



# Constitution of the Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum

Amended 23 November 2016

## **Name**

Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum

## **Town Forum's office**

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, Town Hall, Royal Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN1 1RS

## **1. Purpose of the Town Forum**

1.1 To enable residents of the unparished area of the Borough of Tunbridge Wells (“the town”) to play an active role in localism and shaping the future of the town, ensuring that their views on town matters are effectively conveyed to public and other relevant bodies, elected representatives and, where appropriate, local residents.

1.2 Forum members will normally endeavour to achieve this by:

- assessing issues within, or affecting, the town, and with other agencies, if appropriate, initiating and developing strategic and operational proposals, and making recommendations to TWBC, Kent County Council, and any other relevant bodies;
- seeking responses to these proposals and recommendations;
- reviewing and responding to consultative documents and proposals from TWBC, or from any other body, that will or may affect the town;
- encouraging residents’ associations and other representative bodies to join the Forum, and promoting the establishment of new residents’ associations in the town;
- encouraging residents to contribute their own views to the Forum and to participate in relevant consultations where necessary outside the Forum;
- and by working for the benefit of the residents of the unparished area in any way that they see fit.

## **2. Membership of the Town Forum**

2.1 Core membership of the Forum shall comprise:

- Borough councillors representing wards in the town, subject to the voting limitation in 3.1.3 below;
- Residents’ associations in the town;
- other voluntary or not for profit organisations representing residents’ interests which are open to residents of the town subject to the following conditions:

i) Any voluntary or not for profit organisation that demonstrates to the satisfaction of the Chair that the majority of its membership comprises residents of the town or that one of its main purposes is to work in the interests of residents of the town may apply to become a member of the Forum;

ii) Alternatively, the Town Forum may, by majority vote, allow organisations which cannot satisfy these criteria to become members of the Town Forum under whatever conditions may be considered by the Forum to be desirable;

2.1.1 Organisations wishing to be considered for membership should apply in the first place to the Town Forum Chair or Secretary. Applications should include a statement giving reasons for wishing to join and setting out the aims and objectives of the organisation;

2.1.2 Organisations wishing to join shall submit such evidence of their constitution and membership as may be required.

## 2.2 Representatives of Town Forum member organisations

2.2.1 Member organisations must nominate a named representative who is entitled to attend the Town Forum and speak and vote on their behalf. A second named representative who is authorised to deputise in all matters for the first named representative may also be nominated.

2.2.2 The Town Forum may co-opt individuals with relevant knowledge, skills, expertise or interest and may invite individuals and/or organisations to attend particular meetings where appropriate to the agenda. In addition, officers of TWBC and other bodies may be asked to present material in person, give guidance or respond to enquiries from the Town Forum. Neither co-optees nor invitees shall have voting rights.

2.2.3 The Town Forum shall be open, transparent, apolitical and accountable; it shall ensure that all interests have a voice where appropriate, and that hard to reach groups are appropriately represented and engaged.

## 2.3 Others in attendance

Other residents of the town are welcome to attend Forum meetings, but must register their presence with the Town Forum Secretary. They have no right to vote but may, at the discretion of the Chair, speak and ask questions.

## 3. Voting entitlement

### 3.1 Member Organisations

3.1.1 At the Annual General Meeting (AGM) and Extraordinary General Meetings (EGMs) each attending member organisation and Borough Councillor shall be entitled to a single vote.

3.1.2 In order to vote at the AGM or any EGM the named representative of a member organisation or their substitute shall have attended at least 50 percent of possible meetings that could have been attended in the previous 12 months. This percentage shall be pro rata for organisations joining part-way through the year. The minutes of the Forum's meetings shall be taken as conclusive evidence of this attendance.

3.1.3 At ordinary meetings of the Forum, attending member organisations only shall be entitled to vote, on the basis of a single vote per organisation.

3.1.4 Councillor members shall be eligible to vote at the AGM and any EGM if they have attended at least 50 percent of possible meetings that could have been attended in the previous twelve months. This percentage shall be pro-rata for councillors elected and joining part-way through the year. The minutes of the Forum's meetings shall be taken as conclusive evidence of this attendance.

## **4. Role and reporting responsibilities of Town Forum Members**

4.1 Representatives of Town Forum member associations are expected to:

- represent the views of their association or membership organisation and to report back to them developments and initiatives of the Town Forum; and
- identify ways in which their members can contribute to the work of the Town Forum.

4.2 In order to ensure compliance with the above responsibilities, representatives of Forum members shall, when required:

- confirm the aims and standing of their member organisation;
- demonstrate communication between themselves and the members of their organisation whether by copies of newsletters, of meeting minutes, or any appropriate evidence; and
- submit to the Town Forum Secretary evidence of the appointment of the named representative(s) to attend the Forum.

4.3 A list of member organisations, representatives and officers of the Town Forum and its working groups is available from the Secretary and is published on the Town Forum's website, [www.townforum.org.uk](http://www.townforum.org.uk).

## **5. Management of the Town Forum**

5.1 The Town Forum shall be administered by a Management Group. This shall be made up of:

5.1.1. Officers elected at the AGM:

- the Chair, who must be a named representative of a member organisation; and
- one or two Deputy Chairs, at least one of whom must be the named representative of a member organisation.

5.1.2. The leaders of the working groups.

5.2 In addition, the Management Group may co-opt onto the Group in an advisory and non-voting capacity up to three other individuals who it considers will help to fulfil the aims of, or have some expertise to contribute to, the Town Forum.

5.3 The Management Group shall meet before each plenary meeting of the Town Forum and at least three members, including the Chair and one Deputy, must be present in order that a Management Group meeting may take place.

