



# A G E N D A

Thursday 22 March 2018 at 6.30 pm  
Council Chamber, Royal Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN1 1RS

**1 Apologies for absence**

**2 Membership changes**

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

**3 Chairman's announcements (5 mins)**

**4 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 18 January 2018 (5 mins)** (Pages 3 - 14)

To approve the minutes of the previous meeting, dated 18 January 2018.

NOTE: There were no action points requiring an update to this meeting.

**5 Update by the Leader of the Council (10 mins)**

The Leader's update will include a short report from Councillor Joy Podbury, on the issue of encouraging a reduction in the use of plastic bottles and packaging.

**6 Retail in the town centre - discussion (30 mins)**

Retail in the town centre has been the subject of much concern and comment in recent months. The Town Forum's Management Group would like to discuss this issue, with a focus on what the causes might be and what solutions might exist.

The decisions of retailers are principally influenced by commercial interests – and aspects such as business rates and rent levels are outside the control of the Borough Council. Nevertheless, TWBC does have a role to play in trying to support local retailers through certain planning policies and adopting specific initiatives.

Hilary Smith (TWBC's Economic Development Manager) will be joined by Karen Pengelly (Town Centre Manager) to discuss this matter and invite Forum members' views. Steve Baughen (TWBC's Building Control & Planning Policy Manager) will also be present, to explain how planning policy might also have an influence.

**7 Local Plan review - update (30 mins)**

The last time that the Town Forum had a comprehensive update on TWBC's review of its Local Plan was in May 2017. At that stage, Kelvin Hinton, the former Planning Policy Manager, gave a presentation on the 'Issues and Options' consultation paper and explained the important part it plays in the review of the Local Plan – a document which will guide future development in the Borough up to 2033.

Steve Baughen is now the senior officer responsible for continuing with the review of the Local Plan. He will be present to explain the outcome of the Issues and Options process, what the next stages are and also to answer Forum members' questions on this matter.

**8 TWAANG - an update report (15 mins)**

Irene Fairbairn from the Tunbridge Wells Anti-Aircraft Noise Group (TWAANG) will provide an update on the current key issues relating to their work. The following provides a link to their website: <http://www.twaang.org.uk/>

**9 Report of the Transport Strategy Working Group (10 mins)**

The Working Group will have met only two days ago (20 March), so their update report will be circulated with the minutes. Jane Fenwick will also be available at the Town Forum meeting to answer member questions on the latest issues which the Working Group have been examining.

**10 Report of the Culture Working Group (10 mins)**

Although there is no written update report to present, Linda Lewis will be available to answer any questions Town Forum members might have on the latest issues the Working Group has been studying.

**11 Report of the Strategic Planning Working Group (10 mins)**

Mark Booker, the Chairman of this Working Group, will present an update report.

**12 Report of the Water in the Wells Working Group (10 mins)**

Michael Holman, Chairman of this Working Group, will present an update report.

**13 Report of the Finance and Other Issues Working Group (5 mins)**

Although there is no written update report to present, David Wakefield will be available to answer any questions Town Forum members might have on the most recent issues this Working Group has been studying.

**14 Any Other Business**

**Date of the Next Meeting**

Scheduled meetings of the Town Forum for 2018. Meetings to start at 6.30pm

Thursday 10 May

Thursday 5 July

Thursday 6 September

Thursday 15 November (including the AGM)

(Thursday 24 January 2019)



## ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS TOWN FORUM

### ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS TOWN FORUM

Thursday 18 January 2018

**Attended:** Stuart Anderson, Caroline Auckland, David Barnett, Adrian Berendt (Chairman), Lorna Blackmore, Mark Booker, Stephen Bowser, David Bushell, John Cunningham, Irene Fairbairn, Jane Fenwick, Carolyn Gray, Alex Green, Dorothea Holman, Michael Holman, Dean Kenward, Kyrios Kyriacou, Linda Lewis, Cllr Peter Lidstone, Brian Lippard, Marianne Mac Donald, Katharina Mahler-Bech, Helen Mitcham (sub), Cllr Tracy Moore, Altan Omer, Peter Perry (sub), Nick Pope, Cllr James Scholes, David Scott, Cllr Don Sloan, Tim Tempest, Alastair Tod, David Wakefield (sub), Denise Watts, Cllr Lynne Weatherly, Philip Whitbourn (sub), Pat Wilson and Cllr Chris Woodward

