



# AGENDA

**Thursday 13 July 2023 at 6.00 pm**  
**Council Chamber, Town Hall, Royal Tunbridge Wells, TN1 1RS**

## Agenda

- 1 Attendance**  
(Members are asked to sign the attendance sheet on arrival. A draft attendance list will then be circulated after the meeting. Please advise the Secretary of any errors or omissions in the draft list.)
- 2 Membership Changes**
  - a) Changes of representatives
  - b) New membership applications
- 3 Minutes of the meetings dated 25 May 2023**
  - a) Approval as a correct record
  - b) Matters arising
- 4 Engagement Questionnaire**  
Administered by Brian Lippard, RTW Civic Society
- 5 Air Ambulance Charity**  
Air Ambulance Charity of Kent, Surrey and Sussex
- 6 Updates from Member Organisations**  
(Written if possible. Please advise the Secretary before the meeting if you wish to raise a topic under this agenda item.)
- 7 Update on The Commons**  
Presentation by Dan Colborne, Warden for The Commons
- 8 Town Forum Communications and Public Engagement**  
Discussion led by our Management Group team seeking *help* for effective communications (electronic and other) and in identifying *key issues* for us to address.
- 9 Update from the Borough Council**  
Update from Cllr Justine Rutland, Cabinet Member for Tunbridge Wells town and surrounding areas. Includes Amelia Centre Review, TW Football Club, Outsourcing of Town Hall, Councillor Convention, Cinema site and Elysian St John's Road.
- 10 Reports from the Town Forum Working Groups**
  - a) Strategic Planning Working Group
  - b) Transport Strategy Working Group includes Better Streets Initiative
  - c) Culture, Leisure and Tourism Working Group
  - d) Wellbeing Working Group
  - e) Finance and Other Issues Working Group, includes new group membership, Special Expenses and possible TF budget.

f) Water in the Wells Working Group

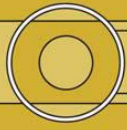
**11 Results from Engagement Questionnaire**

Results from Questionnaire introduced in agenda item 4.

**12 Urgent Business or Topics for Future Meetings**

**13 Future Meetings**

- Dates to be decided



## ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS TOWN FORUM

**Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2023 held at the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Chambers starting at 6pm**

### **1. ATTENDANCE**

#### **Member Organisations**

Dave Barnett (Friends of Grosvenor & Hilbert Park); Adrian Berendt (Royal Tunbridge Wells Bike User Group); Lorna Blackmore (Grantley Court Residents' Association); Mark Brooker (Culverden Residents' Association); Ruth Chambers (Tunbridge Wells Older People's Forum); Tim Colley (Stone Street Residents' Association); John de Lucy (Royal Tunbridge Wells Civic Society and Friends of Tunbridge Wells Cemetery); Marieke de Jonge (Tunbridge Wells Friends of the Earth); Jane Fenwick (Calverley Park Association); Dorothea Holman (Boyne Park Residents Association); Michael Holman (Tunbridge Wells Twinning and Friendship Association); Mandy Flashman-Wells (Tunbridge Wells Fair Trade Town Group); Marianne MacDonald (Sherborne Close Housing Association); Graham McNeilly (Rotary Club of Tunbridge Wells); David Scott (Residents' Association 1887/The Potteries); Don Sloan (Chair and Molyneaux Park Residents' Association); Tim Tempest (Friends of The Grove and The Avenues Residents Association); Mike Trudel (Friends of the Amelia Scott); Neill Williams (Warwick Park Area Residents' Association); Carol Wilson (Inner London Road Residents' Association).

#### **Councillor Members**

Culverden Ward: Cllr Martin Brice and Cllr Justine Rutland); St John's Ward: Cllr Marguerita Morton.

#### **Others in Attendance**

Borough Council Officers: Karin Grey (Sustainability Manager) Carlos Hone (Head of Planning); Sarah-Louise Koessler (Marketing and Administration Assistant); Hilary Smith (Economic Development Manager); Mark Straffelli.

