



AGENDA

Thursday 24 November 2022 at 6.30 pm
Council Chamber, Town Hall, Royal Tunbridge Wells, TN1 1RS

Agenda

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

- 1 Attendance**
(Members are asked to sign the attendance sheet on arrival. A draft attendance list will then be circulated after the meeting. Please advise the Secretary of any errors or omissions in the draft list.)
- 2 Register of Members** (Pages 3 - 6)
- 3 Voting Entitlement for Member Organisations and Councillors** (Pages 7 - 9)
- 4 Minutes of the 2021 AGM** (Pages 10 - 11)
(The minutes of the 2021 AGM were noted at the meeting on 20 January 2022 and are attached here for formal approval.)
- 5 Chair's Annual Report** (Pages 12 - 17)
- 6 Election of Officers** (Pages 18 - 20)

ORDINARY MEETING

- 7 Membership Changes** (Page 21)
 - a) Changes of representatives
 - b) New membership applications
- 8 Minutes of the meeting dated 16 June 2022** (Pages 22 - 28)
 - a) Approval as a correct record
 - b) Matters arising
- 9 Minutes of the meeting dated 21 September 2022** (To Follow)
 - a) Approval as a correct record
 - b) Matters arising
- 10 Updates from Member Organisations**
(Please advise the Secretary before the meeting if you wish to raise a topic under this agenda item.)
- 11 Spotlight on Safety in Tunbridge Wells** (Pages 29 - 48)
Introduced by Caroline Auckland (Soroptimist International of Tunbridge Wells and District) with Terry Hughes (Community Safety Manager, TWBC), Inspector Jones (Kent Police) and Roz Heaton (Business Crime Manager, Safe Town Partnership)

- 12 Environment**
Introduced by Radu Dorin Iepure (Environment Agency)
- 13 Cost of Living** (Pages 49 - 53)
Introduced by Marianne Macdonald (speaking for Nourish Community Foodbank)
- 14 Electoral Arrangements Consultation**
Introduced by Adrian Berendt (Town Forum Deputy Chair) with update from Jane Clarke (Head of Policy and Governance, TWBC)
- 15 Update from the Borough Council**
Update from Councillor Justine Rutland (Cabinet Member for Tunbridge Wells and surrounding areas, TWBC)
- 16 Reports from the Town Forum Working Groups** (Pages 54 - 63)
- a) Planning Working Group
 - b) Transport Working Group
 - c) Leisure, Wellbeing and Culture Working Group
 - d) Finance Working Group
 - e) Water in the Wells Working Group
- 17 Urgent Business or Topics for Future Meetings**
- 18 Future Meetings**
- 19 January 2023
 - 30 March 2023

Attending Instructions

This meeting is being held in the Council Chamber at the Town Hall. Please arrive at Reception on Monson Way between 6pm and 6.15pm. Members arriving late should also use the Reception but use the out-of-hours call button at the door.

The meeting will be recorded to assist with minute taking.



Annual General Meeting on 24 November 2022

Register of Members

The table below sets out the various membership organisations and their nominated and substitute representatives, where available, and the councillor members which make up the body of the Town Forum as at 18 November 2022.

Please notify the Secretary as soon as possible of any errors or changes.

Member Organisations

Association/Group	Primary Representative	Substitute
Banner Farm Residents' Association	Diana Butler	Veronika Segall-Jones
Benhall Mill Road Land Association	Altan Omer	Ken Norman
Beulah Road Residents' Association	Stuart Anderson	Chris Morris
Boyne Park Residents' Association	Sue Bishop	Dorothea Holman
Calverley Park Crescent Association	Stuart Macdonald	none
Calverley Park Gardens Residents' Association	Sue Diales	none
Calverley Park Residents' Association	Jane Fenwick	none
Camden Park Residents' Association	Tim Harper	Sally Manning
Camden Road Guild	Sue Kaner	none
Civic Society of RTW	Brian Lippard	John de Lucy
Clarence Road Users' Association	Alec Taylor	Paul Sinclair
COCA (Camden Hill, Oakfield Court Road and Cambridge Gardens Residents' Association)	Sue Pound	Tony Miller
Culverden Residents' Association	Mark Booker	Michael Lees
Dudley Road Residents' Association	Jenina Bas-Pendry	Big Bilski

Member Organisations (continued)

Association/Group	Primary Representative	Substitute
Friends @ The Amelia Scott	Mike Trudel	Helen Mitcham
Friends of Calverley Grounds	Rebecca Dodsworth	Lisa Grant
Friends of Grosvenor & Hilbert Parks	David Barnett	none
Friends of Hawkenbury Recreation Ground	Valerie Le Moignan	Pamela Lock
Friends of The Commons	Joy Podbury	Clive Evans
Friends of The Grove	Tim Tempest	Joanna Anderson
Friends of Trinity Churchyard	Charles Pope	none
Friends of Tunbridge Wells Cemetery	John de Lucy	none
Friends of Woodbury Park Cemetery	Margaret Ginman	David Bushell
Grantley Court Residents Association	Lorna Blackmore	none
Grove Hill House Residents' Association	Robert Chris	Ingrid Pope
Hawkenbury Village Association	Geoff Shewry	none
Inner London Road Residents' Association	Carol Wilson	Pat Wilson
Kingswood Residents' Association	Adrian Johnson	none
Molyneux Park Gardens Residents Association	Don Sloan	Mark Lavenstein
Nevill Court Roads Committee	David Kershaw	none
Nourish Community Foodbank	Dawn Stanford	Lesley Darcy
Poona Road Residents' Association	Laura Gibson	Olivia Thornhill
Ramslye Residents	Adrian Thorne	Noreen O'Meara
Residents' First	Chris Stevenson	none
Rotary Club of Tunbridge Wells (new in 2021/22)	Graham McNeilly	John Cook
Royal Tunbridge Wells in Bloom	Katharina Mahler-Bech	none
Royal Tunbridge Wells Together	Sarah-Jane Adams	none
Royal Wells Park Residents' Group (new in 2021/22)	Paul Bright	Helen Walton

Member Organisations (continued)

Association/Group	Primary Representative	Substitute
Sherborne Close Management Committee	Marianne MacDonald	None
Soroptimist International of Tunbridge Wells and District	Caroline Auckland	Angela McPherson
St John's Road Residents' Association	Marguerita Morton	Tony Mole
Telephone House Neighbours' Association	Katharina Mahler-Bech	none
The Avenues Residents' Association	Tim Tempest	none
The Forum	Carolyn Gray	Jason Dormon
The Potteries Residents' and Owners Group (new in 2021/22)	David Scott	Michael Paynter
Trinity Theatre	Alex Green	Jocelyn Cheek
Tunbridge Wells Access Group	Andy England	none
Tunbridge Wells Anti-Aircraft Noise Group (TWAANG)	Irene Fairbairn	Angus Stewart
Tunbridge Wells Bicycle User Group	Adrian Berendt	Paul Mason
Tunbridge Wells Business Forum	Allan Gooda	Nicholas Kelly
Tunbridge Wells Dementia Friendly Community	Jocelyn Cheek	Christine Parker
Tunbridge Wells Fairtrade Town Group (new in 2021/22)	Mandy Flashman-Wells	Jacqueline Franklin
Tunbridge Wells Friends of the Earth	Marieke de Jonge	Steve Walter
Tunbridge Wells Older People's Forum	Denise Watts	Ruth Chambers
Tunbridge Wells Puppetry Festival	Matthew Brown	Ailsa Molyneux
Tunbridge Wells Repair Café	Chris Murphy	none
Tunbridge Wells Twinning and Friendship Association	Michael Holman	David Wakefield
Tunbridge Wells U3A (IN ABEYANCE)	n/a	n/a
Upper Stone Street Residents' Association	Helen Featherstone	none
Warwick Park Residents' Association	Neil Williams	Andrew Hempleman

Councillor Members

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



Annual General Meeting on 24 November 2022

Voting Entitlement for Member Organisations and Councillors

Paragraph 3.1.2 of the Constitution requires that “In order to vote at the AGM or any EGM the named representative of a members organisation or their substitute shall have attended at least 50 percent of possible meeting that could have been attended in the previous 12 months. This percentage shall be pro-rata for organisations joining part-way through the year.”

Similarly, paragraph 3.1.4 of the Constitution requires that “Councillor members shall be eligible to vote at the AGM and any EGM if they have attended at least 50 percent of possible meeting that could have been attended in the previous 12 months. This percentage shall be pro-rata for councillors elected and joining part-way through the year.”

Five full meetings have been held in the relevant period: 11 November 2021, 20 January 2022, 24 March 2022, 16 June 2022 and 21 September 2022.

The Town Forum held an informal ‘Forum Focus’ meeting on 12 May 2022 which was only open to Member Organisations so this does not count as a possible meeting for Councillor Members. The Town Forum also hosted Hustings on 21 April 2022 but this is not counted in the number of possible meetings.

Member Organisations who have attended at least 50% of possible meetings:

Beulah Road Residents’ Association

Boyne Park Residents’ Association

Calverley Park Residents’ Association

Civic Society of Royal Tunbridge Wells

Culverden Residents’ Association*

Friends @ The Amelia Scott

Friends of Grosvenor and Hilbert Park

Friends of The Commons

Friends of the Grove*

Friends of Tunbridge Wells Cemetery

Friends of Woodbury Park Cemetery*

Grantley Court Residents' Association

Inner London Road Residents' Association

Molyneux Park Road Residents' Association*

Poona Road Residents' Association

Rotary Club of Tunbridge Wells

Royal Tunbridge Wells in Bloom

Royal Tunbridge Wells Together

Soroptimist International of Tunbridge Wells and District*

St Johns Road Residents Association

Telephone House Neighbours' Association

The Avenues Residents' Association*

The Forum

The Potteries Residents and Owners Group*

Tunbridge Wells Anti-Aircraft Noise Group

Tunbridge Wells Bicycle User Group

Tunbridge Wells Fairtrade Town Group

Tunbridge Wells Friends of the Earth

Tunbridge Wells Older Peoples Forum

Tunbridge Wells Puppetry Festival

Tunbridge Wells Twinning & Friendship Association

Warwick Park Residents' Association

(* = 100% of possible meetings)

(32 out of 60 member organisations are eligible to vote)

Councillor Members who have attended at least 50% of possible meetings

Councillor Chapelard

Councillor Ellis

Councillor Fitzsimmons

Councillor Lidstone

Councillor Morton

Councillor Pope

Councillor Pound

Councillor Rutland*

(* = 100% of possible meetings)

(8 out of 19 councillor members are eligible to vote)

Member Organisations and Councillor Members not listed above have not met the attendance requirement set out in the Constitution and will not be able to vote at the AGM.



Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Thursday 11 November 2021 held online via Zoom, starting at 6pm

ATTENDANCE

- 1 Member Organisations:
 Beulah Road Residents' Association – Stuart Anderson | Boyne Park Residents' Association – Dorothea Holman | Calverley Park Residents' Association – Jane Fenwick | Civic Society of Royal Tunbridge Wells and Poona Road Residents' Association – Alastair Tod | Clarence Road Users' Association – Alec Taylor | Culverden Residents' Association – Mark Booker | Friends @ The Amelia Scott – Anne Stobo | Friends of Grosvenor & Hilbert Parks – David Barnett | Friends of The Grove and The Avenues Residents' Association – Tim Tempest | Friends of Tunbridge Wells Cemetery – John de Lucy | Friends of Woodbury Park Cemetery – David Bushell | Hawkenbury Village Association – Geoff Shewry | Inner London Road Residents' Association – Pat Wilson | Molyneux Park Gardens Residents' Association – Don Sloan | Royal Tunbridge Wells in Bloom and Telephone House Neighbours' Association – Katharine Mahler-Bech | Soroptimist International of Tunbridge Wells and District – Caroline Auckland | St John's Road Residents' Association – Marguerita Morton | The Forum – Carolyn Gray | Tunbridge Wells Anti-Aircraft Noise Group – Angus Stewart | Tunbridge Wells Bicycle User Group – Adrian Berendt | Tunbridge Wells Friends of the Earth – Marieke de Jonge | Tunbridge Wells Puppetry Festival – Matthew Brown | Tunbridge Wells Repair Café – Chris Murphy | Tunbridge Wells Twinning and Friendship Association – Michael Holman.

