



AGENDA AND JOINING INSTRUCTIONS

Thursday 16 June 2022 at 6.00 pm
Virtual Meeting - Online

Agenda

- 1 Attendance**
(Members will be checked-in as they enter the meeting – please ensure you use your real, full name. 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** (Pages 3 - 4)
 - a) Changes of representatives
 - b) New councillor members
 - c) New membership applications
- 3 Minutes of the meetings dated 24 March 2022** (Pages 5 - 14)
 - a) Approval as a correct record
 - b) Matters arising
- 4 Updates from Member Organisations**
(Please advise the Secretary before the meeting if you wish to raise a topic under this agenda item.)
- 5 New Leader of the Council**
Presentation from Cllr Ben Chapelard (Leader of the Council, TWBC)
- 6 OuRToWn**
Presentation from David Scott (Trustee of OuRToWn)
- 7 UK Shared Prosperity Fund**
Presentation from David Candlin (Head of Economic Development and Property, TWBC)
- 8 Discussion on the Forum Focus meeting on 12 May 2022** (Pages 15 - 18)
(Notes of the meeting are attached for reference.)
- 9 Reports from the Town Forum Working Groups** (Pages 19 - 20)
 - a) Strategic Planning Working Group
 - b) Transport Strategy Working Group
 - c) Culture, Leisure and Tourism Working Group
 - d) Finance and Other Issues Working Group
 - e) Water in the Wells Working Group
- 10 Urgent Business or Topics for Future Meetings**
- 11 Future Meetings**
 - 15 September 2022
 - 17 November 2022 (AGM)
 - 19 January 2023
 - 23 March 2023



Joining Instructions – by computer

Click on the following link to join the meeting:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87205480849?pwd=SDJoUTBuQzAyUmlnWWFLaFhWcUx4dz09>

Meeting ID: **872 0548 0849** Passcode: **099119**

(The meeting ID and passcode are embedded in the above web address so if using the link you will not need to enter them separately.)

During the 'join in' process please note:

1. Use your proper name. Please ensure your display name is your own full name and not, for instance, a personal nickname or "My iPad" or other unidentifiable object. The name can be altered when logging in. People who cannot be identified may not be admitted.
2. Agree to use your computer video
3. Agree to use your computer audio
4. If you have a problem, please open the Zoom client and 'message' on the system direct to "TWBC Democratic Services" who will be running the system on behalf of the Town Forum.
5. On entry you will automatically be put into a 'waiting room'. If its busy there may be a delay in admitting you but be assured the meeting will not start until everybody waiting has been admitted. To ensure a speedy entry into the meeting please ensure your display name shows your actual name.

Joining Instructions – by telephone

Should you wish to join the meeting by telephone only, please dial one of the following numbers and add the meeting ID and passcode when requested by the automated system:

0208 080 6591 United Kingdom

0208 080 6592 United Kingdom

Meeting ID: **872 0548 0849** passcode: **099119**

Important information on joining

1. The meeting will be recorded and may be made available online.
2. Please mute your microphone when not speaking to reduce background noise. Attendees via telephone can mute themselves by typing 'x 6' on their keypad.
3. The organisers may mute or unmute all or individual microphones if necessary, but we will try to avoid this.
4. If you wish to speak during the meeting please either type 's' in the chat window or raise your hand using the 'reactions' button. The Chairman will invite you to speak to avoid multiple people trying to speak at once. Please unmute your own microphone when invited to speak by the Chairman and mute again afterwards.
5. The meeting will be open early, from 5.30pm, for those who are not used to Zoom so that you can become familiar with the platform.



ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS TOWN FORUM

Membership Changes, 16 June 2022

a) Changes of representatives

None to report

b) New councillor members

Ward	New / re-elected members	Continuing members
Broadwater	Cllr Jamie Johnson	Cllr Christopher Hall
Culverden	Cllr Martin Brice	Cllr James Rands Cllr Justine Rutland
Pantiles & St. Mark's	Cllr Gavin Barrass	Cllr Wendy Fitzsimmons Cllr Andrew Hickey
Park	Cllr Nicholas Pope (re-elected)	Cllr Christian Atwood Cllr Victoria White
Sherwood	Cllr Shadi Rogers	Cllr Lance Goodship Cllr Hugo Pound
St. James'	Cllr Ben Chapelard (re-elected)	Cllr Rob Wormington
St John's	Cllr Mark Ellis (re-elected)	Cllr Peter Lidstone Cllr Marguerita Morton

c) New membership applications

None to report

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**Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 24 March 2022,
held online via Zoom, starting at 6pm**

ATTENDANCE

1

Member Organisations:

Banner Farm Residents' Association – Veronika Segall-Jones | Beulah Road Residents' Association – Stuart Anderson | Boyne Park Residents' Association – Sue Bishop | Calverley Park Residents' Association – Jane Fenwick | Civic Society of Royal Tunbridge Wells – Brian Lippard | Culverden Residents' Association – Mark Booker | Friends @ The Amelia Scott – Mike Trudel | Friends of Grosvenor & Hilbert Parks – David Barnett | Friends of the Commons – Joy Podbury | Friends of the Grove – Tim Tempest | Friends of Woodbury Park Cemetery – David Bushell | Grantley Court Residents' Association – Lorna Blackmore | Inner London Road Residents' Association – Carol Wilson | Molyneux Park Gardens Residents' Association – Don Sloan | Nourish Community Foodbank – Dawn Stanford and Lesley Darcy | Poona Road Residents' Association – Alistair Tod | Ramslye Residents – Adrian Thorne | Rotary Club of Tunbridge Wells – Graham McNeilly | Royal Tunbridge Wells in Bloom – Katharina Mahler-Bech | Royal Tunbridge Wells Together – Sarah-Jane Adams | Sherborne Close Management Committee – Marianne MacDonald | Soroptimist International of Tunbridge Wells and District – Caroline Auckland and Angela McPherson | St John's Road Residents' Association – Marguerita Morton | The Avenues Residents' Association – Tim Tempest | The Forum – Carolyn Gray | Telephone House Neighbours' Association – Katharina Mahler-Bech | Tunbridge Wells Anti-Aircraft Noise Group (TWAANG) – David Fenwick | Tunbridge Wells Bicycle User Group – Adrian Berendt | Tunbridge Wells Fairtrade Town Group – Mandy Flashman-Wells | Tunbridge Wells Older People's Forum – Veronika Segall-Jones | Tunbridge Wells Twinning and Friendship Association – Michael Holman and David Wakefield | Warwick Park Residents' Association – Neil Williams.

Councillor Members:

Culverden Ward – Cllr James Rands and Cllr Justine Rutland | Pantiles & St Mark's Ward – Cllr Wendy Fitzsimmons | Park Ward – Cllr Nicholas Pope | St James' Ward – Cllr Rob Wormington | St John's Ward – Cllr Mark Ellis and Cllr Marguerita Morton.

Others in Attendance:

County Councillors – Cllr Becki Bruneau (TW South) | Presenters – Samuel Danby (Chalybeate Spring), Gabriel Abulafia and Oliver Trowell (Redwood Consulting), Lucy Wilford (DHA Planning (Planning Consultants)), Dominic Hailey (Collado Collins (Architects)), Guy Flintoft and Caroline Keiller (Retirement Villages) | Borough Council Officers – William Benson (Chief Executive), Stephen Baughen (Head of Planning), Karin Grey (Sustainability Manager), Amy Allen (Climate Change Officer) and Hilary Smith (Economic Development Manager) | Secretary – Mark O'Callaghan.

MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

2 a) Changes of representatives

The following changes were noted:

- Joy Podbury is now the primary representative for the Friends of the Common, previously Sally Balcombe. Clive Evans is now the substitute representative.
- Sue Bishop is now substitute representative for Boyne Park Residents Association, previously Lindsay Baker. Dorothea Holman remains the primary representative.
- Lesley Darcy is now the substitute representative for the Nourish Community Food Bank. Dawn Standard remains the primary representative.
- Paul Bright is now the primary representative for the Royal Wells Park Residents Association, previously Liz Grant. Helen Walton remains the substitute representative.
- Mary Wardrop the representative for Sherborne Close Management Committee had sadly died in November 2021. Marianne MacDonald is now the primary representative. There is no substitute representative.

b) New Membership Applications

A new application has been accepted from:

- The Tunbridge Wells Fair Trade Town Group. The primary representative is Mary Flashman-Wells with Jacqueline Franklin as the substitute representative.

MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS DATED 20 JANUARY 2022

3 No amendments were proposed. The minutes were noted.

UPDATES FROM MEMBER ORGANISATIONS

4 Rotary Club of Tunbridge Wells

Graham McNeilly provided an update on a couple of initiatives currently in progress:

- The Rotary Club of Tunbridge Wells was celebrating its centenary and to mark the 100 years they had been raising money to install a set of adult exercise equipment in Dunorlan Park.
- This was a joint exercise with the Tunbridge Wells Round Table.
- The fund raising target was reached this month (March 2022) and contracts had now been signed with the supplier. It was hoped the equipment would be installed sometime during the summer.
- The main driver behind this project was Don Sloan.
- The other initiative was a plan to introduce an odd job service for the elderly.
- The Rotary Club were working with Tunbridge Wells Age UK to launch this service. Initially this work would be undertaken by members of the Rotary Club, but as it expanded outside volunteers would be sought.

CHALYBEATE SPRING

5 Samuel Danby presented on the potential for development of the Chalybeate Spring on the Pantiles:

- A plan for the redevelopment of the Spring had been put together that would allow residents and visitors to enjoy this attraction throughout the year.
- Planning permission proved very difficult as this was a listed site but approval had now been given.
- Details of the plan were provided to the group. It included a visitor centre, the inclusion of the Royal Crest, a Chandelier and a Fountain that would be lit up. It would also include a cinema screen that would tell the story of the Spring.
- The water would be bottled. The bottles would include a QR Code that when scanned would link into the story of the Spring.
- Additionally, there would be an old style map, that would also include QR Codes which when scanned would allow the reader to enjoy a walk that included other sites of interest around the town. The tour would be very family orientated rather than overly factual.
- In order to generate revenue, the Trinity Theatre had agreed to organise a horse and cart (Tuesdays and Saturdays) that would travel along the High Street with bottles of the water, the aim would be to promote the water and encourage businesses to sell Spring water.

Answers to questions and comments from members included:

- Discussions had taken place with the Amelia Scott and it was hoped that they would also show the film depicting the history of the Spring.
- A watering treatment company based in Sevenoaks would be responsible for ensuring the water was drinkable. Excess minerals could be extracted from the water making it palatable without removing its spring water status.
- The amount of water made available would be monitored – it was not expected to be distributed on a large scale. Initially the water would be stored in 2 tanks which would provide 6 months of supply.

PUBLIC SAFETY

- 6 Marianne MacDonald (Town Forum Management Group), Caroline Auckland (Soroptimists International of Tunbridge Wells and District) and Sarah-Jane Adams (Royal Tunbridge Wells Together) presented:
- Safety of women and girls had become a major issue around the UK.
 - Towards the end of 2021, Kent Police undertook a survey (receiving over 8,000 responses) with the results showing that Kent was not considered to be a particularly safe place.
 - Last year the Soroptimists asked their Members and members of the public about their thoughts on safety. A couple of examples of comments included issues around safety on public transport late at night and not using multi-storey car parks at night due to feeling unsafe.
 - Younger respondents commented on instances of verbal and lewd comments being made that were totally unacceptable.
 - Overall the comments received suggested that women and girls felt very vulnerable in the local community.
 - A peaceful candlelit non-political vigil held in November 2021 received an amazing level of support on the subject of violence and safety.
 - Following the Kent Police survey a number of areas of concern were raised, including: Police presence; Street lighting; Lack of female Police; CCTV; Education; Victim blaming and support; Stalking; Misogyny; Personal Safety; Drink spiking; and Online and offline harassment.