**Apologies Member Organisations:** Stuart Anderson and Chris Morris (Beulah Road Residents' Association); Sue Bishop (Boyne Park Residents Association); David Bushell (Friends of Woodbury Park Cemetery); Dawn Stanford (Nourish Community Foodbank); Caroline Auckland (Soroptimists Tunbridge Wells); Mike Lees (Tunbridge Wells Civic Society); Matt Brown (Tunbridge Wells Puppetry Festival).

**Apologies Councillors:** TWBC Councillors: Cllr Victoria White (Park Ward) and Cllr: Rob Wormington (St James Ward) and Kent County Councillor Cllr Becki Bruneau.

## 1. MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

- No changes of representation
- No new membership applications

## 2. MINUTES OF MEETING 30<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2023

- Approved as a correct record
- Matters arising: None

## 3. UPDATES FROM MEMBER ORGANISATIONS

- Tunbridge Wells Old People's Forum – Have produced a survey: Giving a Voice to People in Later life. Survey of views from Covid-19. Opening quote: "Nobody understands the needs of the elderly until they are old themselves". Copies are available from Ruth Chambers and on the TF website.
- Mike Lees from the Royal Tunbridge Wells Civic Society has presented a paper on engagement and consultation, included within the Agenda Papers distributed.
- David Scott from the 1887 Pantiles Residents Association has provided some photographs of the Chalybeate Spring which opened just in time for the Coronation. Included in the Agenda Papers distributed.

## 4. TUNBRIDGE WELLS VISITOR ECONOMY

Presentation from Hilary Smith (TWBC Economic Development Manager) and Sarah-Louise Koessler (Marketing and Communications Assistant). Sarah-Louise Koessler summarised the attractions in our Borough with visitor groups identified as social contemporary buzz seekers, green spacers and historians.

**Visitor information** – The Centre has moved to the Amelia Scott with a presence in the Pantiles via leaflets ins, with a leaflet in the Corn Exchange Arcade, also in all hotels and key retailers and cafes. Seeking more official tourist information points, such as Royal Victoria Place and Chalybeate Spring (these also note where the toilets are located). Supplemented by regularly updated online presence via visitTunbridgeWells website and social media focused more on the younger social and contemporary audience. Previewed the new mini-guide with 150K copies distributed across Kent, Sussex, Kent, Surrey, South London and ports.

Visitor economy – Figures for 2021: 3.6 million visitors, at a value of £191m; 44.4% increase in trips (post-Covid), 47.1% increase in value, 23.4% increase in jobs. Some 39% of overall visitors are visiting friends and relatives, which is high. Further information available in presentation.

**Promotional activities completed** – Two short films, one focused on the Borough (family-focused) and one a day in Tunbridge Wells (younger audience), poster campaign from June at London train stations, new Instagram page called LoveLocal\_TW to promote business across all sectors, various tourist organisation events held/attended, will have a presence at Pub in the Park as many attendees are out of town, working collaboratively with different organisations,

such as BID, Visit Kent and Visit Britain, and undertook small campaigns around Small Business Saturday and International Women's Day (videos available via TWBC website and Youtube).

**Ongoing goals** – To build collaborative relationships, set up official tourist information points across Borough and build awareness with younger audience of travellers and other international travel organisations.

**Action** – Social media: Request made of any Town Forum members on social media to follow the Tourism Team and share photos and tag as an advocate of the Town.

## **Questions/comments**

**How many visitor numbers relate to town not Borough, e.g. Sissinghurst and Scotney Castle?**

Can't say exactly but Tunbridge Wells is a big draw. Figures come from an external economic model and copies of the full report are available.

**How do we compare with competitors?**

Each district or Borough has its own report and there is a Kent-wide one.

**Wiesbaden has a very effective model and the Twinning Association would be more than happy to help.**

The team has already met with someone from the Twinning Association.

**Comment that sport is missing on the promotional activities and this is a potential opportunity, particularly with cricket.**

Sport is featured on the website and promoting the cricket ground, squash club etc. Potential to have the cricket ground feature as a hidden gem video as it attracts Indian visitors because Indian cricket took off in 1983 at the Neville ground (features in the film 1983 on Netflix). Cllr Justine Rutland commented that the suggestion that Kent Cricket return to the Neville was a good thought to take away.

