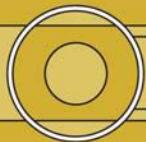


# Public Document Pack



ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS TOWN FORUM

## A G E N D A

**Thursday 26 November 2015 at 6.30 pm  
Council Chamber, Royal Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN1 1RS**

### Annual General Meeting

- 1 **Apologies for absence**
- 2 **Voting entitlement for member organisations** (Pages 1 - 2)
- 3 **Minutes of the 2014 AGM** (Pages 3 - 6)  
The minutes of the Annual General Meeting dated 27 November 2014 are attached. These were submitted to the Town Forum meeting on 22 January 2015 for noting, so are presented here for approval.
- 4 **To receive a report from the Chairman on the Town Forum's activities over the past year** (Pages 7 - 8)
- 5 **To elect a Chairman and Deputy Chairmen 2015/16** (Pages 9 - 12)

### General Meeting

- 6 **Membership changes**
  - a Membership applications (for noting)
  - b Changes of representatives (for information)
- 7 **Minutes of the previous meeting held on 24 September 2015** (Pages 13 - 24)
- 8 **Actions from previous meeting, held on 24 September 2015 (5 mins)**
  - 4 (h) Sewage egress, Warwick Park  
The Leader of the Council had arranged a meeting with Southern Water's operations manager, to which John Cunningham was also invited, due to have taken place on 9 October. Southern Water had to cancel at a late stage and efforts continue to be made to re-schedule the meeting.
  - 4 (8) 'Developing our Green Network'  
Mark Booker, Chairman of the Planning and Development Working Group, issued an action plan with the 25 September minutes, arising from the 'Developing our Green Network' report. This set out a number of actions which the relevant working groups are requested to undertake during the course of their work programmes in 2015/16.
  - 4 (8) Pedestrians and buses  
It was agreed that the aide-memoire produced by Mark Booker on this topic would be used as the basis for more detailed discussions on bus routing and more general town centre matters in the coming months.

- 5 Progress of St John's Sports Centre refurbishment work  
“The Borough Council to post an update on the re-opening of sports facilities at the Sports Centre on its website”. This information can be obtained from the Sports Centre’s website and is regularly updated by the centre’s operator, Fusion Lifestyle, under the ‘news’ heading: [http://www.fusion-lifestyle.com/centres/Tunbridge\\_Wells\\_Sports\\_Centre/News\\_and\\_Events](http://www.fusion-lifestyle.com/centres/Tunbridge_Wells_Sports_Centre/News_and_Events)
- 5 Public realm scheme  
“The Borough Council will announce completion of phase I of the public realm scheme formally, as soon as this position has been reached.” A verbal update on progress will be made at the meeting, under the update from the Leader of the Council (item 9).
- 6 Town Centre Partnership  
“Mike McGahey was asked to provide Forum members with a link to the Cabinet agenda item (and the Cabinet Advisory Board in advance of that), once these agendas were published. Members of the Town Forum were encouraged to either speak at the Cabinet and/or Advisory Board meetings on this topic or to come and observe the discussion.” This was actioned by e-mail to Town Forum members.
- 9 Electoral equality and arrangements  
“Cllr Rankin undertook to circulate the questions posed and invited Town Forum members to comment on the issues raised, in respect of individuals’ own ward areas”. These questions were e-mailed, not to the full Town Forum membership, but to the nine Management Committee members. The responses were fed into the work of the Overview and Scrutiny task and finish group.
- 9 Update report from the Leader of the Council (10 mins)**
- 10 The civic complex and the Assembly Hall Theatre - a presentation**  
David Candlin, TWBC’s Head of Economic Development, will explain what the Borough Council’s ambitions are for alternative office accommodation and a new theatre for the Borough. Further details can be viewed from the following link to the agenda for the recent Finance and Governance Cabinet Advisory Board meeting (item 11):  
<http://democracy.tunbridgewells.gov.uk/eListDocuments.aspx?CId=356&MId=3505&Ver=4>
- 11 TWBC's draft budget for 2016/17 (10 mins) (Pages 25 - 42)**  
Lee Colyer, TWBC’s Director of Finance and Corporate Services, has provided the attached report on the Borough Council’s draft budget for 2016/17. This was considered by the Finance and Governance Cabinet Advisory Board earlier this month, ahead of a decision by the Cabinet on 3 December. Mr Colyer will present the report at the meeting and be available to answer member questions.
- 12 Proposed play area, Calverley Grounds (10 mins)**  
Rhiannon Harfoot and Jennette Emery-Wallis will provide a short presentation on proposals for the provision of a children’s play area within Calverley Grounds.
- 13 20's Plenty and results of the Cycling Strategy consultation (10 mins)**  
Adrian Berendt, Town Forum member and a key person involved in both the Tunbridge Wells Bicycle User Group and the 20’s Plenty road safety campaign, will provide a verbal update on the above issues.

- 14 Reports from the Town Forum Working Groups (5-10 mins each) (Pages 43 - 48)**
- (a) **Water in the Wells** – Michael Holman, Chairman of this working group, will provide a verbal update report.
  - (b) **Tourism and Leisure** – Dorothea Holman, Chairman of this working group, will provide a verbal update report.
  - (c) **Transport Strategy** – Jane Fenwick, Acting Chairman of this working group, has provided the attached update report.
  - (d) **Planning and Development** – Mark Booker, Chairman of this working group, will provide a verbal update report.
  - (e) **Finance and Other Issues** – David Wakefield, Chairman of this working group, will provide a verbal update report.
  - (f) **Culture** – Bob Atwood, Chairman of this working group, will provide a verbal update report.

**15 Any Other Business (5 mins)**

**Date of the Next Meeting**

**Dates of meetings in 2016 (at 6.30pm):**

Thursday 28 January

Thursday 24 March

Thursday 19 May

Thursday 21 July

Thursday 22 September

Thursday 24 November (including the AGM)

(Thursday 19 January 2017)

This page is intentionally left blank

# Agenda Item 2

## TOWN FORUM – VOTING ENTITLEMENT OF MEMBER ORGANISATIONS AT THE AGM, 2015

**Organisations/ward members who have achieved at least 3 attendances during 2014/15 (= 50% of meetings) including Sept 2015: (35 out of 36 active groups)**

Benhall Mill Road Land Association  
Beulah Road Residents' Association  
Boyne Park Residents' Association  
Calverley Park Crescent Freeholders' Association  
Calverley Park Residents' Association  
Camden Park Residents' Association  
Camden Road Guild  
Civic Society  
Clarence Road Users' Association  
Culverden Residents' Association  
Friends of Calverley Grounds  
Friends of the Commons  
Friends of Grosvenor and Hilbert Parks  
Friends of the Museum, Library and Art Gallery  
Friends of Tunbridge Wells Cemetery  
Friends of Woodbury Park Cemetery  
Grantley Court Residents' Association  
Hawkenbury Village Association  
Inner London Road Residents' Association  
Kingswood Residents' Association  
Mereworth Road Residents' Association  
Number One Community Trust  
Poona Road Residents' Association  
Residents First

# Agenda Item 2

Sherborne Close Management Committee

Soroptimist International of Tunbridge Wells

St John's Road Residents' Association

Telephone House Neighbours' Association

Trinity Theatre

Tunbridge Wells Access Group

Tunbridge Wells Bicycle User Group

Tunbridge Wells Business Forum

Tunbridge Wells Over 50s Forum

Tunbridge Wells Twinning and Friendship Association

Warwick Park Residents' Association

Ward members (10):

Bob Backhouse

Ronen Basu

Peter Bulman

Barbara Cobbold

Tracy Moore

Catherine Rankin

David Scott

Don Sloan

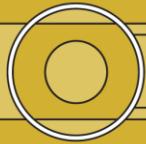
Lynne Weatherly

Chris Woodward

**Organisations that will not be able to vote at the AGM, as they have not been able to meet the attendance requirement set out in the Constitution: (1)**

Ward members: (9)

# Agenda Item 3



## ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS TOWN FORUM

### ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS TOWN FORUM - ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Thursday 27 November 2014

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

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

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

#### 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

#### 2. DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS ENTITLED TO VOTE

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

#### 3. MINUTES OF THE 2013 AGM

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

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

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

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

# Agenda Item 3

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

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

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

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

## 5. PROPOSED CHANGE TO THE CONSTITUTION

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

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

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

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

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

**RESOLVED –**

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

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

# Agenda Item 3

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

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

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

The meeting concluded at 6.45pm.

This page is intentionally left blank

# Agenda Item 4

## Chairman's Annual Report 2015

Your chairman has the job of condensing into a reasonable space the record of a busy year, which has got busier as it has gone on.

As you know we work mainly through Working Groups, whose leaders report regularly on their activities. There are now six groups, since with the departure of June Bridgeman, an early stalwart of the Forum, we set up a separate Culture Group as she suggested with the primary role of representing the Forum on the Cultural Hub; this Group has now acquired a further responsibility with the plan for a new theatre. I am grateful to June for all her work, and to the leaders and members of the other groups: Planning, Transport, Finance, Water in the Wells, Leisure and Tourism. It is due to them that the Forum covers such a wide range with energy and expertise; please come forward if you feel you could contribute in this way.

The Council also generously continues to support the Forum, not just providing their Chamber for our meetings and the administrative guidance of an excellent staff, but also the Leader and a number of individual members for town wards attend our meetings, tell us about their initiatives, and expose themselves to our questions. It is to the credit of all that these exchanges are so good-humoured and productive. We held a meeting for councillor members at Trinity in July at which to explain ourselves, particularly to new members, since it seems we still have a reputation in some quarters for disruption which properly belongs in the past; if necessary we will hold this again.

Inevitably a large part of our work is responding to the initiatives of others. During the year we have produced considered responses to the Council's Destination Management Plan (tourism), Transport Strategy, Parking Strategy, the Green Network Plan, the Cycling Strategy, and the Urban Design Framework. The Site Allocations proposals – a major step towards the new Local Plan - were finalised and the Forum submitted evidence which is being considered at the Public Examination now under way. In the case of the Green Network Plan the Planning Group responded with a substantial piece of original work Developing the Green Network and a related Action Plan.

In all these cases we test policy proposals for relevance to the people of Royal Tunbridge Wells, with the emphasis on actions rather than grand designs, and we are working to bring our influence to bear earlier in the process by informal contact and briefings from councillors and officers. This year we had the opportunity to do so with the proposals for unmanned vehicles ('pods'), and current discussions about bus routing; we have contributed to the replacement of the information drums with tourist signage ('midoliths'); we have discussed the proposed expansion of the RVP with the new owners; and we have had an early sight of the Council's ideas about the civic complex and the replacement of the Assembly Hall.

These subjects have been discussed in meetings of the full Forum, and will no doubt be again. Other matters on which the Forum has had presentations include the formation of a Town Centre Partnership, Twenty's Plenty (on speed limits), the Cultural and Learning Hub, the expansion of Gatwick Airport, the management of the Common, and the Site Allocations process with the implications for further housing development beyond 2026. Issues that continue to concern us include the flow of water in the chalybeate spring, the promotion of tourism, changes to aircraft routing, and the redesign of Fiveways. Members have also had two very useful briefings on the planning system, and it is intended to continue these.

