



A G E N D A

Thursday 22 January 2015 at 6.30 pm
Council Chamber, Royal Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN1 1RS

1 Apologies for absence

2 Membership changes

- a Membership applications (for decision)
- b Changes of representatives (for information)

3 Minutes of the previous meetings held on 27 November 2014 (Pages 1 - 14)

To: (a) note the minutes of the Annual General Meeting; and (b) approve the minutes of the scheduled meeting, both held on 27 November 2014.

4 Actions from previous meetings

27 November 2014

4 Tunbridge Wells Car Club

Transport Strategy WG The Working Group be asked to consider the Tunbridge Wells Car Club initiative in detail and report their findings to the full Town Forum.

An update report will be made to a future meeting of the Town Forum.

4 Purchase of Tunbridge Wells and Rusthall Commons

Although there was no specific action point arising, a further update will be provided at today's meeting.

4 Site Allocations Development Plan Document

Various Updates to be made on: housing targets and the Site Allocations DPD timetable. This is an agenda item for today – please see Item 7.

4 (a) The Core Strategy review (process, timetable etc) and (b) review of TWBC's Open Spaces Strategy

Adam Chalmers (a) update report and (b) confirmation of when this review will occur.
NB – the Open Spaces Strategy will be reviewed in 2016, as part of the evidence base for the Core Strategy review.

5 Update from Leader of the Council (5 mins)

6 Gatwick Airport - Consultation on a possible second runway (15 mins presentation/15 mins questions)

To assist Forum members in understanding the issues relating to this formal consultation process, Joe Ratcliffe, KCC's Principal Transport Planner, will make a short presentation and answer member questions.

7 Site Allocations Development Plan Document (10 mins)

Jean Marshall, TWBC's Planning Policy Manager, will attend the meeting to provide a general update on the Site Allocations DPD process, including the next stages.

8 Responses to TWBC consultation issues (10 mins each)

(a) Draft TWBC budget 2015/16

David Wakefield, the Chairman of the Finance and Other Issues Working Group, will introduce a proposed response to TWBC's formal consultation on its draft budget for 2015/16.

(b) Draft Corporate priorities 2015/16

Similarly, Mr Wakefield will also present his Working Group's proposed response to TWBC's draft list of corporate priorities for 2015/16, which has also undergone a period of formal consultation.

(c) Draft Parking Strategy

Jane Fenwick, Acting Chairman of the Transport Strategy Working Group, will present the Group's proposed response to TWBC's draft Parking Strategy, which will shortly begin its formal public consultation stage via TWBC's website.

9 Presentation by Councillor David Scott (15 mins) (Pages 15 - 28)

Councillor David Scott will make a short presentation to the Town Forum on his proposals for an alternative public transport system. Some background reading is attached.

10 Reports from the Town Forum working groups (5 mins each) (Pages 29 - 36)

(a) Water in the Wells – Michael Holman, chairman of this working group, will provide an update report.

(b) Leisure, Culture and Tourism – June Bridgeman, chairman of this working group, will provide an update report.

(c) Transport Strategy – Jane Fenwick, acting chairman of this working group, will provide an update report.

(d) Planning and Development – Mark Booker, chairman of this working group, will provide an update report.

(e) Finance and Other Issues – David Wakefield, chairman of this working group, will provide an update report.

11 Any other business

Date of the next meeting

Dates of meetings for 2015 (all at 6.30pm):

Thursday 26 March

Thursday 21 May

Thursday 16 July

Thursday 24 September

Thursday 26 November (including the AGM)

(Thursday 28 January 2016)



ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS TOWN FORUM

ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS TOWN FORUM - ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Thursday 27 November 2014

Attended: Cllr Bob Backhouse, Sally Balcon, David Barnett, Lorna Blackmore, Mark Booker, Stephen Bowser, June Bridgeman, Cllr Peter Bulman, David Bushell (sub), Cllr Ben Chapelard, John Cunningham, Michael Doyle, Helen Featherstone, Jane Fenwick, Allan Gooda, Alex Green, Michaela van Halewyn, Tim Harper, Dorothea Holman, Michael Holman, Sue Kaner, Kyrios Kyriacou, Katharina Mahler-Bech, David Morris, Marguerita Morton, Ken Norman (sub), Peter Perry (sub), Nick Pope, Cllr James Scholes, Cllr Don Sloan, Anne Stobo, Alastair Tod, David Wakefield (Chairman), Mary Wardrop, Denise Watts, Cllr Lynne Weatherly and Philip Whitbourn (sub)

TWBC officers present: Adam Chalmers (Democratic and Community Engagement Manager), Lee Colyer (Finance Director) and Mike McGeary (Democratic Services Officer)

Also present: Will Farmer (Community Engagement Officer, KCC) and Cllr Jane March (TWBC Cabinet Portfolio-holder for Tourism, Leisure and Economic Development)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were reported from: the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jukes, and from Altan Omer, Angela Phillips, Cllr David Scott and Cllr Frank Williams.

2. DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS ENTITLED TO VOTE

The Democratic Services Officer had circulated a list of organisations which had achieved the required level of attendance at meetings to be able to vote at the AGM, as determined by the Town Forum's Constitution. (This had been amended in advance of the meeting to add the Camden Road Guild as eligible to vote.)

3. MINUTES OF THE 2013 AGM

The minutes of the 2013 AGM, held on 28 November 2013, were submitted. It was noted that these had been presented to the January 2014 meeting, where they had been approved.

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the AGM, held on 28 November 2013, be noted.

4. REPORT FROM THE CHAIRMAN ON THE TOWN FORUM'S ACTIVITIES OVER THE PAST YEAR

The Chairman of the Town Forum for 2013/14, David Wakefield, summarised his report on the work of the Forum over the past year, which was a requirement of its Constitution.

Mr Wakefield thanked the chairmen of the five Town Forum working groups and acknowledged how fortunate the town was to have people of such quality leading these as well as having others with the ability, commitment and keen interest to play such an active role in their work.

As for the future of the Town Forum, Mr Wakefield expressed the hope that its role and influence would grow. He felt there were plenty of obvious opportunities to allow this to happen, e.g. the proposals for the Cultural and Learning Hub as well as the 'localism' initiative under which treasured land or buildings could become 'assets of community value'. Mr Wakefield believed the Town Forum had an important role to play in helping to co-ordinate the efforts of different interest groups, including fund-raising, in achieving these objectives.

Mr Wakefield welcomed the election of a new Chairman (see minutes 6 below), confident that the Town Forum was now a well-structured, cohesive and effective group.

RESOLVED – That the Chairman's report on the work of the Town Forum for 2013/14 be accepted.

5. PROPOSED CHANGE TO THE CONSTITUTION

The Chairman introduced a report, in which the Forum's agreement was sought to amend the Constitution in order to be able to elect at least one of the Deputy Chair posts from a wider group of members than currently specified within the Constitution. This, it was stressed, would bring the criteria in line with that for the election of the Chairman of the Town Forum, which had been agreed at an extraordinary meeting, held on 29 May.

RESOLVED – That the Town Forum's Constitution be amended as proposed, to enable at least one of the Deputy Chairmen to be elected from amongst the member organisations.

6. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE FOR 2014/15

The Chairman summarised a report, which set out the nomination process for the election of a Chairman and two Deputy Chairmen of the Town Forum.

Mr Wakefield explained that there had been one nomination for the position of Chairman and two for the Deputy Chairmen positions, as follows: Chairman – Alastair Tod; Deputy Chairmen – Cllr Bob Backhouse and Alex Green. These nominations were endorsed unanimously.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That Alastair Tod be formally declared elected to serve as Chairman for 2014/15, until the date of the 2015 AGM;
- (2) That Alex Green and Cllr Bob Backhouse be elected to serve as Deputy Chairmen for 2014/15, until the date of the 2015 AGM;

Alastair Tod took up the Chairman's position at this point. He paid tribute to the three-year chairmanship of David Wakefield, drawing attention to the transition Mr Wakefield had achieved in steering the Forum away from a period of turmoil to become a flourishing, productive group.

Agenda Item 3

Mr Tod felt that, in a time of significant change, both nationally and locally, it was even more important for the town to have a distinct body which could articulate the views of its residents. He firmly believed that the strength of the Town Forum lay in the active role of its working groups. He added that the Town Forum should welcome the occasional 'talking shop' label it was given, provided that such discussion developed into outcomes of substance.

Michael Holman welcomed Alastair Tod's appointment. He also paid tribute to the chairmanship of David Wakefield, voicing gratitude for his huge contribution since being elected in 2011. Mr Holman felt that David had led the transformation into much greater order and increasingly constructive dialogue, helping the Town Forum become a model for debating and sharing initiatives.

On behalf of all Town Forum members, Mr Holman expressed a heart-felt debt of gratitude to David Wakefield for his patient, courteous and calm chairmanship.

The meeting concluded at 6.45pm.