Councillor Members:
 Culverden ward – Cllr James Rands, Cllr Justine Rutland and Cllr David Scott | Pantiles and St. Mark's ward – Cllr Wendy Fitzsimmons | Park ward – Cllr Nicholas Pope and Cllr Victoria White | Sherwood ward – Cllr Hugo Pound | St James' ward – Cllr Ben Chapelard | St. John's ward – Cllr Marguerita Morton.

Others in Attendance:
 Co-optees – Marianne MacDonald | Borough Councillors – Cllr Tom Dawlings (Leader of the Council) | Borough Council Officers – Hilary Smith (Economic Development Manager) | Guests – Diana Armstrong-Wilson, Mark Brown, Liz Guest, Angela McPherson and Paul Sinclair | Secretary – Mark O'Callaghan.

REGISTER OF MEMBERS

- 2 The Secretary returned the list of members of the Town Forum as set out in the agenda.

VOTING ENTITLEMENT FOR MEMBER ORGANISATIONS AND COUNCILLORS

- 3 The Secretary confirmed that the voting entitlement of those who had achieved the required level of attendance was as set out in the agenda.

MINUTES OF THE 2020 AGM

- 4 The Chair noted that the minutes had been agreed in principle at the meeting in January 2021 but were submitted here for formal approval.

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the AGM held on 19 November 2020 be approved.

CHAIR'S ANNUAL REPORT

- 5 The Chair, Adrian Berendt, gave his report as outgoing Chair and reflected on the last year and his previous five-years as chair. Regrets included that the Town Forum had been unable to get the Council to rethink on Calverley Square or Phase 2 of the Public Realm works and a lack of progress on a modal shift to active travel.

Town Forum continued to meet via Zoom but it was appreciated this did not suit everybody. Town Forum had increased its ranks with two new member organisations with several more in the wings. Work would continue to increase active membership and widening the demographics of the forum.

Recent positive developments included exciting new plans for the town hall and changes on the high street to reduce traffic and make the area more welcoming. The Council also appeared to be taking a more proactive approach to consultation.

Council officers and the Town Forum's management group and working groups were thanked for their support. Working Groups are the engines of the Town Forum and more help was needed.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

- 6 The Secretary introduced the report and confirmed that nominations had been received as set out in the agenda.

The Secretary set out the procedure for voting electronically as follows: All members listed in the 'Voting Entitlement for Member Organisations and Councillors', as set out at agenda item 3, may vote by raising their hand and a count would be taken. A provisional result would be announced whereupon any member may challenge the result. In the event of a challenge a roll call vote would be taken.

No challenges to the provisional result were received therefore it was declared that the votes cast were as follows:

- Don Sloan, Chair: Unanimous
- Adrian Berendt, Deputy Chair: Unanimous

The new Chair, Don Sloan, returned thanks for his election and paid tribute to his predecessor Adrian Berendt who, he was glad, would continue to provide his experience and expertise as Deputy Chair. He added his thanks to Alastair Tod who was stepping down as Deputy Chair after many years' service.

RESOLVED –

1. That Don Sloan be elected Chair for 2021/22 until the date of the AGM 2022; and
2. That Adrian Berendt be elected Deputy Chair for 2021/22 until the date of the AGM 2022.



RTW Town Forum: Chairman's Report 2021 – 2022

The 2021-2022 year got off to a good start in the meeting immediately following the AGM last November. The agenda was a full one covering High Street Changes, Public Safety, Town Hall Co-Working, Active Travel, Housing, plans for the Queens Jubilee, update on Christmas preparations and OuRToWn. We report on progress on some of these below.

RTW Town Forum has continued to be a source of community action responding to issues and problems in the town, and in urging appropriate action. We have gone further than this, responding to consultations and producing reports which are increasingly being passed to Borough Council consultants. In February we produced an information sheet summarising of our outputs and achievements over recent years.

Meetings

In addition to our usual six bimonthly meetings we held a virtual local election hustings on 21 April. This was advertised jointly with one of our members, Tunbridge Wells Friends of the Earth, who held their own in-person hustings on 26 April. Most political parties with candidates were represented at the hustings.

Our full meeting on 12 May focussed on the Town Forum with a reconsideration of our role and the new realities post pandemic. At the meeting we reviewed current functions and activities, identified current issues and areas for improvement. There was discussion of relations with BID and ouRToWn as well as support to climate change/environment; also image and media. It was concluded that we needed to promote our successes, encourage KCC councillors to attend our meetings and have more informal meetings with borough councillors to help understanding and make any concerns known. Indeed the number of informal meetings between individual councillors and various members of our Management Group has greatly increased in recent months and has helped to formulate and take forward proposals.

The idea of a town council was mooted but it was felt likely to be resisted amid fears of taking money from the borough council, adding bureaucracy and increasing costs. However, this could happen in the future and we should be prepared for the possibility. It was also felt that the TF is overly dependent on a small number of people and further support to our working groups was needed. It was agreed to engage more with younger people and support the formation of a Youth Forum. This has happened and one of their members attended our September meeting. A full report on the Forum Focus meeting on 12 May is attached to the agenda for the meeting of 16 June and can be found on our website www.townforum.org. Agendas and reports on all our meeting are to be found on the site.

The Forum Focus meeting in the Town Hall was our only face-to-face during the reporting year. Unfortunately the Council Chamber was needed at short notice for Council meetings at the times we had booked, and it was not possible to find alternative venues.

OuRToWn

At one of our meetings we were briefed on OuRToWn. We were advised it is a Community Interest Company (CIC) and a vehicle to raise funds for project to improve the town. The Town Forum, not being a legal entity, cannot raise funds. We learned that OuRToWn will fill gaps in services provided by ourselves, the Borough Council and RTW Together. We already have close links with Water in the Wells, one of our members, which is also an established CIC.

Cooperation with businesses

We continued to work with business groups in town including Together for Tunbridge Wells (BID) which is one of our members. At the invitation of their chair, Sarah-Jane Adams, we have been represented at some of their monthly virtual breakfast meetings. During the year the Tunbridge Wells Fair Trade Group, under Mandy Flashman-Wells, became a Town Forum member.

Council Partnership groups

Partnership groups have been set up by the Borough Council to take forward projects or respond to particular needs. The idea is to involve stakeholders by getting their views, suggestions and other help as appropriate. Members of the groups have typically included Councillors, our Town Forum, voluntary organisations, Parish Chairs, NHS, KCC and others.

We have participated in several such partnerships:

Town Centre Area Plan – Town Forum members have participated at meetings (real and virtual) and three workshops. We have helped with interviews to recruit consultants. Adrian and I, with other stakeholders, recently went on a tour of the Town with the consultants to draw attention to particular features.

A number of reports were requested the Council for passing to consultants. We provided the following:

- 20mph and footpath reports
- Towards Change, Town Centre Transport Plan 2017/18
- The New Normal' - a post Covid update in 2020 on 1 above
- RTW Town Forum response to Transport component of the Local Plan 2018.
- The Green Network.

The report by TWBUG, one of our members, on cycle parking was also requested.

Ukrainian Refugees – Meetings have covered updates including matching of guests to hosts, employment opportunities, schools, and holiday support for children. We advertised for and recruited several volunteers from our members to assist with Kids' Clubs in August. A first class website was produced by a local firm. The group advised on English language classes and contributed clothes and household goods for the hub at TN2.

Cost of Living Crisis – So far there has been one partnership meeting (in September) which looked broadly at cost of living issues before deciding to focus on action on food; setting up an information portal partly to match support to asks; internal communication to include details on premises and support; and advocacy. With parish chairs and Nourish (one of our members) we have accepted to take the lead on action on food. We have recommended additional practical support for Nourish, to Council to consider setting up a community allotment, and extending and/or replicating the work of Charlie's Angels. At the time of writing, these ideas are being further explored and worked on.

Shared Prosperity Funds – This is part of Levelling Up. In May we were asked to propose projects which might be suitable for support under the Government's Shared Prosperity funds. We submitted a number of projects including:

- Pedestrian Project submitted by Jane Fenwick building on the earlier survey of twittens and alleyways.
- Benches Project submitted by Caroline Auckland, President, Soroptimist Tunbridge Wells and District, building on an earlier report.

We also endorsed:

e-cargo bike scheme submitted by TWBUG and a parks project the Council were considering

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It later became apparent that what had started off as a simple request for projects (under a few categories), which might have been combined or modified, had developed in complexity with the emphasis then changed to be more on investment plans, and budgets.

We were advised in June that further information from DLUHC had indicated that the focus would now be on needs and interventions rather than the details of individual projects. This left scope to develop further projects over the three years. An Investment Plan was submitted to DLUHC in August for their approval later in 2022, so we await further developments.

Transport and Active Travel

During the year our Transport Working Group prioritised measures to increase pedestrian safety, reduce vehicle speeds and volumes, and to enable safer cycling within the town. They were looking to encourage more walking generally. Specifically, they drew attention to the danger of Carrs Corner for pedestrians, the need for more crossing points on London Road and the difficulty trying to cross the High Street from the station.

There was disappointment that a long planned cycle scheme for the A26 had been refused following a withdrawal of support by the KCC on safety grounds.

The Working Group has prepared a 20mph report which will be presented at our full Town Forum meeting in January 2023.

Environment

Our efforts have been concentrated on supporting the Council's objectives outlined in their 2019 report including achieving carbon neutrality by 2030. At our meeting in September Cllr Luke Everitt spoke frankly about the challenges in achieving the target, including financial ones. The meeting was also attended by a representative of the Environment Agency who is himself due to speak on 24 November after the AGM.

Our members have put forward a number of suggestions to help the environment including solar panels on car park roofs and practical ideas for active travel. Two of our members addressed a meeting of the Joint Transport Board (KCC and TWBC) at their meeting in October.

Membership and attendance

New members welcomed in 2021/22 (in alphabetical order) were:

- Rotary Club of Tunbridge Wells
- Royal Wells Park Residents' Group
- The Potteries Residents and Owners Group
- Tunbridge Wells Fairtrade Town Group

The average attendance rate has dropped this year. A number of organisations appear to have let their membership lapse by not attending any meetings, and we'll need to find the reasons for this and advise on appropriate action. Getting back to normal after Covid and unavoidably having virtual meetings may also have been factors.

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Year	Average attendance including Councillors	Average attendance excluding Councillors (member organisations only)
2021/22	42%	45%
2020/21 (covid continues until may 2021)	57%	60%
2019/20 (covid from march 2020 onwards)	52%	56%
2018/19	Not recorded	62%

On the positive side congratulations to those who achieved 100% attendance:

- Culverden Residents' Association
- Friends of The Grove (same rep as The Avenues (Tim Tempest))
- Friends of Woodbury Park Cemetery
- Molyneux Park Road RA (Chair)
- Soroptimist International Tunbridge Wells and District
- The Avenues RA (same rep as Friends of The Grove (Tim Tempest))
- The Potteries Residents and Owners Group (pro-rata 1 meeting)
- Cllr Rutland

Cinema Site

The site is still vacant and fresh plans have been submitted and are about to be considered by the planning committee. A lot of attention has been given to this following a presentation by the developers, RVG, at our full meeting in January.

Our concern has been to follow up with the developers to get the best possible plans and appropriate use for the site. Indeed we joined the Civic Society at two meeting with the developers, and some improvements were suggested by email. We also sent comments to borough councillors. Once the plans published we conveyed information and analysis of them as widely and fully as possible so people could make considered decisions, and if they wished submit comments on the plans to the Council by the closing date in September.

By the eve of the closing date our Strategic Planning Working Group had come firmly to the view that the plans were flawed in a number of ways, and submitted their comments accordingly. At our meeting in September after the comments were submitted we held a vote. 21 people supported the comments by the Working Group against the application. Only one person voted in favour, and 9 were neutral. A member of the working group hopes to speak against the application at the meeting when it is considered.