# Agenda Item 4

Group leaders and chairmen meet regularly to plan the agenda and discuss the way forward. As the Town Forum we are the only body collectively representing the town, in a borough of which the larger part lies outside the town; elected councillors from the town are a minority on the Borough Council. The rest of Tunbridge Wells is covered by parish or town councils, and almost all areas of Kent now either have a local council or are on the way to one. The Government has recently simplified the process for setting up town and parish councils, and one of our presentations during the year was by Mrs Jenny Blackburn, founder and chair of Rusthall Parish Council. The Management Group of the Forum has agreed to investigate further what would be involved in setting up a Town Council for Royal Tunbridge Wells. This would not only give us a statutory voice, but would bring in representatives from areas where we are now weak.

Finally we have recognised the need for the Forum to have a higher profile and a more pro-active voice. To this end we are looking at possible changes to the website, the adoption of a logo, and the appointment of a PR person. It is not easy to make our voice heard in the hubbub of other interests and the proliferation of media, but as the above record shows it is more urgent than ever to do so.

I end by repeating my thanks to the leaders of the Working Groups, to the vice-chairmen, to the Council staff who support our meetings, and to the Leader of the Council and the councillors who attend them, and finally to all the active members of the Forum.

**Alastair Tod**

# Agenda Item 5

## ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS TOWN FORUM

26 November 2015

### ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN AND DEPUTY CHAIMEN

#### Introduction

- (1) The Town Forum is administered by a Management Committee of 'three officers' elected at the AGM, together with the chairs of the working groups. The 'three officers' are the Chairman and two Deputy Chairmen.
- (2) This report sets out the current situation regarding nominations for the election of the Chairman and the two Deputy Chairmen at the Annual General Meeting.

#### Management Committee

- (3) The Town Forum's Constitution specifies the following regarding the annual election of its Management Committee (section 5):

Three officers elected at the AGM:

- 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

- (4) At the specified deadline for the submission of nominations (i.e. 12 November), the following nominations had been submitted:

Chairman – Alastair Tod (Poona Road Residents' Association) – re-election for a second term of office

Deputy Chairmen – Alex Green (Trinity Theatre) – re-election for a second term of office

NB – only one nomination received.

- (5) As required by the Constitution, each nominee has provided a supporting statement, setting out what they hope to achieve during their period of office. These are attached.

#### 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) 35 out of the 36 active organisations within the Town Forum have met the necessary attendance requirements (i.e. have attended at least 50% of Town Forum meetings across the year) and their representatives will be entitled to vote.
- (8) Ten TWBC ward members have also achieved the minimum meeting attendance requirement.

# Agenda Item 5

## **RECOMMENDED -**

- (1) That Alastair Tod be re-elected to serve as Chairman of the Town Forum for 2015/16, until the date of the AGM in November 2016;
- (2) That Alex Green be re-elected to serve as one of the two Deputy Chairmen for 2015/16, until the date of the AGM in November 2016.

Jane Clarke  
Head of Policy and Governance  
E-mail:  
[jane.clarke@tunbridgewells.gov.uk](mailto:jane.clarke@tunbridgewells.gov.uk)

Phone: 01892 554407

Mike McGeary  
Democratic Services Officer  
E-mail:  
[mike.mcgeary@tunbridgewells.gov.uk](mailto:mike.mcgeary@tunbridgewells.gov.uk)

Phone: 01892 554105

Appended: each candidate's supporting statement

# Agenda Item 5

## Nomination for Chairman:

### **Alastair Tod**

I am offering myself for re-election as Chairman of the Town Forum.

I have lived in Tunbridge Wells since 1998 and attended the Forum regularly since 2006, for the last six years representing the Poona Road residents. I retired from the chair of the Civic Society last year having held the post twice, and I remain on the Executive of the Society. I am also on the Committee of the Friends of the Grove and of Calverley Grounds, and a member of other town organisations.

My working career included twenty years as a local government planner, followed by roles in the voluntary sector and ten years in the renewable energy industry.

The Forum is an essential platform for communication between residents and the Council; as a `talking shop` between residents on issues that concern us all; and as a public voice for focussed studies of current issues. It is fortunate in the calibre of those who contribute to these, via the Study Groups and the full meetings of the Forum, and in the support of the Council.

I believe grassroots democracy is more important now than ever, and the Forum needs to consider how it can best develop its activities and constitution to ensure the voice of Royal Tunbridge Wells is properly heard. I would aim to expand our membership to groups and areas of the town which are under-represented at present, and look at ways of moving towards a statutory basis such as a Town Council.

## Nomination for one of the two Deputy Chairmen posts:

### **Alex Green**

Having now been a Deputy Chair for almost 12 months I would like to put myself forwards to be re-nominated as a candidate for Deputy Chairman of the Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum.

Having grown up and lived as a resident of Tunbridge Wells for the majority of my life I am keen for the town to prosper as a successful town and believe that from my role as a senior manager of a local community venue in the centre of the town, I can work with the Forum to help contribute to the vitality of the town. I am excited at the prospect of continuing to provide my time, knowledge, experience to work with the executive of the Town Forum to assist it in whatever way possible as it continues to link together resident and other local groups together in their mission to represent the views of local people.

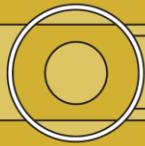
In addition to my work with the executive group I have been a committed member of three of the RTWTF sub-committees and hope to continue offering valuable input and support.

Externally I believe my position at Trinity has allowed me to build links and networks across the town with a variety of bodies including recently becoming part of the Town Centre Business Partnership and assisting on its steering group, a group which I believe would be useful for the Town Forum to be closely linked into.

PTO

# Agenda Item 5

If I am re-elected as Deputy Chair I would find it a pleasure to continue to help support its efforts to help make TW prosper and become the best town it can be.



## ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS TOWN FORUM

### ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS TOWN FORUM

**Thursday 24 September 2015**

**Attended:** Bob Atwood, Caroline Auckland (sub), Lindsay Barker (sub), David Barnett, Cllr Ronen Basu, Dr Ian Beavis (sub), Adrian Berendt, Lorna Blackmore, Mark Booker, Stephen Bowser, Cllr Peter Bulman, David Bushell, Adrian Cory, John Cunningham, Michael Doyle, Andy England, Alex Green, Cllr Lawrence Heasman, Dorothea Holman, Michael Holman, Ann Hughes-Wilson (sub), Bill Kern, Kyrios Kyriacou, Claire Luxford (sub), Katharina Mahler-Bech, Cllr Tracy Moore, Altan Omer, Peter Perry (sub), Nick Pope, Martin Prentice (sub), Cllr Catherine Rankin, Cllr David Scott, Cllr Don Sloan, Alastair Tod (Chairman), Mary Wardrop, Denise Watts, Cllr Lynne Weatherly, Dr Philip Whitbourn, Pat Wilson and Cllr Chris Woodward

**TWBC officers present:** William Benson (Chief Executive), Adam Chalmers (Head of Partnerships and Engagement), Kelvin Hinton (Planning Policy Manager) (item 8), Hilary Smith (Economic Development Manager) (item 7) and Mike McGahey (Democratic Services Officer)

**Guest speaker:** Stephen Gurney (item 7)

**Also present:** Cllr Jane March (Portfolio-holder for Tourism, Leisure and Economic Development), Sue Daniels and Tim Tempest

#### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were reported from: Cllr Bob Backhouse, Sally Balcon, Cllr Barbara Cobbold, Shauna Dupuy, Jane Fenwick, Allan Gooda, Michaela van Halewyn, Cllr David Jukes, Sue Kaner, Cllr David Neve, Cllr Peter Oakford, Anne Stobo and Cllr Frank Williams.

#### **2. MEMBERSHIP CHANGES**

Adam Chalmers reported that the Town Forum's Management Committee had approved membership applications from: (a) the Mereworth Road Residents' Association, whose appointed substitute representative, Ann Hughes-Wilson, was welcomed to the meeting; and (b) the Tunbridge Wells Access Group, whose appointed representative, Andy England, was also welcomed to the meeting.

#### **3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting dated 16 July 2015 were submitted for approval.

**RESOLVED –** That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 July 2015 be approved.

#### **4. ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES**

16 July 2015

4(h) Sewage egress, Warwick Park

Mike McGeary advised that a meeting had been arranged by the Leader of the Council with Southern Water's operations manager to discuss the on-going concerns of sewage ingress at Warwick Park, to which John Cunningham had been invited. The meeting would take place on 9 October. Mr Cunningham added that the problems were still very much evident, including land at the Nevill cricket ground.

6 'Developing our Green Networks' (On-going action point)

The findings and recommendations of the recently-published report on 'Developing our Green Networks' have an impact on all of the Forum's working groups. This remains as an on-going action point for the immediate future.

8 Urban Design Framework

Mark Booker had circulated a draft action plan with the agenda, which covered both the **Green Network** issue and relevant sections of the **Urban Design Framework**. The recommended action plan set out how the principal proposals made in the Green Network report might be taken forward within three of the Forum's working groups, in collaboration with the remaining working groups where that was considered relevant.

**RESOLVED** – That this draft action plan be endorsed and forwarded to the Borough Council, so that the issues it raises can be discussed with Council officers when relevant planning, transportation, economic development and leisure-related decisions are being taken.

Mr Booker had also circulated a linked paper with the agenda, entitled '**pedestrians and buses** in Tunbridge Wells: an aide-memoire of issues'. This paper was intended to highlight some of the key points raised by members of the Forum in the recent past, some of which had now become even more topical due to the Borough Council's decision to commission a study into bus routing in the town centre.

Mr Booker welcomed the Borough Council's decision to commission this study. He stressed that bus routing and consideration of traffic restrictions within the town centre should be examined at part of an overall strategic plan to improve the public realm.

Mr Booker raised the following issues relating to the bus routing study: he stressed that bus usage should be encouraged, as a way of reducing congestion in the town centre; many elderly people, as well as those with a mobility problem, would find it difficult if access to buses in the town centre were removed; the relocation of some bus stops was a more realistic and acceptable solution, which could still enable a 'town square' concept to be realised.

Cllr Scott largely agreed with those views. He advised that Cllr Jukes had asked him to head up a study into this issue, adding that he was a strong advocate of improving transport for all people. His approach had two strands: (i) to find a solution which addressed the key issues over the next five year period; and (ii) the longer term position. In the short term, Cllr Scott advised, his focus was on how to make buses easier to use and to access. A bus 'staging area' was one option he had already expressed which would help

achieve those objectives. He added that he also wished to increase use of the new public realm without causing upset to bus users. Longer term, Cllr Scott advised, there was a growing acceptance that transportation in general would see dramatic changes.

Dr Philip Whitbourn was encouraged by Cllr Scott's comments and welcomed the forthcoming discussions that would be taking place. He commended Mr Booker's report, set out as 'appendix A' in the agenda, as a basis for that future debate.