This page is intentionally left blank



ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS TOWN FORUM

ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS TOWN FORUM

Thursday 27 November 2014

Attended: Cllr Bob Backhouse, Sally Balcon, David Barnett, Lorna Blackmore, Mark Booker, Stephen Bowser, June Bridgeman, Cllr Peter Bulman, David Bushell (sub), Cllr Ben Chapelard, Cllr Mrs Barbara Cobbold, John Cunningham, Michael Doyle, Helen Featherstone, Jane Fenwick, Allan Gooda, Alex Green, Michaela van Halewyn, Tim Harper, Dorothea Holman, Michael Holman, Sue Kaner, Kyrios Kyriacou, Katharina Mahler-Bech, David Morris, Marguerita Morton, Ken Norman (sub), Peter Perry (sub), Nick Pope, Cllr Catherine Rankin, Cllr James Scholes, Cllr Don Sloan, Anne Stobo, Alastair Tod (Chairman), David Wakefield, Mary Wardrop, Denise Watts, Cllr Lynne Weatherly, Philip Whitbourn (sub) and Cllr Chris Woodward

TWBC officers present: Adam Chalmers (Democratic and Community Engagement Manager), Lee Colyer (Finance Director) and Mike McGeary (Democratic Services Officer)

Also present: Will Farmer (Community Engagement Officer, KCC) and Cllr Jane March (TWBC Cabinet Portfolio-holder for Tourism, Leisure and Economic Development)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were reported from: the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jukes, and from Altan Omer, Angela Phillips, Cllr David Scott and Cllr Frank Williams

2. MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

Mike McGeary, TWBC's Democratic Services Officer, reported the following change of representatives: (a) for the Inner London Road Residents' Association, Mr Pat Wilson had been appointed as the first-named representative, with David Wakefield as substitute; and (b) Will Farmer (KCC's Community Engagement Officer) was welcomed to the meeting.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 September 2014, were presented.

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 25 September 2014 be agreed.

4. ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

25 September 2014

6 Tunbridge Wells Car Club

Transport Strategy WG *The working group be asked to consider the Tunbridge Wells Car Club initiative in detail and report their findings to the full Town Forum.*

The Transport Strategy Working Group will examine this in the new year.

8 20mph speed restrictions

Cllr Caroline Derrick Cllr Derrick to circulate full details of the two pilot schemes to initiate 20mph zones.

It was noted that these details had been circulated by e-mail on 1 October.

9 Purchase of Tunbridge Wells and Rusthall Commons

Management Committee The Management Committee to send a letter to the Courier, setting out the concerns of the Friends of Tunbridge Wells and Rusthall Commons regarding the actions of Targetfollow.

It was noted that this action had been completed and the letter published by the Courier.

Sally Balcon provided a further update. She advised that the Friends group had submitted a bid, adding that those wishing to learn more should contact their Chairman, John Barber. Mrs Balcon advised that Targetfollow had subsequently challenged the bid. She also underlined the fact that, if the bid were accepted, there would be a significant undertaking involved to raise the sum agreed.

10 Green Networks questionnaire

All Members All members encouraged to complete this questionnaire

(See minute 8 below)

10 Site Allocations Development Plan Document

Various (a) Housing targets; (b) Site Allocations timetable; (c) recent reports

Cllr Rankin provided an update on the Site Allocations DPD process. She began by confirming the timetable for the 'submission' DPD document, advising that it would first be considered by the Cabinet (4 December), then full Council (10 December), before a further period of public consultation takes place from February 2015 and the DPD is sent to the Secretary of State.

Cllr Rankin emphasised that, as soon as the Site Allocations DPD had been submitted to the Secretary of State, TWBC would immediately embark upon a review of its Core Strategy, as required by the Government's National Planning Policy Framework; one of its key focuses, she added, would be housing.

Cllr Rankin felt that the town area of the Borough would face the biggest pressure to accommodate the bulk of the additional housing to be imposed, because it was surrounded by an 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty' designation, as well as a substantial Green Belt perimeter, within which a certain level of protection from additional development was provided. However, Cllr Rankin felt that there was already a presumption that certain parts of the Green Belt would be allocated for additional housing. She felt that the Town Forum should be fully aware of the risks and dangers to the town area of significant additional development as part of the Core Strategy review.

Sue Kaner also asked whether there were plans to review the Open Spaces Strategy at the same time, as it was clear that some existing areas would be under threat. Adam Chalmers undertook to raise this with the Planning officers and report back.

Action point: (a) Information on the review of the Core Strategy (process, timetable etc) be provided for the Town Forum in due course; and (b) Adam Chalmers to check on the timetable for the review of TWBC's Open Spaces Strategy.

13(a) Charles Whitbourn Emson portrait bust

Adam Chalmers to investigate the possibility of having the portrait bust displayed in the Town Hall for Remembrance Sunday.

Adam Chalmers confirmed that this had been achieved, adding that the bust would remain on display in the foyer to the Council Chamber for the four-year duration of the WW1 commemorations.

Alastair Tod advised that he would like to see the bust remain on permanent display in the Town Hall.

5. UPDATE REPORT FROM TWBC'S CABINET

Cllr Jane March, Cabinet Portfolio-holder for Tourism, Leisure and Economic Development, before providing an update on some of the key issues considered by the Cabinet since the last Town Forum meeting, introduced Liam Rogers from the Gradient creative and consulting company. Mr Rogers provided Town Forum members with a short presentation on an "Artists Unveiled" free exhibition, which was taking place across 17 venues in the town, from 1 – 31 December, where 30 local artists were showcasing their work, including art, performances, written work etc.

Cllr March reported on the following areas of interest:

- (a) The proposed Cultural and Learning Hub** – where negotiations were continuing with KCC over the viability of the scheme. Cllr March added that she would report back to the Town Forum on this topic early in the new year on progress;
- (b) Fiveways** – where construction work would pause at the end of the month and recommence in January;
- (c) Cinema site hoardings** – Cllr March advised that the Cabinet had agreed to invest £21k in promoting the Borough, through commissioning the printing and installation of high-quality photos to be applied to the hoarding on the Mount Pleasant and Church Road elevations. Cllr March added that the cost would be met partly from one of the Economic Development budgets and partly from revenue from night-time parking.

The Chairman asked where the images were being sourced from. Cllr March added that the parish and town councils in the Borough had been asked to provide some local images for consideration. Adam Chalmers added that the majority of the photos were from existing stock held by the Council.

Sally Balcon asked about the two existing rights of way across the site, specifically whether access would be maintained. Mr Chalmers advised that the Borough Council was aware of this issue and had been in discussion with the highways authority;

- (d) **Assembly Hall Theatre** – Cllr March advised that the Cabinet had agreed that capital funds of £1.5m be set aside in order to provide some much-needed improvements to the Theatre, including air conditioning. She added that the Borough Council had also started to work with consultants in investigating the viability of providing a new theatre;
- (e) **Chalybeate spring** – Cllr March advised that Targetfollow had commissioned an endoscopic survey of the Chalybeate spring, to determine if there were any blockages that were affecting the flow. The results would be shared in due course, she added.
- Cllr March added that TWBC's Environmental Service would be testing the quality of the water at the spring as well as at the cold bath, on Eridge Road, adjacent to the Common.
- (f) **Grosvenor and Hilbert Park** – Cllr March advised that this improvement project was progressing well, with work to the dripping wells started, part of the proposed orchard being marked out and work on enhancing the skate park due to take place over the winter period;
- (g) **Christmas train** – Finally, Cllr March reported that, subject to final safety testing, the Christmas train would be operational from the following day. She added that Marker Study would operate the train and the Borough Council would provide overnight storage.

There were no action points arising from this report.

6. TWBC DRAFT BUDGET FOR 2015/16

Lee Colyer, TWBC's Finance Director, provided a detailed report on the key issues impacting upon TWBC's proposed budget for 2015/16.

Mr Colyer pointed to the provisional government grant settlement for the authority, which would see a further cut, namely £697,000, representing a 16% reduction on the current year's level of support.

Mr Colyer drew attention to the latest budget projection for 2015/16, which showed that a balanced budget could be achieved, provided the staff savings and work streams set out could be delivered.

He added that, after the Cabinet meeting on 4 December, the proposed budget would be the subject of a full public consultation process. He asked that the Town Forum – either at its relevant working group or through individual comment – be involved at that consultation stage.

David Wakefield, as the Chairman of the Finance and Other Issues Working Group, asked Mr Colyer if it would be a helpful contribution to say that the Town Forum supported the balanced budget objective. Similarly, he asked whether it would be appropriate to comment upon the proposed 2% increase in council tax for 2015/16.

Mr Colyer advised that the table set out on page 31 of the agenda papers was only a projection at this point, ahead of confirmation of the actual level of government grant which the authority would receive. He added that this would be known after the Chancellor's 'Autumn Statement' on 3 December. However, Mr Colyer stressed that any contributions which the Town Forum wished to make during the consultation stage (4 December - 16 January) would be very welcome.

John Cunningham felt that two of the assumptions set out in that same table were speculative. He therefore asked Mr Colyer how confident he was about the forecast increases in investment income and the council tax base. Mr Colyer advised that the confidence level in those two aspects was high: the investment income levels were virtually guaranteed, he advised, and the tax base was one of the more certain forecasts.

Marguerita Morton sought further information about the £20m loan which the authority secured some years ago. She asked whether the interest the Council was achieving matched the amount it was having to pay to the Public Works Loans Board. Mr Colyer advised that there was £12m remaining from that loan, with the authority repaying £1m every six months. He added that the interest received on this outstanding loan was exceeding what the authority had to pay.

Sue Kaner referred to the £21k which the Cabinet had agreed to invest in the marketing initiative through the photographs it planned to have added to the hoardings around the cinema site. She asked whether it was felt prudent to spend this sum in this way. Cllr Jane March advised that the decision was taken in order to help achieve some of the objectives of the authority's Destination Management Plan; she advised that the initiative would help to promote the Borough as a tourist destination, adding that it was anticipated that the enhanced hoardings would remain in place for at least four years.