At the time of writing the Borough Council Planning committee has not considered the application. It is likely to be considered on 16 November.

Town Hall Co-Working

We monitored plans for Town Hall co-working. This has arisen because much of the Town Hall is underused. 2/3rds of the space is surplus to requirements so the plan is for a firm to be responsible for the maintenance of the building and manage letting of the surplus space. Our Deputy Chairman, Adrian Berendt, helped with the interviewing of firms shortlisted for the job and LVG were selected and appointed early in 2022.

Adrian has also played an important role in the Cross-Party Working Group, making recommendations to the Cabinet and Full Council about what to do next with the Civic Complex. He has pointed out that the proposal was not simply a contract to let out some surplus space, but had much wider ramifications likely to benefit the town. It was about continued cooperation and akin to a joint-venture or management contract. For co-working space to be successful, it would need the support of the Borough Council, the BID, other local businesses and residents; and this is how it is developing.

Our input has been as a critical friend of the Council. Our members have asked questions about the further development of the Civic Complex site, public access, finances, decision making and procurement and responsibilities. Councillors had voted unanimously in December in favour of the project and we are giving it our full support.

Safety

In one of the updates given by the Council we were advised that public safety is primarily a police matter, though supported by the Borough Council. Marianne MacDonald (Town Forum Management Group), Caroline Auckland (Sorooptimists International of Tunbridge Wells and District) and Sarah-Jane Adams (Royal Tunbridge Wells Together) presented at our March meeting drawing attention to a number of issues, indicating remedial action being proposed, and some action already taken. Reference was made to a Sorooptimists survey and a police report, both of which are to be followed up at the TF meeting immediately following the next AGM.

Working Groups

Our working groups are our backbone. Without them our impact and effectiveness would be lost. The groups have continued to produce reports, disseminate information and monitor Council and other proposals and plans.

The Culture, Leisure and Tourism Group has been renamed *Leisure, Wellbeing and Culture* to bring it in line with the new Lib-Dem coalition's cabinet position occupied by Cllr Wendy Fitzsimmons. Carolyn Gray passed the Town Forum chairmanship of the group to Stuart Anderson in August. Our thanks go to Carolyn for all her work with the group. With the *Water in the Wells* group they have been advising on development of the Chalybeate Spring in the Pantiles. Samuel Danby, an entrepreneur, presented his proposals at one of our meetings for developing the site to produce bottled spring water to sell. He said the appearance of the site would be improved and would have a theatrical element to draw attention to its history.

Water in the Wells group: Major developments over the past year have been the inclusion of Tim Ward's two-level drinking fountain in the courtyard of the Amelia Scott and the installation of a specially commissioned tazza on the base of the Royal Doulton fountain in St John's Park and Meadows.

The group has kept a watching brief on the continued functioning of the established water features in and around the town centre: Fountains Lodge, Royal Wells Park, the Dripping Wells, Knights Wood, The Potteries (Pantiles 1887), Dunorlan (both the bottle filling station and the Victorian fountain), and the Pantiles Chalybeate Spring.

Water features currently at the planning or construction stage - a water wall at the former Bus Depot on St John's Road, a courtyard feature in the ABC cinema development, and the

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refurbishment of Dippers Hall and the Pantiles Chalybeate Spring - have continued to claim the group's attention.

Of concern to the group is the need for the Council to draw up a comprehensive renovation and maintenance plan for the Dunorlan Victorian fountain and cascades, where attention is urgently needed.

The *Finance Working Group* under David Wakefield responded to the Council's budget consultation.

The *Planning Working Group*, chaired by Mark Booker, has had a particularly busy year with the Local Plan and has responded to consultations and to questions raised by Government inspectors/examiners. The time and effort he has put into addressing the issues has been herculean. The plans for the development of the cinema site (covered above) have also been a major concern of the Group.

Jane Fenwick chairs our very active *Transport Working Group*. The work of this group is reported above on under Transport and Active Travel and under the Shared Prosperity Fund.

Town Forum management

Thanks to all those who have supported us during the year. I am especially grateful to our management group and to chairs of working groups and all who have served on them.

Thanks also to Katharina Mahler-Bech who has continued to efficiently manage our website and social media, providing vital sources of communication for our organisation.

We could not have managed without the continuing support of the Borough Council for our meetings, real and virtual. Our special thanks to Mark O'Callaghan for secretarial support. He has put in a huge amount of work during the year setting up meetings, providing first class minutes, and giving timely advice on procedural matters.

Finally, it has clearly been an active and productive year for the Town Forum. We look forward to further action on most of these themes in the coming year.

Don Sloan,
Chairman RTW Town Forum
18 November, 2022



Annual General Meeting on 24 November 2022

Election of Officers

Introduction

1. The Town Forum is administered by a Management Committee of officers elected at the AGM and the leaders of the working groups.
2. The officers are:
 - the Chair, who must be a named representative of a member organisation; and
 - two Deputy Chairs, at least one of whom must be a named representative from a member organisation.

Nominations submitted

3. At the specified deadline for the submission of nominations, the following nominations had been submitted:

Chair

Don Sloan (second term) – proposed by Michael Holman, seconded by Adrian Berendt

Deputy Chair

Adrian Berendt (second term) – proposed by Don Sloan, seconded by Michael Holman
Jane Fenwick (first term) – proposed by Lorna Blackmore, seconded by David Scott

4. Statements from each of the candidates are set out at the end of this report.
5. The Town Forum's Constitution states: "The Chair and both Deputy Chairs shall be elected annually and will only be eligible to serve a maximum of two terms in any one office unless a majority of eligible voting Forum members agree to allow a further term of office." Thus, further terms of office is permissible, subject to the agreement of the majority of persons voting at the AGM.

Voting eligibility

6. The Constitution states that at least one third of nominated representatives who satisfy the voting entitlement requirements must be present for the AGM to take place and for the officers therefore to be elected.
7. Details of those who are eligible to vote are set out in the separate document on the agenda titled "Voting Eligibility".

Statement from Don Sloan OBE (nominated for Chair)

I am willing to serve for a second year as Chairman. I have been a member of the Town Forum since 2014, first as a Borough Councillor and then as a member of our residents' association. Helen and I have had our base in Tunbridge Wells since 1975 and have lived here continuously since 2001. Prior to 2001 we were abroad for periods with the British Council.

The past year has put the pandemic behind us and seen the formation of a new Lib-Dem led coalition administration with the resulting new policies and local programmes, which in turn has meant more business and activity for the Town Forum. To help respond to this I hope we can return to having two Deputy Chairs as we had until a year ago.

In the coming year I would like the Town Forum to focus on the following:

- tackle environmental issues, action by Borough Council and individuals
- promote active travel, which also has environmental and safety impacts
- safety generally (everyone should feel safe in our town)
- help achieve the best possible Local and Town Centre* plans
- with the Borough Council address the Cost of Living Crisis*, also support the bid for Shared Prosperity* funds
- work with businesses and BID to ensure the continuing prosperity and attractiveness of Tunbridge Wells
- enhance the identity and cultural provision of the town e.g. water features and upgrading of Chalybeate Spring, proposed Decimus Burton Museum and Study Centre
- to assist and develop ties with the newly formed Youth Forum
- monitoring progress on the review of our borough's electoral ward boundaries by the LGBCE. This could affect our membership and the area we cover.
- fuller engagement with those Borough and County Councillors whose responsibilities cover the inner wards, and ensure our membership associations are representative of all areas.

The activities of our working groups hold the key to achieving results and that is what has led to our current successes. I shall encourage more of our members to join the groups and to participate in Borough Council's partnerships in support of some of the points listed above, i.e. those indicated by *.

I continue to represent the Molyneux Park Gardens Residents' Association and I am a member of the Rotary Club of Tunbridge Wells.

Statement from Jane Fenwick (nominated for Deputy Chair)

I have been an active member of the RTW Town Forum since soon after it was formed, and chair of the Transport Working Group for more than 10 years. Transport issues in Tunbridge Wells are many and urgent. Responsibility for these services lie with KCC, TWBC and the various public transport providers making it a difficult and lengthy process to effect improvements. Now we are facing new challenges to drastically reduce harmful emissions from all our transport activities, and to walk and cycle more on shorter journeys. These challenges are facing the whole country. The Town Forum is actively engaging with our council officers and political members to ensure that our town's many voices are heard during this transition that we all need to make.

Active volunteers have made a huge impact in Tunbridge Wells and they are needed more than ever in these economically challenging times. The Town Forum's membership is growing and becoming a significant voice in the town. I am pleased to support the chairman and all members in protecting and advancing our ever widening community of interests.

Statement from Adrian Berendt (nominated for Deputy Chair)

As a member of the Town Forum and its management committee for a number of years and as a past Chair, I am content to continue as a Deputy Chair for the next 12 months.



Meeting of the Town Forum on 24 November 2022

Membership Changes

a) Changes of representatives

John de Lucy is now the substitute representative for Civic Society of Royal Tunbridge Wells Older People's Forum, previously John Cunningham. Brian Lippard remains the primary representative.

Mike Trudel is now the primary representative for Friends @ The Amelia Scott, previously Anne Stobo. Helen Mitcham is now the substitute representative, previously Mike Trudel.

Sue Bishop is now the primary representative for Boyne Park Residents' Association, previously Dorothea Holman. Dorothea Holman is now the substitute representative.

b) New membership applications

None



Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 16 June 2022, held online starting at 6pm

ATTENDANCE

1

Member Organisations:

Calverley Park Residents' Association – Jane Fenwick | Civic Society of Royal Tunbridge Wells – Brian Lippard | Culverden Residents' Association – Mark Booker | Friends @ The Amelia Scott – Anne Stobo | Friends of The Commons – Joy Podbury | Friends of The Grove – Tim Tempest | Friends of Tunbridge Wells Cemetery – John de Lucy | Friends of Woodbury Park Cemetery – David Bushell | Grantley Court Residents Association – Lorna Blackmore | Inner London Road Residents' Association – Carol Wilson | Molyneux Park Gardens Residents Association – Don Sloan | Poona Road Residents' Association – Eve Foster | Royal Tunbridge Wells in Bloom – Katharina Mahler-Bech | Royal Tunbridge Wells Together – Sarah-Jane Adams | Royal Wells Park Residents' Group – Paul Bright | Sherborne Close Management Committee – Marianne MacDonald | Soroptimist International of Tunbridge Wells and District – Angela McPherson | Telephone House Neighbours' Association – Katharina Mahler-Bech | The Avenue Residents' Association – Tim Tempest | Tunbridge Wells Bicycle User Group – Adrian Berendt.

Councillor Members:

Culverden ward – Cllr Justine Rutland | Sherwood ward – Cllr Hugo Pound | St. James' ward – Cllr Ben Chapelard | St. John's ward – Cllr Mark Ellis and Cllr Peter Lidstone.

Others In Attendance:

Presenters – David Scott (OuRToWn) | Borough Council Officers – David Candlin, Head of Economic Development and Property, TWBC | Guests – Alastair Tod | Secretary – Mark O'Callaghan.

MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

2

a) Changes of representatives

The following changes were noted:

- Laura Gibson is now the primary representative for Poona Road Residents' Association, previously Alastair Tod. Olivia Thornhill is now the substitute representative.

b) New councillor members

Details of newly elected councillors for wards in the Town Forum area were attached to the agenda. Please note a correction for St. James' ward: Cllr Rob Wormington was re-elected and Cllr Ben Chapelard was continuing.

c) New membership applications

There were no new applications.

MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS DATED 24 MARCH 2022

- 3 No amendments were proposed. The minutes were noted.

UPDATES FROM MEMBER ORGANISATIONS

4 Rotary Club of Tunbridge Wells

Don Sloan advised that gym equipment donated by the Rotary Club to mark the centenary of Rotary in Tunbridge Wells had now been installed in Dunorlan Park.

NEW LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

- 5 The Chair welcomed the new leader of the Council, Councillor Ben Chapelard.