**TWBC officers present:** Jane Clarke (Head of Policy and Governance), Jane Lang (Housing Services Manager), Sarah Lewis (Housing Register and Development Manager), Gary Stevenson (Head of Environment and Street Scene) and Mike McGeary (Democratic Services Officer)

**Also present:** Cllr David Jukes (Leader of the Council), Cllr Alan McDermott (Deputy Leader of the Council), Louise Berendt, Derek and Toni Boyce, Denise Hamilton and Michele Harriman-Smith (both Children's Salon), Olla Johnson and Mrs C Wilson

#### 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were reported from: Sally Balcon, Tim Ball, Cllr Ronen Basu, Cllr Peter Bulman, Cllr Barbara Cobbold, Cllr Lawrence Heasman, Sue Kaner, Marguerita Morton, Cllr Catherine Rankin, Anne Stobo and Mary Wardrop.

#### 2. MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

Mike McGeary reported that an application for membership of the Town Forum had been submitted by the Nourish Community Foodbank, which had been approved by the Forum's Management Group. He added that Marianne Mac Donald would be Nourish's representative at Forum meetings, with Islay O'Hara as the substitute appointment.

#### 3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meetings dated 16 November 2017 were submitted. The Chairman advised that the minutes of the Annual General Meeting held that day were for noting and subsequent approval at the 2018 AGM. The Town Forum was therefore being asked to approve just the scheduled meeting minutes, held on the same day.

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the scheduled meeting held on 16 November 2017 be approved.

#### 4. ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

- (a) Cultural and Learning Hub – It was noted that the two action points relating to this issue had both been carried out.

- (b) Civic development – It was noted that this action point had also carried out and that all of the presentations made to the November meeting had been placed on the Town Forum website.

The Chairman advised that the planning application for the civic development had now been submitted, adding that members of the public had until 9 February to submit their comments.

- (c) Public realm scheme – There was a separate report being made to the Town Forum on this agenda.

## 5. UPDATE FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

Cllr David Jukes, the Leader of the Council, provided an update report on two key schemes which the Borough Council was leading on, namely the proposed civic development (new theatre and offices) and the cultural and learning hub.

David Wakefield, in his role as Chairman of the Finance and Other Issues Working Group, said that the Town Forum was very concerned at the authority's intention to cut its grant support for community groups, both large and small. Mr Wakefield added that the Council's view that these groups would be adequately supported through the Tunbridge Wells Lotto was totally unrealistic. He felt that, even though the TW Lotto might lead to some modest levels of support for community groups, it was unlikely to act as a replacement for grant support.

On the basis of this argument, Mr Wakefield asked whether the Borough Council might consider reversing the decision to cut its community grants.

Cllr Jukes said that the TW Lotto had been very successful to date. He added that, when central government had first provided local councils with revenue support grant funding, part of its purpose was to assist community groups. With the Borough Council now having reached the point where no revenue support grant would be provided from 2018/19 onwards, Cllr Jukes said that it had become almost impossible to continue to have a grants system in place.

Mark Booker said that there had been much comment about the number of empty shop units within the RVP. He added that the Forum was also aware of a number of Cabinet decisions, taken in exempt session, relating to the shopping centre. He asked when, against this background, the expected expansion plans might proceed.

Cllr Jukes explained that the discussions had been held in exempt session because the Cabinet needed to consider competing bids for the appointment of consultants, to provide the Council with the advice sought. He said that the authority shared the Forum's concern over the current number of empty units, adding that, with the sale of RVP, the originally proposed expansion plans were now on hold.