John Cunningham continued the hoardings discussion. He referred to a meeting he had attended in September, where he had been advised that David Bartholomew would be providing the photos at no cost but had now learnt that Mr Bartholomew would not now be commissioned to supply the images. Cllr March voiced her gratitude for Mr Cunningham's input into this initiative. She added that David Bartholomew had been originally commissioned, however due to some of the criticism which had been linked to this Cabinet decision, he had decided for his own commercial reasons to withdraw from the project.

Cllr Peter Bulman expressed his full support for the hoardings proposal, adding that the authority should do all it could to enhance the attractiveness of the town centre, especially the improvement of this prominent site.

Alex Green voiced his relief that the derelict cinema building had finally been demolished. He voiced his full support for the proposed hoardings initiative.

Marguerita Morton felt that the £21k sum proposed to be spent on enhancing the hoardings for marketing purposes could have been spent in a more effective manner, e.g. with improved leaflets, especially as the authority did not seem to have a recognised tourism budget. Cllr Jane March responded; she advised that the Leisure, Culture and Tourism Working Group was leading the way as far as improved leaflets were concerned. She added that there was a separate tourism budget but that this formed a part of the overall Economic Development service figure. She reiterated her full support for the hoardings scheme as an effective way in which to attract visitors.

Michael Holman added his support for the hoardings proposal, but stressed that emphasis must be placed on high quality images.

There were no action points arising from this report other than encouragement for the Town Forum to respond to the draft budget during the formal consultation stage.

7. DRAFT CORPORATE PRIORITIES

Adam Chalmers, TWBC's Democratic and Engagement Manager, drew attention to a draft list of corporate/political priorities which the authority had produced for 2015/16, in support of achieving the objectives set out in the Council's Five Year Plan. Mr Chalmers added that, once the Cabinet had agreed the draft list, there would be a period of formal public consultation on these, between 4 December and 16 January; he encouraged Town Forum members to study the list and take advantage of the consultation process.

The Chairman, Alastair Tod, felt that the best way forward was for the Finance and Other Issues Working Group to take a lead on behalf of the Town Forum.

There were no specific action points arising from this report.

8. WORKING GROUPS

Update reports were made from the working groups as follows:

Water in the Wells Working Group – The Chairman, Michael Holman, voiced the working group's acknowledgement of the importance of developing a 'refreshed' face for the whole of the town's public realm. He added that this underlined the need to achieve a consistency which promoted the Borough's health, wealth and water brand. This, he felt, was of equal importance in the developments taking place on the periphery of the town, some of which were picked up in the following progress report:

- (a) **Fiveways public realm scheme** – Mr Holman reiterated his disappointment that this scheme had not incorporated a water feature at this stage; however, he was very keen to ensure that the contractors had included the provision of electricity and water services, to allow an easy link-up to a water feature at a subsequent point;
- (b) **North Farm roundabouts** – Mr Holman advised that investigations and negotiations were continuing, to try and ensure appropriate ducting was included in the building of the two main roundabouts as part of this scheme, to allow for the later installation of a water feature. He added that Cllr Scott was continuing to assist in this work;
- (c) **Knight's Wood** – Mr Holman referred to earlier discussions with representatives of Dandara, from which it had been established that the developer was supportive of the suggestion that a water feature be installed in the communal area at Knight's Wood. He added that plans and how this was to be funded were awaited;
- (d) **Royal Wells Park** – Mr Holman reported on progress with this scheme at the former K&S Hospital. He advised that detailed plans for a cascading water feature down the central spine of this development were awaited;
- (e) **Cinema site** – With plans for this cleared site to provide temporary Christmas parking being withdrawn by TWBC, Mr Holman advised that the working group was investigating the possibility of developing a small corner for a water feature. Mr Holman also asked if it were possible for some photos of Wiesbaden's water features to be included as part of the hoardings initiative, set out in minute 5 above;

- (f) **Pantiles Chalybeate Spring** – Mr Holman welcomed the statement made by Cllr Jane March that an endoscopic survey was being carried out, to determine the reason why the Chalybeate Spring was no longer flowing. He added that he looked forward to seeing the results of this investigation;
- (g) **Fountains Lodge BUPA care home** – Finally, Mr Holman reported that this new development had been officially opened on 12 November, incorporating a fountain, the three spouts of which were clearly visible from London Road – one of the main entrance routes to the town. He added that this was an excellent example of what can be achieved between the private sector and a dedicated interest group.

Cllr Catherine Rankin advised that TWBC would shortly be undertaking public consultation on an 'urban design framework supplementary planning document' (which was due to be considered by the Planning & Transportation Cabinet Advisory Board on 26 January, followed by Cabinet on 12 February 2015). She felt that this might provide the Town Forum with a good opportunity to press the case for more water features under any 'public art' element of future town centre development.

Mark Booker also reported on a very helpful meeting he had had with Michael Holman on the prospect of preparing a 'water and rocks' trail, as part of the work being undertaken by the Leisure, Culture and Tourism Working Group. It was acknowledged that this was one more example of the cross-working group co-operation that existed within the Town Forum.

RESOLVED – That the progress report be accepted.

Leisure, Culture and Tourism Working Group – The Chairman, June Bridgeman, had earlier circulated an update report, summarising the progress made by her working group since the last Town Forum meeting. From this report, members noted the following issues:

- (a) An invitation from TWBC to take a lead in progressing two initiatives set out in the '**Tunbridge Wells Souvenirs**' report, namely: a chain of information points in shops and other tourist destinations; and the development of further, themed, itineraries for tourists and shoppers. A further initiative which TWBC had asked the working group to progress was the development of a consistent wayfaring signage strategy for the town, it was noted;
- (b) With the '**green networks**' initiative, Mark Booker had thanked all those who had completed questionnaires and asked others yet to respond to submit their findings. From the update provided, it was noted that TWBC had indicated they wished to see a number of trails mapped and published. Related very much to that, June Bridgeman invited Town Forum members with either graphic art (capable of cartographic or map-production work) or relevant IT skills to join the working group and assist in moving these initiatives forward. The next meeting of the group, to which those with relevant skills were very much welcomed, would take place on Tuesday 9 December at 7.30pm, it was noted.

RESOLVED – That the progress report be accepted.

Transport Strategy – Jane Fenwick, acting Chairman of this working group, advised that her members had met on 3 October and a number had also attended the Joint Transportation Board (JTB) (TWBC and KCC members) and the Public Transport Forum. The key issues arising from the working group were:

- (a) Mrs Fenwick advised that the **Transport Strategy** was being presented to the next JTB meeting, taking place on 19 January, as the final version of the document. She

expressed the hope that the consultation responses had been adequately considered and the draft version of the Strategy thereby significantly improved. Mrs Fenwick invited Cllr Rankin to attend the next meeting of the Transport Strategy Working Group to talk on the issue of the transport implications of the additional housing that the Town Forum had been alerted to;

- (b) Mrs Fenwick advised that there would be a full public consultation process beginning in January on TWBC's draft **Parking Strategy**. Mrs Fenwick advised that her working group had welcomed the opportunity to meet with the Parking Manager, Rosemarie Bennett, some weeks before publication of the draft. Mrs Fenwick stressed the importance of the draft Parking Strategy including actions which (i) reduced congestion and (ii) saw parking revenue being used to support investment in updating and improving parking facilities;
- (c) Mrs Fenwick advised that, at **Carrs Corner**, KCC had installed a sign, intending to alert drivers to the need to slow down their approach to the roundabout when coming from the Bayhall Road direction. However, there was universal agreement that the sign was ineffectual, so more obvious measures were now being suggested by the working group;
- (d) **Co-Wheels**, the car share initiative launched by TWBC in September, had made a successful start, Mrs Fenwick advised. She added that TWBC was inviting the Town Forum to say whether there was a need for an additional vehicle, based in a residential area for instance, or any other feedback they wished to give. Stephen Bowser suggested that what might be helpful was the availability of something like an estate car, which would be capable of carrying bulky items to the recycling or refuse facility at North Farm.

Adam Chalmers drew attention to a pilot 'pay-on-exit' car parking scheme which was being run from February at the Great Hall car park for one month. He advised that further details were set out in the Local magazine and he urged Town Forum members to provide feedback on their experiences of the trial.

Mr Chalmers advised that TWBC was also setting aside funds to improve some town centre car parks, e.g. improving some stairwells etc.

Stephen Bowser asked what surplus car park revenue was spent on by TWBC. Mr Colyer advised that there were two distinct revenue streams: (i) on-street car parking, the income from which could only be spent on the provision and enforcement of such parking; (ii) off-street car parking, where the revenue could be spent across the full range of TWBC services.

Dorothea Holman enquired about Tesco's park and ride proposals and whether these would ever be realised. Adam Chalmers undertook to research and respond direct to Mrs Holman. Mrs Holman also raised the linked issue of the difficulties created by drivers using residential streets to park all day, free of charge, without regard to the impact on local residents.

Cllr March advised that TWBC had tried to secure some funds from the South East Local Enterprise Partnership to help introduce a park and ride scheme in the Borough, but, on this occasion, had been unsuccessful.

Cllr Backhouse advised that he was aware of Tesco's park and ride proposals from a Planning Committee aspect. The current position, he understood, was that this was not yet a viable scheme.

Finally, on the transportation issue, Cllr Rankin advised that TWBC's current thinking was to reduce the congestion on Pembury Road by examining the viability of widening the road, to allow for a dual carriageway scheme.