Councillor Chapelard provided an update:

- After many years of conservative administration the council no longer had one party with overall control. Liberal Democrats was now the largest party.
- There were now 16 Liberal Democrats, 13 Conservative, 9 Tunbridge Wells Alliance, 7 Labour and 3 Independents.
- Liberal Democrats, Alliance, Labour and one of the independent members agreed they had enough in common to form the Borough Partnership which was to form the council's administration.
- A Partnership Agreement setting out how the parties would work together had been published and was available on the respective websites.
- The Partnership first established its priorities then sought to appoint office holders to deliver the priorities.
- The Partnership's priorities were:
 1. Safeguarding finances – the council was spending more than was coming in, this was unsustainable and difficult choices would need to be made.
 2. Vibrant and safer towns and villages – the internet had changed the nature of town centres but there were opportunities to do things that could not be done online. This also included making the streets safer and less congested.
 3. Carbon reduction – climate change was an existential threat that needed a robust response.
 4. Genuinely affordable housing and social rental housing – the desire of home ownership was simply not available to too many residents in Tunbridge Wells. Good housing was fundamental to quality of life.
 5. Digital access, transparency and local democracy – residents felt detached from decision makers, the new administration wanted to engage with residents.
- The new Cabinet would consist of:
 1. Cllr Hugo Pound – Housing and Planning
 2. Cllr Nancy Warne – Rural Communities (and Deputy Leader)
 3. Cllr Andrew Hickey – Finance and Performance
 4. Cllr Ben Chapelard – Leader (and Communications)
 5. Cllr David Hayward – Governance and Transparency
 6. Cllr Justine Rutland – Tunbridge Wells town and areas (incl. Southborough and Rusthall)

7. Cllr Wendy Fitzsimmons – Leisure, Wellbeing and Culture
 8. Cllr Luke Everitt – Environment, Sustainability and Carbon Reduction
- In addition to the formal Cabinet Members, several member champions had been appointed:
 1. Cllr Peter Lidstone – Walking and Cycling
 2. Cllr Mathew Sankey – Local Business
 3. Cllr Alex Britcher-Alan – Charities and Voluntary Sector
 4. Cllr Mark Ellis – Town Market

Councillor Rutland added details of the portfolio concerning the town centre:

- The new portfolio was the successor to the previous Economic Development portfolio for the town centre but included working cooperatively with the councils of Southborough and Rusthall.
- She would be working closely with businesses and the Business Improvement District.
- Transport and parking also were covered by the portfolio.
- Projects were being planned to:
 1. Bring people back to the town and increase dwell time
 2. Re-establish an independent farmers' market
 3. Deliver a small business pack
 4. Deliver street scene improvements – tackling graffiti, lockers at the station, restoring red-brick paving, overflowing litter bins
 5. Expand 20mph zone to the town centre
 6. Consult on the Town Centre Area Plan.
 7. Liaise with developers of the former cinema site
 8. Submit proposals for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.
 9. Green the town centre
- The principles guiding the new portfolio would be:
 1. Listening and understanding the challenges faced by Royal Tunbridge Wells, Southborough and Rusthall.
 2. To progress a mixture of short- and long-term projects, some small-scale and some ambitious.
 3. To deliver visible improvements within one to two years.
- The cabinet member could be contacted at justine.rutland@tunbridgewells.gov.uk

Councillor Chapelard concluded:

- The new Cabinet was enthusiastic to get started and get out meeting people.
- The Partnership would work in the interests of residents and businesses.

Comments included:

- There was a lot of synergy between the aims of the Partnership and the Town Forum. The Forum was keen to work with the Partnership on common priorities.
- The unparished area of Royal Tunbridge Wells did not have the usual option of parish precepts to pay for local services so the Borough Council collected 'special expenses' instead. Special expenses were reserved for the town of Tunbridge Wells but the Partnership would be improving the transparency of how that money was spent.
- Consultation would be improved by councillors in the Borough Partnership being out and visible in future. Cabinet meetings would travel around the borough and include time for questions and answers. Lots of ideas for new ways of communicating were being looked into.

- Formal consultation had not been effective in the past but the Partnership wanted to change that and involve residents in the forming of ideas rather than fait-accompli proposals.
- Councillor Rutland would be a director on the Board of the Business Improvement District. Former councillor David Scott was thanked for his previous contribution in that post.

OURTOWN

6

David Scott provided an update:

- OuRToWn was a new body established to help improve the town. The organisation would have a corporate structure and be able to enter into contracts and handle money in order to get things done.
- It would not be a campaigning or political organisation.
- The idea was to have both a Community Interest Company (CIC) and a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)
- A CIC could do all the things a company did and make profit but this would be retained within the company and only spent by the CIC or granted to other CICs.
- The initial Trustees are:
 - David Scott
 - Adrian Berendt
 - Liz Orr
 - Catherine Rankin
 - Peter Taylor
- There were many people involved in running successful activities benefitting the town but when individuals retired, moved or had other priorities their initiatives often went with them. The hope was that the CIC would be a permanent vehicle for these activities.
- A CIO was established under charities legislation and would be a tax-efficient body to raise funds including receiving bequests and other donations.
- Refresh Tunbridge Wells is already a CIO and had similar aims to OuRToWn. With a small widening of its objectives it could serve both purposes.
- Setting up bank accounts had been a long process over the past 6-months through the Charities Aid Foundation.
- Judith Symes and Jackie Stanton had been engaged to help run the organisation.
- OuRToWn would be starting with some small projects and hopefully building to larger ones. A wide range of people would be needed to help both in time and funding, membership would involve a financial contribution. A 'Friends of' group would also be set up to broaden the opportunities for involvement.
- This was an exciting project which was hoped to become one of the major doers in the town, putting projects into action.
- Many people and groups had similar interests in improving the town and OuRToWn would provide funding and a structure to get things done.

UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND

7

The Chair noted that the Town Forum had been invited to submit projects for consideration in May. Details of long-standing projects including 20mph zones, benches and cycling infrastructure amongst others had been sent.

David Candlin, Head of Economic Development and Property at TWBC presented:

- The UK Shared Prosperity Fund was a significant pillar of the government's Levelling Up agenda worth a total of £2.6billion.
- Tunbridge Wells would receive an allocation rather than having to competitively bid.
- Aims of the fund and the types of investments are set out in the presentation, a copy of which is attached.
- Unusually, district councils were being given responsibility for submitting plans directly for government approval and managing the resulting projects.
- If plans are approved, the borough council would receive an allocation of approximately £1million to be spent in the borough over 3 years.
- Funding would be released in phases and must be spent in that phase:
 - Year 1 2022/23: £91,137
 - Year 2 2023/24: £187,774
 - Year 3 2024/25: £725,839
- Proposals must be submitted as a complete 3-year plan.
- Separate funding was available to assist in the preparation of the plan however the template was relatively light-touch so this assistance was not expected to be needed.
- Collaboration with other authorities was encouraged. Discussions with the West Kent Partnership and Kent County Council had taken place.
- Ideas had been invited from Town and Parish Councils, Town Forum, Councillors, Business Improvement District and other stakeholders. A Local Partnership Group was being set up to monitor the plan.
- 73 projects worth £5million had been submitted. An initial shortlist of 15 projects had been selected within the £1million budget.
- Projects included some delivered by the council directly or through partnerships or in the form of grants to third-parties.
- Draft proposals will be discussed at the Communities and Economic Development Cabinet Advisory Board on 13 July.
- Cabinet on 20 July will decide the final plan and make a number of associated decisions to facilitate implementation.
- The plan must be submitted to Government by 1 August 2022 and a response is expected around October 2022.

Comments included:

- The opportunity to submit new projects had passed.
- The Plan was moving quickly by necessity according to the government's timetable. It had not been possible to undertake a general consultation.
- People could feedback via their Councillors or comment directly on the draft proposals at the Cabinet Advisory Board and Cabinet meetings.
- Projects would be defined as loosely as possible to allow some flexibility in implementing.
- Some projects will be a one-off investment. Others will need to demonstrate how it will be sustainable beyond the initial investment. Match-funding and other sources of funding will likely be required.

DISCUSSION ON THE FORUM FOCUS MEETING ON 12 MAY 2022

8 The Chair discussed the Forum Focus meeting held on 12 May, minutes of which were attached to the agenda. The Town Forum working groups had

been incredibly active behind the scenes leading on projects and responding to consultations.

The meeting recorded its thanks to Alastair Tod who was standing down from the Forum but whose contribution over many years had been significant and much appreciated.

Key items from the discussion included:

- Lack of people willing or able to take action.
- The new Cabinet had arranged itself around important issues affecting residents.
- Environmental issues were preeminent and this was the most regular issue which attracted what little funding was available.
- The Forum needed to focus on issues where it could have most effect.
- The Forum's management group had worked successfully with the Cabinet, this was productive and provided an opportunity to give leverage to the Forum's voice.
- It was difficult to work with KCC who were particularly key on Transport issues, or national government. Need to engage with County Councillors.
- Joint Transportation Board was in a difficult position between the county and borough councils. The new Chair of Tunbridge Wells JTB, Councillor Lidstone advised that KCC had a number of good policies which he would be seeking to hold to account and there would be more working with town and parish councils to secure more 'wins' such as the recent 20mph scheme in Bidborough.
- Possibility of having a town council had been discussed but there may be alternatives to achieving the same outcomes.
- There needed to be continuity, whatever solution was decided needed to be sustainable.
- The new Cabinet would be much more visible and reachable than previous administrations, with a dedicated Cabinet member for Royal Tunbridge Wells. Work was underway to try to improve access to and coordination with KCC and neighbouring authorities.
- This was a hugely complex issue which would require further deliberation.
- There will likely be incremental improvement over a period of time.
- Relations with the borough council had improved and were working well, to the effect that informally Town Forum was treated as if a statutory consultee in planning matters. This was not a formal arrangement but perhaps future deliberations could seek to build on this.

REPORTS FROM THE TOWN FORUM WORKING GROUPS

9

a) Planning Working Group

Mark Booker presented:

- The examination of the Local Plan was ongoing. Recent hearings were focused on the technical nature of the decision making process and therefore could result in a Plan which is within the bounds of planning regulations but not what a lay person might consider to be optimal.
- There had been much change in the planning landscape and there was increased pressure to increase the density of housing in town centres to preserve more rural areas. This was supported by the Town

Forum working group. The Borough Council was building flexibility into the Plan.

- The examination hearing was progressing well, it was expected that the Plan would be adopted with only minor modifications. If adopted the Plan would be subject to review in 5 years time.
- Spa Golf Course – which was outside the boundary of the un-parished area but still important to the residents of the town – had been sold to an undisclosed person. It was hoped the land would be protected as an important open space and wildlife corridor.
- The Town Forum and Civic Society had sent a joint letter with a number of constructive observations to the developers of the Cinema Site, no reply had yet been received.
- The developer's previous commitment to consult was being put into doubt.

b) Transport Working Group

Jane Fenwick presented:

- Working Group had not met since the elections but in the meantime the 20mph plan for the town centre and contributions to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund had been submitted.

c) Culture Leisure and Tourism Working Group

d) Finance Working Group

e) Water in the Wells Working Group

No update

URGENT BUSINESS OR TOPICS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

10 Friends @ The Amelia Scott

Anne Stobo noted the opening of the Amelia Scott in central Tunbridge Wells and thanked the Council.

Future Meetings

A further Forum Focus meeting or similar discussion would be scheduled.

FUTURE MEETINGS

11 Future meetings:

- 15 September 2022
- 17 November 2022 (AGM) proposed to move to 24 November
- 19 January 2023
- 23 March 2023 proposed to move to 30 March

Members asked to check the proposed dates for clashes.



SEPTEMBER 2022

Spotlight on Safety in Tunbridge Wells

Our findings and recommendations



PORTAL TECH CO.

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Acknowledgements

We are grateful to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and Tunbridge Wells Community Safety Unit for their sympathetic interest in this project, and for their intention to use its findings to help inform the development of their policies.