Cllr Scholes said that the sale by Hermes of the RVP had been triggered by the difficulties which the leaseholders – the BT Pension Fund – were experiencing.

The Chairman felt that the plight of retailers in the town was being felt much more widely than just the RVP. He asked whether this was a concern shared by the Borough Council. He also wondered whether any expansion plans for the RVP should be focusing on uses other than simply retail. Cllr Jukes said that Hermes' plans, for which planning consent was given, did include a significant amount of leisure use, in recognition of this exact point.

Dorothea Holman asked when the redevelopment of the cinema site was likely to begin. Cllr McDermott said that the developers, who now had planning consent for a mixed-use scheme, were currently in discussions with Network Rail, to agree the detailed works in respect of the area of the site above the railway tunnel. (This is referred to in more detail as part of the planning application when this was considered by the Planning Committee in October 2017.)

There were no action points arising from this update report.

## 6. HOMELESSNESS

Jane Lang, TWBC's Housing Services Manager, and Sarah Lewis, the Housing Register and Development Manager, provided the Town Forum with a presentation on homelessness. Mrs Lang began by setting out the Borough Council's statutory duties regarding homelessness and provided details of the scale of the issue within the Borough. She then summarised how the Homelessness Reduction Act, which would come into force later this year, would add further statutory duties for local authorities, at an estimated cost of £226k for the Borough Council.

Mrs Lang said that the authority currently had a total of 28 properties available for the provision of temporary accommodation, adding that the average length of stay was approximately 10 months before permanent arrangements were put in place.

Mrs Lang next turned to the situation of rough sleepers. She said that there were approximately 20 people in the Borough who were currently 'sleeping rough'. Mrs Lang added that the authority's aim was to reduce this figure to zero through outreach work with the various partner agencies and through greater provision of supported housing and more use of the 'rent deposit' scheme.

Ms Lewis summarised her work in managing the Council's Housing Register and provided an analysis of the number and types of households on the waiting list. She also reported on Council initiatives to reduce the number of empty homes in the Borough and how the authority dealt with instances of overcrowding where this was brought to the Council's attention.

Ms Lewis reported on the Council's role in trying to see more affordable housing provided. She advised that the amount of such housing which had been delivered in the last three years was: 2014/15: 238, 2015/16: 113 and 2016/17: 144, the majority of which had been provided by the Town & Country Housing Group. Ms Lewis added that there were a number of schemes being built or due to be built which would see significant numbers of additional affordable housing being provided in the Borough across the next few years.

Ms Lewis advised that a housing needs survey had just been completed, which formed a part of the current review of the Local Plan and which would also feed into a revision of the Council's Housing Strategy.

In summing up the presentation, Mrs Lang listed the key priorities which the Borough Council was addressing, as part of its housing and homelessness strategy. She said that this included an initiative of assisting older people with their discharge from hospital, specifically to help them 'downsize' their properties as part of a planned, supportive process.

Cllr Don Sloan asked what elements of the Homelessness Reduction Act would help local authorities to reduce rough sleeper numbers to zero. Mrs Lang said that it had been hoped that the Act would have set out how emergency accommodation could have been provided in all cases, however, this had not formed a part of the legislative

measures. She said that, for non-priority people, the Act provided greater impetus for local authorities to work harder with partner agencies to find the necessary accommodation, with a government expectation that more active support is given by councils.

Brian Lippard asked what the breakdown was for new affordable housing in 2018/19 between properties for buying versus those for renting. Ms Lewis said that approximately 70% would be for renting, adding that a distinction had to be made between social rent, affordable rent and shared ownership properties.

Mark Booker said he was impressed with the initiatives taken to date and endorsed the need for more social housing for rent. He felt that all housing authorities were facing an impediment, namely current government policy. He asked how the authority was dealing with that obstacle. Mrs Lang advised that the Council was looking to use some of its 'commuted sums' and work with local housing associations to provide more affordable homes, adding that this was how the Friends Meeting House in Grosvenor Park had helped to deliver 10 units. She added that 'affordability' was the top priority in using commuted sums.

