

People reluctant to join discussion on improvements

by Rachael Woods

rwoods@thekmgroupp.co.uk
@rachaelwoodskm

A £3.5 million windfall is ready to be spent on reshaping Tenterden for the better – but the town council's invitation to residents to get involved has been met with a lukewarm response.

And although the plans include developing a youth hub, only one person under the age of 40 has applied to join the consultation groups.

Town clerk Phil Burgess said: "We want residents to take part so that the whole process involves the community and we want a broad cross-section of that community. Any decision that did not involve the young would not be representative."

Now time is fast running out for people to have their say on how money from the sale of

Tent1 housing development land should be used.

Following recommendations in a report by independent consultants The Lipton Group, Tenterden Town Council earmarked a number of key areas for improvement: developing the recreation ground and creating a youth hub; repairs or an extension to the town hall, including a possible community centre; a cinema; improved football facilities; and improving village halls, including establishing a centralised booking system.

The aim was to create focus groups made up of between six and 10 members, including one or two councillors, with residents encouraged to apply.

A total of 30 positions on the consultation groups are available, but at the time of going to press only 21 people have applied to take part, with the April 30 deadline looming.



Cllr Sue Ferguson

The consultation has been hit by the complete absence of young people coming forward, whose input will be vital as councillors thrash out the detail of the youth hub and possible skate park.

Parents with teenage children are known to have enlisted for



An artist's impressions of what the homes in Tent1A will look like

How to join focus groups

To join a focus group, contact Tenterden Town Council stating your contact details, age, the particular group and reason for your interest, by

writing to Tenterden Town Council, The Town Hall, 24 High Street, Tenterden TN30 6AN, or by emailing townhall@tenterdentowncouncil.gov.uk

the project, which will see residents team up with experts such as landscape designers and architects to develop the projects, but the council would like to see young people aged from 14 to 21 apply.

Around £1.5 million is forecast to be spent on the recreation ground, while a footballing hub will cost an estimated £1 million and town hall improvements £1.5 million.

Money will also be drawn from a variety of additional pots, including Section 106 cash from housing developers' contributions to the community, plus outside grants.

Plans for a cinema are at a very early stage, with at least a seven-figure sum involved in the

purchase and adaptation of any property. The Lipton Group had recommended a £2 million extension to Tenterden Leisure Centre in its report and also endorsed the plan for an arts, music and community space at St Mildred's Church, with the town council stating that it "would welcome an opportunity to work with both organisations in furthering their aims".

Cllr Sue Ferguson has been assigned to a task force to get people to join the consultation group on the proposal for a cinema in Tenterden.

She said: "We want to encourage as many people as possible to take part. If people really want a cinema in Tenterden, they should come forward now."

COUNCILLORS TAKING CHARGE

Following Monday night's Tenterden Town Council meeting, individual councillors have been allocated to promoting the consultation projects, with the aim of encouraging more residents to

come forward and have their say.

The councillors have been allocated as follows: Recreation Ground and youth hub: Cllrs Alan Sugden and Ken Mulholland; town hall: Cllrs

Lisa Lovelidge and Pam Smith; cinema: Cllrs Sue Ferguson and Rory Knight; pitches and football: Cllr Mike Carter, plus one other TBA; halls and virtual hub: Cllrs Justin Nelson and Callum Knowles.