



ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS TOWN FORUM

Minutes of Meeting - Thursday 6 March 2008

1. Present:

Sheila Armitage (Norfolk Grange Management), Daniel Bech (Telephone House Neighbours' Association), Jenny Blackburn (Rusthall Village Association), June Bridgeman (Soroptimist International), John Cunningham (Royal Tunbridge Wells Civic Society), Michael Doyle (Hawkenbury Village Association), John Goodfellow (Banner Farm Residents' Association), Michael Larsen (Friends of the Grove Residents' Association), George Lawson, (Inner London Road Residents' Association), Jim McGrath (Norfolk Grange Management), Ian Naismith (Hanover and Rock Villa Residents' Association), Altan Omer (Benhall Mill Road Land Association), Keith Perry (Benhall Mill Land Association), Matthew Roberts (Monson Colonnade Residents' Association), Kate Sergeant (Clarence Road Users' Association), Christopher Thomas (The Chairman of the Town Forum, The Goodwins Nos 1 & 2 Residents' Company and Woodbury Close Residents' Association), David Webster (Clarence Road Users' Association), Christopher Weller (Calverley Park Association), Jon Weller (Substitute for Charlie Fox, Voluntary Action for West Kent), Philip Whitbourn (Beulah Road Residents' Association) and Peter Unwin (Broadmead/Broadwater).
 Councillors: Barry Edwards (Rusthall), Mrs Catherine Mayhew (Parks), Leonard Price (Culverden), James Scholes (Pantiles/St.Mark's) and Chris Woodward (St John's).

Councillors in attendance: Roy Bullock (Leader of the Council).

Others in attendance: Nick Boyle (Circle Healthcare, minute 9 refers), Richard Loke (Circle Healthcare, minute 9 refers) and Neil Rawson (Circle Healthcare, minute 9 refers); Sharon Hunt (Pedestrian Crossing Campaigner in Frant Road, minute 8 refers); David Candlin (TWBC Head of Economic Development and Regeneration, minute 7 refers).

2. Apologies:

Jenny Alexander (Rusthall Village Association), Betsey Dix (Calverley Park Crescent Freeholders' Association), Anthony Forte (Upper Stone Street Residents' Association), Charlie Fox (Voluntary Action for West Kent), Matt Goodwin (Tunbridge Wells Village Residents' Association), Richard Gould (Calverley Park Crescent Freeholders' Association), Phyl Griffiths (Woodbury Close Residents' Association), Michael Holman (Tunbridge Wells Twinning and Friendship Association), Simon Smith (Inner London Road Residents' Association), Alastair Tod (Royal Tunbridge Wells Civic Society), Mary Wardrop (Hawkenbury Village Association) and Councillor David Wakefield.

(Christopher Thomas in the Chair for the duration of the meeting)

3. Membership Changes

There had been a number of new members who had joined the Town Forum since the last meeting; they were as follows:

Peter Unwin – Broadmead
 Lisa Wilson – Voluntary Action for West Kent
 Charlie Fox – Voluntary Action for West Kent
 Mark Faithful – Town and Country Housing Group
 Peter Cooke – Chair of the Tenants' Representative Committee

Phyl Griffiths – Woodbury Close Residents' Association
 Jim McGrath – Norfolk Grange Management
 Sheila Armitage – Norfolk Grange Management
 Matthew Roberts – Monson Colonnade

The Town Forum welcomed the new members, however, Peter Cooke, Phyl Griffiths Mark Faithful and Lisa Wilson were not in attendance. Charlie Fox had given her apologies and Jon Weller attended in her place.

4. Minutes of Last Meeting Dated 10 January 2008

The minutes were agreed.

5. Matters Arising/Actions Completed from the Meeting dated 10 January 2008

Actions outstanding from 29 November 2007 Forum:

Actions:

- 5.2 Councillor Bullock to report back to the Town Forum on any progress being made on land ownership at the Station/Morrisons, on going action.
- 5.3 Christopher Thomas spoke with Councillor Bullock and he stated that the new Directors were extremely busy at the moment due to the budget etc. Christopher Thomas agreed to obtain dates as soon as possible with the Directors.
- 9.2 That the Town Forum submit a 'discussion paper' to Robert Cottrill giving possible future uses for the Town Hall. Michael Larsen and the Vision Committee to take this matter forward.

Actions outstanding from 10 January 2008 Forum:

Actions:

- 8.2 That Councillor Bullock provides the Town Forum with a letter from Network Rail giving a simple and understandable reason why the cinema site cannot be demolished immediately.
- 9.1 That Councillor Bullock reply to Christopher Thomas' letter/report regarding the role and performance of the Town Forum in 2006/07 and key residents' challenges to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council dated 14 December 2007.

