looking at Southbound one way but KCC want Northbound.



## Questions/Comments

**Peter Lidstone:** Challenge the High Street being Southbound. It is very southbound at the moment, making the High Street northbound would discourage people using it as a cut through and will have more of an impact on the feel of the High Street will feel less like a road that gives pedestrians permission to join the car and more like a retail area.

**William Benson:** KCC would rather Northbound to avoid evening/afternoon rat running taking place.

**Brian Lippard:** Apart from financial what do you regard as the biggest problem?

**William Benson:** We are probably going to enter the biggest recession on record with unemployment the likes of which we have never seen before. Unemployment gone up highest in Tunbridge Wells, Dartford and Canterbury (i.e. areas with low unemployment). For the Council, the financial consequences are very serious indeed.

**Caroline Auckland:** Younger people loss of jobs is that to do with working in cafes, bars, etc? They have to sign on in Tonbridge, will that move back here?

**William Benson:** We are looking to set up a triage system is the number of new entrants coming into the system, e.g. jobs, housing etc. Looking at setting up some online triaging to allow people to do that more quickly. Younger people more affected – they are overrepresented in the service sector, plus they tend to be last in, first out and they are less expensive for redundancy and more on zero hours contracts.

**Jenina Bas-Pendry:** Easing of planning process to turn commercial and retail premises into housing more easily since more premises seem to be closing?

**William Benson:** Clear there will be changes to planning system but no details wrapped around that. When we had the last set of changes to permitted development rights, we lost 200,000 sq ft of office space plus local jobs. As a destination town we would want to curate the use / mix of each area – retail, offices, residential – otherwise we risk becoming less appealing as a town. Cultural centre is important and hopefully monies announced will help those institutions. Amelia Scott build is now at the first floor.

**Robert Chris:** Is there any green dimensions to the recovery plan?

**William Benson:** There are positive consequence and the fact that emissions are vastly down. Having conversations on some principles that should underpin recovery for that. Wealth recovery – working on a recovery strategy pan-Kent and that is coming out imminently and we are looking to recover very well.

**Carol Wilson:** Is there any likelihood of changes in size or design of Borough Councils. Is TWBC at risk of being merged?

**William Benson:** There is going to be a White Paper in September. This might include a package of measures that we have had hints of in the past – greater devolution for unitary Government or mayoral for greater funding. We have seen changes at national government level, e.g. DfID and Cabinet Secretary and Security Advisor and would be surprised if we did not see changes for local Government.

**Marieke de Jonge:** Is the Council getting ideas from CEAP (Climate Emergency Advisory Panel) on sustainable recovery? Has the CEAP been active since the Climate Emergency Declaration in July last year?

**William Benson:** Advisory board have stopped meeting but increased overview and scrutiny and COVID recovery. The emphasis for the first 70 of 100 days was to get food out and remain solvent but there is work ongoing.



## Maintaining and Establishing Public Rights of Way (PROW): Adrian Berendt, Chairman

- Project going on around Kent to ensure that PROW are all on the definitive map of Kent (some have been lost). The Ramblers are leading this work.
- We also need to ensure that those routes / paths which we think are rights of way, but are NOT PROWs are added. A recent example is Elphick's Place, which KCC are making a PROW, thanks to the efforts of Mark Brown, a local residents.
- If we are all going to be cycling and walking more, it's even more important that rights of way are preserved . It would be quite good to set up a small taskforce to look at these that.

## Questions/Comments

**Mark Lavenstein:** There has been a Rambler's campaign: Don't Lose Your Way. There is a formal process for adding a PROW, but it does require a lot of form filling and legal work. I will try and check with Kent Ramblers if there is any way we can leverage work being done on their projects on what we can do locally. At moment it is done on a piecemeal basis – Elphick's Way was done on a personal basis. I will make a call to Kent Ramblers who are close to the Rambling Association. There is a facility on KCC website if you see a problem with PROW you can log it like you do with a pothole They are being worked through, not as quickly as we would like. Ramblers have sponsored gates etc.

**Cllr Jane March:** I do quite a few of these in the rural areas. Jonathon Biggie is the KCC officer and the one we have done in our local area took about 2.5 years to achieve it. We had to get affidavits from people to say they had used it for over 20 years (we had over 60 years) and it still took that time, We also have an issue with one that is locked, a public footpath, and that is causing an issue, It does need quite a lot of investigation and work but it is possible. 30m long in Horsmonden.

**Adrian Berendt:** It is slightly different in the town as it is short routes connecting one road with another road, e.g. Top of Castle Street is registered as a PROW, but the bottom is not. It would be good to have them regularised as we don't have them done by 2025, we can lose them. We would like to hear from KCC is that if we have a package or routes, can we go through a streamlined process as it is generally very painful. And if we can get a working group/taskforce together.