**A query over finance and funding and if BID are contributing.**

The films were funded through the Government's Welcome Back Fund to the district and there is funding through the UK Prosperity Funding that can be spent on the marketing plan for the Borough. The BID collaboration may also be a source of funding with mutual goals.

**Scope to link with activities for older people in the Borough and the suggestion was made that some of the empty shops are used for posters for things to do?**

Agreed there is potential for this and also estate agents' windows.

**Query over potential for visitor gifts such as fridge magnets.**

This has been raised before regarding the potential for have a shop selling Tunbridge Wells gifts and information provision.

## 5. TOWN CENTRE PLAN 'TRANSPORT AND CARBON BASELINE REPORT'

Presentation from Carlos Hone, TWBC Head of Planning. TWBC commissioned LDA Design, Knight Frank and City Science to develop a town centre study on active travel etc. This reviews national and local policy, cases studies and best practice and provides baseline data on: air quality, walking and cycling, other active travel, bus network, rail, highway and parking and carbon emissions. Presentation available.

**Air quality** – Change in air AQMA boundaries, new AQMA levels. Centre of the town still below national standards for NO2 and the PM10 concentrations for air borne particulate matter from car usage but can be improved.

**Walking and cycling** – Distance from walking in the town centre, 5 minutes from central areas, 15 minutes from outer in the study area so easy to get train station on foot. National cycleways – one of the main routes is along the A26 but the route is busy with traffic. Other cycle networks are somewhat fragmented and do not always come into the town centre.

**Highway and parking** – Parking is plentiful in the town centre and some other private car parks. Congestion is a main issue that needs to be looked at.

**Bus services** – Borough served by 12 different bus companies, mainly Arriva and Southern Counties. Links further afield to outskirts and longer distances to Sevenoaks, Maidstone and Brighton.

**Carbon emissions** – Decarbonisation is progressing in the town centre: in almost every instance there has been a reduction in CO2 since 2018, e.g. main domestic emissions (accounts for 64% of emissions).

### **SWOT Analysis Transport and Movement:**

- Strengths – pleasant walking environment in Core and Pantiles; green space; low speed limits; good rail connectivity; successful car club; frequent Bus Services to key locations
- Weaknesses – Cycling infrastructure, traffic pedestrian separation, congestion, car dominance, coach/bus layover parking, gradient, rural bus routes, low cost parking, EV charging levels, air quality, public realm quality in places
- Opportunities – Active travel; e-Bikes; EV charging expansion; peak hour spreading; potential P&R site; LCWIP routes; bus fares; Mount Pleasant Road environment; collaboration between stakeholders
- Threats – Bus service post-Covid; reallocation of road space for bus/cycle/ pedestrians; increased travel demand; delivery vehicles; rat Running; car ownership levels; funding of projects.

### **SWOT Analysis Carbon Emission and decarbonisation**

- Strengths – Carbon emissions reduction from all sources, below national average per capita transport emissions
- Weaknesses – Gas heating dependence, reliance on private car

- Opportunities – renewable heating potential, rooftop solar PV potential, modal shift potential
- Threats – Increased demand.

In response to this, the Town Centre plan can try to increase town centre living/ commercial/leisure/cultural /employment, improve the public realm and connectivity, cycle and pedestrian infrastructure (LCWIP projects), improve energy efficiency, develop pedestrian priority schemes to improve walking environments, support economic developments and development-related improvements.

## **Questions/comments**

**A lot of what is in there is what has been in Town Forum papers over the years.**

## **With innumerable options how are these to be prioritised and over what time period?**

Encouraging to see that CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are going in the right direction and they have been since 2011. The plan is dependent upon, for example, landowners doing building in the town centre. A lot of the land is associated with the Highways Authority and a lot of the connectivity is limited by that as this is a very focused plan not a Borough-wide plan and will be dependent on funding from elsewhere.