With special thanks to Cllr Justine Rutland (TWBC), Inspector Ian Jones (Tunbridge Wells Police), Terry Hughes (Community Safety Manager) and Denise Haylet (Head of Facilities & Community) for survey advice and provision of the town map.

Thanks also to the team at The Forum who facilitated the launch of the survey during the International Women's Day (IWD) Event 2022 in particular Carolyn Gray.

We thank the Town Forum for their interest and support in sharing the survey to all members, especially Mark O'Callaghan (TWBC) and Don Sloan (Chair) and Marianne MacDonald for sponsorship of the SurveyMonkey platform.

We also wish to thank Rosie's plaques who gave kind permission to use their plaque image as part of our campaign and to illustrate the front cover of this report.

We would also like to acknowledge the support of our Friendship Link Club Soroptimist International Munich for assistance with printing costs.

Finally, and most importantly, thank you to everyone who submitted the survey forms whether in person, during the IWD event, by post or by completing the online survey or by sticking a post it note on the town map. You were listened to and your views and experiences relating to safety issues are being shared because they are important and deserve to be taken seriously.

Soroptimist Tunbridge Wells & District
situnbridgewells@yahoo.co.uk



Spotlight on Safety – Violence against Women and Girls Survey

Position Statement

Soroptimists- who we are and our position statement on Violence Against Women & Girls and Safety Issues.

Soroptimist International is a global volunteer movement working together to transform the lives of women and girls with nearly 72,000 Members in 121 countries. Soroptimist International Great Britain and Ireland (SIGBI) has 6,000 Members in 270 Clubs in 18 countries including Great Britain, Ireland and countries in Asia, the Caribbean and Malta, who work at a local, national and international level to educate, empower and enable opportunities for women and girls. The SI Federation has consultative status at the United Nations.

There has been a Soroptimist Club in Tunbridge Wells since 1946. We seek to use women's perspectives, skills and experience to contribute to the community, and to carry out programme action projects on health, education, the environment and are committed to ending all forms of violence against women and girls.

Gender based violence is a violation of human rights and affects the ability of women and girls to reach their full potential and participate in society. We advocate that there should be initiatives to make public spaces safe, particularly for women and girls.

We support programmes which educate girls and boys, at an appropriate age, about healthy respectful relationships.

Sexual harassment, stalking and other forms of violence have created a culture of fear for their safety amongst women in cities and towns. Recent news reports have highlighted the dangers especially following high level reports of the rape and murder of women in several countries. This survey arose after the shocking cases of Sarah Everard and Sabina Nessa made headlines, along with Kent PCSO Julia James. The historic murders of Caroline Pierce and Wendy Knell also entered the public consciousness when new evidence came to light.

We held a vigil, conducted a discussion panel based around the topics of safety with Terry Hughes Community Safety Manager, Phoebe Root, Head Girl, Bennett Memorial School & Vice-Chair of TW Youth Forum and Inspector Ian Jones, Tunbridge Wells Police. What emerged from these events was a need to capture information rather than hearsay.

There is a perception that Tunbridge Wells is a relatively safe place to live and we wanted to ask women and girls in Tunbridge Wells if that indeed was their view. The survey was open to all genders. Rather than just collect statements a survey was devised to collect reliable data and statistics which we hope will provide a helpful input to improving services and decision-making based on the concerns raised. We also hope this report will raise awareness and assist public debate.

Overview

The survey responses largely confirmed both the results from the survey conducted by the Police and Crime Commissioner's Office in August 2021 and general assumptions based on anecdotal evidence so in one sense there are no surprises. However, the survey has provided documentary evidence of people's views on the effectiveness of support services and the additional actions needed to keep women and girls safe in Tunbridge Wells.

A detailed analysis follows but the salient features are:-

- People feel safest where they live and in the town centre during the day and least safe in parks / open spaces or on public transport at night.
- Greater police presence and better lighting were the most frequently cited actions needed to improve the safety of women and girls.
- There was consensus that the objectives in the policing strategy were the right ones but satisfaction as to current performance was consistently poor.
- The most common forms of crime experienced were verbal harassment and unwanted attention but less than 12% were reported.
- Reasons for failure to report mainly centred around the expectation that the complaint would not be taken seriously or it wasn't worth the trouble as the occurrence was so frequent.

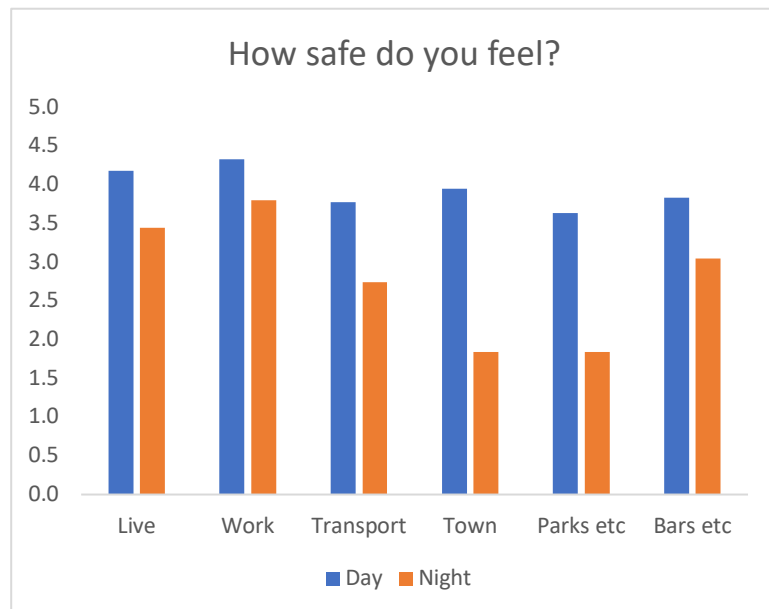
Methodology

The survey was produced in two formats – hard copy and on a Survey Monkey platform – and it was launched at the Soroptimists' International Women's Day event at the Forum in Tunbridge Wells on 13th March 2022. 112 responses were received – 33 in hard copy format and 79 on Survey Monkey. The sample is therefore small but as the format allowed for free-form comment it has provided insights into individuals' views.

Detail

How safe do you feel in Tunbridge Wells?

People feel safest where they live and/or work in the town centre during the day, fairly safe in bars and restaurants at night but less safe on public transport, in parks / open spaces or in the town centre at night. These findings are consistent with the 2021 PCC survey which found that people felt least safe at night in parks, at bus stations and at taxi ranks.



Participants describe their safety fears and issues in a variety of ways.

There were general feelings of vulnerability:

"Always have to plan what to do & where to go, how-to get there & back safely, men just 'do things!'"

"Stop telling us how safe the town is!"

Are there any particular locations you avoid?

46 mentions were made of unsafe places during the day with commons, parks, woodlands and train stations cited most frequently. As for night-time, 133 mentions were made, of which 63% related to commons, parks and unlit streets. The town centre was cited on 9% of occasions as a location to be avoided at night.

"I'm very wary about walking through the parks on my own."

"I don't walk through any woodland on my own"

St John's, the Commons, Hargate Forest, Grosvenor & Hilbert and Calverley were identified by name as well as particular roads as areas of concern.

"I used to walk around the Common quite a bit but am a bit cautious since various crimes reported around the area."

"Hargate and other lonely walks because of the flasher."

"Some of the areas near multi-story car parks (Monson Rd & Meadow Rd). Secluded areas in the parks (I've had an experience with a man exposing himself in Calverley Park) 2 years ago. My teenage daughter experiences cat calling from men driving past her on Pembury Road/ Sandhurst Road regularly and finds it very intimidating. She was also violently assaulted (intimidated and hit) in the park near High Brooms Station in the day time by a group of teenagers. There was no CCTV so the police were unable to help much."

"Vale Rd and London Rd is bad for leering, jeering etc and parts of the parks that are off the beaten track. I go to isolated pockets for peace and in the summer to chill and read but almost always get harassed so keep to well frequented areas of parks."

As mentioned above commons, parks and unlit streets, plus parking and public transport particularly railway station were highlighted as perceived areas of risk:

"Parks and poorly lit areas to be honest I try not to go out on my own at night as I don't feel safe at all."

"Grosvenor and Hilbert Park and Liptraps Lane due to inadequate lighting"

"Mount Pleasant Road, outside Pitcher and Piano"

"The area outside Wetherspoons"

"Defining night as after 9pm summer and 6pm winter, there is a section of 21st century cycle path, from Medway Road to GH Park hub (unlit, I would use a torch in winter up to 6pm) also I wouldn't walk over Common/ Calverley Grounds (except during ice rink season) in the dark on my own. But they are routed I would walk in daytime to go from a to b."

"High Brooms underpass- will pay extra to travel to T.Wells to ensure I don't have to use it."

"Back path to TW Rail Station."

"Poorly lit car parks."

"Multi-storey car parks in town."

How to improve safety for women and girls in Tunbridge Wells

Respondents were asked the specific question –

What would you like to see done to improve the safety of women and girls in Tunbridge Wells?

Specific measures were suggested 111 times, the most frequent being more police presence (31%), better lighting (27%) and better education (14%), particularly of men and boys. Other suggestions included more CCTV, preferential taxi rates for women and more scrutiny of taxi drivers.

Calls for more police presence were expressed:

"More police presence"

"More community patrols/ police on foot"

"Police patrolling on foot during the hours of darkness"

"Have a manned (police) station"

"More female officers"

Women felt vulnerable in the following areas due to the lighting provision or lack of –

The streets:

"I think there could be better street lighting, for example in areas where there are big houses with driveways where someone could easily hide and jump out but the speed of drivers and/or parking means walking nearer the road isn't necessarily any safer."

Parks:

"Better lighting in parks- particularly in winter when it gets dark early - we should be able to walk home in safety."

The Common:

"Lighting on the road through the common where you can park. It feels such a shame to be frightened in and around the common as it's so beautiful"

The Town:

"There are not enough lights in and around town, it is like a desert most of the times, scary when walking around."

Improved education around the issue of safety issues:

"Educate men about how women can feel vulnerable."

"Education at a young age for both sexes on dangers, understanding fears young and old have, consequences of actions. Learning to respect others is a major part of the issue."

"Workshops in schools & businesses to counter culture of violence towards women being acceptable & to teach strategies to adopt to make women feel safe and to call out any man/friend who makes derogatory remarks aimed at women. "

"Have it taken seriously and made a priority and not dismissed as being 'daft drunk girls'."

The Council and others need to provide more CCTV:

"Designated CCTV safe routes that are monitored"

"Put in street CCTV, all around High Brooms Station and surrounding areas. Extremely unsafe."

"CCTV in dark places"

Women feel vulnerable engaging with public transport and this leads to social exclusion due to fear:

"Lady taxi drivers."

"Concession or reduced (rate) taxi services for women driven by women. More advertising/public campaigns highlighting this issue."

"More female guards (not necessarily police officers) either in or around busy areas."

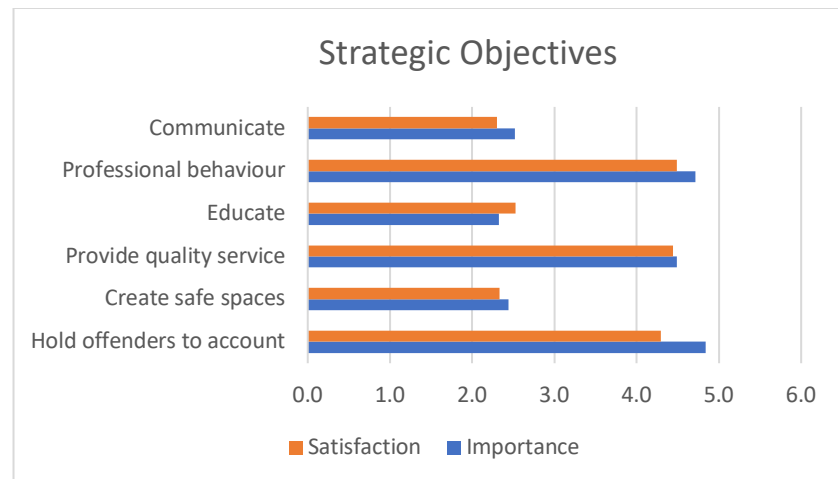
"Better public transport- Buses at night."