## Reports from the Town Forum Working Groups

- Culture, Tourism and Leisure – Carolyn Gray
  - CG has been chair since lockdown – thinking about changing her Working Group to “The lack of culture, tourism and leisure”. No word on the amount available from the funds from last week.
  - Parliament saying we have a lot of money but not how it is going to get to anyone. As we know, most places we think of for culture have been shut and are trying to do fundraising. For the future, we have little idea about to gather people for events indoors.
- Transport – Jane Fenwick
  - Has not met, we had had a Zoom meeting, there has been a lot going on but not a lot we have been able to contribute in time because of the speed of things happening. Difficult for us to pitch in when we have not been consulted on things.
  - One thing we have done is to revise the Town Centre transport plan in 2018 and submit it to the Council for the COVID recovery scheme; it is pretty much unchanged, but we have updated.

- With Lorna Blackmore, we have looked at taxi and private hire regulations consultation. We first created a response to this in 2017. It now looks completely different, which we welcome many changes, but we still have some comments. To be resubmitted by the beginning of August.
- Pleased to see mini roundabout roundels repainted – thanks to prompting from Catherine Rankin.
- Water in the Wells – Michael Holman
  - Building has continued on Dandara site at the Pantiles and have been told the water feature basin has been formed and waterproofed and is waiting for masonry and sculpting to be finished. First section including the fountain to be delivered in autumn this year.
  - Peter Every hoping to push forward drinking fountain in Dunorlan – good to go at Easter but because of COVID-19 it was delayed but hoping to get back to this as soon as possible.
  - Also looking to push forward in St John's. Beacon is looking to restore the cold bath and to build a wellness suite – plus possible hot bath – and applied for permission to build 4 accommodations.
  - Pantiles – no dippers as no tourists.

## Questions/Comments

**Adrian Berendt:** What is the update on the Amelia and is there fundraising going on?

**Cllr Jane March:** We are up to first floor level. Fundraising – we have just received notification that we are now a charity and because of lockdown we have not managed to get a bank account organised as the charities section of the bank has been closed. Counterculture who are doing our fundraising for us have identified various funds for us and we are ready to go once we have a bank account and now we are a charitable Trust.

**Marieke de Jonge:** Update on the Climate Emergency Advisory Panel.

**Cllr Marguerite Morton:** Have started on the green audit and looking to do workshops in August and making some reports in September/October.

**Cllr Peter Lidstone:** Update on town centre 20mph zone.

**Adrian Berendt:** Consultations closed recently and hoping they are going to go through. The Town Centre I think will go through as the emergency order don't know if there will be a consultation on that.

**Carolyn Gray:** There is a FB community group and they were saying if we have any ideas how we get them through to council. One idea was a group of people that could report blocked drains, but they can do this individually. But if they have ideas, how can they get these to Council?

**William Benson:** If its blocked drains – the online report to KCC via webform. Ideas for Council is they write/email their local Ward Councillor.

**Adrian Berendt:** Could we encourage all residents to cut back their hedges and not park cars on the pavement so people can walk up and down.

**Cllr Justine Rutland:** Litter in the parks.

**Adrian Berendt:** Presumably being emptied but there are just so many more people using the parks.

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# **Covid-19 Update: Response and Recovery**

# Background



- TWBC is a Category 1 responder and has specific duties regarding Major Emergencies and Business Continuity. These plans are co-ordinated with others through the:
- Kent Resilience Forum which includes; All LA's, Emergency Services, NHS, Environment Agency, Utilities and the Coast Guard. These organisations all have their own:
  - Major Emergency Plans and;
  - BCP i.e. NHS for Health and KCC for Social Services
- A Gold, Silver, Bronze Command Structure is used when plans need to be enacted.

# Council Services



## Bins & recycling

Bulky waste collection requests	Operational	last updated: 24/6/2020
Civic Amenity Vehicle	Suspended	last updated: 30/3/2020
Garden waste	Operational	last updated: 24/6/2020
Make a complaint	Suspended	last updated: 16/4/2020
New bins, repairs, replacements and removals	Operational	last updated: 19/5/2020
Non Farm Household Waste and Recycling Centre	Operational	last updated: 19/5/2020
Recycling and waste collections	Operational	last updated: 2/4/2020

## Car parks

Meadow Road	Suspended	last updated: 30/3/2020
Town Hall Yard	Operational	last updated: 1/7/2020
All other car parks	Operational	last updated: 30/3/2020

## Cemetery and crematorium

Kent and Sussex crematorium	Operational	last updated: 2/4/2020
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## Council

Meetings	Partial service	last updated: 16/4/2020
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## Environmental protection

Abandoned vehicles reports	Operational	last updated: 24/6/2020
Fly tipping	Operational	last updated: 24/6/2020
Food safety inspections	Suspended	last updated: 30/3/2020
Graffiti	Operational	last updated: 24/6/2020

## Licensing

Taxi Driver Knowledge Tests	Suspended	last updated: 30/3/2020
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## Our venues