## **Query over buses and the loss of the bus garage and fewer parking places for vulnerable or friends/family visitors.**

The need for layover potential for buses has been identified and a bus study is being planned. There is also a need for a parking strategy that will be car parks and on street.

## **Which are the three key visions over the next 5 years?**

Maintaining a good economic vibrancy in the town centre and more local housing (150-200 new dwellings) and making walking and cycling improvements

## **Current building is focused on people of a certain age is there anything being done for more affordable housing?**

Important to have a mix. There is a need for older people accommodation and to have affordable housing and trying hard to make affordable housing around the borough and we try hard to make it deliverable around the town. Government has not changed how it calculates housing needs and this will only be reviewed once the Census data is out in a couple of years. For the town centre plan it is very constrained in terms of open sites. The developments will be denser with multiple height developments but to make sure the scale of the developments is appropriate an environment study would need to be done. Allowing people balconies and greening is important but the town has lots of green areas that are easily walkable.

## **What we have seen with Water in the Wells for example is that early intervention works.**

**Am I right in thinking only 12% of people are in the older age group (65 and over in the town centre vs 18.6% in England and 19.4% in the Borough overall?**

The town is very vibrant and want it to be attractive across the board so we don't want to focus on just one demographic. (Data available at:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/maps/choropleth/population/age/resident-age-3a/aged-65-years-and-over?msoa=E02005169> )

**Grantly Court junction you get carbon and exhaust emission as the junction is permanently blocked and a yellow box has been requested, what is being done?** Can look at the main routes in and the carbon emissions and the AQMA and it is improving – but it is a matter for the Highways Authority.

## **6. PROGRESS BY TWBC TOWARDS CARBON NEUTRALITY**

Presentation from Karin Grey – TWBC Sustainability Manager. Work divided into corporate plan for Council's own estate with a Corporate Carbon Descent plan since 2021, starting to move into the third year of this plan and a Borough-wide climate change strategy that is at draft stage. Also a corporate emissions plan with a greenhouse gas assessment and has seen a 21% reduction from 2018/19 to 2021/22. Grant funding – property improvements ongoing £1.4m Weald and Depot in funding. Some funding set aside for assessments. Also implemented a Carbon Impact Assessment toolkit that all officers have to do which includes Solar Together Kent: Borough-wide initiative to a group purchasing scheme – some 430 properties have signed up with 130 installations done; Climate Action website updated with resources and community stories; Pesticides and herbicide policy to reduce chemical use in parks and green spaces; phased sustainable procurement policy, staff carbon literacy training, participation in the Great Big Green Week among others; Car Club has expanded to 8 cars and will continue to expand as opportunities arise. Presentation available.

Borough-wide strategy is in draft. Drastic emission changes are needed if we want to get carbon neutrality by 2050. Domestic emissions account for 45%, , transport 35%. There are 7 themes across the borough: waste, building and energy efficiency, communities and engagement, natural environment, transport, adaptation and renewable energy generation. These will be the ones that we will be taking forward for the joint strategy. In March we became part of the UK 100 of leaders to ensure that we lobby Government on strategies for carbon change.

### **Questions/comments**

**More information on the Care Club locations requested and a comment that the 1887 sires has a space for a club car.**

These are Amherst Road, Quarry Road, Goods Station Road, Mount Ephraim, Civic Way, Mount Pleasant Road Avenue, Grove Hill Road and Warwick Park.

**Query over collaboration with KCC as TWBC has set a target for net zero by 2035 but KCC is 2050 and how cope with these differences county-wide?**

Work with KCC County wide is 2050 but TWBC is aspirational for 2030, but likelihood that this will merge in 2040.

**Comment that the website does not give local example of solar panel installation to encourage people to sign up.**



Can host local stories if a household but there are staffing changes that has meant no one has been able to do this.