Dr Whitbourn added the following comments: he emphasised how Tunbridge Wells was an important hub for bus users, which underlined the importance of ensuring easy inter-change access; the displacement of buses on to narrow roads would make congestion in the town worse; the Five Ways public realm scheme had been designed to accommodate buses, so why should they be excluded now.

Denise Watts stressed that it was not only elderly people or those with a disability who would be greatly inconvenienced by the loss of town centre bus stops but younger people as well. She added that re-routing of buses away from the town centre would most likely have an adverse impact on congestion and air quality elsewhere and possibly lead to a fares' increase because of the extra mileage vehicles would have to travel.

In response, Cllr Scott stressed how it would not be the intention to make bus journeys worse for users or for residents generally. He encouraged all interested parties to engage fully in the discussions about bus routing, once the formal consultation process started.

Andy England, newly-appointed member of the Forum, raised two aspects of concern about the current bus gateway in the town centre: (i) first, he felt that pedestrian safety had been adversely affected at the junction of Monson Road and Mount Pleasant Road, where the speed of the traffic had increased significantly; (ii) at that same junction, he advised that the highway sign at the end of Monson Road indicated that buses could turn right at that point. He advised that this was an impossible manoeuvre for buses and he proposed that the sign therefore be removed. Cllr Scott undertook to look at these points as part of his study.

**RESOLVED –** That Mr Booker's 'aide-memoire' on pedestrians and buses be adopted as the basis for more detailed discussions which will take place on bus routing and more generally about town centre matters in due course.

## 5. UPDATE REPORT FROM TWBC'S CABINET

Cllr Jane March, Portfolio-holder for Tourism, Leisure and Economic Development, reported on the following areas of interest:

- (a) **Cinema site** – where the authority was in regular contact with the site owners; she understood that they were in discussions with one potential buyer.
- (b) **Assembly Hall Theatre** – which now had a new bar area, new seats, air conditioning in the bar and a facility to pay for drinks by credit card.
- (c) **Holly Farm, Hawkenbury** – the sale of which had been approved by the Cabinet; Cllr March added that a letter from KCC had been received which confirmed their position over the provision of a new primary school.

- (d) **John Street car park** – the development of which was progressing well and to timetable.
- (e) **North Farm highway scheme** – which was likely to be completed by the end of October.
- (f) **Residents' survey** – involving 1,000 face-to-face interviews, the interim results of which would be available in November, the final report being made in December.
- (g) **Youth hub** – which Cllr March advised would be provided by KCC on the site adjacent to the Fire Station in Grove Hill Road.
- (h) **Cultural and Learning Hub** – where the HLF bid had been re-submitted, with a decision expected towards the end of the year.
- (i) **Town Hall reception** – Cllr March advised that an improvement scheme had been completed within the reception area, providing a much more welcoming and business-like environment.
- (j) **Cycling Strategy** – which was accessible on the TWBC website for comment, as part of the formal consultation stage, closing on 1 November.

Cllr March also provided an update on some issues which fell within her portfolio-holding: (i) the additional attractions being considered for the **ice rink** in Calverley Grounds had been withdrawn, following concerns expressed by local residents. Cllr March added that the Council would work with the Friends of Calverley Grounds to agree other attractions for the future, adding that ideas and suggestions could be made via the Assembly Hall section of the website; (ii) at the Tunbridge Wells Museum, all staff were now trained to be '**dementia friendly**'. Cllr March added that the Museum had achieved a 'runners-up' award in the national dementia friendly assessment; (iii) a successful **jobs fair** had been held on 16 September, which had seen 225 jobs on offer (as well as many volunteer positions advertised) and over 500 visitors. The event, Cllr March advised, had been held jointly with Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council, where 60 employers/voluntary organisations had been present. Already, she added, three companies had asked to be part of next year's event; (iv) and the proposed **pedestrian signage** scheme, details of which had been presented at the May meeting of the Forum. Cllr March advised that funding for the implementation of the initiative had been secured from the West Kent Local Sustainable Transport Fund, which would see the current information drums being replaced. She added that a meeting had been held with representatives of the Town Forum and the Civic Society, the feedback from which would be used to help in the design of the signs. The scheme was due for implementation by 31 March 2016, it was noted.

Dr Whitbourn enquired into progress with refurbishment work at the Sports Centre in St John's Road. Cllr March said that she had been advised that this was still progressing according to the timetable, adding that she was due to visit the Centre the following Monday for the latest update. Cllr March advised that she had asked for the latest timetable of when the facilities would be available again to be posted on to the Council's website.

**Action:** The Borough Council to post an update on the re-opening of sports facilities at the Sports Centre on its website.

Michael Holman enquired if anything further was going to be provided as part of the Fiveways scheme before it was declared as complete. He added that it would be

helpful to hear from the Borough Council when it was considered that the works were finished.

Cllr Ronen Basu, within whose portfolio-holding this scheme fell, advised that works to rectify the early-stage faults would be starting soon; this would involve examining the footings of some of the slabs which had become loose or broken.

Dorothea Holman added that she felt that the remedial works were not just limited to the paving but to other elements as well, including the waste bins at some of the cafes and restaurants and to the maintenance of some of the floral displays.

William Benson acknowledged the points raised, saying that: (a) the Borough Council would formally announce when all of the remedial work had been completed and the scheme was considered to be complete; and (b) at that stage, any possible enforcement action would be looked at.

**Action:** The Borough Council will announce completion of phase I of the public realm scheme formally, as soon as this position has been reached.

Andy England asked when phase two of the public realm scheme would be started. Mr Benson reaffirmed that no decisions on this would be taken until a proper evaluation of phase I had been undertaken.

There were no additional action points arising from this report beyond the two highlighted above.

## 6. TOWN CENTRE PARTNERSHIP

Hilary Smith, TWBC's Economic Development Manager, reported the details of a Borough Council initiative to work with local businesses in the formation of a Town Centre Partnership; this would be formally considered and determined by TWBC's Cabinet at their meeting on 29 October.

Mrs Smith introduced Stephen Gurney, Managing Director of the Index magazine, who explained the background to the proposal. He advised that the purpose of this initiative was for businesses and the Borough Council to deliver town centre management projects and services, leading towards making Tunbridge Wells a 'stronger brand', to strengthen its position as a great destination, and help businesses to attract quality staff because of that enhancement.

**Action:** Mike McGeary was asked to provide Forum members with a link to the Cabinet agenda item (and the Cabinet Advisory Board in advance of that), once these agendas were published. Members of the Town Forum were encouraged to either speak at the Cabinet and/or Advisory Board meetings on this topic or to come and observe the discussion.

Both Cllr Catherine Rankin and Dorothea Holman welcomed the Borough Council's intention to play a more active role in supporting local businesses in this partnership initiative.

Bob Atwood endorsed Cllr Rankin's comments and enquired whether this partnership superseded the existing town retailers' group. Mrs Smith advised that the intention was that the partnership would build upon the work of that group, adding that the active members of the retailers' forum were closely involved in the latest initiative. Mrs Smith also advised that local businesses had been asked to support the latest Christmas campaign, launched the previous week.

Michael Holman asked what the extent of the business involvement in this initiative would be. Mr Gurney advised that every business within Tunbridge Wells town area – including small businesses – would have the opportunity to become involved. Mrs Smith added that the intention was that the partnership would become a company limited by guarantee, with the employment of an administrator in due course.

Mr Holman advised that the Water in the Wells group had already established ‘community interest company’ status, adding that they were able to offer some relevant experience to the partnership, if that were helpful. Mrs Smith felt that this would be entirely welcome as the partnership developed.

Mrs Smith and Mr Gurney were thanked for their report. There were no specific action points arising, other than the agenda notification referred to above.

## **7. TWBC'S CORPORATE PRIORITIES 2016/17**

William Benson, TWBC Chief Executive, presented his report, which had been considered by the Finance and Governance Cabinet Advisory Board in August, ahead of its approval by the Cabinet on 17 September.

Mr Benson explained how each Autumn the Cabinet began the process of formulating its key priorities and its budget strategy for the following year. His report, he advised, provided the context within which these processes were undertaken, which marked the start of the consultation stage.

Under each of the sections of his report – national, regional/county and local – the Chief Executive had listed a number of ‘key issues’, intended to act as pointers for councillors as to future actions or aspects where a close ‘watching brief’ was recommended. This led on to the Chief Executive’s recommendations for what were considered to be the corporate priorities for 2016/17, following discussions with the Leader of the Council. In summary, it was proposed that the authority continue to follow the majority of its plans and projects as set out in the previous year’s report, with two additions: (i) exploring the potential to deliver a higher education facility or campus within or around the town; and (ii) producing a sports facilities strategy that will set out a route map for upgrading and extending existing facilities around the Borough.

The Chief Executive advised that, subject to the Cabinet’s approval of this list of recommended projects, full consultation with all interested parties would follow, in order to establish whether any additional proposals should be added.

A number of relevant issues were highlighted by Mr Benson: (i) he felt that the Government’s proposed reduction in rent increases to social housing had the potential to impact adversely upon planned development programmes and improvements within Tunbridge Wells Borough; and (ii) the mechanism by which funding for infrastructure was secured for the Borough was now through the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), under which a regional grouping of Kent and Medway, East Sussex and Essex had been formed by the Government. Mr Benson added that a strong argument existed for infrastructure funding for the Borough through the LEP but, to date, it had fared quite poorly. He advised that the case for greater LEP funding would continue to be made, with a greater business input being added.

Michael Holman referred to a statement made at an earlier meeting by the Leader of the Council that discussions had been held with two universities regarding the establishment of a campus within the Borough; he asked what stage such discussions had reached and whether the Town Forum could assist in these aspirations. Mr Benson advised that discussions were still at an early stage and were on-going. He

added that he would happily return to the Town Forum if a stage were reached where some Forum input was felt to be helpful.

Mr Benson advised that there was a 'district deal' now in place, which was part of three pilot projects across the county. The 'district deal' had a focus of joint priorities and commitment towards specific tasks, under which higher education would be included.

Bob Atwood referred to paragraph (21) of the report and asked for clarity, particularly the phrase "integrating front-line services". Mr Benson provided an example of where this was relevant: if the Cultural and Learning Hub received the go-ahead, he advised that this would be a perfect opportunity for bringing the front-line services of both KCC and TWBC together. He added that there might be other such opportunities between the County and the Borough Councils, which would be the subject of discussions between the two local authorities.

Mary Wardrop referred to paragraph (26) within the context of the Five Year Plan and '...working with community groups'; she asked whether this included the Town Forum. Mr Benson confirmed that this was the case, as evidenced in the regular consultations that now took place.

Michael Holman said that the Town Forum had for some years produced many documents on town centre issues, which had been formally presented to the Borough Council. He asked when the Forum could expect to receive formal feedback on these. Mr Benson felt that, as part of the support process, the Borough Council should make a commitment to respond to such formal documents on a regular, say six-monthly, basis.

Mark Booker advised that, in some operational areas, such a process was already in place, which he welcomed.

Mary Wardrop wished to place on record her appreciation for the three new signs that had been installed at Hawkenbury Recreation Ground, which she assumed had followed on from formal representations having been made to the Borough Council.