Assembly Hall Theatre	Suspended	last updated: 30/3/2020
Community centres	Suspended	last updated: 7/7/2020
Leisure centres	Suspended	last updated: 30/3/2020

# Council Services (cont'd)



## Parking, Travel and Roads

White Lines - Vehicle Access Markings	Suspended	last updated: 15/4/2020
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## Parks and play areas

Enclosed spaces	Suspended	last updated: 30/3/2020
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Parks	Operational	last updated: 30/3/2020
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Playgrounds and Outdoor Gyms	Operational	last updated: 2/7/2020
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## Payments

<u>Payments (including Penalty Charge Notices)</u>	Partial service	<u>last updated: 2/4/2020</u>
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## Tourist information

Tourist Information Centre	Suspended	last updated: 30/3/2020
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## Tunbridge Wells Gateway

Tunbridge Wells Gateway	Partial service	last updated: 29/6/2020
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# Changes to demand



Webpage	March-May 2020	March-May 2019	Swing
Business - Support and Advice	1605	151	963%
Business Rates	2552	502	408%
Bonfires	1448	313	363%
Council Tax Support	1596	375	326%
Bin Collections	16682	5262	217%
Problems Paying Council Tax	372	132	182%
Benefits	1121	406	176%
Reducing your Council Tax bill	2366	1060	123%
Allotments	1331	646	106%
Noise complaints	587	382	54%
General Council Tax	9489	6158	54%
Homelessness	380	260	46%
Volunteering	378	278	36%
Burials and Cremations	1185	932	27%
Make a Planning Application	658	1115	-41%
Car Parks	518	1598	-68%
Car Park Season Tickets	1765	5879	-70%
Taxi Driver Licences	196	675	-71%
Play Areas	110	416	-74%
Parking Fines	2646	10010	-74%
The Camden Centre	140	888	-84%
Planning Pre-Application Advice	128	2535	-95%
Voting and Elections	151	5941	-97%

# The money



- Loss of income
- Additional costs
- Cashflow
  - Total impact c. £1m a month (£8m this year)
  - Impact of funding package

# Support for Business

## Advice and support for businesses

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### **Covid-19 Grants**

Covid-19 Business Grants



### **Financial Support and Advice**

The Government has confirmed that we and other councils will be responsible for administering rate relief and grants to businesses.



### **Food businesses, take-away and home delivery**

Guidance for home caterers/food businesses on providing delivered food during the coronavirus pandemic.



### **Covid-19: Health and Safety**

The latest government information and advice on COVID-19 (including working safely).



### **Looking after business premises**

Take steps now to avoid legionella when your business reopens.



### **Government Guidance on Construction and Building Site Working Time Relaxation**

The government has identified that the construction industry

# Support for Business



## Business Rate Relief and Grants

- 1,952 payments totalling £26m+ (97% of eligible businesses)
- 125 discretionary payments totalling of £1.2m. 42 companies deemed ineligible. £170k left to distribute

## Flexibility

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- Flexibility for businesses changing to deliver/collection (planning)
- Processing requests for on-street furniture

## Business Improvement District

- Advice, #Twdelivers, reopening kig

## Kent and Medway Growth Hub





# Initial support for local residents



## Parking

- Free parking for NHS and care workers (apply online)
- Permit holders can use multi-storey car parks

## Housing

- Accommodating all rough sleepers
- Advice on preventing evictions
- Direct the public to the official information on government websites.

## Council Tax

- Flexibility and support
- Advice and signposting
- Liaise with Parish Councils

# Supporting vulnerable people

- Support for the clinically extremely vulnerable and other vulnerable and isolated people:
  - providing emergency supplies
  - signposting and directing residents to organisations that can help (e.g. Age UK, TWSIG, Local Food delivery services and where appropriate to Parish Councils
  - providing 'wellbeing calls' to residents that may feel isolated/lonely during this time.

24/7 #KentTogether helpline

- Volunteer co-ordination and support
- Support for the Voluntary and Community Sector
- Work with Nourish, Age UK and MHRC
- Close working relationship with parish and town councils
- Lend a hand