Mrs Lang said that one element of the partnership approach which the Council followed which might not be so well known was with local businesses. She said that one example of that was the link with the Children's Salon in Tunbridge Wells. Mrs Lang explained that the Children's Salon had done much to help rough sleepers and had recently worked with other local businesses to look at ways to help, including identifying some work experience for local homeless people.

Marianne Mac Donald asked about the impact that the introduction of Universal Credit (UC) would have. She asked specifically (i) whether an impact assessment had been undertaken and what 'modelling' had taken place and (ii) how the lack of access to a computer and a bank account was going to impact on UC recipients. Mrs Lang said that, while no formal impact assessment had been done to date, the challenges of UC in the Borough were well known within the Housing service. She added that some recent government changes such as the advance payment process would have a particularly significant impact on private landlords. Mrs Lang said that, to mitigate against that, it might be that the Borough Council would consider some private sector leasing with landlords.

On the issue of UC recipients needing to access a computer, Mrs Lang advised that staff at the Gateway will be offering help, by sitting with claimants and guiding them through the on-line process.

Pat Wilson asked if local councils such as TWBC were prohibited from building/buying their own housing for social rent. Mrs Lang said that, as TWBC sold its housing stock to help create what was now the Town & Country Housing Group, it therefore no longer had a Housing Revenue Account. She added that, while this prevented the Borough Council from establishing and managing its own housing stock, it had set up Tunbridge Wells Property Holdings Ltd, which might provide a very limited amount of homes for rent, under an 'assured shorthold tenancy' arrangement.

Michael Holman praised the Housing service for the initiatives it was following, in partnership with other agencies, to try and address the Borough's housing needs, without blaming government policy for the difficulties it faced. He asked what the Council's current policy was towards empty properties, an element which the Town Forum had studied a few years back.

Mrs Lang said that the Housing service was still working to reduce the number of empty properties, although it had not used the 'prohibition\* order' process for some time and would only do so having taken a balanced view on the benefits of doing so. (\*NB – Subsequent to the meeting, Mrs Lang has corrected this information. She advises that this should read 'compulsory purchase order' process.)

Michael Holman asked if the Town Forum could help the Housing service in any form to tackle some of the issues which had been raised. Mrs Lang acknowledged the offer and said that it was definitely of help to have listened to the presentation and be more aware of the issues the Borough faced. She added that, having listed the key priorities which her service would be following, she and her colleagues were always happy to listen to other ideas and suggested courses of action. Ms Lewis added that she had been grateful to have had the opportunity to have raised the profile of housing, drawing particular attention to the loss of social housing.

In thanking Mrs Lang and Ms Lewis, the Chairman reiterated his wish to look again at the spread of the working group activities, perhaps with a view to establishing one more, focusing on 'communities'.

There were no specific action points arising from this presentation.

## **7. REPORT OF THE WATER IN THE WELLS WORKING GROUP**

Michael Holman, Chairman of this Working Group, began his update report by making reference to TWBC's Five Year Plan (2017-22), in which the Leader of the Council acknowledges the importance of building on "...our spa town heritage...". His verbal report was divided into three sections: 'macro', 'micro' and 'more'. Under the 'macro' heading, Mr Holman said the primary task of the Water in the Wells initiative had been to persuade public authorities and developers of the importance of the 'spa town' theme. He added that the subsequent effort had led to several quality water features now being seen across the wider town area, completed or under construction. He added that the one area where much more effort was needed was in achieving an acceptance of the significance of 'art in the public realm', a principle which he felt the Borough Council in particular had not yet recognised in its planning policy documents.

In the 'micro' part of his report, Mr Holman focused on two specific initiatives: first, the Royal Wells Park, where the developers – Berkeley Homes – had created a very impressive water feature covering the full length of the site, but the impact of which, he felt, was not matching the investment they had made. He said that he had raised this with the developers, who said that they would look at the practicality and cost of providing some suitable up-lighting for the 'table-top' water feature as well as adding on a vertical face the inscription 'Something in the Water' – which would link in with other water features.