RESOLVED – That the progress report be accepted.

Planning and Development Strategy – Michael Doyle, Chairman of this working group, referred to the Site Allocations Development Planning Document (DPD), which had now reached its 'submission' stage, subject to Cabinet (4 December) and full Council (10 December) agreement. He expressed sympathy for TWBC's Planning officers facing, as they did, a review of the authority's Core Strategy, immediately upon the submission of the Site Allocations DPD, due to the implications of the Government's National Planning Policy Framework.

David Wakefield made a plea for the provision of the Site Allocations DPD in hard copy format, which Adam Chalmers confirmed could be provided, once the Cabinet and the full Council had agreed the final detail.

Finance and Other Issues – David Wakefield, Chairmen of this working group, advised that there were no items to report.

9. TWBC CONSULTATION ISSUES AND ITEMS OF GENERAL INTEREST

Mike McGeary had circulated a paper with the agenda in which items of forthcoming Council business had been listed, extracted from TWBC's 'Forward Plan'. This had been provided for information only.

Jane Fenwick queried why public consultation on the draft Parking Strategy was scheduled to begin over the Christmas and new year period, a time when most people had other priorities. Mr Chalmers explained that, whatever the official deadline for comments was, he would ensure that the full Town Forum meeting on 22 January had a chance to consider the working group's recommendations on the Strategy.

NB – Subsequent to the meeting, it has been confirmed that public consultation on the draft Parking Strategy will begin in mid-January at the earliest.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(a) Wiesbaden and the ice rink – Michael Holman reported that, once again, Klaus Doessler would be visiting the Tunbridge Wells ice rink, from 12 – 14 December, where he would be offering Glühwein, Bratwurst and potato curls for sale. Mr Holman encouraged Town Forum members to visit and enjoy the German Christmas fare once more.

(b) Maintenance of sports pitches – Sue Kaner raised the issue of the recent Courier article in which the Foresters Football Club had been unable to play football on their home pitches, due to poor maintenance by the parks' contractor. She felt that this issue might benefit from some Town Forum input. Cllr March advised that the Foresters had been offered an alternative pitch, free of charge. Cllr March added that there had been further discussions held with the parks' contractor that day and that the position would be reviewed in the spring.

(c) Gatwick Airport development – Dorothea Holman enquired into progress with the latest consultation process re. Gatwick Airport and the proposed second runway. Adam Chalmers advised that the Leader of the Council intended to have a full Council debate on this issue, at which members of the public would be able to speak. Cllr March added that the Leader of the Council was attending a meeting on this topic that evening, at Hever Castle.

(d) 2015 centenaries – John Cunningham advised that there were a number of centenaries occurring in 2015, which he felt the Town Forum needed to be aware of and perhaps help organise events around. First, he advised that, in December 2015, it would be 100 years since the death of William Nevill, 1st Marquess of Abergavenny; secondly, 2015 marked the period when Belgian refugees settled in Tunbridge Wells, (adding that there might be the possibility of a joint commemorative activity with relevant families); and thirdly, October 2015 would mark the centenary of the accidental sinking of HMS Hythe in the Gallipoli campaign, when 129 local men from the 1st/3rd Kent Field Company, Royal Engineers died.

(e) Civic Society publication – John Cunningham advised that the Civic Society had produced a WW1 commemorative book, 'The shock of war', which was available from Waterstones and proving to be a very popular purchase.

(f) Parks maintenance – June Bridgeman asked that all relevant 'Friends of ...' groups be asked for their views, in any review of Sodexo's performance.

(g) Town Forum anniversary – Katharina Mahler-Bech advised that July 2015 would mark the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the Town Forum.

(h) Health publications – Mike McGeary drew attention to a number of leaflets and publications which had been tabled, covering a 'choose health' programme, adult and family weight loss sessions, free health checks for 40-74 year olds and a 'parent and toddler' walks booklet, produced by the Weald Forest Ridge Landscape Partnership.

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 22 January 2015 at 6.30pm

The meeting concluded at 8.25pm.

Proposed: Personal Pods For Tunbridge Wells

Can this be an environmentally friendly, low impact way to solve the chronic congestion problems along the Pembury road and elsewhere?

Personal Pods have travelled over a million miles carrying close to a million passengers safely and speedily since their installation in Heathrow Terminal 5 in September 2011. It's time to consider these for Tunbridge Wells to solve our chronic congestion.

They are highly attractive, fast, quiet, on demand, driverless and for personal use as a complete alternative to the traditional bus Park and Ride systems. It can be designed to fit unobtrusively into our town, running mainly on the ground but also up and over or under obstructions.



See: <http://goo.gl/IXZQ40> and <http://goo.gl/PvV7V0>

Congestion: is suffocating our town. Visitors, our guests - we all hesitate to travel in or out of our town because we know the problem. We see 'rat runs' risking the lives of our children; our roads are parked up with commuters vying for spaces; our shops and businesses suffer from the inability of customers and employees to get to them. We hesitate visiting North Farms retail or entertainment areas.

Challenge: We need a long term solution to reduce congestion. We want solutions that are friendly to our environment, in tune with our heritage, our buildings and our commons. It must meet the needs of our town and our residents.

However a solution to Tunbridge congestion will **only** happen if the residents of Tunbridge Wells are willing to fight for one. The political will and the finance will then be forthcoming. In the long term solutions should be self-financing however we must find the initial capital costs for infrastructure.

The Pod System

The Pods are a new and innovative on-demand system for developed or urban environments. It is designed to meet the need for congestion free, multi-origin, multi-destination public transport. Using small driverless electric vehicles that run on guideways, the lightweight and flexible nature of the system enables it to be retrofitted into a broad range of environments and provide transportation that is environmentally friendly and operationally efficient.

The Alternatives

The capital and operating revenue and costs of the Pod should be compared to the potential capital cost (and disruption) of at least £30 million for "dualling" or widening the Pembury road - with no additional revenue stream or a solution of what to do with the additional cars once they are in TW centre.

Bus Park and Ride cannot be effectively delivered (according to the recent report to the JTB) without huge capital sums being spent to widen the road, substantially restricting parking in TW centre and subsidising the buses.

With additional Pods the track can run up to 900 pods per hour - comparable to a single lane of the best of urban roads. Hence, if needed - demonstrating a high level of success - the system would more than double the current Pembury road people carrying capacity and still achieve fast travel times.

The pods are a game changer. They are fun to ride. More people will want to visit here, to work here, to stay here, with a safe and easy way to get in and out of Tunbridge Wells.

Pod Economics

The pod system is an infrastructure project that is **potentially self-financing**. It is much lower cost with minimal environmental and construction impact compared to the drastic alternative of dualling or widening the main Pembury Road for cars or bus Park and Ride systems.

Suggested passenger fares of £2 per passenger - £6 per pod (4th passenger travels free) compares well to parking at £5.70 per day. At this level revenue may vary from £1m to £5m.

Additional revenue from advertising, increased customers and property values will benefit residents, businesses and council receipts.

Operating costs are likely to be under £2 million per year. Some staff could be shared with other Council functions (e.g. Community Safety Unit and maintenance) or contracted out on an operating licence or service basis.

The capital cost is estimated at £1.34 million pa (*repayment mortgage over 30 years at 2% above inflation of initial investment of £30 million*).

Profitability can be achieved depending on passenger numbers.

Invitation

If you would like to hear more, please contact the proposer: **CIlr David Scott, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council**

david.scott@tunbridgewells.gov.uk
01892 701950

1st January 2015



Agenda Item 9

The tracks are narrow - half the width of a single road lane - comparable to cycle lanes. They can be on the ground, in the air (designed to have minimal visual impact) or in cut and cover.

Stations are 'off track' allowing pods to continue smoothly to their selected destination.

An initial installation of 25 pods each carrying up to 4 adults, plus 2 children or a wheelchair/ buggy or shopping could provide capacity of 75 pod round trips an hour - up to 300 adults (450 children) each way.

The Pods system has been designed with reliability and safety built-in as standard to ensure the comfort and security of passengers.

The proposed route would be from Pembury Park and Ride to the centre of Tunbridge Wells with extensions to the hospital and the station at each end of the route.

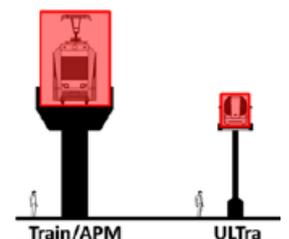
The route can be two-way along the Pembury road or a double loop (figure 8) which gives comparable costs and travel times to the single two-lane route and also increases station points. Ask to see route options and travel time simulations.



A single guide-way along the Pembury road will be easily accommodated with minimal visual or other impact.