# twsocial



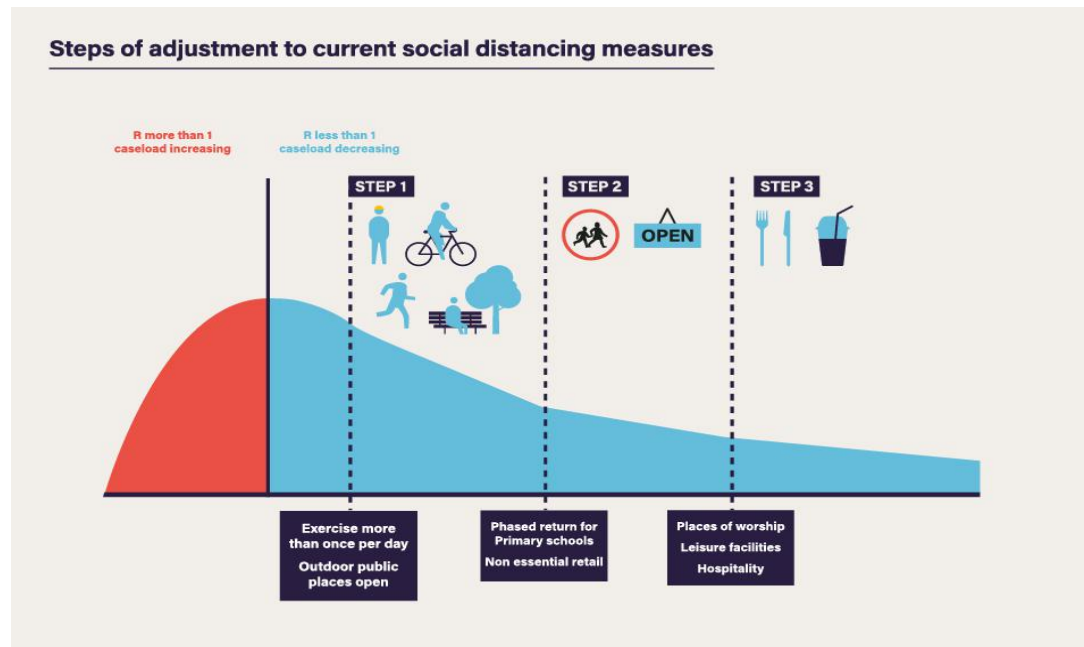
# Communication



- Regular updates on social media and through the media
- Daily briefings with Group Leaders and the MP
- Extensive Member engagement
- Covid-19 Panel
- Weekly meetings with parish and town councils
- Regular discussions with the Town Forum
- Regular meetings with Royal Tunbridge Wells Together, the FSB and individual businesses
- Business phone-ins
- Facebook AMA sessions – reach of 10,000+ people

# Reopening and Recovery

- Unique recovery (impact of Covid-19, duration of lockdown, second wave, Brexit)
- 'The Plan'



# Overarching principles



- To support local **businesses** return to operation and to survive one of the most challenging economic times in our lifetime.
- To support local **residents** who have been affected by the Pandemic and the restrictions placed upon them and to manage the transition as protections and support mechanisms are removed.
- To protect the **health and safety of staff** and councillors delivering essential public services to our residents and businesses.
- To maintain and prioritise (where necessary) the **Council's services** in line with government advice.
- To retain the capacity to **protect the vulnerable** and to react to any move back into response mode if necessary.
- To recognise and **promote positive outcomes** including reduced traffic and pollution, better work/life balance, community spirit reduced traffic/congestion.
- To recognise that the Council needs to remain **financially solvent** and that, with government grant completely removed and Council Tax capped (and us retaining 10p in the pound) we are reliant on income and there remains the possibility of a tension between this and other objectives.



# Support for Business



*Moving forward*  
for **KENT**



# Reopening the Town Centre(s)



- Reopening plan:
  - Management of high streets including the use of ambassadors
  - Signage and equipment to promote social distancing and aid queueing
  - Street cleansing
  - Parking
  - Traffic and pedestrian management
  - Public transport
  - Public toilets
  - Promotion, marketing and signposting
  - Monitoring



# Changes to the high street



Location	Proposed Intervention
High Street (RTW town centre)	One-way operation to allow pavement widening
Reynolds Lane (Southborough) A26 Cycle Route	Modal Filter or access only signage to allow safer walking and cycling Implementing southern end of LCWIP scheme
Commercial Road, Paddock Wood	One-way northbound to allow for pavement widening for pedestrians
Grosvenor Road (RTW town centre)	Reallocation of carriageway space to pedestrians/queues on western side (near Tesco)
Camden Road (RTW town centre)	One-way northbound between Calverley Road and Garden Road to allow pavement widening
20mph restrictions	20mph zone in town centre

# Other issues



- Culture and the Arts
- Leisure
- Sustainability of financial support for local government
- Capacity and funding for the voluntary and community sector

