



March 2023

## Town Forum in Action: Background/context for Forum meeting, 30 March 2023

### **1. Who we are**

The Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum is a partnership between Residents' Representatives and ward Councillors in the Town of Royal Tunbridge Wells, the unparished area of the Borough of Tunbridge Wells, Kent.

It was formed in July 2005 with the purpose of addressing local issues.

See:

[www.townforum.org.uk](http://www.townforum.org.uk)

<http://townforum.org.uk/administration/townforumobjectivestermsofreferencejune2016.pdf>

<http://www.townforum.org.uk/terms.html>

- Gives the original 2011 constitution and then amended in 2016, plus amended aims and objectives, terms of reference.

### **2. What we do (types of activities)**

-Communicate with councillors and critical friend to TWBC

-Encourage members to address their concerns to ward councillors and officers, and advise how to raise issues and speak at TWBC committees (e.g. Joint Transportation Board [JTB])

-Speak in support of member organisations at TWBC committees where appropriate (e.g. where issues have a wider concern)

-Respond to consultations, TWBC and others on behalf of the RTW TF and encourage RTW TF members to contribute and/or respond themselves

-Provide a platform for communications to and from our members and with other organisations. Presentations at meetings.

-Engage with the community, giving updates via meetings, minutes, and

**Website:** [www.townforum.org.uk](http://www.townforum.org.uk)

**Facebook:** [TownForumRTW](https://www.facebook.com/TownForumRTW)

**Twitter:** [@townforum](https://twitter.com/townforum)

Participate in TWBC Working Groups when invited

Identify needs and promote improvements in Royal Tunbridge Wells ideally before final plans are prepared and published for consultation e.g. in planning, transport, leisure, finance, environment, safety etc.

Persuade TWBC and developers to refresh existing, and install new, water features in keeping with the character of Royal Tunbridge Wells

### **3. Recent significant actions**

#### **3.1 Cross-Party Working Group**

Chaired the Council's Cross-Party Working Group leading to:

- agreement on Town Hall co-working
- new outline strategy replacing Calverley Square

Participation in other working groups

- Town Centre Local Area Plan
- Ukrainian refugees
- Shared Prosperity Fund

For last year's actions see Chairman's report attached to November 24, 2022 AGM agenda.

#### **3.2 Responded to consultations**

- Tunbridge Wells Local Plan:

Responded to the Planning Inspector's questions under Stage 1 of the Public Examination; it is based on RTW TF 'Call for Sites' response and RTW TF 'Reg 19 Consultation' response and deals only with issues concerning the town Royal Tunbridge Wells (Planning Working Group February 2022). Participation in next stage.

- Towards Change – analysis of transport issues  
(Transport Working Group, June 2017)

- Town Centre Transport Plan (taking account of Covid and Climate change priorities): *The 'New Normal' for Transport in RTW*  
(Transport Working Group, Updated May 2020)

- National government consultation on Pavement Parking  
(Transport Working Group, November 2020)

- Vision for Royal Tunbridge Wells 2017-2033  
(Planning Working Group, February 2017)

- Stage 2 Cultural Hub (Amelia Scott Project)

- KCC consultation on Cultural Strategy  
(Culture, Leisure, Tourism Working Group, March 2017)

- Article 4 Direction for St James Ward (intended to be much wider coverage)

- TWBC Budgets  
(Finance Working Group, January every year)

#### **3.3 Helped in conducting surveys**

- Undertook with TF volunteers identification of all the alleyways, twittens and paths to ensure all are registered as PROW or have legal protection. Report produced, paths added to TWBC GIS.

Awaiting discussion on further action by TWBC re legal protection.

Referred two 'Lost Ways' to Ramblers Association for inclusion in their campaign.

-LCWIP (Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans) pedestrian routes: assisted officers in walking survey of condition of proposed LCWIP routes in preparation for funding applications.

- Survey the benches in the town RTW
- Local List of Buildings of Architectural and Historic Importance
- High Street survey of businesses and public  
(resulting now in more attractive and one-way traffic street)

### 3.4 Provided Platform for presentations at meetings

This year:

- Local Government Boundary Commission England: LGBCE Electoral Boundary Review
- Updates on the Tunbridge Wells and Rusthall Commons
- new plans for cinema site
- proposals for Chalybeate spring

### 3.5 Helped prepare way for easing traffic congestion / cycling

Through engagement with officers and councillors:

- pressure to reduce 'free' on street parking
- object to park and ride and bypass suggestions
- 20mph in residential areas (ambition is the whole town RTW)
- deter use of bus stand on London Road as a bus depot for school services
- 'Go' buses no longer drop children on Culverden Down
- High Street as one way street since 2021 (2nd year of Covid-19 lockdown)
- Continue to work with and defer to the expertise of TW BUG, Bicycle Users Group
- Took part in "Cycle Path for visitors" (2015-16).

### 3.6 Community safety

Pressed to keep CCTV in town

Asking for accessible public toilets for everyone

### 3.7 Water features

Campaigned for more water features, now added in Royal Tunbridge Wells e.g. at:

- Knightswood
- Royal Wells (old Kent and Sussex hospital site)
- 1887 The Pantiles

### 3.8 Culture, Leisure, Tourism

-Published Tunbridge Wells tourism and the cultural offer "*A place of pleasure and resort*" (Leisure, Culture and Tourism Working Group, January 2013)

>>> <http://www.townforum.org.uk/community/rtwtourismculture-report2013.pdf>

-Took part in and advised on projects such as Wayfaring Signage, Information Points, Map of RTW, tourism leaflet, Plaques for Historical Walks.

-Amelia Scott Culture, Arts, and Heritage Project:

Supported the strong views in the town against minimising her name to a 'brand' Amelia instead of full name 'Amelia Scott'

### 3.9 Environment

Published the "RTW Green Network" 2016

>>> <http://www.townforum.org.uk/community/rtwgreennetwork-report2016withphotos.pdf>

adopted by TWBC