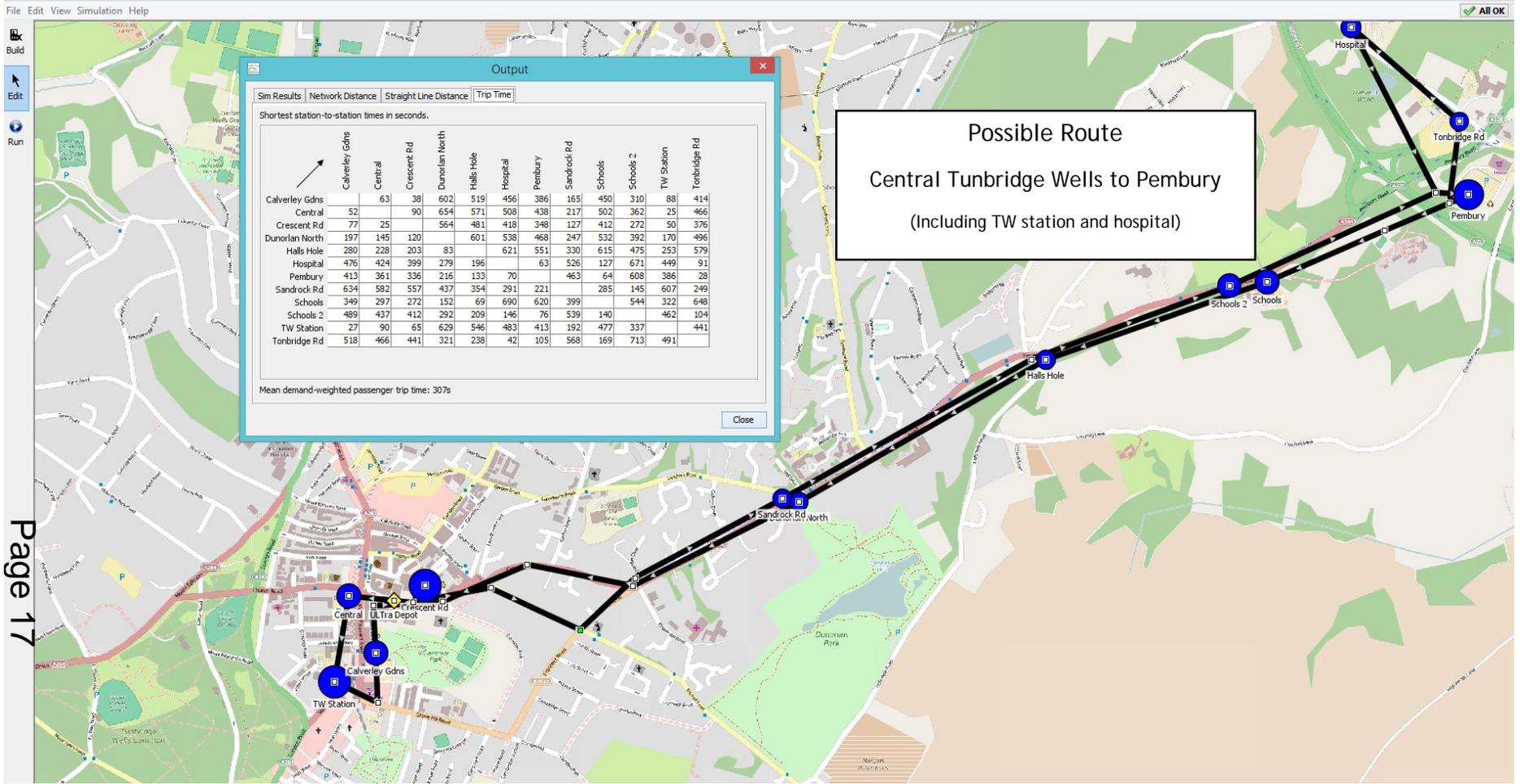
Estimated passenger times from Crescent Road car park to Pembury is under 7 minutes. Travel from the station to the hospital is approx. 9 minutes. Average wait time for a pod in Heathrow is 10 seconds and potentially achievable in TW.

Easy & Fast Construction Visiting Heathrow everyone is immediately impressed by the setup in particular the strong but light weight track, the few structures needed and the consequent 'fast build' nature of the system proposed for Tunbridge Wells. It has an estimated build time from 'Go' of 18 months (6 mths design, 6 mths build, 6 mths commissioning).

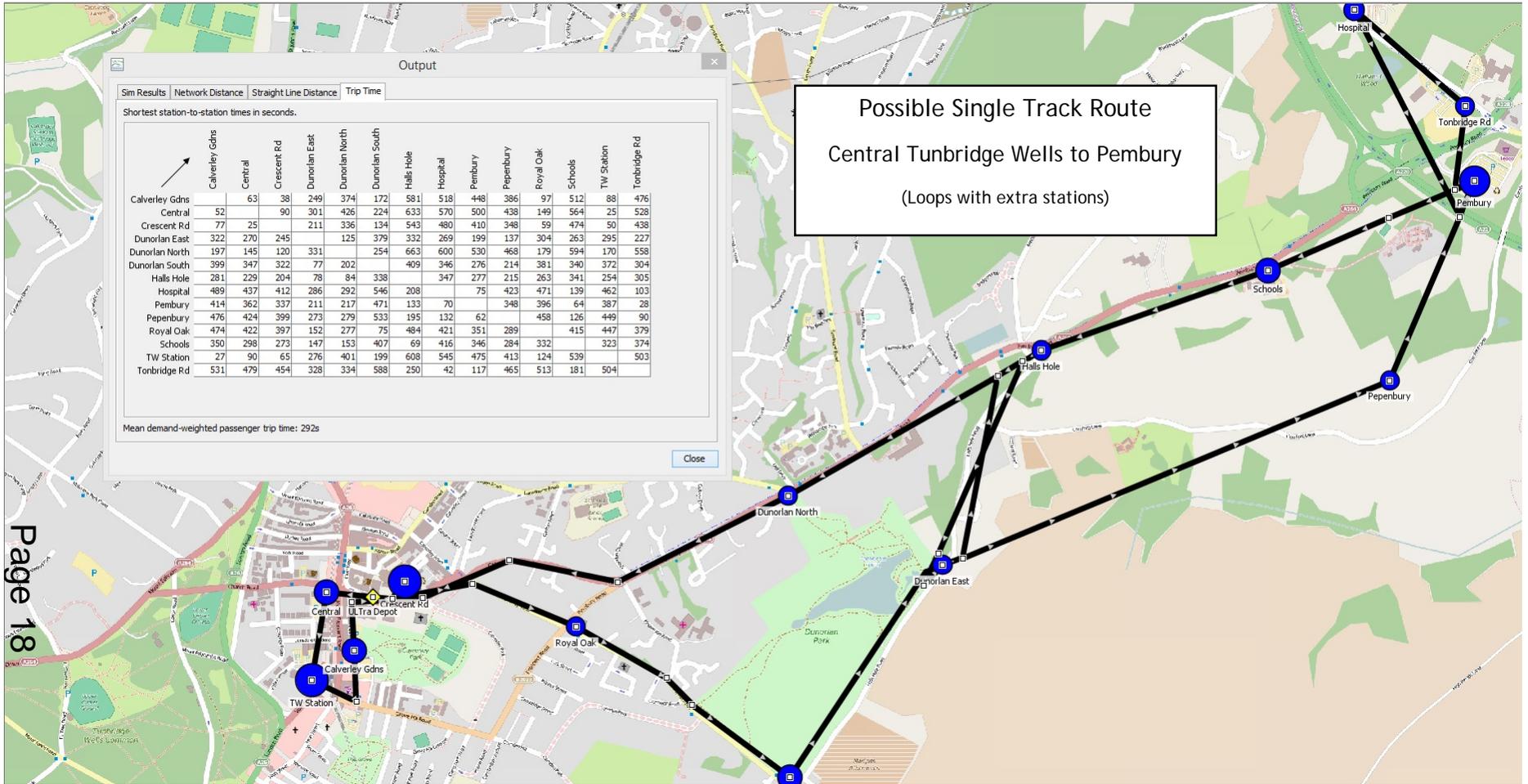


The construction process has low impact on surrounding properties, roads and vegetation. Ariel guide-ways are constructed off-site and bolted in place. They can be designed to fit with the Tunbridge Wells environment with minimal profile and visual impact, attractive fencing and blended into the treeline and vegetation.

"Enabling Tunbridge Wells borough to have a prosperous, green and confident future"



OUR FIVE YEAR PLAN - Challenges: Addressing traffic congestion, Improvements to our local road network and alleviating traffic congestion are crucial in order to encourage growth and improve ease of accessibility to Tunbridge Wells.



OUR FIVE YEAR PLAN 'Enabling Tunbridge Wells borough to have a more prosperous, green and confident future'

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

THE PROPOSAL

1. Does the Council support the proposal for a driverless transport system for Tunbridge Wells?
2. How long will it take to develop a system for Tunbridge Wells?
3. Why start the process now? Would we be better to wait for new developments?
4. What more conventional alternatives does Tunbridge Wells have to ease congestion?
5. Have other towns installed such a system? Would Tunbridge Wells be first?

THE PROPOSED SYSTEM

1. Are the ULTra driverless pods the most appropriate for Tunbridge Wells?
2. Why install it on the Pembury Road and not the A26 / St Johns Road?
3. Why not link the initial system to North Farms, Pantiles and elsewhere?

THE SYSTEM GUIDE-WAYS DESIGN

1. Can the system be 'blended' into Tunbridge Wells?
2. Will construction of the system cause major disruption and disturbance?
3. Will there be sufficient 'station' stops along routes.
4. Why does the system have to be fenced off and not allow other traffic and pedestrians to cross the guide-ways?
5. Can the Guideways be designed to look attractive?
6. Can pods be designed to intermingle with pedestrians in shopping streets and elsewhere?
7. How big is the carpark for the Park & Ride system? Can it be extended?
8. Are there parts of the suggested routes more difficult or complex to build?
9. Will passengers in pods be able to see into my garden over fences and walls or through upstairs windows? Can I still use my path and driveway?