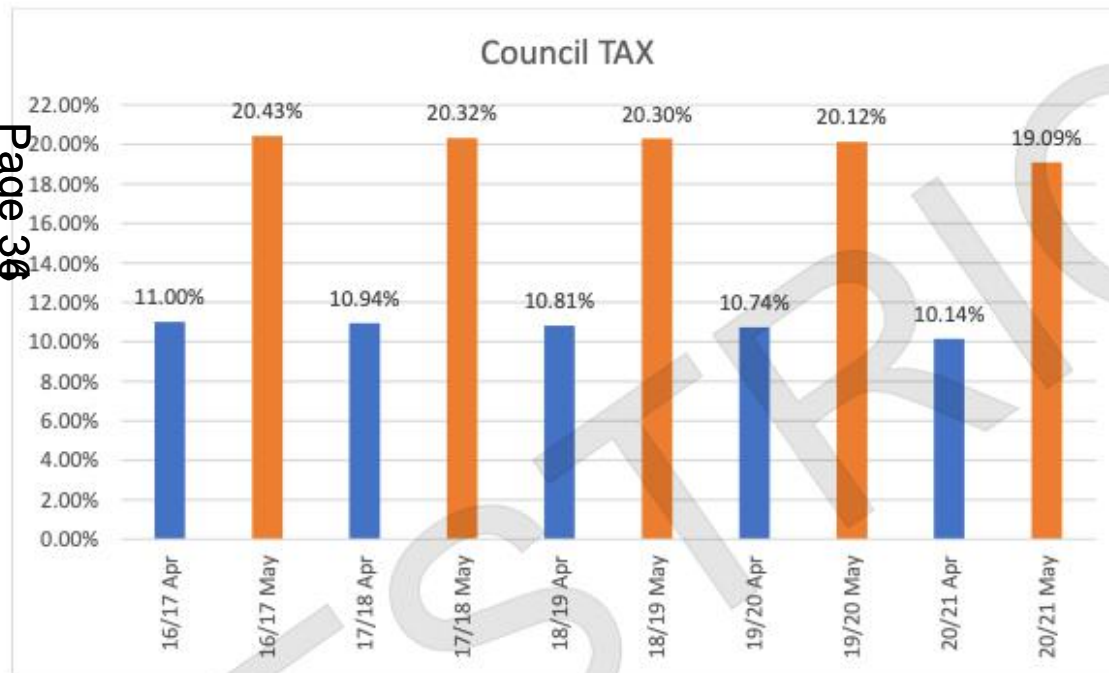
# Stats



# Stats

## Council tax collection

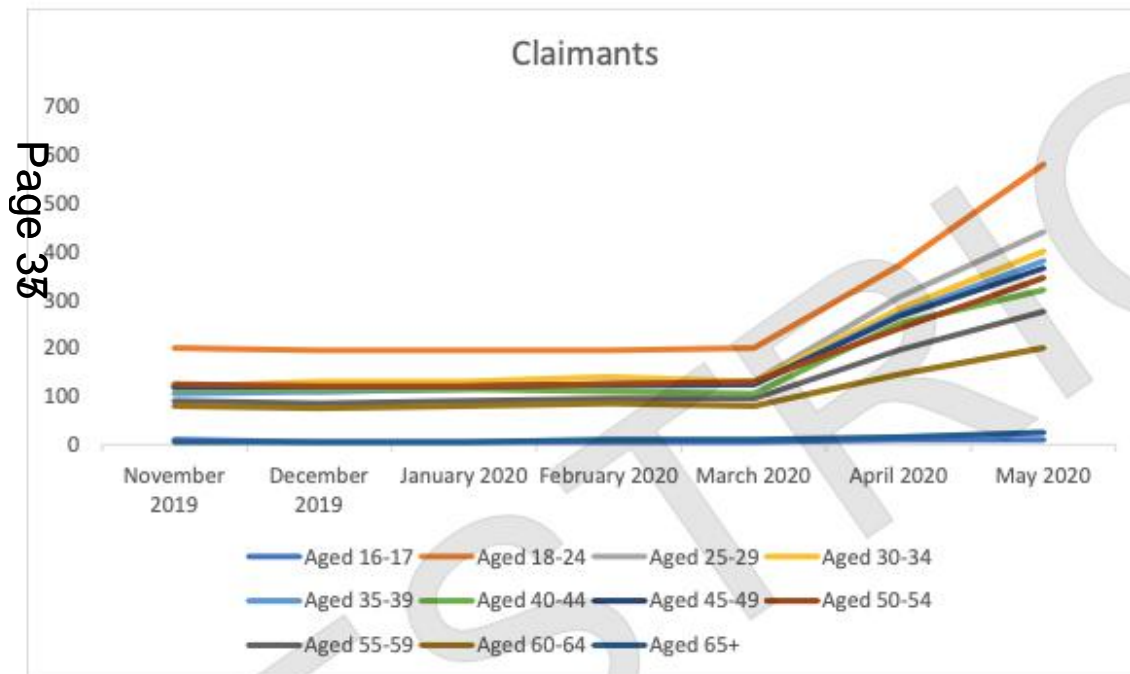
Council tax collection is 1.03% down compared to May 2019/20 and is the lowest take for the month of May since before 2010/11. This reduction equates to a cash fall of £893,000 shared across all preceptors.