Mr Holman then turned to the Beacon Hotel, where the owner was part-way through a scheme to restore the lakes and the cold bath within the site. He said that this initiative was a good example of a scheme which fitted in with a wider objective – i.e. building on the spa town heritage – while at the same time making the Beacon Hotel more attractive for the owner's commercial benefit.

Finally, under the 'more' heading, Mr Holman invited interested Town Forum members to become more involved in the work of the Working Group, particularly in its monitoring and lobbying roles.

Brian Lippard raised the issue of the Chalybeate Spring on the Pantiles, which he said had once more been troubled by a lack of flowing water. Mr Holman said that this issue had a high priority within the programme of the Working Group. He added that

he was in the process of establishing a small working group, to include representatives from Targetfollow, the Commons Conservators, TWBC and Lord Abergavenny, to discuss this problem and seek a solution to the Spring's management. Mr Holman said he would report back to the Town Forum in due course.

The Chairman thanked Mr Holman and the members of the Water in the Wells Working Group for their continued hard work, the results of which he said were very much appreciated by Town Forum members and the town's residents.

There were no specific action points arising from this report, other than for interested members to contact Mr Holman if they wished to become involved in the work of the Group.

## **9. REPORT OF THE FINANCE AND OTHER ISSUES WORKING GROUP**

David Wakefield, Chairman of this Working Group, read out the proposed response to TWBC's draft budget proposals for 2018/19, which were set out on the Council's website. The key elements he drew attention to related to: (i) concern over the ability to achieve a balanced budget in future years; (ii) the need to retain specialist staff in respect of the proposed civic development, against a backdrop of a general reduction in staff; (iii) the need for clarification over the proposed level of council tax increase for 2018/19; (iv) the considerable concern over the proposed cuts in community grants and the unrealistic expectation that such cuts would be met from a significant increase in the success of the TW Lotto; (v) a call for a realignment between what the Council sees as its corporate priorities and what the majority of residents would like to see.

He added that the Town Forum would like to see details of what form of sponsorship the Council envisaged – from both private and public sources – towards the creation and on-going operation of the proposed new theatre.

Mark Booker saw considerable benefit in the Borough Council setting out a policy of how it intended to develop external fundraising for the new theatre. He felt that this would have two key advantages: it would help to reduce the financing costs of the scheme as well as answer positively the public's concerns over the project's impact on community grants.

Cllr Tracy Moore supported the idea of fundraising for the new theatre. She said that the authority had another two years before it took up its loan options, adding that if it were possible to reduce the amount required it would provide the Council with some flexibility and possibly the ability to continue with some of these areas of expenditure which the public were most concerned about. Cllr Moore said that there were other financing options available to the Borough Council, adding that she was not a supporter of cutting community grants.

Cllr Peter Lidstone added his voice to the concerns expressed over the possible cuts to community grants, saying that they would penalise some of the Borough's most vulnerable residents.

Cllr James Scholes said that, if a good level of sponsorship for the new theatre could be achieved, some councillors who had publicly voiced their concerns over the cuts to community grants would give their backing to the scheme. Cllr Chris Woodward stressed that the concerns over community grant cuts were very much a cross-party issue.

With the comments regarding the potential sponsorship of the new theatre and the strength of feeling regarding the suggested cuts to community grants taken into



account, it was agreed that Mr Wakefield's proposed response to the draft budget be approved.

**RESOLVED** – That the Working Group's proposed response, duly supplemented by reference to theatre sponsorship and strengthening the concerns voiced over community grant cuts, be approved for submission to TWBC.