THE SYSTEM OPERATIONAL DESIGN

1. How safe are the pods? What happens if something goes wrong?
2. Are there facilities for the elderly, children or those with a disability?

SYSTEM OPERATION

1. How long will I have to wait for a pod at any station to take me to my selected destination? How long will it take?
2. How comfortable are the pods? Are they heated and air conditioned as appropriate?
3. Will they run at night? Can I rely on them in adverse weather conditions or in the case of breakdown?
4. Will smoking be allowed? How will the pods be kept clean and graffiti clear?
5. How much will it cost to use the system? Will I be charged the same for a few stops as for the longer distance in or out of town?

ECONOMICS OF THE SYSTEM

1. How much will the system cost to build and run? Are these estimates reliable?
2. Can Tunbridge Wells afford the system? Will the system operate at a profit?
3. I live in the centre of Tunbridge Wells (or in an area not served by the initial system). How will I benefit?

THE PROPOSAL**1. Does the Council support the proposal for a driverless transport system for Tunbridge Wells?**

I am encouraging debate among all residents including the Town Forum and Civic Society, businesses and the appropriate government bodies for an assessment of a driverless transport system for TW. It is too early in the process to determine the level of support in the various bodies. However with sufficient expression of support by the public I believe the Council will be willing to conduct a full assessment of a system for Tunbridge Wells.

2. How long will it take to develop a system for Tunbridge Wells?

The initial assessment, obtaining finance and agreeing planning permission are the biggest unknowns. An initial assessment could be conducted within six months, however obtaining finance could take much longer. The actual construction period is likely to be around 18 months (design 6 months, construction 6 months, commissioning 6 months). This is quite fast due to the light weight and modular design of guide-ways both on the ground (similar to cycle paths) and in the air. Obtaining the necessary planning permissions could take time. Hence the total system could take between the earliest 2018 and say 2025. Broad public support will make it happen faster.

3. Why start the process now? Would we be better to wait for new developments?

Congestion in TW is primarily caused by the limited capacity of our road (for cars, buses and commercial vehicles), rail, cycle and pedestrian routes in and out of Tunbridge Wells. Each year that passes potentially limits the creation of new routes - as has been seen in the past with proposals for by-passes and other roads. Whatever system we adopt will take time to be agreed and implemented. If it is designed to allow for developments in technology and vehicles then this should help 'future proof' the infrastructure when completed. Congestion is likely to get worse on the Pembury Road with the dualling of the A21. Delays in addressing congestion will continue to impact residents, businesses and others until a solution is identified and installed.

4. What more conventional alternatives does Tunbridge Wells have to ease congestion?

Proposals have included dualling or significantly broadening the Pembury Road or creating bus lanes. Both of these would require substantial road works and removal of trees. The cost is likely to be far higher than the cost of guide-ways for pods and create significant disruption. They would also not solve the problem of what to do with the cars once they reach the centre of Tunbridge Wells.

5. Have other towns installed such a system? Would Tunbridge Wells be first?

Several towns are considering systems including: Milton Keynes, Greenwich, Bath and Bristol. Milton Keynes and Greenwich needs are different to TW and will install systems before Tunbridge Wells. These may be the same or slightly different systems depending on the conclusions of the proposed assessment and public support. These towns are keen to cooperate with Tunbridge Wells. Elsewhere major cities overseas are considering much larger systems. Heathrow installed the ULTra system in 2011 where it has proven to be highly successful and popular. Tunbridge Wells could be a leader - as it was for other technologies such as cars and electricity over 100 years ago.

Major cities have installed trams and other major mass transit systems. These are considered inappropriate for Tunbridge Wells due to our needs for the transportation of people, the huge cost of these systems and their general impact on our town. The Pods provide personalised transport more suitable for Tunbridge Wells at relatively low cost.

THE PROPOSED SYSTEM**1. Are the ULTra driverless pods the most appropriate for Tunbridge Wells?**

The ULTra system is one example of a system already in operation in the UK. Other towns are considering this and other systems. Our proposal is not limited to the ULTra system but uses it as an example of what can be installed now without further advances in technology. The proposer (Cllr David Scott) has reviewed several systems and is putting this forward as the most likely system for TW but wants a full assessment of alternatives to be instigated by the Council.

2. Why install it on the Pembury Road and not the A26 / St Johns Road?

The suggested routes are not fixed, however the Pembury Road has few houses and lots of open space along it for a new guide-way to be created with minimum visual impact and offers a good route for an initial trial system. It is also has a designated Park & Ride carpark by Tesco. The commuters and residents of both Pembury Road and Cornford Lane are suffering the impact of substantial congestion. This is likely to get worse with the dualling of the A21 which is likely to draw traffic from the A26 through Southborough. A successful Pembury Road pod based Park & Ride system will thus also ease congestion on the A26. Experience gained here can then be applied to other routes in and out of Tunbridge Wells such as giving additional routes to ease congestion on the A26 through Southborough.

3. Why not link the initial system to North Farms, Pantiles and elsewhere?

These extensions are all possible. However if the initial system is successful additional private finance could be available for extensions such as these if desired by residents and businesses. This is also true for the sports complex and schools along the A26 into Tunbridge Wells or to the other areas around Tunbridge Wells.

The Pembury Road system may be developed to create 'one-way' systems to include Dunorlan at no or little costs or extra commuting time while increasing areas serviced and reducing the width of the guide-way to the equivalent of a cycle path.

THE SYSTEM GUIDE-WAYS DESIGN**1. Can the system be 'blended' into Tunbridge Wells?**

Where possible the system can run on the ground with minimal impact on surrounding areas. Where needed the guide-ways can be raised above existing traffic or put into a tunnel (using 'cut and cover' techniques i.e. dig a trench, line it and put a cover on top - possibly glass). The guide-ways are light in structure, each being the width of a cycle lane. These can be designed to blend in to the trees or buildings with appropriate low profile, attractive fencing.

Some people will resist any new transit system, however the pod system is designed to substantially reduce the many cars on the existing roads, reduce on-street parking by commuters and the need for large car parks in the centre of Tunbridge Wells. This will help enhance Tunbridge Wells.

Ideas are needed how to achieve the best result for Tunbridge Wells.

2. Will construction of the system cause major disruption and disturbance?

- require trees to be cut down, buildings to be demolished and underground services to be moved?

Each of the above are costly hence there is every incentive to work around existing infrastructure and trees. Much of the route is likely to be at ground level requiring only 'cycle path' width. The supports for elevated parts can be sited to avoid services. The light weight nature and thin profile will greatly assist. Hence it is believed most disruption and impact on existing trees, buildings and services will be minimised by careful design.

On the ground pathways use similar techniques needed for cycle paths and hence minimal construction equipment. Other parts of the system such as pod stations and elevated sections are largely modular. These will be built off-site, delivered and bolted in place. This allows for minimal disruption and fast construction times.

Additional junctions for new routes can be added by removing one section and bolting in a new section or easily realigned with minimal impact.

3. Will there be sufficient 'station' stops along routes.

A number of pod stations will be created at key locations such as schools, parks, shopping areas and offices to allow people to get on or off the pods. Pod stations are off-line to allow other pods to continue without stopping. This will allow most users of the system fast travel in and out of the town centre and rail station.

4. Why does the system have to be fenced off and not allow other traffic and pedestrians to cross the guide-ways?

Segregated guide-ways minimise obstructions and are thus best for speed and safety. They require relatively simple computing and control system. Tunbridge Wells needs additional capacity of routes into the town centre. Creation of guide-ways solely for use of pods allows these to be constructed using light-weight materials and use minimum space. Construction, the pods and systems are thus a far cheaper than alternatives and have already been successfully trialled.

5. Can the Guideways be designed to look attractive?

The guideways and stations will be designed to fit in with the buildings and other features of Tunbridge Wells. The guideways are relatively thin and only a cycle lane width. The fencing can be minimized or design to fit merge with existing structures and fauna in Tunbridge Wells. The system at Heathrow is designed to fit with the visual features of a major airport. At Heathrow the pedestrian stations are attractive for that environment, however the guideways are typically double width and look rather industrial. In Tunbridge Wells designs sympathetic to the historical nature of the town, its open green spaces and tree lined roads.

Various bodies will be asked to assist in the design of components within the public realm to ensure these are appropriate.

6. Can pods be designed to intermingle with pedestrians in shopping streets and elsewhere?

Some systems are being developed to allow driverless pods to intermingle with pedestrians. Typically these non-segregated systems will require a much higher level and complexity of computing systems to allow interaction safely. In high pedestrian areas the pods must also travel slowly. In the future it should be possible to integrate segregated and non-segregated systems as appropriate with entry and exit points at designated stations - although this may not be technically feasible for a number of years.

The proposed assessment for Tunbridge Wells will examine both segregated and non-segregated systems. If a segregated system is selected for the inward and outward bound routes then these should be designed to allow future development enabling pods to leave the guide-ways for interaction at appropriate locations - for instance in town or the last few hundred meters.

Travel on conventional roads may only be possible once the number of existing cars (parked along roads or moving) is reduced.

7. How big is the carpark for the Park & Ride system? Can it be extended?

There are already plans for car parking at Tesco in Pembury for a bus Park & Ride system. This will be reassessed as part of the design of the pod system. If demand exceeds the level already allocated additional spaces can be built or further destinations created to spread arriving vehicles across various 'joining' locations. For instance addition car parking may be provided in North Farms, at the Hospital

TW Auto-Pods: Questions & Answers

(possibly using the spaces that would otherwise have people travelling by car from the centre of TW who may now travel by pod). Other car parks may be built in Pembury or elsewhere if demand exceeds the initial supply of spaces.