The Chairman summed up the discussion by acknowledging the active and productive co-operation that already existed between the Town Forum and the Borough Council, which provided a sound base from which to build a future partnership.

There were no actions points arising from this report.

## **8. STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

Kelvin Hinton, TWBC's Planning Policy Manager, advised that the authority's 'Statement of Community Involvement' was a document which set out how the Borough Council involves the community, individuals and organisations with an interest in matters relating to development in their area. He added that a report was being made to the authority's Cabinet on 29 October, which would seek approval to consult on an updated version of the Statement.

Mr Hinton welcomed input from Town Forum members into the process, which would be the subject of a six-week consultation stage, beginning in December.

Mark Booker drew attention to the recent initiative by the Head of Planning Services in convening a number of briefings for Town Forum members on key planning issues. These had started in July, involving Mr Hinton and his staff, as well as officers from

other areas within Planning Services. Mr Booker advised that these briefings, which would continue on an approximately quarterly basis, had been very well received by Town Forum members.

The Chairman endorsed these comments and thanked Mr Hinton for his report on the Statement of Community Involvement update.

There were no action points arising from this report.

## **9. ELECTORAL EQUALITY AND ARRANGEMENTS**

Cllr Catherine Rankin advised that a 'task and finish' group established by her Overview and Scrutiny Committee was examining the implications of an electoral review for the Borough Council. She was keen to learn what Town Forum members felt about some of the key issues being considered, such as: (i) did residents feel that the existing number of Borough councillors was right? (ii) did they feel that they were being sufficiently represented by their Borough councillors? and (iii) would they prefer 'all-out' elections every four years rather than the current 'elections by thirds' cycle?

Cllr Rankin added that, as a starting point, the Borough Council had no pre-conceived ideas about either what the ideal number of councillors should be for the whole Borough, or what the optimum size of the electorate should be for each councillor.

Dorothea Holman sought clarification over the impact on resident representation if the balance between urban and rural areas were altered.

John Cunningham sought further information and guidance on some of the alternatives, adding that he believed that the authority did have too many councillors. He advised that, in his opinion, the quality of representation was one of the most important factors.

Mr Cunningham also warned about the costs associated with an electoral review.

Cllr Scott cautioned that it was sometimes misleading to look at a particular councillor's activity and judge their level of effectiveness. He added that his own commitment assumed that two days a week would be spent on Council business but he paid tribute to other councillors who, because of work or family (or both) commitments, could only give a few hours each week to Council business. The role, he added, relied upon the commitment and goodwill of individuals in what was essentially an unpaid job.

**Action:** Cllr Rankin undertook to circulate the questions posed above and invited Town Forum members to comment on the issues raised, in respect of individuals' own ward areas.

## **10. WORKING GROUPS**

Update reports were made from the working groups as follows:

**Water in the Wells Working Group** – the Chairman, Michael Holman, welcomed the Borough Council's Urban Design Framework document which, he added, had been prepared by someone "who has a mature understanding of Tunbridge Wells" and which provided a valuable framework into which plans for individual sites could be fitted.

Mr Holman added that, where sites offered the possibility of water feature installation, Water in the Wells would seek to be involved with developers and the Borough Council in drawing up detailed plans.

Mr Holman also reported on the following issues: (i) he drew attention to the outcome of a competition run by the South West Region of the Royal Institute of British Architects, called 'Imagine Bath'. The winner, announced in March, focused on celebrating what Bath was famous for – its water – by proposing to 'rehydrate' the city. He added that there was an uncanny similarity with the 'So create a difference' initiative which Tunbridge Wells architects Stuart Page and James Galpin had run in this town and in the 'Water in the Wells' work. Mr Holman felt that there were lessons which could be learnt from Bath's approach.

(ii) With Fiveways, Mr Holman felt that the point had been reached where a more active campaign for a water feature should begin. He added that the space remained one which people passed through rather than one which was more of a welcoming area where they could gather. A series of meetings with senior figures in businesses surrounding Fiveways was taking place, to enlist further support. Mr Holman added that it was hoped to be in a position to commission alternative designs that would incorporate the Millennium Clock with a cascading water feature. However, he stressed that the lead on this issue had to come from the Borough Council.

(iii) The Chalybeate Spring on the Pantiles had once more ceased to flow, Mr Holman advised.

(iv) Mr Holman had two items of good news associated with Calverley Grounds: first, he welcomed the news from TWBC that it was working with the Friends Group to help develop a long term vision for Calverley Grounds; secondly, the Friends Group was working together with a nationally-acclaimed, locally-based landscape architect to draw up plans for a quality play area on the bowling green. He was hopeful that the play area might have a water-based theme.

(v) Mr Holman ended with three new locations where his group hoped that water features might be incorporated: Dairy Crest site in St John's Road, where the developer's latest plans indicated a water feature for the internal courtyard which would be visible from the main road; Owls(wood) nest on the Tonbridge Road in Pembury, where there were plans for a 76-bed health and wellbeing facility; and the potential housing and new primary school development at Holly Farm, Hawkenbury.

**RESOLVED** – That the progress report be accepted.

**Tourism and Leisure Working Group** – The newly-appointed Chairman, Dorothea Holman, advised that the previous Chairman, June Bridgeman, would be finishing off work she had led on in respect of the pedestrian signage in the town centre (referred to in minute 5 above). Mrs Holman welcomed the news of the Town Centre Partnership under minute 7 above. She added that the group was still keen to see a clear tourism strategy in place for the Borough, which was one of a number of areas she and her working group would be examining in the coming months, along with other initiatives.

**RESOLVED** – That the progress report be accepted.

**Transport Strategy** – In the absence of the Acting Chairman, (Jane Fenwick), it was noted that there were no specific issues which needed to be brought to the attention of the full Forum at this stage.

**Planning and Development Strategy** – Mark Booker, the Chairman of this working group, reported on a number of issues of general interest to Forum members: (i) Dairy Crest site, to which reference had already been made under the Water in the Wells report above; (ii) Royal Victoria Place, where a further meeting with representatives of Hermes had taken place, to hear more about their plans for expansion; (iii) Union House, where the developer had taken account of discussions and was looking to link the site more closely with the Pantiles, by incorporating Linden Park Road; and (iv) the Site Allocations DPD process where he advised that the appointed inspector for the examination in public had submitted some ‘probing’ questions for TWBC to answer (covering the proposed ‘areas of change’ and the division of residential and retail accommodation) which Mr Booker advised reflected some of the same views expressed by his working group.

**RESOLVED** – That the progress report be accepted.

**Finance and Other Issues** – In the absence of David Wakefield, Chairman of this working group, there was no report made.

**Culture** – Bob Atwood, Chairman of this new working group, advised that he had drafted some terms of reference, which he would circulate for comments. He reported that some suggestions had been made for external membership of the group and added that people with relevant expertise would be very welcome.

Mr Atwood advised that the HLF bid for the Cultural and Learning Hub had been re-submitted, the only change from the initial one being in respect of the list of exhibits. He added that one of the tasks of the working group would be to shadow the progress of the HLF bid. He advised that the Cultural and Learning Hub proposal was very welcome, particularly so when so many of the building’s existing features would be preserved. The management of the Hub was a key issue, he added, and the working group would be maintaining a close watch on this aspect.

The Chairman of the full Forum reminded members that the wider group had already signalled their full support for the proposals for the Cultural and Learning Hub.

**RESOLVED** – That the progress report be accepted.

## 11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(a) **‘Restore our identity’** – Andy England reported that he had raised a number of issues with Greg Clark MP on the theme of restoring Tunbridge Wells’ identity. One proposal, he advised, was to illuminate the Borough’s coat of arms on the Town Hall. Dr Philip Whitbourn supported this proposal, adding that he felt the Town Hall should be available for better public use;

(b) **RSS feeds on the website** – Stephen Bowser advised that the RSS feed service on TWBC’s website was not working. The Chief Executive undertook to investigate and rectify;

(c) **Britain in Bloom** – Dorothea Holman reported that Tunbridge Wells had once more won a gold medal award in the Britain in Bloom competition, in the large town category. Members of the Town Forum joined her in expressing congratulations to everyone involved in this wonderful achievement;

(d) **Future-proofing transport** – Cllr Don Sloan commended a Radio 4 broadcast he had listened to the previous evening entitled ‘Transport: future-proofing’. He said that the imaginative ideas discussed would be of particular interest to anyone involved in the town’s transportation discussions;

**(e) Future agenda items** – The Chairman advised that he had had a request to add some items to the agenda, but after the agenda for this meeting had already been published. He asked, therefore, that if anyone had some suggestions for agenda items, they should contact either himself or Mike McGahey at least two weeks before each meeting;

**(f) New housing on the southern border** – Altan Omer advised that Wealden District Council had given planning permission for a 60-home development on the southern border of the Borough, suggesting that interested parties view Wealden's website for further details. The Chief Executive advised that there was regular discussion taking place between planning officers of the two authorities, adding that Tunbridge Wells was trying to secure a developer contribution out of this development, to meet specified local facilities as a direct result;

**(g) Telephone boxes in Calverley Precinct** – Andy England felt that the public telephone boxes in Calverley Precinct should be removed, on the basis that they were very rarely used, they were not regularly cleaned and they spoilt the appearance of the area.

## **12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Thursday 26 November 2015 at 6.30pm (including the Town Forum's AGM)

The meeting concluded at 8.40pm.

This page is intentionally left blank

## Finance and Governance Cabinet Advisory Board

10 November  
2015

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?

No

## Draft Budget 2016/17 and Medium Term Financial Strategy Update

Final Decision-Maker	Cabinet
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr. Paul Barrington-King
Lead Director	Lee Colyer
Head of Service	Jane Fineman
Lead Officer/Report Author	Lee Colyer
Classification	Non-exempt
Wards affected	All

### This report makes the following recommendations to the final decision-maker:

1. That Cabinet comments on the draft budget and identifies any areas that they believe need to be strengthened or where there are omissions; and
2. That, subject to the above recommendation, Cabinet agrees the draft budget for public consultation.

### This report relates to the following Five Year Plan Key Objectives:

- A Prosperous Borough
- A Green Borough
- A Confident Borough

The Council's budget involves the allocation of financial resources to deliver the Council's Key Objectives.