- The Soroptimists attended an International Women's Day event and held a safety panel that included the TWBC Community Safety Officer, a representative from the Youth Forum and an Inspector from Kent Police.
- The panel received some quite challenging questions and it was evident that concerns existed within the local community.
- A recent Government survey showed that over 50% of women still felt unsafe at certain times.
- The Soroptimists were keen to collect similar data and have therefore produced a survey. The data collected would allow for action plans to be created that will promote better education and awareness.
- In recognition of the need to promote awareness and make the town safer, last year Tunbridge Wells Business Improvement District (BID) introduced some free self defence classes for town centre workers – so far over 150 town centre workers had attended. Attendees also received a free personal alarm.
- BID had also provided 'stop tops' (free of charge) to hospitality venues. Stop tops are foils that are put over your drink to deter drink spiking. In addition, anti spike awareness training was being offered.
- BID were also considering going for a Purple Flag accreditation – assessors would visit the town and against a set of predetermined criteria associated with safety, the town would be evaluated. If successful the town would be awarded a Purple Flag.
- In addition, BID were working the Kent Police on the 'Best Bar None' scheme. This was also an accreditation scheme.
- BID were always looking for ideas that would help support safety in the Town Centre.

Answers to questions and comments from members included:

- The 'Ask Angela' campaign was operating in the town. If a person felt uncomfortable in a venue, they can approach the bar and 'Ask for Angela'. It would be a good idea if this could be better publicised.
- Safety measures should include the older generation.
- Positive steps were being taken but there was much more that could be done.

ENVIRONMENT

7 Karin Grey (TWBC Sustainability Manager) and Amy Allen (TWBC Climate Change Officer) presented:

- TWBC had now launched its new Climate Action website.
- The website was aimed at being able to showcase the Council's commitment to reduce its corporate carbon footprint and share information with the community. In addition, to heighten the importance of climate emergency and the actions needed on both a local and global scale.
- The website was broken down into 3 clear themes: Inform; Explore; and Engage.
- The website was specifically designed to be uncluttered and easy to navigate. More information would be added as initiatives and work came forward.
- In the first instance it was important for the Local Authority itself to understand its current position and what measures could be taken to reduce emissions.
- Next steps, both inhouse and externally included, promoting cycling, encouraging composting, bee keeping etc.

- TWBC had green ambassadors that represented different departments to discuss ways to encourage climate actions within their teams.
- It was also important for community groups to get together to showcase the activities e.g. allotments etc.
- TWBC were looking to create a Borough wide strategy and would ensure there was wider community engagement and consultation throughout the process.
- There would also be a youth engagement activity in the form of a competition. It was hoped this would take place sometime in July.
- TWBC were hoping to hold an event in the autumn that would get small and medium enterprises together to explain what they were doing and hopefully, potentially signpost them through to some grant funding.
- KCC had confirmed they had received some grant funding for some pilot training programmes for food and drink businesses.

Answers to questions and comments from members included:

- Car Club was very popular and TWBC were keen to roll it out further. There were plans to add 3 more cars to the service.
- KCC had completed, and TWBC would be, converting its street lamps to LEDs. Most of the street lighting in the Borough was managed by KCC.
- The Town Forum were considering forming an Environment working group.
- TWBC would be contacting all the key young persons groups to ask them if they want to be involved in the process.
- TWBC were just starting on a first draft of the Borough Strategy. Once this has gone through the Committee process it would be sent out for consultation before coming back with final amendments. The whole process was likely to take about a year. Initial consultation was expected sometime during summer 2022.
- Information on what individuals could do could be found on the TWBC website. The TWBC website also signposted where further information could be found.