## **7. COMMUNITY ENERGY AND OTHER ACTIONS**

Presentation from Marieke de Jonge: Friends of the Earth (FOE) Tunbridge Wells. FOE is looking into this and hopefully getting a work group together. The household is the biggest contributor to carbon emissions and energy costs are so high so it's important to get involved as the borough has the aim of being carbon neutral by 2030. The first stage is learning about the process and held events in 2019 and 2022 that provided insight and confirmed the need for a dedicated working group. There are examples where people have developed into a professional group and they are paid so we have been given some advice from Community Energy South and Kent Community Energy. Community Energy South are an umbrella organisation and their view is about people coming together to reduce energy use etc. They have levelling up funds available and councils need to be made available (including lottery money). Cited examples such as Communiheat and Repower Balcombe.

The next phase is to get a group of people together to look at renewable power. We have looked at Power for People, a lobbying group, which is looking at a change to the local energy bill where local people generating power can sell to other residents, rather than sell back to energy businesses for them to sell back to other local people. Aiming for a new public meeting with two main goals: Greg Clark support for local Electricity Bill and to generate interest in setting up a community energy scheme for the Tunbridge Wells area.

### **Questions/comments**

#### **For a community energy scheme in Tunbridge Wells, how broad would it be?**

That is the task of the work group to see how much interest there is and how many people would want to sign up. We are more the facilitator but we don't have the expertise to set up a community energy scheme ourselves.

#### **Do you envisage locals being able to generate electricity for their neighbour e.g., EV points?**

Yes we do but there are no schemes set up and running in Kent.

## **8. UPDATE FROM THE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Cllr Justine Rutland, Councillor Culverden Ward, gave an update. Working with Kent County Council on a newly launched Better Streets consultation on St John's and St James, which will have a survey and leaflet drops and pop-ups. Also looking at a Town Centre cycle route to Langton Green and Rusthall with funding from Central Government and start date at end of June. The High Street with a Traffic Reg Order and the one way system will stay in place – will run to September and the Council will work with BID to improve planters and work to improve the scheme. Highways – Alex Green from BID and Hilary and Julie Cook will walk round the town to see what can be improved. BID has also paid for new planters at Five Ways. The Literary Festival was very successful with 5,000 attendees, up from 1,600 in 2022 and across 5 rather than 3 venues. The first Comicon was very successful, particularly with young people. Borough-wide residents survey will run from June 12<sup>th</sup> for 6 weeks. There will be drop in options and letter

drops to 10K and will be publicised with Local. Farmers Market hopefully will be up and running in October.

Have had a boundary review and the ward boundaries changing with councillors dropping from 48 to 39 across 14 wards. Full information available at: <https://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/tunbridge-wells>. Post-election: Ben and Nancy remain in the same position, Hugo takes over planning, Wendy is Health, Leisure and Culture passed to Justine a part of Development portfolio. Two new councillors and Ellen Neville will take on Environmental and Jane Sharatt will be Sustainability. New mayor is Cllr Hugh Patterson with Deputy Cllr Nick Pope.

## **Questions/comments**

**FOE went round with the KCC officer two years ago to discuss where trees could be planted is there an opportunity to follow up with that?**

Town Centre plan is very big on greening the town so that is part of the policy. Contact Dave Scully to inform him that this was discussed with KCC as it something that could be done in collaboration with BID as they are interested in this.

**Has the Ford garage on Mount Ephraim got planning permission to move to the John Lewis site? And what comes to Mount Ephraim?**

Yes. Mount Ephraim has been scheduled for a residential site, but not older person specific with some greening or the public realm. The policy is to support affordable housing on those type of sites.

**Where will the Farmer's market be located?**

It will start with Calverley precinct, move to the clock tower and then move in front of the Town Hall. Aim is to be Sunday and make it a larger pavement market.

## **9. REPORTS FROM THE TOWN FORUM WORKING GROUPS**

### **a. Transport Strategy Working Group**

Have not met since the last meeting but will be meeting in June. Anyone keen to talk about transport is welcome to come along. The £2 bus fare scheme is to be extended. We will comment on the transport plan when we get it. There are going to be two bike rides from Tunbridge Wells station to Southborough Common to demonstrate the level of interest to have a bike route along the A26.