### Timetable

Meeting	Date
Management Board	27 October 2015 (verbal update)
Discussion with Portfolio Holder	2 November 2015
Cabinet Advisory Board	10 November 2015
Cabinet	3 December 2015

## Draft Budget 2016/17 and Medium Term Financial Strategy Update

### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report outlines the assumptions that have been built into the proposed budget for 2016/17 and provides projections for the next five years.
  - 1.2 The projections assume that council tax will increase by 2 per cent for 2016/17 which would increase the daily rate from 43.5p to 44.3p. For subsequent years the council tax strategy is for the charge to increase annually by 2 per cent.
  - 1.3 In 2015/16 the Council again set a budget without the need to use reserves. It is intended to maintain this principle, despite an expected cut in government funding of £261,000 for 2016/17.
  - 1.4 This report sets out how a balanced budget can be achieved at this stage.
  - 1.5 The exact amount of government grant is not yet known and details may not be issued until just before the Christmas recess of Parliament.
  - 1.6 The draft budget is a projection and following approval it will be published on to the Council's consultation portal.
- 

### 2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Cabinet received the first report leading to the setting of the 2016/17 budget at the meeting on 17 September 2015 entitled Budget Projection and Strategy which had also been considered by the Finance & Governance Cabinet Advisory Board. This was followed by a Budget Update report on 29 October 2015.
- 2.2 Previous reports highlighted the further dramatic reductions to government grants. 'Formula Grant' will have been cut by nearly 50 per cent since 2010. The expected settlement for 2016/17 is for a reduction of £261,000 (16 per cent) over the current year.
- 2.3 Demand for Council services continues to increase, driven by a significant increase in the population of 10.7 per cent (double the national average) to a total of 115,000 according to the 2011 Census.
- 2.4 National inflation forecasts have a key impact on the Council's costs especially on external contract payments and business rates paid to the Government which are linked to the Retail Price Index (RPI). The Office of National Statistics announced that for the year to September RPI was 0.8 per cent.

# Agenda Item 11

## Latest Budget Projection for 2016/17

- 2.5 The latest budget projection has been developed using broad assumptions on how various types of costs and income will look when the budget is built up using detailed estimates in January.
- 2.6 There are still some uncertainties that will impact on the budget for 2016/17. Notwithstanding these, portfolio-holders have been busy with their directors/heads of service in trying to identify efficiency options and ideas to reduce the cost of services or to increase income. These ideas are listed in Appendix A for discussion.
- 2.7 The Council has already taken difficult decisions over the past seven years which have mitigated the impact of the financial and economic crisis. But the culture of innovation and rigorous cost reduction combined with income optimisation will need to be continued and there are likely to be further strategic decisions required. The Council is now on a strong financial footing and has an embedded culture of change and efficiency from which to face the challenges ahead.
- 2.8 Provided all the corporate savings and budget work streams identified in Appendix A are delivered then a balanced budget is expected without the use of reserves. Other major changes over the current year are summarised in the table below.

	£000s
<b>Cut in Government Grant</b>	<b>261</b>
Increase in National Insurance from Pension Reform	291
Council Tax Increase 2 per cent	(140)
Additional usage income (Parking & Crematorium)	(192)
Loss of income from Union House redevelopment	58
Budget work streams (Appendix A)	(248)
Fees and charges over the MTFS	(52)
Single Person Discount Review	(17)
Reduction in staff vacancy factor	65
Increase in insurance premium	5
Increase to number of car park season tickets	(31)
Freeze in car parking charges	0
<b>Shortfall</b>	<b>0</b>
Development Programme Additional Staffing Resources	500
Use of Years 4 to 6 New Homes Bonus	(500)
Use of reserves	0
<b>Net Revenue Budget</b>	<b>0</b>

- 2.9 Additional funding is required to resource the Development Programme which is the subject of a separate report elsewhere on the agenda. It is proposed to fund this work by making use of the New Homes Bonus from years 4 to 6. Years 1 to 3 are already included within the base budget. The use of New Homes Bonus to fund the revenue cost of development plans is a logical use of this type of funding which itself is derived from growth which has already been delivered. This approach will need to be reviewed should the Government decide to end the New Homes Bonus scheme.

## Budget Strategy

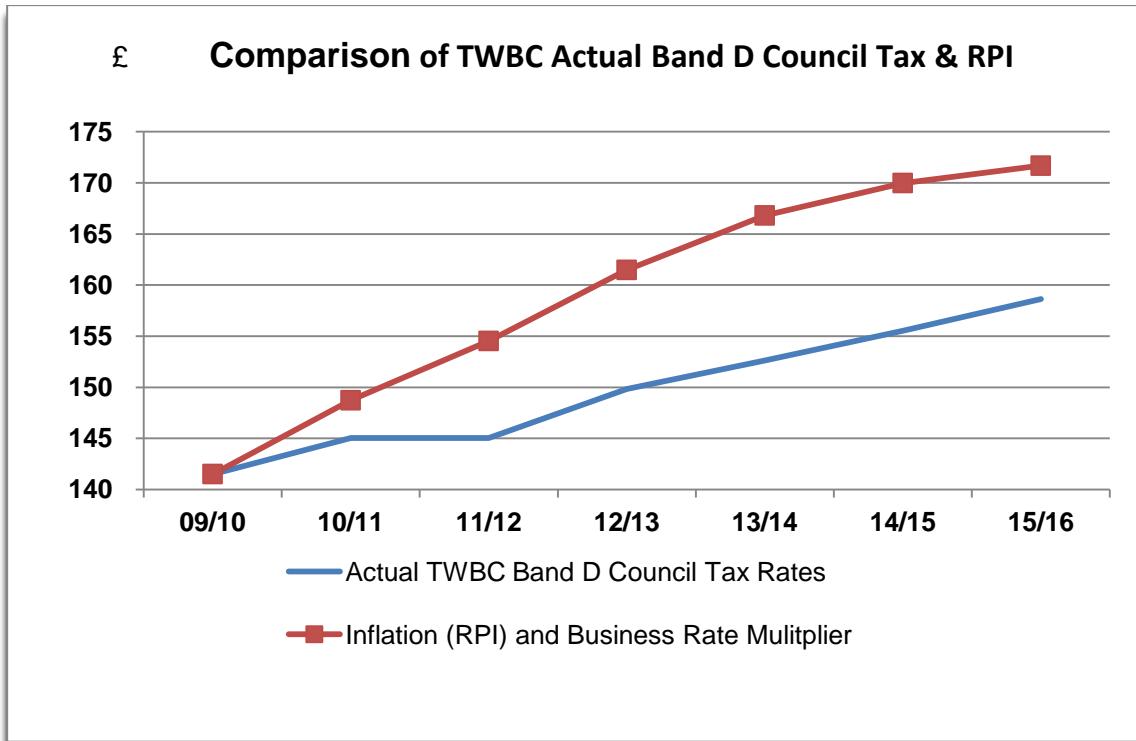
- 2.10 The budget is forecast to be balanced for 2016/17. If any of the expected savings or efficiencies fail to be delivered and are not replaced with alternatives then a budget gap would occur requiring the use of reserves. However, the use of general reserves is unsustainable over the longer term which led Cabinet in 2012 to set a definition of a balanced budget as follows:

“Where ongoing expenditure is met from fees, charges, government grant and council tax with only the use of earmarked reserves being used to meet one-off priority expenditure.”

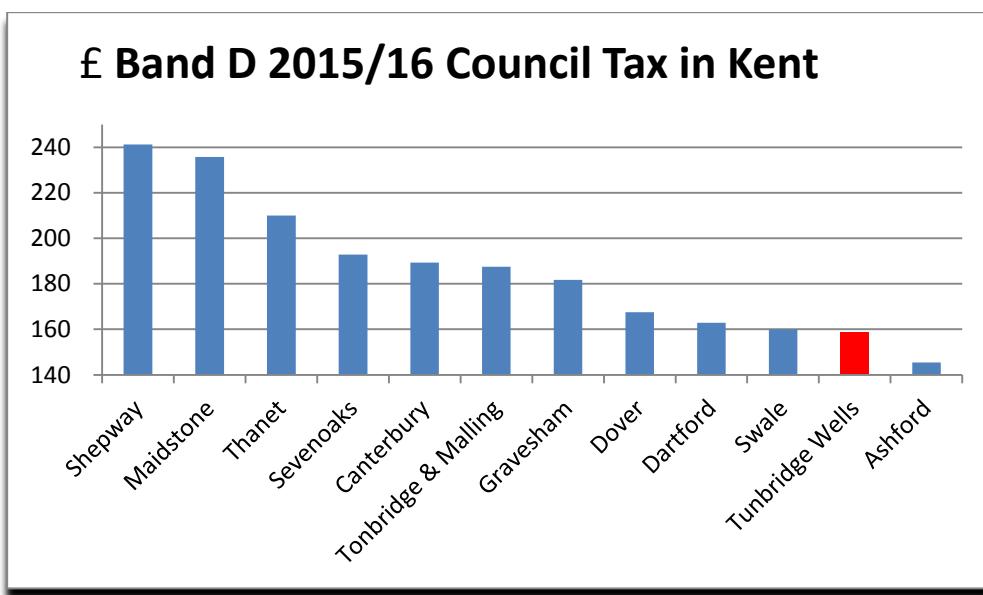
- 2.11 If this strategy is to be met then tight financial control will continue to be required to adhere to the budget agreed and action implemented where variances are identified. The alternative is to temporarily use the general fund to balance the revenue budget.

## Council Tax Strategy

- 2.12 One source of funding for the provision of local services is council tax. This Council has historically had a policy of very low council tax levels and the strategy is for council tax to increase by 2 per cent. Unlike business rates, council tax cannot increase by more than 2 per cent without the need for a referendum (which for this Borough would cost £100,000) because of the 2 per cent ‘cap’ set by the Secretary of State for English councils.
- 2.13 The impact of the council tax ‘cap’ locally is that this Council does not even have the ability to increase council tax by 1p per day to fund local services without triggering an expensive referendum.
- 2.14 The following graph shows that since 2009/10 council tax has been cut in real terms compared to inflation and was frozen in 2011/12.



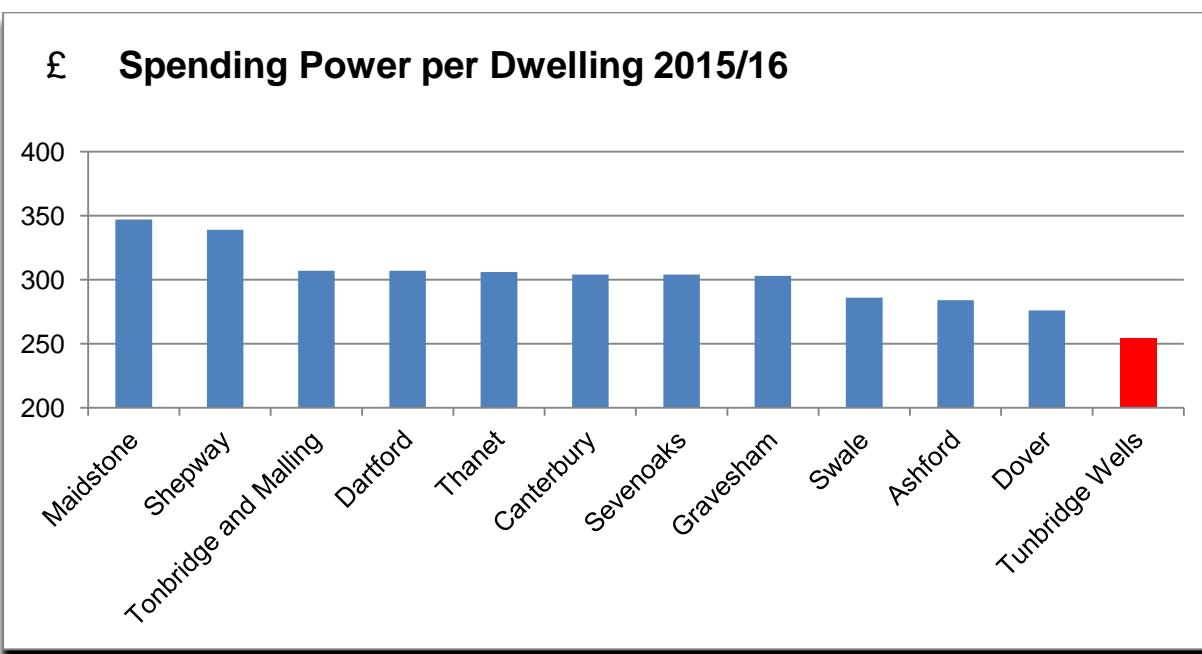
- 2.15 Since the introduction of council tax this Council has consistently had one of the lowest levels of council tax in the country (20<sup>th</sup> lowest General Expenses out of 201 shire districts) and the 2<sup>nd</sup> lowest basic rate in Kent.
- 2.16 The graph below shows the comparison across Kent of the basic council tax rates for 2015/16. By way of example if Sevenoaks and Maidstone Councils freeze their council tax every year and this Council agrees an increase of 2 per cent every year then it would take 11 years and 21 years respectively for the TWBC rate to reach the level charged by these councils.