UPDATE FROM THE BOROUGH COUNCIL

8

William Benson (TWBC Chief Executive) presented:

- Cabinet had now given approval to co-working at the town hall and a contract would now be awarded to the successful tender.
- Although recognising a lot of work would be involved, TWBC were very pleased to have secured hosting the Subbuteo world championship in 2024.
- The Amelia Scott was on track to open on Thursday 28 April 2022.
- The Council's annual budget had been agreed at the Full Council meeting in February.
- A note would be sent to the members of the Town Forum with details of what was being planned for the Platinum Jubilee.
- The Garden Waste service had now resumed.
- The Local Plan examination process had started. A bit more time had been requested on the 'Duty to Co-operate' with particular regard to Tonbridge & Malling and Maidstone.
- Many of the vacant premises around the town centre were now becoming let. It was very encouraging that the empty stores were now coming back into use.

Additionally on supporting Ukrainian Refugees:

- Two schemes were operating in the UK – the family scheme and the sponsorship scheme.
- Family Scheme was already up and running and was very straightforward. If you were a UK resident you could secure a visa for a relative.
- The Sponsorship Scheme was currently being worked up but would be quite different.
 - A website was launched for hosts to register.
 - To date, over 150,000 people had registered.
 - Initially the scheme was for known families and individuals.
 - Guests would be able to come over to live and work for up to 3 years and would have full recourse to public funds.
 - Sponsors would be eligible for £350 per month and would be required to offer accommodation for at least 6 months.
 - Councils would be required to undertake a number of processes including safeguarding checks etc.
 - There were a number of channels sponsors/guests could use e.g. through friends, Facebook etc.
 - Hosts would need to be DBS checked.
 - There were still a number of issues yet to be resolved e.g. how funding would be distributed – to TWBC direct or to the County.
- There remained concern as to whether the public sector would be able to cope with the management of the scheme and that there was sufficiency in terms of the checks to ensure the whole scheme was properly and robustly safeguarded.
- As of last week the Kent Resilience Forum had been reset up which was the vehicle used to manage major emergencies.
- Within Tunbridge Wells there were already 135 Ukrainian guests. Approximately between 1,000 and 2,000 people were expected in Tunbridge Wells.
- TWBC had already created a website that pointed people in the right direction to find support.
- TWBC had also asked for people to register their interest in helping and in the first 3 days received 150 responses.
- TWBC had also been connecting the voluntary and community sector.
- The Gateway would be used as the administrative hub.
- TN2 would be used as the facility for processing clothes, toys etc.
- There had been some concern that families here that had organised visas for other family members did not have sufficient room within their own accommodation to house the additional family members so the Council had had to step in and help.
- Other possible tensions included breakdown in relationships and community tensions if guests started to dominate the housing register. Also, the effect on other refugees (Afghans, Syrians etc.) who had not been afforded the opportunity to bring relatives over.
- There would be an additional burden on public services, e.g. schools and mental health services.

Answers to questions and comments from members included:

- The slides from the presentation would be circulated to members.
- With regards to the Housing Register, the usual banding scheme would apply.
- The checks on refugees would be undertaken by the Home Office and Border Security.

- The 'matching' process would be undertaken by individuals – there was no central system. There were a number of Facebook groups that had been set up to offer help.
- Southborough had previously had a very strong connection with a town in Ukraine. It might be worth checking as to whether this group was still operating.
- TWBC had set up an email address ukraine@tunbridgewells.gov.uk which can be used to submit any ideas or suggestions.

CINEMA SITE

9 Gabriel Abulafia (Redwood Consulting), Oliver Trowell (Redwood Consulting), Guy Flintoft (Retirement Villages), Caroline Keiller (Retirement Villages), Dominic Hailey (Architect, Collado Collins) and Lucy Wilford, (DHA Planning) presented:

- Retirement Villages only build, operate and manage retirement villages.
- Retirement Villages were owned by AXA which allowed an expansion of expertise and a long-term approach.
- A similar development in West Byfleet shared many characteristics with Tunbridge Wells including redeveloping a derelict site in the town centre and integrating services with public spaces.
- The scheme in West Byfleet had now received planning consent and so work would start in the next few months.
- Town centre locations would allow older people to access services and contribute within their communities rather than retiring to exclusive out of sight locations.
- The site had been vacant for a very long time so it especially important that the scheme was realistic and deliverable.
- Details of the scheme were still work in progress and there was time to contribute to ensure a sustainable asset to the community was created.
- The site came with a number of challenges e.g. the tunnel underneath.
- Focusing on health and wellbeing and active space was an important factor in the design of the development.
- An element of retail would be retained on the site. It would also include a central courtyard that would form the heart of the development and would be an open public space which carries the public rights of way.
- The development would feature four main blocks around the central courtyard, each block addressing the particular aspects of its location and relationship with its neighbours.
- There would also be a need to respect the local landscape so the development would need to remain in keeping with the architecture around it.
- The key aspect facing the town hall would be set back and stepping down the hill to reduce the massing of the building.
- The development would improve upon previously consented designs and draw upon architectural influences from around the town.
- The development would be built to be a net zero carbon building.
- Next steps was a public consultation (week beginning 28 March 2022).
- Details of the public consultation would be circulated to all members.

Answers to questions and comments from members included:

- Details of AXA vacating their town centre presence were not known.
- It was usual that about one third of residents moving to retirement communities previously lived within 10 miles of the site. The large majority of those moving from further away usually have a connection to the area e.g. family and friends.
- The new design would also ensure that the apartments were 'right sized' – this would ensure they were affordable and accessible to local people.
- There was concern that the development did not include provision for any affordable/social housing. An assessment would be made and submitted as part of the planning application with regards to the viability of the scheme to fund affordable housing.
- The flats would include a mixture of leasehold sale and rent.
- In keeping with the spa heritage of the town, a water feature would be included in the design of the development. The themes of health and wellbeing in the town could be enhanced by opening the facilities to the public.
- The number of homes envisaged in the complex was circa 150.
- Retail/commercial space would be circa 750m².
- Residents care needs would be assessed on arrival and there would be a resident care provider on site.
- There were not thought to be any issues regarding maintaining the public right of way that ran through the site.

Stephen Baughen (TWBC Head of Planning) made the following comments:

- The site had been sitting vacant for a considerable amount of time. The future of the town having a viable scheme would be fundamental.
- Decisions would need to be made on the form of the scheme but also a viable scheme.
- The scheme would be subject to a planning application and rigorous review.
- The provision of affordable houses on previous applications had been considered unviable.
- The provision for a public consultation was very welcome.
- It was a highly accessible location and would therefore likely reduce the pressure on developments on the outskirts of the town.
- The approach being undertaken by developers was encouraging.

REPORTS FROM THE TOWN FORUM WORKING GROUPS

10

a) Strategic Planning Working Group

Mark Booker presented:

- The Cinema site and the increase in the number of proposed residences was noted.
- The new proposed development of 43 apartments on the former SDA site on St Johns Road to be noted.
- It was a positive time for planning in the town centre.

b) Transport Strategy Working Group

Report on agenda.

c) Culture, Leisure and Tourism Working Group

Report on agenda.

d) Finance and Other Issues Working Group

No update.

e) Water in the Wells Working Group

Report on agenda.

URGENT BUSINESS OR TOPICS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

11 There was no urgent business

FUTURE MEETINGS

- 12 Special meetings:
- 21 April 2022 – Hustings
 - 12 May 2022 – Forum Focus
- Regular meetings:
- 16 June 2022
 - 15 September 2022
 - 17 November 2022 (AGM)
 - 19 January 2023
 - 23 March 2023

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Notes of the meeting held on Thursday, 12 May 2022, held at the Town Hall, starting at 6pm

