

Tollbooth Discussion

Parish Council Meeting Notes

Date: 7th July 2025

Present:

- JM – Jamie Moore (PC Chairman)
- AR – Alex Robson (PC Clerk)
- RB – Roy Beckwith (PC Council Member)
- CB – Chris Bumby (PC Council Member)
- BC – Ben Collard (PC Council Member)
- AS – Andrew Storie (Tollbooth Group Spokesperson)
- 20+ Members of the Public

Apologies:

- AE – Andrew Eckersley (PC Council Member)
 - DS – Dan Sladden (Councillor)
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Summary of Discussion

1. Community Engagement & Questionnaire Results

- AS updated the Council on the Tollbooth Group's engagement process:
 - An initial questionnaire was circulated via the Sunday Email list.
 - Results shared with the Parish Council (AS to resend to JM who had not seen them).
 - A follow-up public meeting took place with ~50 attendees to share the questionnaire results and building history.
 - A second questionnaire was circulated to gather specific questions for the Tollbooth Group and Parish Council.

- Tollbooth Group responded to their portion of questions in the 6th July weekly update.
- Questions for the Parish Council were submitted on 2nd July.

✅ **Action Point 1:** Parish Council to respond formally to the submitted public questions.

📝 **Responsibility:** Clerk to coordinate and include a note in the weekly Sunday Email.

2. Access and Permissions

- AS requested regular access to the building for investigation and assessment.
- JM confirmed access is approved.
- Insurance cover was discussed; Parish Council requested that names of those entering the building (volunteers/contractors) be submitted to JM for insurance purposes.
- Sandbags currently stored in the Tollbooth may be relocated temporarily, as long as they remain accessible.

✅ **Action Point 2:** TBG to submit list of individuals/contractors accessing the building.

✅ **Action Point 3:** TBG to notify JM if sandbags are temporarily moved.

3. Next Steps: Surveys and Investigation

- It was agreed that a **full structural survey** is required to assess the current condition of the building.
- Previous surveys were noted as insufficient for detailed planning and funding applications.
- JM gave approval for the Tollbooth Group to seek quotes for a structural survey.
- Discussion included possible exploratory work (e.g., lifting floor slabs to investigate damp issues), which may require insurance confirmation.

✅ **Action Point 4:** Tollbooth Group to obtain and present quotes for a full structural survey.

✅ **Action Point 5:** Clerk to confirm insurance coverage for exploratory work.

4. Timeline and Funding

- JM confirmed that the **Parish Council precept deadline is November 2025**, though it could be delayed slightly if necessary.
- Any increase in precept would require full public justification and communication.
- AS proposed that, if the building is shown to be structurally sound for 1 to 2 years, the group could use that time to investigate funding opportunities and return with a fully developed plan in 2026, ahead of the next precept decision.
- JM tentatively agreed that this was possible.

✅ **Action Point 6:** Tollbooth Group to return with survey results and potential plans by **Autumn 2026** to inform the November decision-making.

5. Use and Status of the Tollbooth

- AS questioned the status of the Parish Council documents currently stored in the Tollbooth and whether archiving or removal is necessary.

📌 **Note:** This was not addressed by the Council during the meeting.

✅ **Action Point 7:** Parish Council to review status of council files and clarify whether they require archiving and/or removal.

- JM clarified the Tollbooth remains listed as a Parish Council office (per online listings), which may require correction.

✅ **Action Point 8:** Clerk to review and update any online/public listings reflecting outdated use of the building.

6. Position of the Parish Council

- Originally, the Parish Council circulated a letter expressing preference to sell the building, citing financial and liability concerns.
- JM reiterated this was based on low responses (25 replies) and risk mitigation, but acknowledged views may be quite different than originally thought.
- AS emphasized the Tollbooth Group's questionnaire received **99 responses**, 90% in favour of preserving the building.
- JM **confirmed** that the Parish Council **now supports the Group's efforts to investigate the potential for saving the Tollbooth.**
- JM emphasized he would not personally lead any fundraising or project work due to personal health and future retirement from the Council.
- It was confirmed by the PC that further efforts to explore the sale of the building have been placed on hold for the foreseeable future.

✅ **Action Point 9:** Clerk to record the formal position that the Parish Council supports the Tollbooth Group's efforts to explore preservation options, pending future review.

7. Grant Funding

- AS asked if the Parish Council had explored any grants to date.
- **Clerk confirmed no grants have been explored** but offered administrative support and noted existing contacts that may help.
- The Clerk emphasized a willingness to work collaboratively with the Group going forward.

✅ **Action Point 10:** Tollbooth Group and Clerk to liaise on initial grant opportunities.

Unresolved Issues and Notes

- 🚩 **Outstanding:** Parish Council has not agreed to publish or share the 25 public responses it referenced in its original position.

-  **Transparency Concern:** Tollbooth Group expressed concern over lack of clarity/transparency in Council decision-making.
-  **Parish Council Office Files:** No clarity provided on next steps for documents stored in the Tollbooth.

Summary of Agreed Actions

No.	Action Point	Responsible Party	Deadline
1	Respond to resident questionnaire submitted on 2nd July	Parish Council / Clerk	ASAP
2	Submit list of individuals accessing Tollbooth for insurance	Tollbooth Group	Ongoing
3	Notify JM of sandbag movement	Tollbooth Group	If/when applicable
4	Seek quotes for full structural survey	Tollbooth Group	ASAP
5	Confirm insurance coverage for investigative work	Clerk	ASAP
6	Return with survey and plan ahead of Nov 2026	Tollbooth Group	Autumn 2026
7	Clarify status of Parish Council documents in Tollbooth	Parish Council	Next meeting
8	Update online listings showing Tollbooth as PC Office	Clerk	ASAP
9	Record Council support for Group's preservation work	Clerk	With minutes
10	Liaise on potential grant opportunities	Tollbooth Group / Clerk	Ongoing

Sentiment Overview – Tollbooth Discussion

The overall sentiment of the meeting was **constructively tense but ultimately collaborative**. While there were clear moments of **frustration, miscommunication, and mistrust**—particularly regarding transparency, the Parish Council's historical position on selling the Tollbooth, and the handling of previous public responses—the meeting gradually shifted toward a **more cooperative and solution-focused tone**.

Key points of sentiment included:

- **Tension & Frustration:**
 - Frustration was evident from the Tollbooth Group and public attendees over a perceived lack of transparency from the Parish Council, especially regarding prior decisions, the absence of shared feedback from the earlier letter drop, and ambiguous insurance/access arrangements.
 - Public criticism also arose around the Council's initial disinterest in leading preservation or fundraising efforts.
- **Clarity & Reconciliation:**
 - Despite initial conflict, the Chairman (JM) provided clear verbal support for the Tollbooth Group's efforts, signalling a shift from a "hands-off" approach to a more enabling one.
 - Both sides agreed on the importance of due diligence, especially a full structural survey, before making any long-term decisions.
 - The Parish Council acknowledged the group's right to explore preservation fully, marking a key point of reconciliation.
- **Cooperative Spirit Emerging:**
 - The Clerk's contributions helped reframe the dialogue as a partnership, offering administrative and grant-seeking support and explicitly disavowing an "us vs them" dynamic.
 - AS and the Tollbooth Group expressed a clear willingness to lead the investigative and planning work—alleviating pressure on the Parish Council while ensuring momentum.

Conclusion

The meeting began with unresolved tensions and a lack of trust but concluded with **pragmatic consensus**. The Parish Council offered formal support for the Tollbooth Group's work, pending future evaluation, and the meeting closed on a more unified and optimistic note, with defined next steps and mutual understanding of responsibilities.