2.17 It should be appreciated that each area is different and not all councils provide the same range and level of services. This is especially important when discretionary services are provided which require a subsidy such as a museum or theatres.

## Spending Power

2.18 The Government has developed a universal benchmarking indicator called 'Spending Power' to enable comparisons between councils of the income they receive from national and local tax payers. This indicator appears to be the best available for identifying how much funding each council receives per household to provide local services. The graph below shows that using the Government's own calculation TWBC has by far the lowest spending power in Kent at just £263 per household.



2.19 This explains why despite being very efficient (as evidenced by the external auditors who have issued an unprecedented sixth clean Annual Audit Letter) and delivering excellent value for money (2012 Residents' Survey) this Council still faces financial challenges to set a balanced budget. In addition any budget gap will widen as more functions are localised by the Government without the appropriate level of funding.

## Localisation of Discretionary Services to Parish and Town Councils

2.20 This Council has worked well with parishes and kept them informed of the tightening of the Borough Council's finances. Discussions have taken place on their ability to help maintain the provision of services which they regard as necessary in their area.

2.21 In some respects parishes are in a better financial position to continue the provision of local discretionary services and in the budget there is an expectation that they do so. The Council has also created a 'Parish Enabling

Reserve' which can be accessed by parishes who require upfront investment to take on discretionary services currently provided by TWBC.

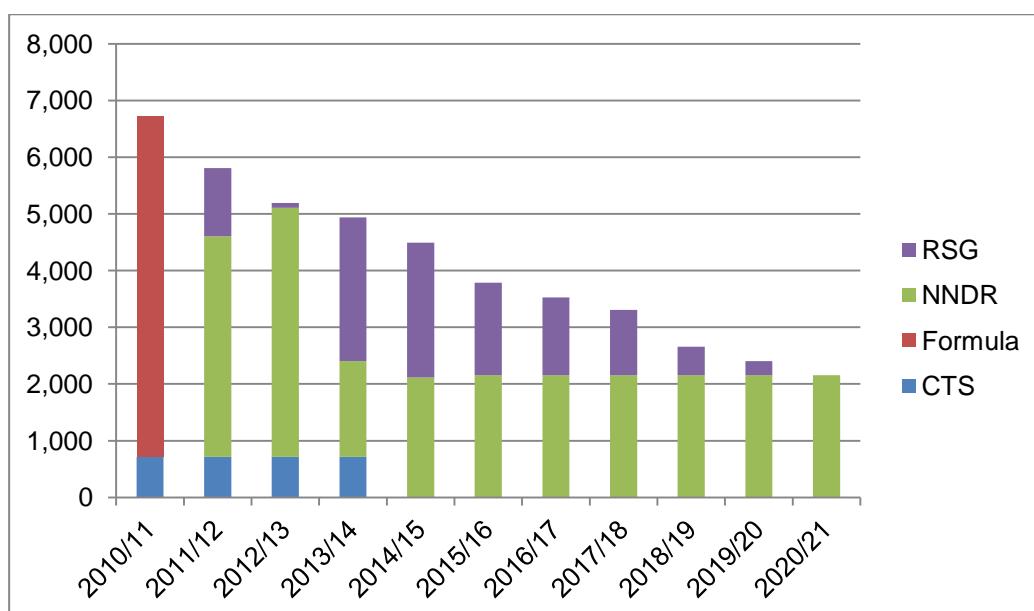
## User Pays Principle

- 2.22 With operating costs driving up expenditure it will be necessary to recover these costs from the user of those services rather than all council tax payers. The Council has used feedback over the years to keep council tax at one of the lowest levels in the country and to pass on costs to the users of optional services through higher fees and charges.
- 2.23 In November, Cabinet will consider the 'fees and charges' report for areas which are not dictated by central government. The budget projections have assumed for modelling purposes that the total income from the charges set out in the report is achieved.

## Government Grant Projections

- 2.24 At the time of writing this report the Government Spending Review 2015 had yet to be published. Consequently the amount of government grant for 2016/17 had also not been published. The Council must set its budget to a statutory timeline and cannot wait for central government information to be published.
- 2.25 Government grant has already been cut by nearly 50 per cent (£3.2 million) since 2010. The graph below models a 16 per cent reduction (£261,000) to Revenue Support Grant for 2016/17 and that this grant will be zero by 2020/21. At this point the only core funding from central government will be the £2.1 million minimum baseline from the redistribution of business rates.

Central Government Grant



RSG = Revenue Support Grant; NNDR = Non-Domestic Rates; CTS = Council Tax Support

## Retention of 100 per cent of Business Rates

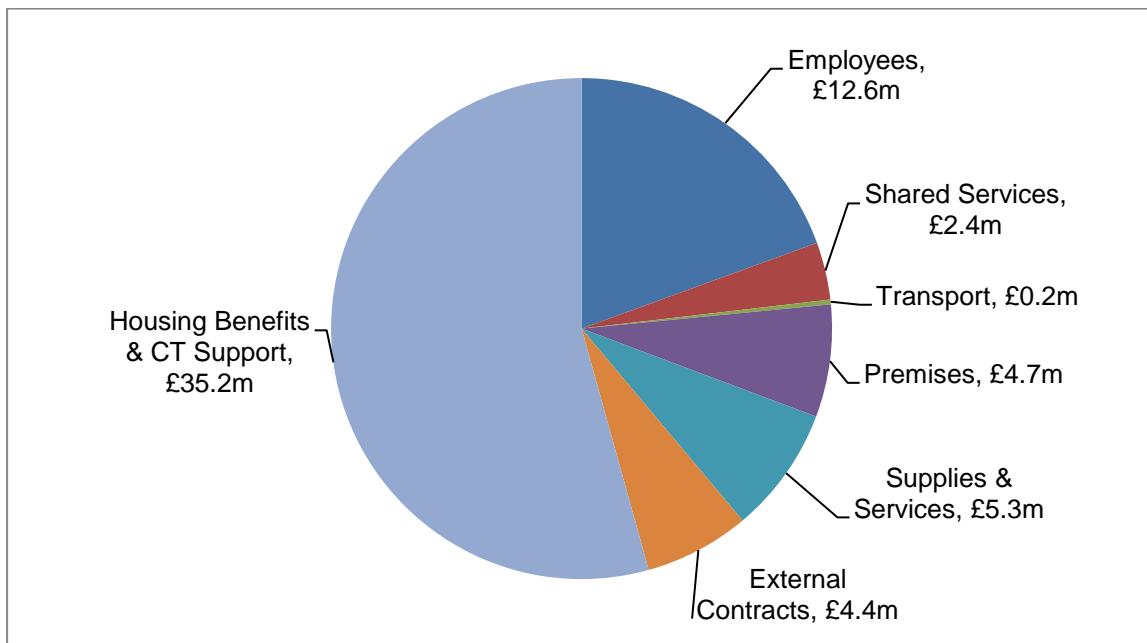
- 2.26 The Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that local government will retain all revenue from business rates by 2020. This is welcome news and one which this Council has been calling for over many years. However, it is important to understand that it is local government overall that by 2020 will be able to keep all the revenues from business rates, not individual councils. There will still be a system of distributing business rates from economically successful areas such as Tunbridge Wells to other parts of the country whose public expenditure exceeds the amount they generate from business rates. Tunbridge Wells will still only be guaranteed £2.1 million of the £52 million collected.
- 2.27 The proposals allow individual councils to keep the extra business rates from new growth over their existing baseline. So there is now a stronger financial incentive to encourage development and give planning permission for new business growth. If Tunbridge Wells does not grow then the share of business rates will remain the same.
- 2.28 By 2020 this Council will not receive any Revenue Support Grant so the challenge is to grow the business rate base sufficiently to cover the loss of £1.6 million in Revenue Support Grant currently received.
- 2.29 Full details have yet to be published by central government and it will be interesting to see if local councils will be given the ability to determine locally how discounts could be funded. Locally there has been frustration expressed by local businesses on the awarding of mandatory charitable relief which is an area which it is hoped that central government will allow to be determined locally reflecting the need of the business community.

## Budget Breakdown

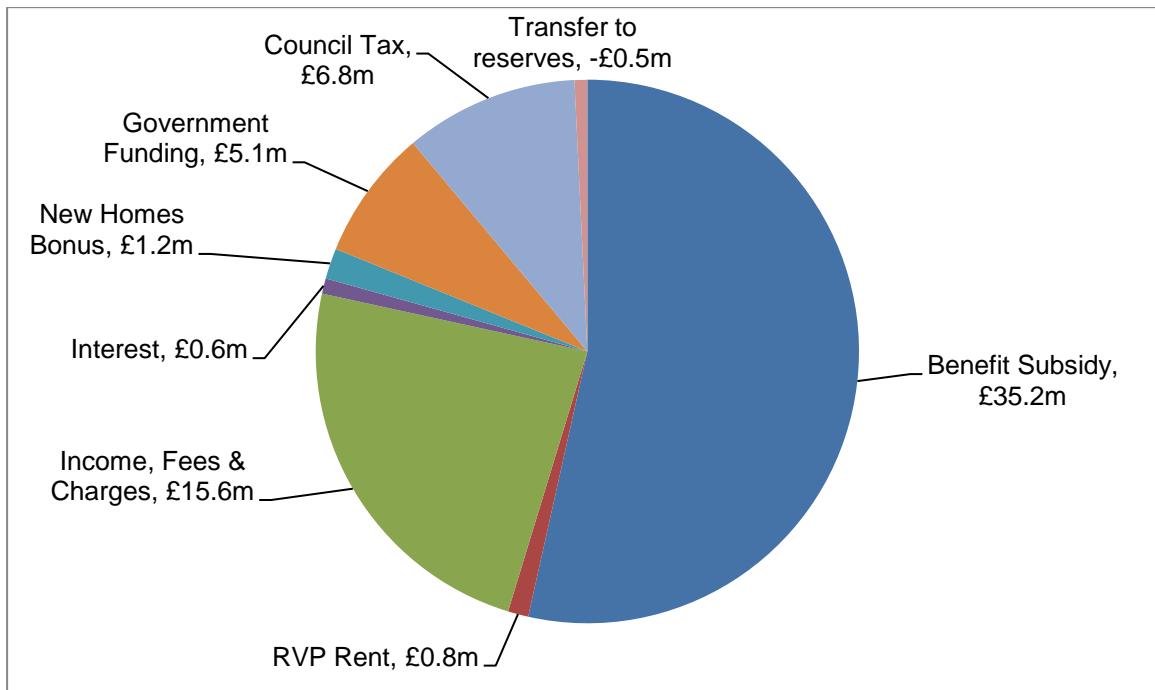
- 2.30 The Council provides a diverse range of services across the Borough which currently cost £64.8 million. The services are provided either by contractors, through partnership with other councils or by directly employing staff. As at 30 June 2015 the Council employed 267 FTEs (Full Time Equivalents). The following pie charts show the current revenue expenditure and how this is funded.