8. Are there parts of the suggested routes more difficult or complex to build?

Areas close to the town centre where space is constricted are clearly more complex. Along Calverley Road the guide-way may be set above each other along the north pavement. Carrs corner will require some innovative thinking to get the guide-way to Crescent car park. However as parts of the area between Carrs Corner and the Town Hall are subject for rebuilding alternatives can be considered.

9. Will passengers in pods be able to see into my garden over fences and walls or through upstairs windows? Can I still use my path and driveway?

Much of the guide-ways will be at ground level with limited visibility into adjoining properties. Where aerial guide-ways are needed or preferred, then blinds, fences or opaque glass may be used to maintain privacy.

The guide-ways will be built either over or under existing driveways and paths maintaining access to properties and on public paths.

THE SYSTEM OPERATIONAL DESIGN

1. How safe are the pods? What happens if something goes wrong?

The ULTra pods have now operated safely since their installation in September 2011 carrying over 1 million passengers. Safety has been built in with several 'back-up' safety features. Pods are continually monitored. There is a camera inside each pod and a communication button for instant link with the controllers. The main doors operate in a similar fashion as lift doors to protect occupants. Any attempt to force these open or to inappropriately use the emergency door is immediately notified to the controller.

Each pod is at least four seconds travel time from the next pod thus giving very adequate emergency braking time from its maximum speed of 25mph (40 kph).

Should the system detect a fault then it is automatically assessed and the controller advised. The pod is then routed to complete the journey or to an appropriate location for disembarkation or repair as appropriate. Where this is not possible (the Heathrow system has had one such occurrence in over three years of operation) the guide-way in front of the faulty pod is cleared and a tow-pod sent to recover the broken pod. This one event caused a delay of under ten minutes. Meanwhile pods may be guided along other routes to their appropriate destinations.

There is also an escape exit at the front of the pod allowing passengers to leave the stationary pod and enter the recovery pod - or walk along the guide-way as appropriate and as instructed by the controller and recovery team. We envisage pod stations at reasonable intervals minimising the distance any pod or passenger needs to travel to allow disembarkation.

2. Are there facilities for the elderly, children or those with a disability?

Ample room is available in the pod for an electric or manual wheelchair or pushchair. There is effectively no gap between the pod station and the waiting pod (a few millimetres of separation). The pods are as easy to operate as lifts in a tall building however as the pods do not stop to pick up new passengers the pods travel direct to their selected destination. There is a call button in the pod to allow the passenger to speak to the controller who can control the pod should the passenger have difficulty.

SYSTEM OPERATION

1. **How long will I have to wait for a pod at any station to take me to my selected destination? How long will it take?**

Empty pods are automatically routed to passengers and stations using both the call buttons at each station and 'anticipated demand' - much like taxis lining up for arriving trains. The average wait time at Heathrow is under 10 seconds. Similar wait times are anticipated in Tunbridge Wells and will be designed into the system.

The passenger then selects a destination (much like a floor button in a lift). The computer routes the pods directly to that station. When more than one station is selected for different passengers, the computer schedules those stops.

Passengers may select to travel alone or share as they feel is appropriate. A discount may be given for four people travelling together.

Travel times will depend upon distance, however it is estimated that travel from Crescent Road carpark to Pembury is under 7 minutes. Travel to the hospital from the main rail station is approx. 9 minutes.

2. **How comfortable are the pods? Are they heated and air conditioned as appropriate?**

The pods are spacious with double doors allowing easy access. They have two double bench seats facing each other which are as comfortable as those in 'black taxis'. Acceleration and stopping is smooth with a maximum speed of 25 mph (40 kph). This and the various safety features eliminate the need for safety belts.

There is plenty of room for baggage, shopping, pushchairs etc.

There are large windows allowing passengers a clear view of the countryside and buildings as they pass by.

At Heathrow most passengers describe their journeys as 'fun' or as 'very comfortable'.

3. **Will they run at night? Can I rely on them in adverse weather conditions or in the case of breakdown?**

In Heathrow the system operates 22 hours per day, 7 days a week. They continued operating several hours after the airport shut because of severe winter weather and opened up two hours before the airport. The system is designed to operate in difficult weather. The pods run on standard car tyres. Sensors identify obstructions. Guide-ways may be swept or cleared of obstructions using a specialist pod if necessary. Snow and or ice is cleared and gritted as appropriate - although the need for gritting is minimised by the design and continued operation of the system.

The system's operating hours are still to be determined however as it does not require drivers the system can be operated with minimal staff enabling long operational times. Costs are managed by the computer 'parking' pods when they are not required.

Cameras on the pods will identify any obstruction on the guide-ways to allow fast removal and continued system operation.

Pods have proven to be highly reliable with minimal disruption and breakdown giving a higher reliability than other forms of transport.

4. **Will smoking be allowed? How will the pods be kept clean and graffiti clear?**

Smoking will not be allowed. Smoking detectors are installed and the controller notified immediately of any infringement. Pods are cleaned at off peak times using staff at pod stations and a 'car wash' system at the pod depot. Following identification of large spills or litter either notified by a passenger or identified by staff the pod is sent directly to the depot or other appropriate location for this to be dealt with.

To be read in conjunction with the briefing paper issued.

TW Auto-Pods: Questions & Answers

Culprits can be identified with the video system and / or the electronic payment system.

5. How much will it cost to use the system? Will I be charged the same for a few stops as for the longer distance in or out of town?

Charges have still to be determined. Initial indicative fare is around £2 per person for the commute in or out of town. A 25% discount may be given for a 'family' or for 4 or more people. This compares well to existing in town full day car parking charges of £5.70. Discounts may be given for short in-town journeys and season tickets. Fares will be adjusted for inflation.

Money will be collected electronically using 'Oyster' style cards or other cashless payment systems.

ECONOMICS OF THE SYSTEM

1. How much will the system cost to build and run? Are these estimates reliable?

The estimated cost of the system to design and build is £30 million - equivalent to £1.34 million per year mortgage repayment over 30 years (interest rate of 2% above the rate of inflation). This was calculated by me using recent detailed engineering costings of systems for other towns. However the full cost can only be determined following detailed design of the system for Tunbridge Wells.

The annual operating cost of the system is estimated at under £2 million per year for full 22 hours per day, 7 days per week. Some savings may be available by combining duties across other Council functions such as existing surveillance systems and vehicle and other maintenance systems. A minimal increase in staffing levels would be needed to handle approximately double the number of pods currently envisaged.

2. Can Tunbridge Wells afford the system? Will the system operate at a profit?

At present over £114 million is collected in the form of Council taxes and business rates within Tunbridge Wells Borough. TWBC retains only around £11 million towards services provided. Hence in relation to all property taxes the investment cost are not large however the investment cannot be solely funded by TWBC. It will require various layers of government and possibly private finance to participate in the investment.

The system will generate revenue from fares, advertising and increased custom to the various TW commercial and Council enterprises etc. Revenue will be estimated in the assessment to be undertaken. Actual income will not be known until the system is in operation and people start to use the system. In addition to passenger fares, income may be generated from advertising and increased custom from Council and private facilities.

Income is likely to exceed £1 million to a maximum of £5 million per year without further investment. This compares very favourably to the dualling of the Pembury road where no income would be generated or for a conventional bus Park & Ride which would require buses to be subsidised.

If successful the system is likely to become self-financing providing a positive return on investment as well as addressing the congestion problems of Tunbridge Wells and adding to the infrastructure of the town.

3. I live in the centre of Tunbridge Wells (or in an area not served by the initial system). How will I benefit?

The system should ease congestion on the roads you or your visitors use. It should also reduce commuter on-street parking and cars using 'rat-runs'. Future extensions should allow you to use the system directly to get to North Farms, The Pantiles, parks, rail stations or shopping areas or to get your children to school. The system should also make Tunbridge Wells a more pleasant place to work and live with fewer cars than would otherwise be the case. Businesses, restaurants, shops and other attractions are likely to be more profitable increasing prosperity generally in the area.

The system is primarily designed to reduce congestion by providing an attractive alternative to cars. This is primarily aimed at visitors / commuters cars coming into Tunbridge Wells (initially from the east and north or the A21) as well as assisting on the school runs.

The pods should also attract additional businesses, tourists, shoppers and residents from neighbouring areas creating a range of knock on benefits to the town and the borough.

Cllr David A. Scott, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

1st January 2015

Please note: The views expressed in this document and the briefing paper are mine only and should not be construed as reflecting the views of any other person or body.

Driverless transport systems for Tunbridge Wells (TW Auto-Pods)

Town Forum Motion:

The Town Forum encourages Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) and Kent County Council (KCC) to carry out an assessment of Driverless or other innovative transport systems for Tunbridge Wells as a means of easing the impact of traffic congestion on Tunbridge Wells.

1. The assessment should include:
 - Economic, financial, environmental, social and ascetic aspects of such a system;
 - The impact on residents, visitors, through traffic, and businesses of Tunbridge Wells;
 - Both segregated and non-segregated systems (i.e. segregated from traffic and pedestrians);
 - The addition of traffic arteries in and out of Tunbridge Wells and the ability to handle existing and increased traffic.

