

## **NEWS: Cleaning up Tunbridge Wells - improving the appearance of the Borough**

**Thursday 27 December 2007:**

**The Council carries out a range of activities that improve the appearance of the Borough including the provision of benches and bus shelters, street cleaning, graffiti removal and the use of fixed penalty notices to discourage litter and fly-tipping.**

We need to complement these activities with action to tackle neglected buildings and pieces of land or **'grot spots'** that can have a negative impact on the look and feel of an area.

Action by the Council has led to improvements at some long standing grot spots, including a derelict property in Warwick Park Tunbridge Wells which is undergoing an extensive renovation after years of neglect by its owner: The Greyhound Pub on Upper Grosvenor Road, Tunbridge Wells, left empty after a fire and a target for graffiti, has now been demolished and a new residential development will take its place.

There are a number of grot spots where improvements are expected following the involvement of the Council. These include the vacant site behind Nevill Terrace in Tunbridge Wells, where planning application has been made to redevelop the site and a long term empty and rundown house that is shrouded in scaffolding in Victoria Road, Tunbridge Wells. In this case, the Council has decided to use its powers to compulsorily purchase the property if the owner does not agree to sell it himself and that will allow the site to be brought back in to use to provide homes.

The steps that we have to go through where owners are not willing to make improvements can take time and involve a number of different services but whilst there may appear to be nothing happening progress is being made. Even where the owners are cooperating such as the cinema site and the old Morrisons, red tape and complex contracts all need to be unravelled before progress is made. Hopefully we'll see these sites back in use soon.