### **b. Water in the Wells Working Group**

A bottle filling station is now in the Grove. The Parks Department will be cleaning the fountain in Dunorlan and hopefully working by the summer. The toilets in every park where there is a water feature are to be open, St John's is supposed to be opening soon – they are boarded up because of vandalism. The Arriva garage development and the Cinema site are both detailed to have water features but no update on progress. The Chalybeate Spring has now opened, it is Chalybeate water stored on site and through an electronic process the iron content is reduced by 50% being marketed as Tunbridge Wells

water as spring water. The fountain is recirculating Chalybeate water. Mr Danby has spent close to £100K on this

**c. Strategic planning Working Group**

**d. Culture, Leisure and Tourism Working Group**

**e. Wellbeing Working Group**

No comments/updates from the other Working Groups.

## **10. URGENT BUSINESS OR TOPICS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS**

Thank you from Don Sloan to the speakers for giving up their time for this meeting.

## **11. FUTURE MEETINGS**

July 13<sup>th</sup> 2023. Have several topics scheduled for discussion already.

## TWBC Councillor Convention - 20 June 2023

### **Proposed new Strategic Plan: Challenges for towns and rural areas in the Tunbridge Wells Borough**

Paper delivered by Don Sloan, Chair RTW Town Forum

#### Background

Thank you for inviting me to say a few words on behalf of the Town Forum on challenges for our borough that need to be considered when drawing up a new strategic plan. I'll be concentrating on RTW town centre though some points will be relevant elsewhere.

This is all against the background of issues/challenges facing the Council itself: staffing levels, adjusting to co-working, and discussions with KCC over transport matters. There are other challenges over which the Council does not have control: the responsibilities and shortfall in standards by utilities – water shortages, sewerage and flooding, and of course government regulations including those for planning.

The Council has clearly demonstrated its ability to respond quickly and effectively in a variety of situations and challenges such as Covid, Ukraine, and more recently the cost of living crisis.

Lifestyles and ways of working have changed post Covid, people are feeling the pinch financially, and this will have a bearing on Council finances.

Many challenges and needs have already been identified by the Council, and much work has been done, and will surely feed into the plan. I'm thinking of the reports produced for the Town Centre Area Plan and steps being taken to be carbon neutral by 2030. There is now the challenge of encouraging and assisting the population reduce their own carbon footprints. The Council has made good progress in transport matters and active travel. Our two TF deputy chairs, Adrian Berendt and Jane Fenwick, have been very active in this area. Jane is with us this evening.

We could do with a better road connection to Maidstone, and we could tackle frequent congestion on the A21 just south of where the dual carriageway ends.

#### Challenges mentioned

I've sought the views of some of our TF membership organisations, including Rotary, as well as members of a U3A discussion group. The following ideas and challenges have emerged:

##### *1. Making town centres friendly and welcoming spaces.*

This requires easy transport access, and for Tunbridge Wells linking of the top part of the town with the High Street and Pantiles, perhaps using light minibuses. Traffic in the centre will need to be light and road signage clear.

Several of our members have commented on a lack of toilets in town. Closing them does not encourage visitors to towns. There should also be clearly labelled toilets in the Pantiles.

Markets give life to towns and villages. What are the most suitable venues and format? Should we also be looking for covered and indoor markets?

Other points raised:

- need for greater attention to pedestrianisation and pavements.
- Taxis tend to be concentrated at the railway station
- Is there a role for Uber?

## *2. Increasing the footfall*

Friendly and welcoming spaces will help to increase the footfall. What else attracts people come here and how can our towns and villages be promoted? We should build on the recent work of the Council's Economic Development team in promoting our borough in UK and abroad.

Many people have referred to our lively music scene. Our literary festival and recent poetry festival are appreciated, as are our park events. Can we do more? Will creating a Decimus Burton Centre be a challenge, it would surely bring people to Tunbridge Wells? The success of the Amelia Centre is applauded, and in my view the best local initiative for years. I think a review after its first year is planned, if so we could contribute.