## 10. REPORT OF THE CULTURE, LEISURE AND TOURISM WORKING GROUP

Linda Lewis, the Chairman of this Working Group, summarised her update report. She began by expressing support for the planning consent now having been given for the proposed Cultural and Learning Hub. Mrs Lewis added that she had been pleased to have been invited to send a member of the Working Group to speak in support of the planning application. However, she added that the Working Group members had been disappointed that none of its suggestions made during the consultation period had been included within the plans presented to the Planning Committee. Mrs Lewis said that, as a result, the Working Group still had some remaining concerns, key of which was the provision of Library, Adult Education and Museum services during the construction/refurbishment works.

Mrs Lewis said that the Working Group members were very pleased with the helpful, regular updates on the scheme, which Ms Farram at the Museum had been issuing. She added that it would be very much appreciated if a similar update could be provided on the civic development.

On the issue of the civic development, Mrs Lewis said that the Working Group would be studying very closely the planning application which had now been made and would be making representations as part of that process; she encouraged individuals to study the application on the TWBC website and to submit comments where they wished to do so. The application can be viewed on the TWBC website at the following address: <http://twbcpa.midkent.gov.uk/online-applications/simpleSearchResults.do?action=firstPage>

Mrs Lewis also drew attention to the key concerns of her Working Group in respect of the future use of the existing Town Hall site. One such concern was a wish to see at least part of the current civic site in use other than for residential occupation; the rationale behind this, she added, was to provide some employment opportunity, for example as offices or an education facility.

Mrs Lewis concluded by saying that the Working Group was keen to know what the implications for tourism might be, as a direct result of the civic development and future use of the current Town Hall site. In that regard, they would like to hear from relevant TWBC Cabinet members and/or managers.

Cllr McDermott advised that the Borough Council had no intention of vacating the current Town Hall building until its future occupation had been clearly determined.

Brian Lippard voiced his disappointment over the lack of any positive response to the comments made by the Working Group on the Cultural and Learning Hub. He asked if it were known why these constructive comments had been ignored. Mrs Lewis said that this was an issue which she was pursuing.

There were no other action points arising from this update report, which was noted.

## 11. REPORT OF THE TRANSPORT STRATEGY WORKING GROUP

Jane Fenwick, Chairman of this Working Group, summarised her update report, which had been circulated in advance of the meeting. She added that, at that week's meeting of the (TWBC/KCC) Joint Transportation Board, representatives of the Calverley Park Gardens Residents' Association had managed to persuade the councillors to continue to look for a solution to the traffic problems and pedestrian safety concerns, linked with the Carrs Corner roundabout. Mrs Fenwick said that the Calverley Park Gardens group was to be commended for overcoming KCC's contention that nothing further could be done.

The Chairman, Adrian Berendt endorsed this view. He added that he was very impressed with the tenacity shown by the Residents' Association representatives.

There were no specific action points arising from this update report, which was noted.

## 12. PUBLIC REALM SCHEME UPDATE

Gary Stevenson, TWBC's Head of Environment and Street Scene, provided an update report on progress made with the next phase of this scheme. He had tabled both a sketch and an engineering drawing to explain and illustrate the proposals and had provided a link to the most recent report on this issue made to the Joint Transportation Board on 16 October.

Mr Stevenson said that, through a process of design development in discussion with Kent Highways, the basis of this next phase of the scheme was to exclude more vehicles from driving along Mount Pleasant Road than currently permitted. He drew attention to the engineering drawing to illustrate how this would be achieved, through: (i) extending the width of pavements; (ii) narrowing the junction with Crescent Road/Church Road and installing a ramped section of highway at this point; (iii) enforcement of the 20mph zone; and (iv) still maintaining a traffic signal entry from Crescent Road/Church Road.

Other features of the scheme which Mr Stevenson highlighted were: (i) to ensure proper traffic management from York Road into Mount Pleasant Road and Monson Road, the installation of ramps at either end of this section, and a traffic calming 'build-out' at the York Road end; (ii) while Civic Way (the 'service road' in front of the Town Hall) would carry light traffic, it would be closed off in front of the Cultural and Learning Hub; (iii) the possible retention of the community flower bed at the corner of Monson Road and Mount Pleasant Road; (iv) the retention also of the existing island in front of the former Congregational Church (now Cotswold Outdoor store), in order to control the speed of buses and provide a safer crossing for pedestrians; and (v) the installation of a clearly delineated pedestrian crossing point at the end of Monson Road, outside the Prezzo restaurant, to link with Civic Way and provide free flow access to the new Cultural and Learning Hub.