"Staff presence at High Brooms Station."

Police Strategy

The Police strategy covering violence against women and girls has a number of objectives. How important do you consider these to be and how well do you think the Police in Tunbridge Wells are performing against them?

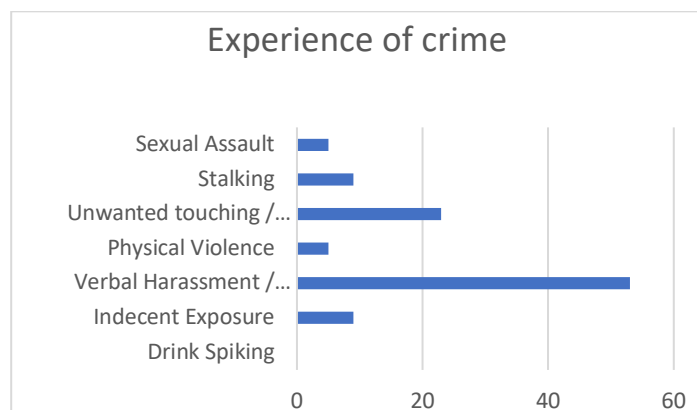
The selection of objectives to include in the policing strategy meets with the respondents' approval but the level of satisfaction with current performance is low. In all areas more than 90% of respondents rated the performance 3 or below and for safe spaces and communication this was 90% or more.



Experience of Crime

Have you experienced any of the following crimes in the past 12 months?

104 respondents had experienced one or more of the listed crimes with verbal harassment / intimidation and unwanted attention being the most frequent. All of the indecent exposure incidents related to Hargate Forest. No incidents of drink spiking were mentioned.



<https://www.heritageopendays.org.uk/visiting/event/high-brooms-railway-station> *"In verbal harassment, I just include comments that certain men probably think are OK/alright, because they just don't understand how it feels to the majority of women."*

Reporting of Crime

Did you report the crime?

12 respondents had reported the crime in question.

If not, what would have made you more likely to report it?

There were 43 responses to this question, 16 of which attributed their failure to report to the expectation of not being taken seriously by the police. A further nine said the incidents were too frequent and/or low level. One expressed a fear of repercussions should they do so.

"Open Police Station"

"Greater police presence"

"Actually know it will be taken seriously"

"If I thought it would make any difference"

"Knowing that something would happen if I did. Groping/catcalling has happened to me so often I've given up."

"It was very scary to report both my own and my daughter's experiences, we did not trust that we would receive the support we needed and feared repercussion."

"Catcalling happens every day."

If you did, were you satisfied with the response / support you received?

6 people answered this question positively, the remainder didn't answer, the conclusion being that, contrary to expectations, if people do make a report they receive a positive response.

If not, how would you have liked it to be different?

5 respondents provided information, citing the dismissiveness of the police and a lack of belief there would be any follow-up.

"The police do not have time to respond anymore"

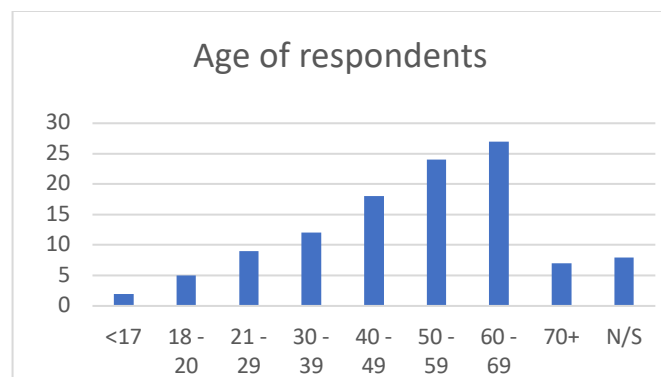
"For more to be done. For any kind of surveillance, CCTV and to be more active when it comes to taking action. Nowhere near enough is done."

"Response needed to be quicker, more consistent and more professional (not young, inexperienced and inconsistent)."

"Still waiting for stalking protection order to be put in place after 12 months of stalking harassment of our family by an individual."

Age

68% of respondents were aged between 40 and 70, an age distribution which applied broadly to both formats.



Gender

Of the 112 respondents, 105 were female, 5 were male (all on line) and 2 did not specify.

September 2022

SurveyMonkey Word Clouds

Q3 Are there any particular locations you avoid DURING THE DAY?

rd road alone None walking Lonely parks places areas
common

Q4 Are there any particular locations you avoid AT NIGHT?

streets Grosvenor Hilbert anywhere quiet streets path go lighting spaces
dark Calverley areas around road station Parks
town centre common open spaces walk alleys unlit comfortable
car parks pitcher piano night St John s alone town

Q5 What would you like to see done to improve the safety of women and girls in Tunbridge Wells?

walking visible police presence education police community women community
common CCTV police patrols around around town
lighting visible police areas men police town centre
Better lighting street lighting better patrols
police presence use night don't places lighting dark park

Q10 If not, what would have made you more likely to report it?

action women happened N police something report anything
taken Knowing

Q15 Your postcode (first part only)

TN2 TN3 TN4 TN1

Map Exercise Responses

During the International Women's Day (IWD) Event at The Forum in Tunbridge Wells a large map was provided by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. Attendees at the event were invited to attach anonymous post-it notes with comments on any areas which were of personal cause for concern in terms of safety.



As this exercise was anonymous and running adjacent to access to the printed and online survey the reporting of the comments are displayed separately in this report so as not to deflect from the submission totals. Some users of the map may have gone on to complete the survey. What this does indicate is a willingness to openly declare 'fears about safety' in a public forum. It is also interesting to note the cluster of comments on the town's green and open spaces. Plus a visual presentation of anecdotal comments is useful to gain an insight as well as statistical data.

The comments reflect many of the same areas of concern raised in the survey:

"Hargate Forest- Flasher Danger"

Tunbridge Wells Common

"The Commons after dark" (twice)

"Mayor York's Road not safe. Have to catch a bus after dusk when I would rather walk."

Calverley Grounds

"Calverley after dark."

"Bottom of Calverley Grounds after dark- Catcalling & harassment."

Tunbridge Wells Station

"Unmanned & inactive staff."

Dunorlan Park

"Uncomfortable walking through"

Rusthall Commons

"Path from Rusthall to St. Pauls Church doesn't feel safe after dark. I have to get my daughter a lift to choir practise when we should be able to walk."

"Rusthall Commons needs better lighting off Langton Road."

"Still Green and footpath to Culverden Down."

St John's Park

"St John's Park doesn't feel safe- lots of anti-social behaviour."

"St John's Park - groups of boys. Intimidating - it makes me feel I can't do these things (aged 16)"

Grosvenor Bridge/ Park Area

"I don't like walking here in the dark especially after 9pm."

Other

"Clarence Road on way home from Station."

Bennet Memorial Area – "My daughter was catcalled by a car full of boys on the way home from school."

What Happens Next?

The survey was a fact-finding exercise aimed at bringing together opinions and experiences with a view to identifying issues and places in Tunbridge Wells which are cause for concern in terms of safety.

This report will be sent to the following

The Town Forum for distribution to its members

The Borough Council and Kent County Council

Tunbridge Wells & Kent Police

Friends' groups of all Tunbridge Wells Parks

Members of Parliament and the local press

Other relevant agencies and services.

We seek a commitment that this report will be read, discussed and actions agreed upon which address the key safety concerns raised by survey respondents.

Such actions might include the following:-

- better street lighting for areas which are not quite town centre but thoroughfares eg London Road
- better lighting and CCTV in council car parks. Could alarms be installed as well?
- subsidising taxi fares for women
- enhanced police presence in areas highlighted on the map or commented on in the survey

It is worth noting that this survey finds that only 12 out of 104 respondents who had experienced crime felt it worthwhile reporting the occurrence, often because they considered it too low level and it happened so frequently – for example “catcalling”. This is a form of sexual harassment and as such is a reportable offence, hence those who experience it should feel comfortable about reporting it. We would therefore welcome schools and the police working together to improve education about and reporting of such anti-social behaviour and find ways of addressing it and thereby avoid it having a damaging effect on individuals' confidence and perception of safety.

It is very important to ensure that our community feels safe, both in the daytime and at night so that all ages can enjoy the town facilities and not be excluded socially because of anti-social behaviour, inadequate lighting, public transport or parking issues.

Appendix Survey Form

Spotlight on Safety in Tunbridge Wells

Recent events in the UK and in Kent have highlighted the problem of violence against women and girls inside the home and in public places. The high profile murders which occurred last year prompted the PCC to survey 8,263 people across Kent to ask about women's safety (<https://www.kent-pcc.gov.uk/SysSiteAssets/media/downloads/vawg/results-of-the-pcc-violence-against-women-and-girls-survey.pdf>)

This survey aims to build on this work and looks at the safety of women and girls in the Borough of Tunbridge Wells. The information you provide will be totally anonymous, your participation is entirely voluntary and you can choose not to answer any question which makes you feel uncomfortable. Survey results will be used to report to policy makers to guide efforts to improve the safety and well-being of women and girls living in, working in or visiting Tunbridge Wells. The report will be available on our website later this year. For more information visit our website: <https://sigbi.org/tunbridge-wells>.

On a scale of 1 to 5, how safe do you feel in Tunbridge Wells where 1 = very unsafe, 2 = unsafe, 3 = fairly safe, 4 = safe and 5 = perfectly safe?

	During the day	At night
Where you live	_____	_____
Where you work	_____	_____
On public transport	_____	_____
In the town centre	_____	_____
In open spaces and parks	_____	_____
In bars / pubs / restaurants	_____	_____

Are there any particular locations you avoid?

	During the day	At night
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

What would you like to see done to improve the safety of women and girls in Tunbridge Wells?



The Police strategy covering violence against women and girls has the following objectives. On a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high) how important do you think each of these is and how well do you think the police in Tunbridge Wells are performing against them?

	Importance	Satisfaction
Hold offenders to account	_____	_____
Create safe spaces	_____	_____
Provide high quality, responsive service	_____	_____
Deliver educational programmes	_____	_____
Raise standards of professional behaviour	_____	_____
Communicate effectively with the public	_____	_____

Have you experienced any of the following in a public place in the last 12 months?

	Y/N		Y/N
Drink spiking	_____	Unwanted touching /	_____
Indecent exposure	_____	groping	_____
Verbal harassment /	_____	Stalking	_____
intimidation	_____	Sexual assault	_____
Physical violence	_____	Other (please specify)	_____

Did you report it? Yes / No

If not, what would have made you more likely to report it?

If you did, were you satisfied with the response / support you received? Yes / No

If not, how would you have liked it to be different?

Please state:

Your age: _____ Your gender: _____ Your postcode (first part only): _____

When completed, please either scan the survey and email it to situnbridgewells@yahoo.co.uk or post it to Suite 36, 2 Mount Sion, Tunbridge Wells TN1 1UE in the addressed envelope provided. The closing date for responses is 30th April 2022. Thank you for your help.



FOUNDED IN 1921, SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL IS A WORLDWIDE SERVICE ORGANISATION FOR WOMEN. WE ARE COMMITTED TO A WORLD WHERE WOMEN AND GIRLS TOGETHER ACHIEVE THEIR INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE POTENTIAL, REALISE ASPIRATIONS AND HAVE AN EQUAL VOICE IN CREATING STRONG, PEACEFUL COMMUNITIES WORLDWIDE.



Meeting of the Town Forum on 24 November 2022

Cost of Living

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council organised a “Cost of Living Summit” on 26 September which included representatives from voluntary organisations, NHS, KCC and others. Notes on the meeting prepared by the Council are attached.