ATTENDANCE

- 1 Member Organisations:
 Boyne Park Residents' Association – Dorothea Holman | Culverden Residents' Association – Mark Booker | Friends of the Commons – Joy Podbury | Friends of the Grove – Tim Tempest | Friends of Tunbridge Wells Cemetery – John de Lucy | Friends of Woodbury Park Cemetery – David Bushell | Grantley Court Residents' Association – Lorna Blackmore | Inner London Road Residents' Association – Carol Wilson | Molyneux Park Gardens Residents' Association – Don Sloan | Rotary Club of Tunbridge Wells – John Cook | Soroptimist International of Tunbridge Wells and District – Caroline Auckland and Angela McPherson | St John's Road Residents' Association – Marguerita Morton | The Avenues Residents' Association – Tim Tempest | Tunbridge Wells Bicycle User Group – Adrian Berendt | Tunbridge Wells Fairtrade Town Group – Mandy Flashman-Wells | Tunbridge Wells Friends of the Earth – Marieke de Jonge | Tunbridge Wells Twinning and Friendship Association – Michael Holman.

Others in Attendance:

Guests – Martin Brice | Secretary – Mark O'Callaghan.

(Attendance was only open to member organisations (not councillor members) therefore this meeting will not be counted in the voting eligibility rule for the AGM.)

REVIEW OF CURRENT FUNCTIONS, ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- 2
- The Town Forum in Action document as attached to the agenda was reviewed.
 - The Town Forum's response to the Gatwick expansion consultation was missing from the list and would be added to future versions.
 - Attendance at meetings was mixed and relied on a relatively small number of committed regulars.
 - Encouraging councillor attendance needed work, particularly for county councillors who were key to affecting transport issues.
 - The Forum had some successes in influencing the borough council and there were several good examples where the Forum and TWBC had worked together (e.g. footpath survey and high street changes survey).
 - The Forum was, at least, a good barometer of public opinion and a pool of expertise which could be better harnessed.
 - The Forum needed to better promote its successes and raise its profile.
 - Councillors were sometimes perceived as following party agendas rather than reflecting resident concerns.
 - Councillors used to meet with Management Group privately which allowed them to speak more personally and freely.

- Communication between member organisations and councillors should go both ways, the Forum is particularly keen to hear the representations from councillors in areas where there are fewer member organisations.

IDENTIFYING CURRENT ISSUES AND POTENTIAL FOR IMPROVEMENT

3

Representation:

- There were difficulties engaging with some councillors, especially county councillors.
- The Joint Transportation Board doesn't work, there is a perception that KCC does not take it seriously.
- Lack of joined-up thinking at KCC, e.g. education – public transport policy bears little or no relation to school admissions policy.
- KCC needs to focus on doing fewer things better.
- KCC, and to a lesser extent TWBC, highly centralised and focused on saving money, both suffer with a lack of understanding of public priorities.
- Government funding was increasingly moving towards disparate 'pots' rather than general funding to local government. Councils needed plans in place to take advantage if/when funding becomes available.
- Could the Forum do more to represent resident views and/or hold councillors to account?
- Important to ensure consultation was genuine and inclusive.

Special Expenses:

- Lack of clarity and accountability of 'special expenses' for Tunbridge Wells. All residents of the town pay an equivalent of a parish precept but that money goes straight to TWBC.
- If Royal Tunbridge Wells was parished a town council would increase visibility and accountability.
- Understanding special expenses could be a project for the Finance Working Group.
- The borough council appears reluctant to reveal and therefore give up control of special expenses. A town council could not be ignored.
- Both Sevenoaks and Tonbridge had town councils in addition to the district/borough council.

WORKING GROUPS: ROLE, STRUCTURE, PRESSURES AND SPECIFIC ISSUES

4

Current Working Groups:

- Working Groups are the engines of the Forum but relied upon a small and ever decreasing pool of active members.
- Need to rebalance the workload of existing groups.
- Planning Working Group needed dedicated and active members with specialist skills. The Government was constantly tinkering with the planning regime which made it difficult to keep up and plan for the future. The new Local Plan had required significant time and mental resources. In future, the Working Group will likely need to focus on fewer priorities.
- Finance Working Group had very little influence with TWBC and previous responses to the budget consultation had gone unheeded. Consultation on the Council's budget is far too late in the process.
- Culture, Leisure and Tourism Working Group covers a huge remit with a large number of members but lacks active volunteers. Largely an information sharing mechanism rather than an activity driver. It needs

some projects or tasks to get into and focus on. Discussions for reform ongoing with the Group.