# Stats

## Out of work benefits

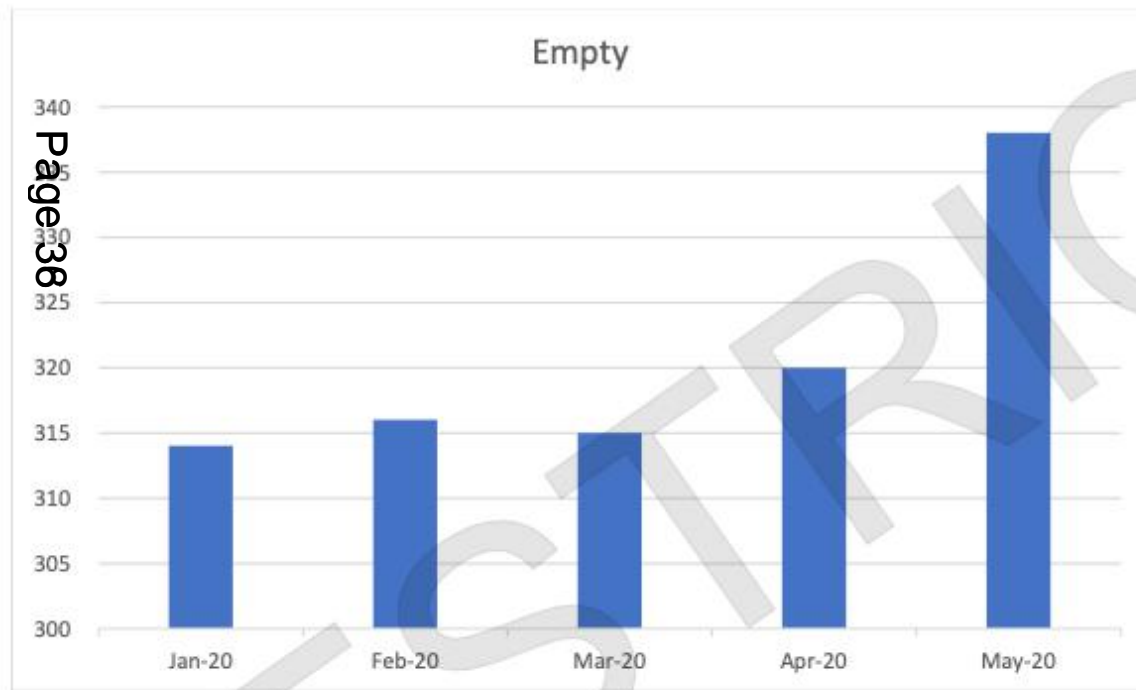
Out of work benefits claimants has risen strongly in both April and May. The largest increases are for younger age groups, in particular the 18-24 yr age group. Of the 580 claimants in this age group in May, 370 were male, and 210 were female. There are currently more male claimants than female across all age groups for Tunbridge Wells.



# Stats

## Number of empty business properties

The number of empty properties has increased in May, whilst the number of non-empty (occupied) business properties has decreased.



# Stats

## Car parking income

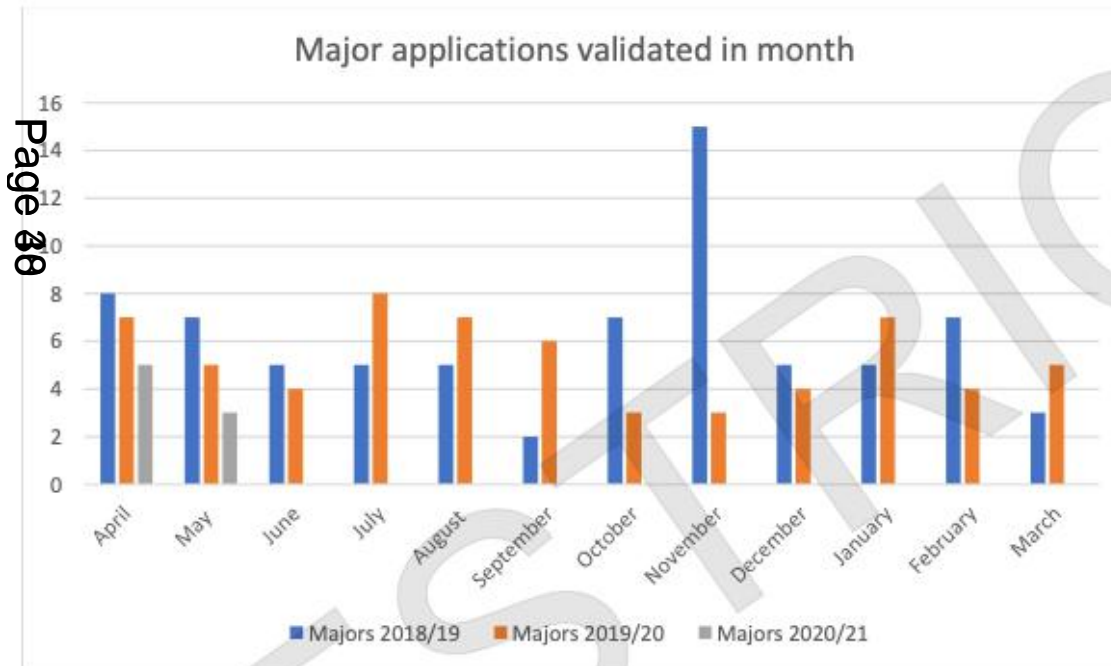
Car parking usage is slowly recovering from a low of £9,714 in April to £16,377 in May. This compares with £361,906 income in February.