Don Sloan, Dawn Stanford and Charles Mackonochie were asked to follow up on Food. They now suggest the following points for further consideration:

Nourish

- Help find more collection points.
- Make it easier for people to donate.
- More volunteers

Community Allotments and gardens (including school gardens)

- Community allotments have been run successfully in Brighton and Canterbury, see: www.bhfood.org.uk and <https://blogs.kent.ac.uk>
- Can the Council help identify suitable land for a community allotment?
- Also could the Parks Team organise and set up community allotments/gardens?
- Mobilise community support.
- Get more schools interested in gardens and provide them with support

Charlie's Angels Kitchens

- Can a way be found to help Charlie provide extra time over and above the one day a week she spends at present away from her gardening business? This would enable her run a kitchen on a second day.
- Can other people be found to run kitchens?
- Can vacant premises e.g. ex-restaurant, shops etc be found as venues for more kitchens? These could be run as Charlie's Angels franchises.
- Assess and provide practical support for setting up a restaurant to operate on a pay as you feel basis.
- More volunteers would also be needed.

Fund-raising

- For all points above suggest sources of grants and provide suggestions of help with fund-raising.”

Notes from the Tunbridge Wells Cost of Living Summit

Background and introductions

Participants introduced themselves and shared details on challenges they/their organisations were facing. It was clear that pressure was being faced across the board in terms of demand on support services and VCS organisations. Mental Health and other preventative services were identified as being a particular issue and various groups identified as being particularly vulnerable including older people, rural communities and those who lacked digital skills.

Discussion

Discussions focused on a number of areas which are summarised below.

Food

It was clear that the increasing price of food was causing real challenges for local residents and the groups working to support them. Nourish noted that they were providing support to unprecedented numbers of clients with particular increases in usage amongst the over 65s, and those not receiving benefits.

Dawn referenced 'Charlie's Angels' – a project to combat food waste. She noted that they had trained a number of people to deliver the project but lacked premises/kitchens from which to deliver it. Chris questioned whether residents could be encouraged to grow their own to tackle both food shortages and social isolation. Nancy referenced 'Incredible Edible' (incredible-edible-todmorden.co.uk)

POTENTIAL ACTION/ASKS:

- Parish and town councils and resident/amenity associations to consider whether they could replicate a local form of 'Incredible edible' or to widen the reach of 'Charlie's Angels' through the provision of facilities and food.
- More generally there was a need for venues (with kitchens) and for food and (freezer) storage (to be picked up as part of the audit below).

External Information and support

It was agreed that there was the potential for a local portal to provide information to residents (or those supporting them) about the full range of support available (for example see <https://www.watford.gov.uk/cost-living-support/cost-living-support-1>). It was also suggested that the portal could include information on what those wanting to help could do associated with a list of (ideally tangible) asks (e.g. £xx to provide yy food parcels, zz hours volunteering, clothes etc).

We agreed that there was probably little that we could usefully add to existing tips for residents to save money (Martin Lewis' list being an example)

POTENTIAL ACTION/ASKS:

- TWBC to look at putting together an information portal, local organisations to provide details of support and asks.

Internal communication and resources.

We agreed that it would be helpful for us to share our contact details and to understand better our respective needs and offers of support. We agreed to circulate an organisational survey seeking details on what organisations could offer in terms of premises (including possible 'warm rooms'), volunteers, data and also what help is required.

We agreed to share details of 'Refer Kent' and to explore whether we could put together a local 'digital notice board' that we could use to share and solve challenges (possibly through a Teams site).

POTENTIAL ACTION/ASKS:

- TWBC to circulate details of attendees and to prepare an organisational survey seeking more detailed information on what is required or available in terms of support. This would include details on premises, volunteers and other support.
- Each organisation to designate an organisational 'lead' for cost of living issues to whom referrals or questions or asks for support could be directed.

TN2

We questioned whether it might be possible to transition TN2 from providing support for Homes for Ukraine to more general support (including for Ukrainian guests) through the provision of clothes and other household goods. This would require volunteering and resourcing as the current volunteers would in all probability fall away should such a transition take place.

Digital exclusion

It was clear from our discussions that digital exclusion was an issue for many people and that the lack of digital access could result in less favourable outcomes and increased costs. There were some local and national programmes to provide assistance (locally, Compaid was an organisation working in this area). We noted that some people struggled to access the internet because of either a lack of skills or lack of broadband/equipment and others were unwilling to access services digitally. We agreed we needed to do everything we could to enable those who were willing to do so to be able to access services digitally.

Data Sharing and benefit maximisation

Tracy explained some of the schemes that KCC and Kent district councils were engaged in to share and use data to identify and support those who were struggling. We discussed whether it might be possible to input other organisations' data into this process (whilst also recognising the challenges around GDPR).

Advocacy

It was agreed that we should continue to lobby government and funders (including KCC) on a variety of issues including:

- Funding (the VCS has been significantly affected by the cost pressures being faced by the public sector and by the standardisation and centralisation of KCC commissioning).
- Preventative services (it was unanimously agreed that the lack of mental health support was causing significant issues for all partners).
- Housing was also raised as another key issue – the cost of both market and ‘affordable’ private rented housing was well above the LHA and was likely to increase given the likely increase in interest rates.

General/Other points

A number of other points were raised including:

The challenges associated with being an affluent area – the lack of central funds and the cost of housing and living costs more generally as well as the lack of local support mechanisms and networks.

Many of those struggling were not those on benefits but those just over the eligibility thresholds (so-called JAMs) who were not able to access additional support targeted at those on benefits.

The Council’s ‘Go Card’ might provide a mechanism by which some forms of support could be targeted.

Possible Draft Work Packages

Work Package	Potential Lead
Action on food Parish and town councils/TF to consider whether they could replicate a local form of 'Incredible edible' or to widen the reach of 'Charlie's Angels' through the provision of facilities and food. All organisations to consider whether they can make venues and food storage facilities available	Charles/Don/Dawn
External information TWBC to look at putting together an information portal, local organisations to provide details of support and asks.	Paul
Internal Communication TWBC to circulate details of attendees and to prepare an organisational survey seeking more detailed information on what is required or available in terms of support. This would include details on premises, volunteers and other support. Each organisation to designate an organisational 'lead' for cost of living issues to whom referrals or questions or asks for support could be directed.	William
Advocacy	All organisations



Meeting of the Town Forum on 24 November 2022

Reports from the Town Forum Working Groups

a) Planning Working Group

Update from Mark Booker

b) Transport Working Group

Update from Jane Fenwick

c) Leisure, Wellbeing and Culture Working Group

(Formerly Culture, Leisure and Tourism Working Group)

Update from Stuart Anderson

d) Finance Working Group

Update from David Wakefield

e) Water in the Wells Working Group

Update from Michael Holman

Tunbridge Wells Town Forum Strategic Planning Working Group

Update report for the meetings on 24th November 2022

1. Local Plan development

The major part of the WG's work in 2022 continued to relate to the Draft Local Plan and its delayed consideration during May-July by the Planning Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State to test whether the draft might be considered "sound". Under the NPPF plans will be considered sound if they are:

- "Positively prepared" i.e. provide a strategy which seeks to meet the area's objectively assessed needs, particularly for housing;
- "Justified" ie contain an appropriate strategy based on evidence and taking into account reasonable alternatives;
- "Effective" ie actually deliverable over the plan period, and
- "Consistent with national policy" ie enable the delivery of "sustainable development"

We produced hearing statements expanding on aspects of the responses we made to the Regulation 18 and 19 public consultations, but were constrained by the need to show that any alternatives put forward to the proposed policies and allocations would be "deliverable" during the plan period. We then attended and spoke when invited on the Inquiry days which touched on Royal Tunbridge Wells, regarding specific land allocations or in relation to transport matters or the Green Belt. We formed the impression that the Inspector had largely made up his mind from the written evidence about the parts of the draft solely concerned with Royal Tunbridge Wells and was unlikely to overturn the town allocations proposed by TWBC. This is now largely confirmed in his interim findings published last week.

Inspector's interim conclusions on the Draft Local Plan

The Planning Inspector's interim conclusions on the Draft Local Plan are available as document "ID-012 Inspector's Initial Findings" on the TWBC Planning Policy Draft Local Plan website. ***There is virtually no discussion of Royal Tunbridge Wells itself***, which confirms that the Inspector is broadly content with the policies set out for the town including the loss of Green Belt at Spratsbrook and Caenwood farms and the controversial proposal for a new roundabout at the junction with Blackhurst Lane and Halls Hole Road on Pembury Road. Besides the environmental damage the latter would do to the important approach to the town on the tree lined Pembury Road, it very much remains to be seen whether such a scheme would succeed in reducing congestion based on the experience at Yew Tree Road Southborough where such a proposal was eventually scrapped as unviable.

The only substantive discussion of issues in the town relate to the **Cinema Site** where the Inspector states as follows:

"This is a prominent town centre site which has a lengthy and detailed planning history. Despite benefitting from planning permission for a mixed use development for some years, it is yet to come forward. The latest proposals for the site include extra care and/or retirement housing which have materialised after the Plan was submitted. Although some representors have questioned the contribution that such uses would make to Submission Version Local Plan, paragraph 4.44, the vibrancy of the town centre, I see no reason why extra care and/or retirement housing would be inappropriate as part of a mixed-use scheme which included some active ground floor uses. Paragraph 86(f) of the Framework specifically requires planning policies to recognise that residential development often plays an important role in ensuring the vitality of centres and encourage residential development on appropriate sites. The site has been vacant for a long time and its redevelopment should be supported and encouraged by the Plan."

In relation to **Colebrook House**, on the edge of the trading estate, he states:

“In summary, I find no exceptional circumstances to justify altering the Green Belt boundary in this location”. So this site should remain in the Green Belt.

There are some passing remarks about **Hawkenbury Recreation Ground** which do not clearly give a view of the Inspector’s conclusions on that site as to whether or not it may be considered sound. We shall have to await his full report to know more.

The main discussion concerns **Tudeley**, where it would appear that the Inspector finds so many aspects of the proposals inadequately developed and the consequences for Tonbridge and localities nearby so potentially problematical that he does not seem prepared to find the Draft Plan proposals sound. To make the Plan sound in relation to Tudeley is described as potentially a huge task which would significantly delay adoption of the Plan. He states:

“When considering the level of acknowledged harm to the Green Belt that would occur, combined with the significance of the issues raised, I find that exceptional circumstances have not been demonstrated to justify removing the site from the Green Belt.”

This obviously has very serious consequences for the whole plan and, reading between the lines, potentially for Royal Tunbridge Wells itself if TWBC are unable to persuade the Inspector that he would be justified in coming to a different conclusion. The likelihood is that additional housing numbers might have to be found in the town itself or on its periphery. The Inspector states:

“In seeking to move the examination forward I consider that there are three broad options available to the Council. They are:

- Provide additional information to justify the Tudeley Village allocation as submitted.*
- Modify the submitted Plan by making significant changes to the Tudeley Village allocation, and in doing so, seek to overcome the soundness issues identified above.*
- Delete the allocation from the submitted Plan.*

The third option would be to delete the allocation and make consequential changes to the Plan. The benefit of this approach is that it would deal with the soundness problems identified above, and subject to considering alternative secondary school provision, has already been tested as a possible outcome in the strategic sites masterplanning documents. It may negate the need for significant further work and potentially avoid lengthy delays to the examination process.

One of the main consequences of deleting Tudeley Village is the impact on housing provision. The Plan envisages 2,100 dwellings coming forward over the plan period. In deciding how to proceed, the Council will therefore need to give further consideration to how best the Plan can still meet housing needs, having particular regard to the requirements in paragraph 68 of the Framework. It may be, for example, that needs could be catered for over a shorter timeframe without the need for any specific additional sites to be identified at this stage.

Any suggested ways forward will be subject to consultation in due course and further hearing sessions may be necessary”.

The Inspector has fewer reservations about development at **Paddock Wood** though he suggests that some quite major changes to the proposed siting of certain developments may be necessary in relation to dealing with flood risk. He states:

“Paddock Wood is a town with a good range of services, employment premises and public transport provision. It is also surrounded by some land which is outside the Green Belt and AONB – a unique position in Tunbridge Wells. I therefore agree with the Council that it represents a ‘logical choice’ for growth. However, the strategy for the town needs revisiting to set out clearly what is proposed on each parcel, both in terms of the scale and mix of uses and any necessary infrastructure provision. In

addition, the location of new housing, community and employment uses in areas at higher risk of flooding is not justified. Comprehensive main modifications will therefore be required to the submitted Plan in order to make it sound”.