## *3. Population trends/ pressures*

Population trends could be another challenge. The steady growth in older age groups is well known. In RTW we already have a slightly higher than average number of people over 65. This is also true for next younger groups, those who will be 65 in the next ten or twenty years. What population groups should we be catering for in the centre of Tunbridge Wells? Retirement Homes and Elysian are aiming to sell apartments to over 65s. Nationally and in TW Borough the figures for over 65s are around 19% whereas for the town centre it is only 12%. Do we want to keep it this way? Under what circumstances do we try to influence the average age of people in different parts of RTW and the Borough and when do we simply respond to it?

What of younger population groups? How can we attract younger workers to live in our towns?

## *4. Environment and Transport*

These are priorities for the Town Forum, and are very much work in hand for the Council. The environment was the focus of the Town Forum's last meeting with presentations on The Town Centre Area Plan: Transport and Carbon and Baseline Report, a review of the Council's progress towards carbon neutrality by 2030, and on Community Energy by TW Friends of the Earth.

Regarding roads the challenge is to make selected roads, as appropriate, suitable for some or all of various categories of users: pedestrians, cyclists, buses and minibuses while encouraging fewer cars in town centres.

## *5. Recent reports*

Reports produced in recent months include one on safety prepared by the Soroptimists and another on a Survey of Views after Covid-19 by the Tunbridge Wells Older People's Forum. Both these reports can usefully inform the new strategic plan. Indeed a number of Town Forum reports are being found useful. Our report on the Public Realm in response to the

# Agenda Item 8

challenges on the traffic arrangements near the Town Hall was updated on 23 May and included in the agenda papers for our 25 May meeting.

## *6. Housing and Infrastructure*

People have commented on housing and associated infrastructure. There have been several major housing developments in the town in recent years. In particular, there is one large and one small one on the Hawkenbury 285 bus route, but that service has diminished rather than be improved.

Water supply, sewerage and drainage are sometimes found not to be adequate, as with the recent water shortages. Utilities are statutory consultees for planning applications but are their responses reliable? How many applications are turned down on the basis of their response? Do they acknowledge their inability to provide a proper service? To what extent do utility firms make improvements in the service they provide to support developments?

Another challenge is to have sufficient low cost housing in towns so people who are lower paid can live in areas where they can respond to employment needs. Developers all too often quote viability problems as a reason not to provide such housing.

## *7. Building on the name of Tunbridge Wells*

It should not be too challenging to build on the name of Tunbridge Wells and to exploit the heritage of the area. With the encouragement of Water in the Wells we continue to see more water features, and the work is on-going. Then there is the promotion of the spring in the Pantiles by an entrepreneur/businessman.

*These challenges can be met. The Council will adapt. Through its plans it will respond to the changing needs of local people and develop an increasingly vibrant borough.*

Don Sloan  
Chair, RTW Town Forum

20 June 2023

WORKING GROUP  
PREVIOUSLY FOR CULTURE LEISURE AND TOURISM  
NOW LEISURE WELLBEING AND CULTURE

Mini update, June 2023

For the past year this group has been rather on hiatus. Myself, Carolyn Gray, needed to step back from Chairing. Stuart Anderson was willing to take over, but then had a very busy year personally. Fortunately Stuart was able to stay in touch with the Town Forum Management Group, but we didn't manage any Working Group meetings, and tasks we had agreed to take on last summer drifted away.

I felt quite guilty, as I had said I would keep an eye on developments on The Pantiles, and I didn't. So I offered to coordinate an informal meeting, and 5 of us met in The George pub on Monday 19th June: Don Sloan, Carolyn Gray, Stuart Anderson, Brian Lippard and John de Lucy. Between us we attempted a round up of all that had happened in the past year regarding The Pantiles spring, Pantiles events, the Decimus Burton Museum project, The Amelia Scott, The Assembly Hall, Trinity Theatre, The Forum, Town Hall, The Local Plan, including Hawkenbury Sports Centre, and TW Football Club, local parks funding, including RTW In Bloom. Don made a list of our comments to take to the meeting about a new Council Strategic Plan.

Stuart and I feel this working group needs "new blood" to take it forward into the future, and would welcome anyone willing to take on Chairing, also a secretary to take and type the minutes, and new members with an interest in the future of the town's leisure, wellbeing and culture.

Carolyn Gray  
30th June 2023