- Water In the Wells Working Group is a small and highly focused group. Pleased with several tangible successes.
- Working Groups often took a long-term view whereas councillors were more interested in short-term gains.

Tourism:

- New Amelia Scott is good but lacks some of the features traditionally associated with supporting tourism, e.g. no gift shop, no maps/flyers.
- (Since the meeting the Tunbridge Wells Business Improvement District, Royal Tunbridge Wells Together, has confirmed that maps are available elsewhere throughout the town, stockists are listed at <http://www.rtwtogether.com/map>)

IMAGE AND COMMUNICATIONS, INCLUDING SOCIAL MEDIA

- 5
- Very difficult to foster relationships with journalists, generally they have significantly reduced resources and only interested in drama/conflict.
 - A request could be made for the Town Forum to feature in Times of Tunbridge Wells. Would need a creative writer to produce copy.
 - The Forum needs a higher public profile to attract new members and increase its influence.

SUPPORTING THE RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE / ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

- 6
- There was a strong interest in environmental issues but a lack of volunteers for a formal working group. An alternative approach may be that each working group to have regard to environmental issues relating to issues within its own remit rather than a standalone group.
 - There were lots of existing environmental groups in Tunbridge Wells.
 - The borough council has climate obligations but one of the biggest contributor to emissions comes from transport which is not a borough responsibility. (Highways and public transport are KCC responsibilities.)
 - Environment champions could be consulted by Forum Working Groups rather than setting up a standing working group.
 - The borough council had been focused on reducing the emissions from their own operations but was now switching to a borough-wide approach, this was the right time to get involved.
 - The Forum could have a communication role and should work closely with the relevant council committee (currently CEAP).

RELATIONS WITH BUSINESS ORGANISATIONS: BID / OURTOWN

- 7
- The Forum had several business interests represented with its membership.
 - The Tunbridge Wells Business Improvement District (BID), Royal Tunbridge Wells Together, was a member of Town Forum and invited members of the Forum's Management Group to BID meetings.
 - OuRToWn Community Interest Company (CIC) is intended to fill the gap as Town Forum is not a legal entity and the town lacks a town council. The initial trustees would disband after establishment and new trustees will be appointed.
 - The Forum needed a better understanding of what the CIC is and what its objectives will be.

FUTURE DIRECTION OF THE TOWN FORUM

- 8 Town Council:
- The prospect of a town council was likely to be resisted amid fears of taking money from the borough council, adding bureaucracy and increasing costs.
 - Town Forum needs to fully understand the implications and potential benefits.
 - Desire to avoid politicisation of any new council, possible to have a politically neutral council as is the case in many parish councils.

Structure of the Town Forum:

- Overly dependent on a small number of people.
- Canterbury City Forum recently changed to remove memberships, alternative structures for the Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum could be investigated.
- Town Forum will continue to support the Youth Forum which is in the process of considering their own image and direction.
- Town Forum needs to engage with younger generations (working age people). Residents are conscientious but generally not interested in sitting on committees.
- Town Forum needs to respond to changing ideas of democracy.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 9 No urgent business not already covered.

FUTURE MEETINGS

- 10 Regular meetings:
- 16 June 2022
 - 15 September 2022
 - 17 November 2022 (AGM)
 - 19 January 2023
 - 23 March 2023

NOTE: A recording of this meeting is available to Town Forum members on request to the Secretary.



Reports from the Town Forum Working Groups, 16 June 2022

a) Strategic Planning Working Group

Update from Mark Booker

b) Transport Strategy Working Group

Update from Jane Fenwick

c) Culture, Leisure and Tourism Working Group

Update from Carolyn Gray

d) Finance and Other Issues Working Group

Update from David Wakefield

e) Water in the Wells Working Group

Update from Michael Holman

(The Wellbeing Working Group is in abeyance.)

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