On the basis of these interim conclusions one may be left wondering how likely it now is that the new Plan will be adopted in the course of 2023 and what its ultimate shape will be. Given the recent 2021 Census findings that the population of Tunbridge Wells Borough has barely increased in ten years, one may also now wonder whether a drastic review of supposed local housing need and consequential need for a massive increase in housing numbers may be justified.

Cinema site

Consideration of proposals for the Cinema Site was the other most significant activity for the working group during the year. The developers, RVG, exhibited sketch designs in March/April at Trinity which they said were for flats for the active retired, and invited comments. They gave the impression that they intended to submit in the autumn, and hence that there would be plenty of time to discuss possible modifications to their plans. We teamed up with the Civic Society setting up a joint panel to maximise specialist architectural and planning expertise across both organisations and in the hope that a common approach could be found, which proved possible.

We duly responded to several of the developer’s representatives with constructive criticism of the proposed scheme during May. We presented the developers with reasoned proposals for solving some of the design problems in the scheme. We showed how the bulk of the buildings could be reduced to blend in with the scale of neighbouring buildings and how the proposed central courtyard could be enlarged. We were surprised to receive no response from any of them within a reasonable time scale. On further enquiry, it seems that our joint letter had gone into “Spam” for each of the recipients and they had not picked this up.

We were eventually able to meet them in early July. Meanwhile, we understand that RVG had several pre-app meetings with officers. When we met them, it became clear that they had taken up none of our May input on design or massing and the scheme was largely aimed at the over-eighties. On this and a further occasion, it was stated that the average age at their other developments was 82 and the average purchaser was 80. This suggested a rather different kind of resident to the one which had originally been suggested. However, the meeting was most cordial and we were invited to put in more refined details of our proposals which would be given serious consideration.

At the same time we alerted relevant Councillors to our concerns about the proposed scheme, which were broadly that:

- Such a prominent site in the town centre required uses that would reinvigorate the area with mixed use and public accessibility (as defined in the current and emerging Local Plans);
- The scheme didn’t respond to the sloping site: At three storeys above the town hall, the corner ‘tower’ would dominate and be out of context with the five adjoining listed buildings;
- The flat accommodation seemed cramped and the central courtyard too small to be a viable public space or a safe and satisfactory outlook for residents;
- The retail elements on Mt Pleasant didn’t follow the slope and would offer poor accessibility and restricted ceiling heights, bringing their viability into question;
- The scheme would neither provide nor contribute to social housing in the town.

At a further meeting in late July, which was also cordial, we were informed that the submission of a formal application would be brought forward from the autumn. This turned out to be made on 1st August. Clearly any significant changes would not be possible. When the formal application was made, the only real change to the appearance of the scheme was that the block facing the town hall would be reduced by one storey, but would still dominate the corner and the adjacent buildings. All

new residents would be required to sign up for at least one care package even if apparently hale and hearty at the time of becoming purchasers.

The scheme was given planning consent last week. One may perhaps gauge how dominant the new building will be by observing the new building going up on the former Arriva Garage site, which will have a lower profile. As to the proposed uses, it remains to be seen whether an elderly resident population and inadequately designed retail spaces will enhance the vitality of the town on this key site. Optimists will, however, argue that comfortably off and hopefully healthy elderly residents will have considerable financial resources to spend on retail, catering and entertainment in the town and in that way will add to its vitality.

Mark Booker Leader Strategic Planning Working Group 19.11.22

Report of the Transport Working Group to the RTW Town Forum meeting on 24th November 2022

The TWG met on Monday 7th November 2022. Members: Jane Fenwick (chair), Cllr Peter Lidstone, Chris Ferguson Gow, David Scott, Lorna Blackmore, Carol Wilson, Katharina Mahler Bech, Adrian Berendt and Ian Rennardson.

1. **Progress of 'whole town 20mph' proposal.** JF reported that Cllr Rutland is taking this proposal forward and she has found some interest but also caution from KCC. Despite adopting its Vision Zero approach to road safety, KCC continues to put weight on previous accident/injury statistics rather than the wider benefits of enabling safer active travel. JF and AB joined Cllr Rutland at a recent zoom meeting of Speldhurst Parish Council's Highways Working Group in October to discuss how 20mph restrictions could help with reducing speed through local villages.
2. **St John's:** A scheme was proposed by CFG to reduce speeds, pavement parking and rat-running which plagues the St John's area which is based on 'self-enforcing' one-way roads. PL advised that TWBC was bidding for funding for LCWIP and LTN (low traffic neighbourhoods) that includes St James and St John's areas. It would be appropriate to put forward CFG's proposals to TWBC at that time.
CW highlighted another rat-run exists on **Inner London Road (INR)** where traffic regularly avoids queues at the London Road/Church Road junction by speeding down INR and across Church Road to join the queue further down London Road. CW is to encourage local residents to highlight this in the current TCAP consultation and advise relevant KCC councillors
https://talkingpointtunbridgewells.uk/engagement/hq.com/royal-tunbridge-wells-town-centre-plan?utm_source=EmailMarketing&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=newsletter-04112022
3. **Pembury Road bus and cycle lanes proposal:** KCC has suggested a plan for bus priority and dedicated cycle lanes along Pembury Road from Halls Hole Road (HHR) junction and down Calverley Park Gardens (CPG). These would be provided on the south - Dunolun Park - side of Pembury Road. A number of issues were raised for further discussion with KCC officers and relevant KCC councillors. Furthermore, the TWBC Local Plan specifies in para 3.53, that CPG is to be "*Bus only route through Calverley Park Gardens removing access for other through traffic (except for cycle and pedestrians)*". However, this plan does not take that into account.
4. **Traffic Count on Mount Pleasant:** The latest traffic and pedestrian survey held on 28th October in the Public Realm shows a reduced number of vehicles entering the area but their speeds and volumes are still too high for pedestrians to feel safe crossing the road.
5. **School bus parking:** Despite a number of changes to school bus routes and bus contracts commencing this term, there continues to be all day parking on the London Road bus stand. The Amelia Scott is also attracting visitor coaches. TWBC has had discussion with some bus operators about alternative parking in the town

Next meeting will be held on TUESDAY 10TH JANUARY at 7pm @22 Calverley Park.

Leisure, Wellbeing and Culture Working Group (LWC)

Update November 2022

There has not been a working group work meeting since the last Town Forum meeting, although several individuals from the group have been involved in the issues set out below.

Leisure

Chalybeate Spring The Pantiles

Construction work on the bottling plant for The Royal TW mineral water project has started on site. A website has been set up <https://www.royaltwwater.com/> which currently provides limited amount of information. A Wholesale page has been set up providing pricing information for the premium bottled water.

Dippers Hall The Pantiles

Continuing to seek a response from TWBC, but no further update to report at the present time.

Wellbeing

Cost of Living Summit

A cost-of-living summit was hosted by TWBC on 26 September bringing together charities and other organisations involved with supporting people in need in Tunbridge wells and the wider borough. Don Sloane attended on behalf of the Town Forum. Adrian Berendt was also present.

This is growing issue facing many people in the local area. A presentation on the subject will be made at the November Forum meeting by Marianne McDonald to explore how TF might contribute going forward.

Spotlight on Safety in Tunbridge Wells

The recently published report will be presented by Caroline Auckland on behalf of Soroptimist International and discussed at Forum meeting on 24 November. The meeting will also be attended by Terry Hughes, Community Safety Manager for TWBC and Inspector Jones for the Community Safety Unit at Kent Police who will be available for questions.

Reverse Advent Calendars

Beulah Road Residents Association is taking part in 'Reverse Advent Calendar' - rather than receiving a gift, those taking part in a reverse calendar DONATE an item each day. Each resident puts one item of food etc in a box each day for 30 days. Approx. 30 households are taking part. We are running it from 19 Nov to 17 Dec. At the end of the period all boxes are collected and delivered to Nourish and other local food banks. The idea developed from a simple group WhatsApp message. There are certainly other groups across the town doing a similar thing but if you're not already involved it maybe work thinking about.

Culture

Town Centre Plan

As part of the Town Plan public consultation process appointed consultants LDA held 3 workshops in mid-October with selected groups and businesses. A representative from the Town Forum attended each of the workshop.

Workshop 1 – Movement and Decarbonisation - Adrian Berendt

Workshop 2 – Public Realm Improvements Katharina Mahler-Bech

Workshop 3 – Opportunities for Development - Stuart Anderson, Mike Lees

The aim of the workshops was to inform LDA of the issues currently facing the town and explore how the problems may be tackled in the future. The development of the TP is an ongoing process.

Cultural Compact

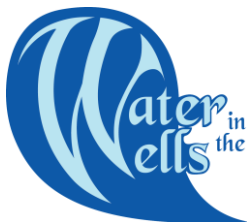
Stuart Anderson attended a meeting in early October with TWBC officers and Councillors Wendy Fitzsimmons and Justine Rutland. The aim of the meeting was to explain the concept of 'Compacts' and get approval to progress the idea to the next stage. Compacts are partnerships designed to support the local cultural sector and enhance its contribution to development, with a special emphasis on cross-sector engagement beyond the cultural sector itself and the local authority. Over the next few months, the aim of TWBC is to set up a steering group and develop the broad terms of engagement.

Town Hall Co-working

Town Square Spaces Ltd has been selected as the coworking space provider for the Town Hall. Heads of Terms have been agreed and the formal lease terms are being finalised. The new use is supported by the Town Forum and representations have been made to TWBC offering to meet with the new provider to discuss plans and understand what level of access will be available to community groups. Refurbishment will be undertaken in 2023 with expected opening in early 2024.



ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS TOWN FORUM



WATER IN THE WELLS WORKING GROUP

REPORT TO THE TOWN FORUM 24 November 2022

Current membership: Bob Atwood, John Cunningham, Jane Fenwick, Michael Holman (Chair), Mike McGeary, Altan Omer, David Scott, Alastair Tod, Pat Wilson.

We have held no formal meetings since the Town Forum on 21 September, but we have been in touch by e-mail and phone as necessary.

My report today contains updated information on five separate sites.

1. **Former ABC Cinema:** The planning application submitted by the Retirement Villages Group (RVG) was considered at the TWBC Planning Committee Meeting on Wednesday 16 November and approved by a large majority. Pictures published in the local press show a water wall in the central courtyard visible from Mount Pleasant Road.
2. **Former Arriva Bus Depot, St John's Road:** Construction has now reached the third floor, and the building is beginning to take shape. The current plans include specifications for a water wall on St John's Road, but its precise position and dimensions cannot yet be seen from the road.
3. **Chalybeate Spring:** A blue hoarding has been in place for several weeks completely screening the left-hand basin. It is impossible to see what is going on behind the hoarding. In front, however, there stands a blue A-Board announcing that Royal Tunbridge Wells Mineral Water, Est. 1606 is 'COMING SOON'. You can see a picture at the end of this report. In the right-hand basin, a foretaste, one hopes, of a less dry future, the fickle trickle has returned.
4. **The Potteries – Pantiles 1887:** At the other end of the Pantiles, the water feature, illuminated at night, is once again without water. I am informed that this is probably to allow routine maintenance. I am further informed that once the final units in the Potteries have been sold, responsibility for the operation of the water feature will pass to a Management Committee.
5. **St John's Park and Meadows:** The specially commissioned Chilstones' Oxford tazza is now in place atop the existing Royal Doulton fountain base. The box hedge has been removed to reveal the beautiful Royal Doulton ceramic tiles. Plans for planting up have been agreed with the Parks Department, and we are nearing agreement on the wording and siting of the accompanying plaque.

I am always happy to answer questions, both at the meeting and by phone or e-mail.

(20 November 2022)

(Michael Holman, Chairman, 'Water in the Wells'. 07799456524; E-mail: michaeldekholman@gmail.com.)