# Stats

## Planning applications

The number of planning applications across all types is lower in May 2020/21 compared with the same month in the previous two years. Major applications are within normal variances. Minor applications dropped off in March and April but have recovered in May. Other applications have seen a more significant fall in May.

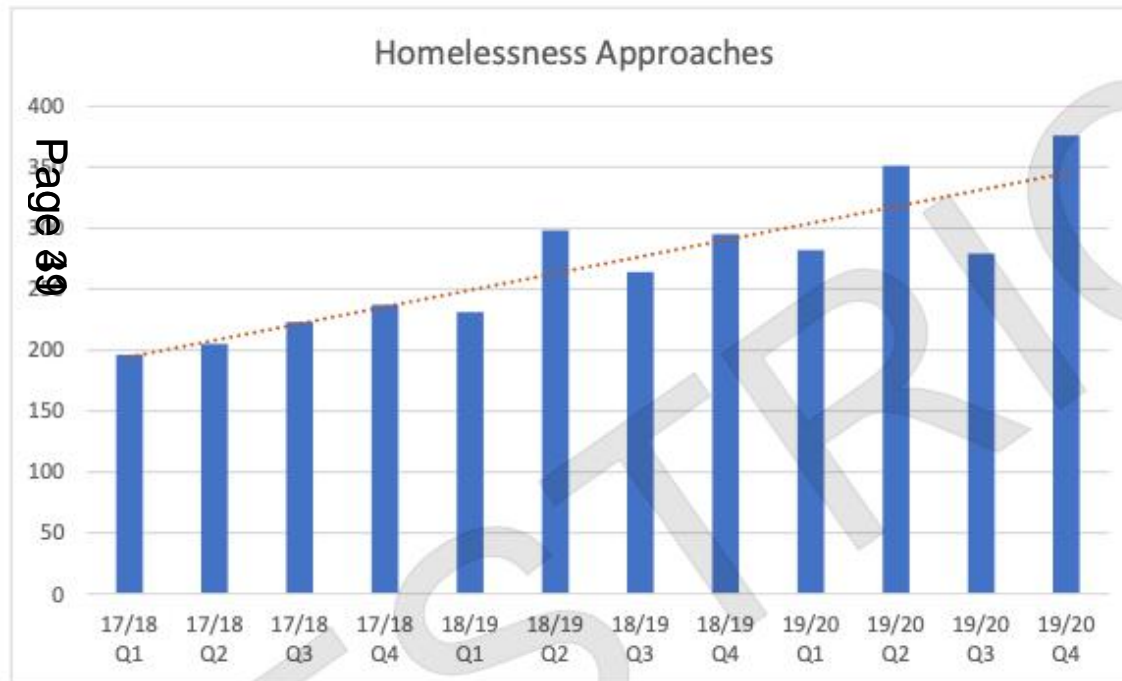




# Stats

## Homelessness

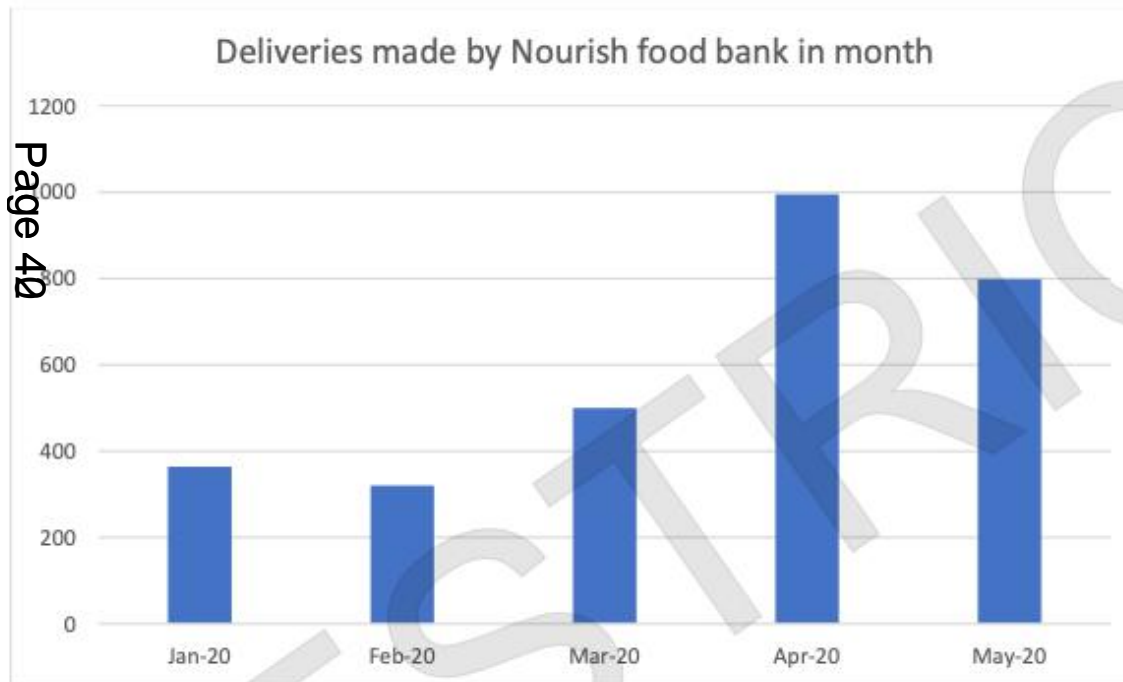
The number of homelessness approaches continues to rise. Whilst there was a drop in the number of approaches in May compared with previous months, this is likely to be because of the movement restrictions in place due to lockdown, and the overall trend continues to increase.