# Agenda Item 11

2015/16 Revenue Expenditure



2015/16 Revenue Funding



2.31 A further subjective breakdown of the budget per cost centre for 2015/16 is available on the Council's website:

[http://www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/85972/Codebook-2015-16.pdf](http://www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/85972/Codebook-2015-16.pdf)

## Budget Calculations and Adequacy of Reserves

- 2.32 When the budget is set in February the Council's Section 151 Officer must give his view on the robustness of the estimates and adequacy of reserves.
- 2.33 The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) was agreed by Full Council on 22 February 2012 and projected the financial impact of the Council's current and proposed policies in the short and medium term. This report and the projections in Appendix B will form an update to the current MTFS.
- 2.34 It is important to recognise that there are a number of factors that can affect some budgets and where variances could be significant requiring closer budget management; these areas include:

Risk Area	Management
Planning Enquiry Costs	Whilst the primacy of planning is paramount, decisions taken by the Planning Committee can lead to formal planning enquiries which have the potential for substantial costs to arise which are quite rightly not budgeted for.
Business Rates Retention Scheme	Part of the Council's government grant is now linked to the amount of business rates in the Borough. However the Government has also transferred the liability for business rate appeals already in the system. To help mitigate the impact of appeals and to retain a greater share of business rates locally the Council is part of a Kent pool.
Economic Conditions	The majority of the Council's income is derived from income streams which are subject to the prevailing economic conditions. Economic conditions can also alter the demand for Council services and partners in the community and voluntary sector.
Employee Costs	The move to local pay offers some protection but a watching brief is still required especially regarding the vacancy factor. Changes to pension legislation have been included where known but such further changes can have a significant cost factor. Demand for some professionals exceeds supply and is exacerbated by the higher salaries available in London.
Welfare Reform	Dependant on rent levels, unemployment rates and the huge uncertainty surrounding much of the legislative changes from Welfare Reform.
Parking Income	Dependant on usage and the economic environment.
Planning and Building Control Income	Dependant on the economy and the impact on legislative changes which limit the full recovery of the cost of providing these services.
Crematorium Income	Dependant on mortality rates.
Contracts	Dependant on inflation indices.

# Agenda Item 11

Utilities	Global supply and demand plus above inflation price rises.
Land Charges	The Infrastructure Bill was approved paving the way for Local Land Charges to be centralised into a single computer system. No details of timeframe or how the Land Registry will provide the service have been released.
Investment Interest	Relies on the interest rates and levels of balances.
Targeted Options to Reduce Net Expenditure	Assumes that savings identified are delivered and there are no unintended consequences.
Capital Receipts	Capital is tied up in non-operational assets which if released will help to reduce the use of cash reserves to fund the capital programme.
Government Policy and announcements by Ministers	There has been a significant increase in volume of legislation and announcements which can undermine strategic planning and compromise budget assumptions.

## Capital and Revenue Reserves

2.35 The Medium Term Financial Strategy maintains the following as an adequate level of reserves:

	Minimum
General Reserves (Revenue)	£2.0 million
Capital Receipts	£2.0 million

2.36 The reserves and balances are currently forecast to meet the above levels although maintaining this position relies on delivering not just a balanced budget in 2016/17 but a sustainable budget for the future.

2.37 In addition to the revenue and capital budget, the Council has earmarked reserves which form part of the Budget and Policy Framework and are available to fund the specific purpose of the reserve in accordance with the virement procedure rules. The projected balances of these reserves are shown below:-

Reserves	Closing Balance 31/03/2014	Movements in Reserves 2014/15	Closing Balance 31/03/2015
	£000's	£000's	£000's
General Fund	7,188	532	7,720
Earmarked Reserves	9,163	2,617	11,780
Capital Grants & Contributions	339	208	547
Capital Receipts Reserve	2,349	(1,338)	1,011
<b>Total Reserves</b>	<b>19,039</b>	<b>2,019</b>	<b>21,058</b>

## Development Programme Budget

- 2.38 Elsewhere on this agenda is a report requesting Cabinet's support for an extra £2 million to provide external professional support for the development programme. If Cabinet are supportive then this will be funded by allocating £2 million from the General Fund and included in the Budget 2016/17 report going to Full Council in February 2016 who will make the final decision of whether to approve funding for this purpose.
- 

### **3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS**

- 3.1 Whilst alternatives to the composition of the budget can be considered there are no alternatives to the process available within the Council's statutory powers.
- 

### **4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 To agree the content and recommendations of the report to set a balanced budget that will meet the Council's priorities.
- 

### **5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK**

- 5.1 This is the third report in the process of setting the 2016/17 budget and builds on the previous views and recommendation of the Finance and Governance Cabinet Advisor Board and Cabinet.
- 5.2 A well-rehearsed process of public engagement will be used. Already an article has been published in the Local magazine which is delivered free to every household in the Borough, seeking views of how the Council should set a balanced budget.
- 5.3 The Council has undertaken a residents' survey during October 2015 and the results will be used to influence the budget report in February 2016.
-

## 6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 6.1 The draft budget will be placed onto the Council's consultation portal with responses included in the final report to Cabinet and Full Council in February 2016.
- 

## 7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off (name of officer and date)
<b>Legal</b> including Human Rights Act	The Five Year Plan and budget form part of the Council's Policy Framework.	Legal fee earner
<b>Finance</b> and other resources	This report forms part of the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.	Head of Finance and Procurement
<b>Staffing establishment</b>	Where savings proposals impact on staff then this will be managed in accordance with Human Resources Policies.	Head of HR or deputy
<b>Risk management</b>	A summary of the risk factors underpinning the budget is included within the report. The Strategic Risk Register also includes a risk on funding streams which is being monitored by Cabinet and the Audit and Governance Committee.	Head of Audit Partnership, Deputy Head of Audit Partnership or Audit Manager
<b>Environment</b> and sustainability	The budget has regard to the environmental sustainability priorities within the Five Year Plan.	Sustainability Manager
<b>Community safety</b>	The budget has regard to the community safety priorities within the Five Year Plan.	Community Safety Manager
<b>Health and Safety</b>	The budget has regard to the Health and Safety obligations and priorities within the Five Year Plan.	Health and Safety Advisor
<b>Health and wellbeing</b>	The budget has regard to the health and wellbeing priorities within the Five Year Plan.	Healthy Lifestyles Co-ordinator
<b>Equalities</b>	Changes to service delivery may impact on equalities; however heads of service will ensure that an equality assessment is in place where this has been identified.	West Kent Equalities Officer

## 8. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix A: Budget Work Streams
  - Appendix B: Five Year Budget Projections
-

# Agenda Item 11

## 9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

## BUDGET WORK STREAMS

		£000s
1	Digital First	Reduction in telephony
2	Digital First	Waste paper shredding
3	Digital First	Reduction in postage
4	Digital First	Fewer cash collections due to popularity of Pay By Phone
5	Assets	Council vacation of Calverley Terrace
6	Contracts	Remove provision of plastic sacks
7	Contracts	Bulky waste review
8	Contracts	Reduction in security costs
9	Community Support	Planned reduction in community grants
10	Shared Services	Mid Kent Improvement Partnership Savings (MKIP) - ICT
11	Shared Services	MKIP - Revenue & Benefits
12	Shared Services	MKIP - New Debt Recovery Service
13	Income	Pop-up play area & café in Assembly Hall
14	Income	Vehicle access and bay markings
<b>Total budget work stream savings</b>		<b>(248)</b>

This page is intentionally left blank

## FIVE YEAR BUDGET PROJECTIONS

Year	Annual (Surplus) / Deficit	Explanation
£000s		
1 <b>2015/16</b>	0	Balanced without use of general reserves
1 <b>2016/17</b>	0	Grant cut of 16 per cent and State Pension Reform
2 <b>2017/18</b>	439	Cuts to government grant
3 <b>2018/19</b>	797	Cuts to government grant
4 <b>2019/20</b>	992	Government Budget Surplus
5 <b>2020/21</b>	1,089	Government Budget Surplus
<b>NET 5 YEAR DEFICIT</b>	<b>3,317</b>	<b>IMPACT ON THE GENERAL FUND</b>

### Assumptions in the Medium Term Financial Strategy

- 1 These projections assume Council Tax increase by 2 per cent each year.
- 2 Fees and Charges income is forecast to increase by 3 per cent each year.
- 3 Existing Car Park Income is frozen.
- 4 New Homes Bonus for years 1 to 6 is included in the base budget .
- 5 Assumes no reserve funding in base budget.
- 6 Annual grant cuts of 16 per cent until Revenue Support Grant is zero.
- 7 Locally retained business rates remains fixed.

This page is intentionally left blank

# Agenda Item 14

## Report to the Town Forum on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2015 from the Transport Working Group

Members: Jane Fenwick, Peter Perry, David Wakefield, Stephen Bowser, Katharina Mahler-Bech, Pat Wilson, Lorna Blackmore, Sally Balcan. Adrian Berendt has recently joined the Working Group.