2. Primary consideration should be given for the relief of the Pembury Road between the Hospital and possible Park & Ride location in Pembury to the centre of Tunbridge Wells and the station. Comment should be given to the future possible extension to accommodate routes and services to other parts of Tunbridge Wells.

3. Consideration and comment should be given to the ability of any proposed system and its infrastructure to:
 - Accommodate future developments in the design and use of guideways, vehicles and technology.
 - Improvements in likely travel time in and out of Tunbridge Wells (including parking and walking time) for both users of the system and other travellers.
 - Ease the other detrimental impacts of traffic congestion including: On-street and off-street parking; 'rat-runs' in and around Tunbridge wells; Noise and pollution.
 - Improve relative safety and enhance reliability of travel and parking.

4. Potential sources of finance for the system should be investigated including the various government bodies (local, county, national and European) and private sources.

Proposer:

Cllr David A. Scott
Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

This page is intentionally left blank

ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS TOWN FORUM

WATER IN THE WELLS WORKING GROUP

Progress report for Town Forum Meeting 22 January 2015

A. GENERAL:

The main item of substance relevant to Water Features was the re-release in December of the **SITE ALLOCATIONS DEVELOPMENT PLANNING DOCUMENT**.

Of especial interest are sections dealing with three Areas of Change:

1. **Crescent Road/Church Road** (Policy AL/RTW2A and Policy AL/RTW2B) (pp. 35-6)
2. **Vale Avenue** (Policy AL/RTW3) pp. 37-8
3. **Eridge Road** (Policy AL/RTW4) pp. 39-40.

All three include clear statements that 'development will be expected to **provide public art, which may include water features.**'

This is a significant achievement for Water in the Wells, for it provides a policy statement to back up proposals for individual water features in each of these central areas.

B. SITE UPDATES:

There has been a lull in activities relating to most of our identified sites over the Christmas and New Year period. I will therefore only comment very briefly on a few of the sites.

1. FIVEWAYS. Work on the first phase of the refurbishment is expected to be completed soon. I am informed that the necessary services for an eventual water feature have been put in place. I am seeking confirmation of this in writing. A TWBC statement regarding the retention of the Clock is similarly eagerly awaited

2. NORTH FARM ROUNDABOUTS. Negotiations are continuing so as to enable ducting to be installed as part of current carriageway widening.

3. KNIGHTS WOOD. Dandara continue to be favourably disposed to the installation of a water feature in the communal area of the development. Discussions are ongoing.

4. ROYAL WELLS PARK. Work on the free school building is proceeding apace. There is every reason to believe that plans are still live for the cascading water feature down the central spine. Work on this should be commencing soon.

5. GROSVENOR AND HILBERT PARK . The lake is currently being de-silted.

6. PANTILES CHALYBEATE SPRING. A trickle of water was recently observed. Investigations by TWBC and Targetfollow are continuing so as to establish the cause of the intermittent flow.

7. 'FOUNTAINS LODGE' BUPA CAREHOME. The fountains were turned off over the festive period and replaced by a Christmas tree, but they are now once again fully operational.

Michael Holman (Chairman, 16 January 2015)

This page is intentionally left blank

(c) Report from the Transport Working Group of the Town Forum – January 2015

1. **Draft Parking Strategy:** The Transport Working Group met on 7th January 2015 to start consideration of the Draft Parking Strategy and the formulation the Town Forum's response to the consultation which begins on 1st February for 6 weeks. Key issues and shortcomings have been identified and the Town Forum will be invited to contribute their views which will be collated and considered in the preparation of the final consultation response. Jane Fenwick will make a presentation to the Town Forum on 22 January. More information has been requested from the TWBC Parking Department
2. **Core Strategy:** Cllr Rankin was invited to brief the Transport Working Group on Wednesday 14th January about the Core Strategy to see how proposed housing developments could impact on transport congestion in the town centre.
3. **Joint Transportation Board** 19th January
 - a) Joint Transportation Board was attended by TWG members. Questions and briefings were prepared concerning the installation of inadequate and inappropriate signage at Carrs Corner, and the Vehicle Management System (VMS) which needs to be repaired and upgraded to support an efficient parking system in the town centre car parks.
 - b) The Transport Strategy has been delayed again and will be presented to the JTB in July 2015 and not in January as expected.
4. **Gatwick expansion and aircraft noise:** Several members of the TWG attended the Full Council Meeting on 7th January to hear the debate on a motion to oppose the expansion at Gatwick Airport. Last week, a TWG member circulated a survey form for members to complete in which Greg Clark MP was seeking the views on this issue from residents of the Borough. We requested that Joe Ratcliffe, KCC, be invited to the Town Forum to provide a presentation on the issues arising from Gatwick expansion and flight path changes to enable members to be informed and contribute to the formal consultation which ends on 3rd February.
5. **Public Transport Forum** meeting attended on 26th November 2014. Next meeting: 1 April 2015.

This page is intentionally left blank

Tunbridge Wells Town Forum Planning and Development Working Group

Update report for the meeting on 22 January 2015: Agenda item 10 (d)

Changes in the Working Group

Having acted as Chairman since the inception of the system of formal working groups in the Town Forum in 2011, Michael Doyle is stepping down as our chairman but we are pleased to report that he will remain an active member of the Working Group itself. Mark Booker is taking over as Chairman and will seek to strengthen the composition of the Working Group in the coming months. We thank Michael for his hard work in setting our Working Group on its initial course and for attending so many public planning meetings on behalf of the Forum during his time as Chairman of our WG.

Submission Draft Site Allocations DPD

The TWBC Submission Draft Site Allocations DPD will open for formal consultation on 9 February and TWBC's Planning Policy Manager, Jean Marshall, is due to give a presentation on the consultation process under agenda item 7. We shall be attending a workshop session on the Submission Draft to be hosted by TWBC on 3 February.

Attached is the update report of Dr Philip Whitbourn who chairs the ad hoc working group established in 2013 to respond to the Draft and to see the Town Forum's response through the public examination stage.

Following our 3 minute presentation and subsequent debate at the meeting of TWBC Full Council on 10 December on treatment of Green Belt issues in the pre-Submission Draft, Councillors voted on a cross-party basis to delete references to a future Green Belt review. In its response, the ad hoc working group will adduce arguments in support of that change, which follows earlier deletion of "areas of search" for replacement Rural Fringe sites in the Green Belt.

We seek endorsement from the Town Forum for the broad line of approach of our proposed response to the final Submission Draft Site Allocations DPD as set out in Dr Whitbourn's update report.

Mark Booker

Chairman Planning and Development Working Group

This page is intentionally left blank

Site Allocations Development Plan Document SUBMISSION STAGE REPRESENTATIONS

In the spring of 2013 the Town Forum appointed a Working Group, chaired by Philip Whitbourn, tasked with preparing a draft response to the Consultation Version of the Site Allocations DPD. The draft was duly circulated to every member, and was formally endorsed at the full meeting of the Forum on 23rd May 2013. The process has now moved on to the next stage, and a Submission Version is due to be published by TWBC on 9th February 2015, for transmission to the Secretary of State on 23rd March 2015. This, together with any representations made within that six week period, will then be examined by an independent Inspector, who will consider the matter of "soundness", and check consistency with national policy, as well as holding an oral session later in the year. As the March meeting of the Forum will not be until after the submission date, the Working Group thought that it might be helpful to indicate some of the main points that will be for consideration when approaching the task of putting together representations after 9th February. These are set out below and they will generally be expected to be in line with the Forum's previously expressed views.

- To press for the addition of the Council's Tunbridge Wells Town Plan Advisory Panel's Report of June 2012 to the list of Evidence Base Documents in Table 2 of the DPD, given TWBC's decision to abandon the TCAAP promised in the Core Strategy.
- To express disquiet about the prospect of Developers preparing Master Plans for Areas of Change, especially where Policy Briefs appear rather wide.
- To update the Civic Centre conceptual diagram in Appendix C of the Forum's Leisure, Culture and Tourism Working Group Report on the town's tourism and cultural offer, in the light of the Council's recent Cultural and Learning Hub proposal.
- To continue to favour the addition to the Vale Avenue Area of Change, the Grove Hill Road site flanking the railway, as a possible retail site in the future.
- To oppose the re-provision of the existing retail space if Union House is redeveloped, while being prepared to support a retail use, such as John Lewis or Waitrose, that could add real vitality to The Pantiles.
- To support the inclusion of the additional requirement to retain the green space facing the Common at the Homeopathic Hospital
- To support the deletion of new housing on the West Station Coach Park, and to encourage investigation of the Brighton Main Line 2 scheme.
- To take a view on the reduced area of the Travis Perkins / Baptist Church site once a new map is available.
- To arrange a more detailed site inspection of the Rifle Range in Warwick Park before adopting a final stance on the proposal for 24 houses.
- To favour exploring the possibility of retaining the central feature of the Unigate site at 87 St John's Road within a development scheme.
- To adopt a different interpretation from TWBC over the PBA Report on retailing, and a substantially lower figure for new retail floorspace.
- To question compliance with para. 2.3 of the NPPF, as Primary Shopping Area should be "based on a clear definition of primary and secondary shopping frontages."
- To question whether the large amount of new retail floorspace at the RVP is justified, and to seek further information concerning the owners' intentions, if possible.
- To continue with efforts to defend the Green Belt and AONB at Hawkenbury and around Tunbridge Wells generally.
- To continue the approach that traffic and development need to be considered together, especially as congestion within and entering the town centre is already becoming unacceptable.

This page is intentionally left blank