Jane Fenwick said that her Working Group welcomed the proposal to install a well-marked pedestrian crossing point outside the Prezzo restaurant at the end of Monson Road. She added that the Group would be willing to discuss traffic issues at the further end of Monson Road too, if the opportunity existed.

The Chairman asked whether it was necessary to have traffic using Civic Way at all. He added that he would like to see this being essentially a pedestrian area, even if funds might not be available to replace the tarmac surface. Mr Stevenson said that the likelihood was that Civic Way would be limited to providing access only, rather than any sort of through route.

Brian Lippard asked why the engineering drawing indicated the presence of three linked bus stop bays on the eastern side of Mount Pleasant Road (outside the Town Hall but close to the junction with Crescent Road). Mr Stevenson advised that the current proposal had arisen after discussions with the bus companies, who were very keen on maintaining bus stops in Mount Pleasant Road; he added that it was important to keep in mind that a significant part of the funding for this scheme was coming from the Sustainable Transport Fund, thus suitable provision for public transport users was essential, in order to meet the criteria for project funding.

Nick Pope said that there remained concern amongst the public about the speed of buses using Mount Pleasant Road. He added that, if the Town Hall did become converted into residential use, the traffic demands in this area would merely become greater. Mr Stevenson acknowledged the point and said that it was never the intention to make this a full 'shared space' scheme; he said its proper designation was a 'public realm improvement' project. He reiterated the importance of maintaining Mount Pleasant Road as a bus corridor, with limited use by other vehicles through appropriate scheme engineering.

The Chairman asked whether taxis would be permitted through Fiveways at all times, adding that he would see this as a retrograde step because of the adverse effect of potentially speeding vehicles on pedestrian safety. Mr Stevenson said that no final decision had been taken on taxis at this point. On the same issue, Mrs Fenwick said that she would welcome some set-down points for taxi users as part of the public realm scheme.

Michael Holman noted that, under current arrangements, cars could drive through Mount Pleasant Road after 6pm. He asked whether there were plans to reduce that access and what the effects of that might be on future scheme stages. Mr Stevenson said that, currently, there were no plans to change the timings.

The Chairman asked whether there was support amongst Town Forum members to call for a change to the hours of general vehicle access, from – say – 7pm until 7am. David Scott said that from his personal observations of traffic in the area around the Millennium Clock, many drivers took very little notice of pedestrians. He asked therefore how it was going to be possible to persuade drivers to slow down and be more pedestrian aware. Mr Stevenson acknowledged that any ramps in the highway had to be relatively shallow to accommodate buses.

Cllr Peter Lidstone asked about the enforcement aspect of allowing taxis to drive through the public realm area, specifically whether it was possible to distinguish them from other vehicles. Mr Stevenson advised that it would be possible to make that distinction through the use of existing number plate recognition cameras.

David Wakefield asked about delivery vehicles operating within the public realm area, particularly whether the hours of loading and unloading to commercial properties would be subject to specified hours. Mr Stevenson said that this was an aspect which would need to be considered, not only within this next phase but reviewing how properties within phase 1 of the scheme had been affected.

Alex Green asked what the timescale was for implementation of this next phase. Mr Stevenson said that it was proposed that some formal public consultation took place in the coming months, adding that he would expect work to begin in the current calendar year, working around key events such as the Remembrance Day service and Christmas. Mr Stevenson said a preliminary timetable showed completion of the work in the summer of 2019.

Mr Stevenson was thanked for his informative presentation and for responding to questions on this proposed project.

### 13. NEW WASTE AND RECYCLING CONTRACT

Gary Stevenson, TWBC's Head of Environment and Street Scene, provided an update on proposals for a new waste and recycling contract, due for implementation from March 2019. He had provided a link in the agenda to the Cabinet report on this issue.