5.4 The Chair and both Deputy Chairs shall be elected annually and shall serve a maximum of two consecutive terms in any one office unless a majority of eligible voting Forum members agrees to a further term of office. It is not intended that a Deputy Chair shall automatically become Chair.

5.5 Voting at Management Group meetings shall be by a show of hands, and if there is a tied vote then the Chair shall have a second vote.

5.6 The Management Group shall have the power, by majority vote, to recommend the removal of any member of the Group for good and proper reason. The reasons for the removal shall be given to Town Forum members at the next available Town Forum meeting.

## **6 Working Groups**

6.1 Working groups will take ownership of specific issues and projects as agreed with the Town Forum Chair and Management Group. The working groups shall reflect the strategic direction of the Town Forum at any time, and may change in membership over time.

6.2 Working groups shall comprise a leader and at least four other Town Forum members. Other persons from the wider population of the town may be co-opted to contribute expertise as decided by the leader of a working group. The Town Forum Chair and Deputy Chairs may attend working groups to monitor progress and facilitate co-ordination.

6.3 The working group leader shall be responsible for ensuring progress on the issues at hand, shall liaise with the Town Forum Chair, and report to the Town Forum for each plenary meeting.

6.4 Working groups may undertake research, write reports and draft consultation responses and speak to relevant officials and interested parties. They shall keep the Town Forum membership informed of progress and seek their input into their work.

6.5 The output of working groups shall be that of the Town Forum and therefore the Town Forum Chair and Management Group shall have final approval before submission or publication of working group documents.

## **7. Duties of the Officers**

7.1 The Chair supported by up to two Deputy Chairs shall:

1. Establish priorities for the Town Forum and set clear outcomes;
2. Support, encourage and co-ordinate the work of the working groups to ensure the development of constructive proposals from the Town Forum;
3. Seek to widen representation from all areas of the town not already represented or engaged in the Town Forum;
4. Promote the collective voice of the Town Forum to the wider public in Tunbridge Wells;
5. Regularly liaise with TWBC staff, TWBC Leader and councillors on matters of interest to the Town Forum;
6. Encourage greater engagement with councillors representing the town;
7. Encourage Town Forum members to work together on common issues, and promote accountability of Town Forum representatives to their member organisations.
8. Chair meetings of the Town Forum.

7.2 In addition, should one not be provided for this purpose by TWBC, the Chair of the Forum shall appoint a Secretary who shall not be a part of the Management Group. The duties of the Secretary shall be to:

- keep a list of member organisations, their two nominated representatives and their attendance record;
- prepare, in consultation with the Management Group, the agenda for meetings of the Group and the Forum;
- take and keep minutes of all such meetings;
- collect and circulate relevant information within the Forum;
- provide relevant information for uploading to the Town Forum website;
- and facilitate communication with relevant TWBC officers.

## **8. Meetings of the Town Forum**

### **8.1 Annual General Meeting**

8.1.1 The Forum shall hold an AGM, normally in the autumn.

8.1.2 All member organisations shall be given at least three weeks' notice of the AGM and shall be entitled to attend and vote in accordance with the section in the Constitution above entitled Voting entitlement. Notice of AGM and EGM will include notice of motions and will be provided either in writing or electronically.

8.1.3 The business of the AGM shall include:

- receiving a report from the Chair on the Town Forum's activities over the year;
- electing a Chair and up to two Deputy Chairs;
- and considering any other matters as may be required.

8.1.4 At least one third of nominated representatives who satisfy the voting entitlement requirements must be present for the AGM, or any other General or Extraordinary General Meeting, to take place.

## 8.2 Election process

8.2.1 Election of officers of the Town Forum at the AGM shall be by a show of hands or by secret ballot if so requested by one third of those present and entitled to vote; the elections shall be chaired by a member of the Management Group who is not standing for an executive position. If no such person is available, then by majority vote of eligible voting representatives an Election Chair shall be agreed from among Town Forum members. In the event of a tied vote in the election of officers, the Election Chair shall have the casting vote.

8.2.2 Nominations for the Chair and Deputy Chair positions shall be submitted to the Secretary at least two weeks before the AGM and must be accompanied by a short statement setting out what they want to achieve during their period of office. The statement shall be circulated to Forum members prior to the AGM along with the agenda.

8.2.3 Candidates for the officer posts shall be announced at the AGM and shall be formally proposed and seconded at the AGM by representatives entitled to vote in the election. Each candidate will be asked to present a short overview of their objectives for their putative term of office.

## 8.3 General Meetings

Meetings of the Forum, including the AGM, shall normally be held at two-monthly intervals; all members shall be entitled to attend and vote in accordance with Section 3 above.

## 8.4 Extraordinary General Meeting

An EGM may be called by the Management Group or by a minimum of 15 Forum members to discuss an urgent matter. The Secretary shall give all members 14 days' notice of any EGM together with notice of the business to be discussed. All members shall be entitled to attend and vote in accordance with Section 3 above.

## 9. Servicing of the Town Forum

TWBC shall provide administrative support and make facilities available to the Town Forum for meetings.

## 10. Publicity

Dates, agendas and minutes of meetings and reports of working groups shall be posted on the Town Forum website.

## 11. Timing and Location of Town Forum Meetings

The Town Forum shall endeavour to ensure that meetings are held at a convenient time and in a place easily accessible for its members.

## 12. Changes to the Constitution

Changes to this Constitution can only be made at an AGM or EGM and must be agreed by at least two-thirds of those eligible representatives present.

## 13. Dissolution

The Forum may be wound up at any time if agreed by two-thirds of those eligible representatives present and voting at any AGM or EGM.