1. A Transport Working Group Meeting was held on Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2015. Matters discussed included the topics suggested for a meeting requested by TWBC's Hilary Smith on Tuesday 27 October attended by JF, SB, KMB, LB and PW. These were:
  - **20s plenty** – The reduction of traffic speeds to 20mph was welcomed by the TWG as providing for a better and safer environment for pedestrians and cyclists.
  - **Cycling strategy:** the response from the TWG was discussed fully and subsequently sent to the TF Management Committee, before submitting as the Group's Consultation response by 2 November 2015. It was explained to Mrs Smith that we felt that the Draft Strategy overstated the impact of the cycling improvements planned on congestion and air quality, and it was too focussed on investment in cycle paths for 'commuter' cyclists rather than improving conditions for the wider population of RTW. It was felt that low investment and low impact measures such as designating quiet residential roads and alleyways (currently pedestrian only) as cycle friendly would widen the appeal of cycling to more people (leisure cyclists) who cycle during the day and at weekends, and provided no off-road options for children such as at Bedgebury and Forest Way.
  - **Town centre bus routing study:** Mrs Smith and a Transport Consultant explained their plans for enabling the removal of buses from Fiveways and providing a bus interchange at Tesco (as suggested by Cllr Scott). We found issues with the plans presented mainly because of routing more buses more frequently through Church Road to London Road. We suggested that a bus interchange at the south of the town at the existing bus stops and stands at Sainsbury should be integrated into the plan, and smaller, greener, more frequent buses should link the two bus interchanges to provide a fast route along the spine of the town, linking Sainsbury/Aldi and the station, with the Tesco interchange. This would remove large buses from the town and replace them with an attractive, dedicated and frequent service top to bottom of the town for the first time.
- SB and JF have subsequently met with Cllr Scott on 10 November to explain our approach and to assist him in developing a coherent and staged plan that will enable buses to be removed from Fiveways in the first instance, and facilitate an integrated public bus service to be developed that will be flexible to accommodate the planned developments within the town and adaptable to new transport technologies.
2. **Joint Transportation Board on 19 October.** SB, JF and KMB attended
  - **Carrs Corner:** TWG asked that the poor state of Carrs Corner be raised by TW Cllrs. Cllr Peter Bulman asked about weeds on the roundabout, and Cllr Bob Backhouse commented about the poor impression this gives of the town. Cllr David Scott suggested that a waterless water feature be placed there – no need for maintenance and it would reflect the town's spa history.
  - 20's Plenty campaign was approved and will be taken forward.
  - A26 and 264 Route Study Update produced for the Transport Strategy has provided interesting data on traffic flows through the town and junction congestion. This needs further examination by the TWG to see what impact this might have on the Transport Strategy.
  - TWG welcomes the introduction of more parking places for the Car Club vehicles.
3. **Public Transport Forum 4 November.** SB attended.
4. **Parking Strategy:** The final version will be presented at the JTB in February.

This page is intentionally left blank

# Appendix A

## CONSULTATION RESPONSE FROM THE TRANSPORT GROUP OF THE TOWN FORUM TO THE CYCLING STRATEGY 2015

The Transport Group of the RTW Town Forum, whilst welcoming the initiative to improve cycling within the town, has deep concern about the Cycling Strategy 2015-2020 in respect of its **FOCUS, ASSUMPTIONS, EFFECTIVENESS and IMPLEMENTATION** as follows:

### 1. FOCUS:

1.1 The Cycling Strategy presumes all cyclists have the same needs and motivations - which they do not. We identify the following groups:

- Sports cyclists – those identified in the Strategy as '*confident and capable of journeys of more than 5 miles at an average speed of 10mph minimum ... typically white, male, 25-44 and on higher than average income.* Largely inspired by the success of competitive cycling at national and international levels, sports cyclists are often lycra clad, have fitness levels to support cycle touring of 20 miles or more, and prefer main roads where higher speeds can be maintained. We suggest that this group is unlikely to deviate to take specially made and 'safer' cycle routes shared with pedestrians through towns, or off-road tracks such as Forest Way. This group is also most likely to commute to work or to the station by bike.
- Leisure cyclists – adults of a wider mix of ages and sexes for whom speed is not important. They tend to avoid main roads, cycle for convenience along quiet roads through the town centre and designated cycle routes where convenient, and mostly outside peak hours on weekdays and at weekends. They will use cycling to replace short car journeys .
- Children – unlikely to be allowed to cycle independently of parents below the age of 11. They might cycle on dedicated safe cycle paths from home to school, but are keen to enjoy off-road leisure trails such as Bedgebury Forest and Forest Way.

1.2 This Cycling Strategy has too much emphasis on routes and infrastructure investment for commuter cycling – distance routes used at rush hours. This has skewed the focus of this strategy away from making "*cycling a normal part of everyday life in the Borough*". This vision will not be achieved if the focus and investment is on *the 0.8% who cycle to work or to the station* rather than on the *15.9% (Leisure cyclists) who currently cycle once a month* and whose needs are different – see above

1.3 As a result, the Strategy is frequently attempting to impose continuous cycle lanes within the town centre which are simply not practicable given the structure, topography, historic street patterns and weight of motor traffic already in existence in the town.

1.4 No consideration has been given to enabling cycling in public parks or on designated routes to cater for children who have a greater need for and enjoy off-road cycling opportunities.

### 2. ASSUMPTIONS:

2.1 The Cycling Strategy has made generous and unsubstantiated assumptions that both congestion and air quality will be improved when people change from driving cars to riding bicycles (Objectives 3 and 5 respectively). No data is provided to say how many people

# Appendix A

would need to switch to cycling from driving a car to reduce congestion or pollution, or how much investment is needed to support this change.

For example, the table on page 6 shows that on the Pembury Road where a cycle/pedestrian path has existed for many years, it is used by just 136 cyclists compared to 24,533 vehicles on average each day. The congestion on the Pembury Road is legendary and to make any impact hundreds – even thousands - of drivers would have to change to cycling to make any impact. If this happened, the cycling facilities and improvements planned in this Strategy would be insufficient, particularly if this was repeated on the other main arteries.

2.2 Another unsubstantiated assumption is made for cycling improving air quality (Page 13). Thousands of people would have to switch to cycling to make any impact at all on the heavily polluted London Road through Southborough. Therefore, encouraging more cycling along the most polluted roads in RTW will actually be detrimental to the cyclists' health and safety.

**2.3 The only sure way of reducing congestion, and improving safety and air quality for cyclists and pedestrians is to remove much of the traffic from RTW on relief roads and to invest in a modern, efficient and sustainable public transport system, an approach that is argued for in RTW Town Forum's response to the Borough Transport Strategy, and endorsed by the RTW Town Forum.**

2.4 Claims in Objective 4 that the Cycling Strategy will '*Improve travel safety*' are also unsubstantiated. Cycling accidents will increase because RTW will not end up with a network of dedicated cycle paths separated from vehicle traffic with this Strategy but only a very mixed environment of shared and on-road arrangements. As a result, as more people cycle more often it is fair to conclude that accidents will increase rather than decrease.

There is already an upward trend. *Road Casualties in Kent 2014 published August 2015:*  
*"Pedal cycles – Pedal cycle collisions have Increased from 441 in 2013 to 480 in 2014 and this upward trend was also reflected in the number of pedal cycle KSI casualties with the 2014 figure now 126% above the 2004 to 2008 average. In the last 3 years, the casualty profile highlights various peaks in pedal cycle casualties, however, those aged between 22 and 50 recorded the highest number of casualties (11)."*

## 3. EFFECTIVENESS:

3.1 Objective 6 is to *Increase the use of sustainable transport modes including cycling, walking and public transport*. Walking and use of public transport are more sustainable and accessible to more people, whereas cycling is and will continue to be a minority option. Given the topography of RTW, the variability of weather and harsher conditions and darkness for 6 months of the year at peak times, cycling is the least effective way to achieve a more sustainable way of getting around the town.

3.2 Whilst considerable emphasis has been put on cycle training for school children, little is said about addressing traffic congestion created by the 'school run'. RTW weekday peak time congestion is transformed when school holidays start and for the duration of the private and public school holidays.

This Cycling Strategy fails to integrate the schools into the network of safe cycle routes. Only a few schools are on the planned cycling paths. There is no analysis of routes to school, catchment areas and how quiet residential roads and footpaths can be utilised for the school arrival and dispersal times.

# Appendix A

Primary schools tend to sit within their catchment areas and could benefit most from enabling otherwise quiet residential roads and footpaths to be used for cycling. Schools that could benefit are St Marks, Claremont, Broadwater Down, Temple Grove Academy and Bishops Down primary schools.

The policy cites improvements along St John's Road for cyclists which could increase take up for Skinners, TWGGS, TW Boys Grammar and St Gregory's, but this involves using routes beside main roads (popular with commuter cyclist but not with most parents) when quieter residential roads running parallel, parks and school playfields should also be considered for these more vulnerable cyclists. Of the private schools in or closest to RTW, only Beechwood is currently served by the Pembury Road cycle route while Holmewood House, Kent College, The Mead and Rose Hill are not.

Objective 4 can only be safely achieved if schools are linked into the network before children are trained and encouraged to cycle, rather than the other way around.

3.3 This Cycling Strategy has not sufficiently considered the shared use of footpaths (with the exception of Camden Park). RTW is lucky to have a network of alleyways and footpaths creating off-road links and short cuts. Most are currently forbidden to cyclists and little used by pedestrians. Many would need little adaptation to achieve the 2.5 - 3m width required for shared use. These could provide quick access into the town and to several schools and other facilities. Examples were identified in the Town Forum's report 'Developing out Green Network' could include:

- The Chase, Farmcombe Road to Claremont Road (also providing a safe route from and to Claremont School)
- Camden Park to the Chase (also providing a safe route from to Claremont School)
- Cumberland Walk
- Farmcombe Road to Little Mount Sion/Claremont Road (currently rough-surfaced)
- Birling Road to Warwick Park
- Broadwater Lane to Broadmead to Broadwater Down

3.4 The probable impact of the 20s Plenty campaign which was endorsed by the JTB on 19<sup>th</sup> October should be fully considered before this Cycling Strategy is taken further. Slower traffic throughout the town could make a safer environment for cyclists and pedestrian alike with the result that some of the infrastructure expenditure planned in this Cycling Strategy could be modified.

## 4. IMPLEMENTATION:

Should this Cycling Strategy achieve approval in whole or in part, the Town Forum would expect that

4.1 There will be full consultation with local people and businesses on all proposed cycle routes in addition to the details of changes for each route provided within this Cycling Strategy document. The local knowledge and views of the people living along the routes should be taken fully into account. To this end, the Transport Group of the Town Forum defers to the detailed views and comments that have been submitted by those interested and affected by each proposed route in this consultation.

## Appendix A

4.2 The use of 'green' or 'unmetalled' areas on Commons land for any transport or development purposes should be avoided. The Route 4 proposes an incursion paralleling Inner London Road. We understand that the Inner London Road Association has provided detailed consideration of the proposed route. We also refer you to the Town Forum's Green Network Report which suggests using alternatives such as Castle Road and Fir Tree Road as existing accesses across the Common.

4.3 There should be no repeat of the ugly 'forest' of signs that was installed on the cycle route along Pembury Road. Street clutter such as this will be unacceptable and contrary to the conservation areas which some routes will pass through. The least obtrusive signage is that printed on the surface of the footway or cycle path visible to both pedestrians and cyclists. Detailed signage proposals should be included in the consultation on each route in 4.1 above.

4.4 Little is said about pedestrians in this Cycling Strategy but their needs and safety should not be compromised by the implementation of any part of the infrastructure changes that the Cycling Strategy proposes.

4.5 Consideration should be given to the use of cycle paths and shared paths by mobility scooters and bicycles with battery power, and their interaction with pedestrians.

4.6 The Cycling Strategy should also consider how the safety of pedestrians and other users of shared paths can be safeguarded by the fitting of bells on cycles and hooters on mobility scooters, and the use of lights at night, and on dull and wet days .

**Prepared by the Transport Group of the Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum**

**Chair: Jane Fenwick**

30<sup>th</sup> October 2015