Mr Stevenson said that part of the research into the new contract included national guidance on collection systems. He added that the Council was proposing to follow one of the three main waste collection methods in operation within England. He summarised the key features of the service, namely: (i) the introduction of a fortnightly collection of glass bottles and jars, alongside plastics and cans in a wheeled bin; (ii) a new weekly separate collection of food waste, using a food 'caddie'; (iii) the continued fortnightly collection of residual waste; and (iv) a new fortnightly collection of garden waste as an 'opt in' chargeable service.

Mr Stevenson said that, based on tonnages for 2016/17, the new service configuration would result in a reduction of approximately 4,500 tonnes of material being sent to be burnt at the Allington 'waste to energy' plant. He added that there would be an increase of approximately 3,028 tonnes of dry, mixed recycling waste being captured. Mr Stevenson advised that the overall waste collection and disposal costs would reduce as a result of this process, which would be of benefit to council taxpayers across the county.

Mark Booker asked whether the wheelie bins for garden waste would be the same size as at present. Mr Stevenson advised that the bins would be 240 litre (i.e. the same as at present) with a smaller option available.

Dean Kenward asked for clarification on the food waste aspect. He was particularly concerned that the new food caddies would not be well used or would lead to waste being scattered under particularly windy conditions. Mr Stevenson advised that the caddies were quite sturdy, so should not be easily blown over, plus they had a lockable lid.

David Wakefield asked if the glass would need to be sorted into different colours, as at present. Mr Stevenson said that this would not be necessary.

Denise Watts asked if the food caddies were for waste cooked or raw food. Mr Stevenson advised that they would take all food waste.

The Chairman asked what the length of the new contract was and whether any variations to aspects of the service could be accommodated. Mr Stevenson said that the contract would be for eight years, with an option to extend it by a further two years. He added that there would also be an 'eight years, plus a further eight years' option. On variations to the service, Mr Stevenson said that this might be possible, depending on the extent of the variation.

The Chairman pursued the variation aspect: he asked if the food caddie element were found to be poorly used, could that part of the service be dropped. Mr Stevenson said that that was probably not an option, on the basis that the contractor would have purchased specific fleet vehicles that matched the range of services required under the contract terms.

Lorna Blackmore felt that the waste food part of the new contract was likely to be difficult for occupants of flats to use. Mr Stevenson advised that alternative options might be available, which could be discussed with residents.

Denise Watts asked whether the existing glass and can banks would no longer be required. Mr Stevenson said the new contract would probably lead to a reduction in their number.

The Chairman thanked Mr Stevenson for his very helpful update; there were no action points arising from this.

#### **14. REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC PLANNING WORKING GROUP**

Mark Booker had circulated an update report on the recent activity of this Working Group, which summarised the key issues discussed with TWBC's Planning Policy team and an analysis of responses to the Issues and Options consultation.

Bearing in mind the lateness of the hour, there were no specific questions on the update and no action points arising. However, one aspect of Mr Booker's report which he asked to have highlighted was reference in his written report to the support shown by Kelvin Hinton, TWBC's Planning Policy Manager, to the work of the Town Forum, as follows:

"Kelvin Hinton mentioned that he would be retiring in the early spring. Mr Booker expressed his thanks to him for having done so much to keep the Town Forum well briefed and brought into the consultation process on a number of matters at an early stage. This open approach, typified by the introduction of the regular round-table discussions on planning policy issues, had been greatly valued and his good humoured, courteous and clear response to our many enquiries would be missed. We hope to be able to build on this excellent working relationship with his successor and wish Kelvin a happy and fruitful retirement."

#### **15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**(a) International Women's Day** – Lorna Blackmore said that this was taking place on 8 March, adding that she would be circulating a programme of events shortly.

#### **16. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Thursday 22 March 2018 at 6.30pm.

The meeting concluded at 9pm.

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