# Stats

## Food bank deliveries

The number of deliveries made by Nourish has fallen slightly for May at 798. It remains much higher than January and February however.



# Wider recovery issues



- Business
  - Culture and the Arts
  - Leisure
  - End of the furlough scheme

## The Council:

- Sustainability of financial support

## The Community

- Significant impact on younger people
- Equalities (inc digital divide)

- Locking in the good
  - Environment
  - Sustainability

## Agenda Item 4

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## Planning for Future

The Govt is trying to do three things:

- \* They have greatly expanded Permitted Development rights to promote housing, including in 'high streets'. Subject to a tickbox procedure of 'prior approval' this enables owners to add to existing buildings without explicit consent. This took effect at the beginning of September.
- \* They are proposing other changes to the *existing* planning system, in particular a new method of calculating housing requirements. This could mean a 20% increase in the TW obligation (to nearly 900 dpa) over the Local Plan figure. There is consultation on this until 1<sup>st</sup> October.
- \* There is a White Paper on a potential *new* system, subject to consultation until the end of October. The White Paper sets out bold proposals but is severely lacking in detail about how most of the changes would be implemented.

## The White Paper

Priority is to find land for housing geared to Govt target of 300,000 dpa in England. Auths without up-to-date Local Plans subject to new (higher) assessment. This will affect TW if new Local Plan is not in final form by end of March 2021, unless we get special allowance because of 'constraints'.

Aim to abolish s.106 and introduce nationally standard Infrastructure Levy 'capturing uplift in land value' to raise more revenue than present and more affordable housing. More freedom for local authorities to determine how contributions are used.

Principle of Local Plans to be preserved but all land to be allocated to one of three areas: Growth, Renewal and Protection: in Growth areas outline approval would be automatic for specified types of development subject to a number of tick-box checks. Final 'technical' approval later.

Aim to make Local Plans much shorter, follow a standard 'digital' template, and replace most 'qualitative' policies with codes and standards. Much tighter timetable for making and processing Local Plans and penalties for non-compliance.

New priority for 'beauty' and 'place-making'. Automatic consent for proposals which 'reflect local character and preferences' expressed through locally adopted design guides and codes. Hint that permitted development might be required to conform to pre-approved designs.

Propose 'radical re-invention' of engagement with local communities using 'digital tools'. Also propose streamlining consultation on planning applications. Key role suggested for (more local) Neighbourhood Plans with principle extended to smaller areas.

ART/RTWCS/Consultation/Govt Consultation/Planning for Future note 090920

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Brief summary of meetings of Working Group, Culture, Leisure & Tourism.  
September 2020.

We have kept in email contact since April with updates on items such as the TW Social website, and progress photos of The Amelia Scott; and held two Zoom meetings since mid August.

In brief:

We are pleased to see how well work has progressed with The Amelia Scott, and we all agree this is a positive project for the town, and hope full funds can be found for a successful Fit Out. We hope there will be continued local involvement, including historic input from The Civic Society.

We wondered what had happened to the Cross Party Group formed following the collapse of the Calverley Square project. Our desire is to adapt The Assembly Hall for multiple uses, and the possibility of linking it to The Amelia Scott, to create a full Cultural Centre.

We are pleased that the Fusion Leisure Centres have now reopened, but concerned that Fusion may ask for more money in the next financial year, should social distancing carry on past April 2021.

We were pleased to see parks and open spaces well used during this summer, and hope that the ice rink will be a positive part of this Christmas.

We have a list of concerns:

The extension of Permitted Development Rights seems likely to affect the historic environment. The proposed Sports Hub at Hawkenbury may lead to the loss of local green spaces - something so important recently - and an increase in traffic around Hawkenbury.

That S106 money, already set aside for public art, might be 'lost' during the new planning laws, and we are curious to know what the progress is with the TWBC Art in the Public Realm Draft Document (seen last year).

These three items as well as funding for Fusion, The Amelia Scott project, and the future of The Assembly Hall, make up our projects going forward. We aim to be an active working group who can help TWBC achieve their aims to be the Cultural Centre of The Weald.

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