Actions Completed:

- 8.2 That Daniel Bech organise a Cinema Working Group to bring forward ideas and suggestions on how to resolve this matter.
 Daniel consulted Philip Whitbourn and Christopher Thomas; generally, the consent between Philip and Daniel was that they should meet with Robert Cottrill, perhaps David Candlin and Jim Kehoe too and depending on such meeting, take the cinema site issue into the wider realm of the LDF-working group, which was just finishing the consultation on the *Draft Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Methodology*. The same group would monitor the Town Center Master Plan and it was felt the Cinema site should be included, not split from it; so the Cinema site would be dealt within the LDF working group. However, Daniel would have the Cinema site and some information on it in the April Town Forum meeting's 'Grot Spot Revisited' presentation.
- 10.1 That Philip Whitbourn submit the Town Forum's views relating to the Borough Council's Core Strategy.
- 11.1 That Christopher Thomas organise an Aims and Objectives Working Group to collate and suggest key aims/objectives for the forthcoming financial year and report back at 6 March meeting.

- 11.2 That Councillor Mrs Mayhew report back at the next Forum meeting (6 March) as to whether or not the Council would provide a free photocopying service for the Town Forum's news letter/leaflet/poster.

6. Reports from Borough Councillors

Councillor Bullock – The Leader indicated that he had a meeting with KCC Highways last week when a report on the Longfield Road traffic written by Jacobs Consulting Engineers had been tabled. They suggested that improvements could be made by a combination of actions - altering the timing of stages on the traffic lights; altering some of the white and yellow road markings to improve two lane capacity; a final phase might be to widen the road in the area of the access to the old Coop Concept site but this would require owners' agreement for the purchase by KCC of some of their land. Some of these changes could be enacted in a short time frame and the Leader urged them to commence as soon as possible.

Councillor Mrs Mayhew – Councillor Mrs Mayhew stated that the funding for photocopying service for Forum's newsletter/leaflet/poster would depend on the frequency of the copying, how many times it would be copied? Where it would be displayed? etc. The Town Forum took this on board and once known would report back. She also indicated that the Council would want to have a message that the Council would agree prior to communication.

Actions:

- 6.1 That The Town Forum report back with details of the frequency of despatching the leaflet/poster, the number being copied, where the leaflet/poster would be displayed etc. and to have agreement by the Council prior to communication.

7. Masterplan/Town Centre Regeneration

David Candlin, Head of Economic Development and Regeneration, gave a presentation regarding the Town Centre Regeneration.

David stated that the decision to go to tender was formalised in January 2007 by the Council's Cabinet and in May 2007 the OJEU process had begun. In June 2007, 21 submissions had been received at the pre-qualification questionnaire stage.

In July, the Stage II tender documentation was issued to the parties and was returned in late October 2007. An analysis of the submissions was carried out prior to an evaluation panel that took place on 26 November. At around the same time an exhibition of the final submissions was held for selected stakeholders, representatives of which included the Town Forum.

The Town Forum was informed that on 20 December 2007, the Council's Cabinet agreed to the selection of John Laing/Gladedale as the Council's Development Partner. They had submitted an excellent and detailed submission, had a commitment to four town centres, commitment to delivering difficult sites and had excellent references. David then went on to explain the legalities of the potential partnership and the relationship of this to the Local Development Framework.

The Town Forum noted the Town Centre Action Area Timetable as follows:

Preparation and early stakeholder involvement	Oct 07 - Feb 09
Consultation on preferred options (six weeks)	Jan 09 - Feb 09
Consideration of representations and prepare submission DPD	Mar 09 - Jan10
Submission of DPD to S of S and invite representations (six weeks)	Jan 10 - Mar 10
Pre-examination period	Mar 10 - Sept 10
Examination & receipt of inspector's binding report	Sept 10 - Feb 11
Adoption	Feb 11 - April 11

David concluded by stating the next step would be to draw up the partnership and legal structures by June 2008 and from June onwards it was anticipated that the consultation and master-planning would commence.

Governance - The development partner process needed to be kept distinct from the Councils statutory duty as a local planning authority. Legal advice was being sought to ensure that the systems were in place ensuring that officers and members involved in the planning system had an appropriate working relationship or contact, if any, with the development partner. The development partnership would need to be considered in the same way as any other developer in terms of planning considerations.

Camden Road - In moving towards the Town Centre Action Area Plans there was as yet no defined boundary for the LDF as to what constituted the town centre boundary. While the current Local Plan area could be taken as a guide it would be through the process of consultation in preparing the Town Centre Action Area Plans that we established the area to be covered by the new town centre plan. Views on the area to be encompassed by the Town Centre Action Plan under the LDF were welcome.

The Town Forum thanked David for his attendance; questions were then asked. The full power point presentation which David Candlin showed is attached as appendix A to these minutes for the members' information.

8. Safe Road Crossing on Frant Road, Tunbridge Wells

Sharon Hunt, a resident of Moat Farm near Tunbridge Wells Rugby Club, attended the Town Forum and informed them of the dangers of Frant Road. Ms Hunt was a member of the Safe Road crossing campaign for the top end of Frant Road opposite the Rugby Club. She went on to say that since the introduction of the Freedom Buss pass, there had been a substantial change in the usage of buses. A significant number of children now used the bus service to get to and from school and therefore, had to cross the road. Sharon stated that she and other residents believe that a fatality would occur if a pedestrian crossing was not developed.

The Town Forum heard that the traffic along that stretch of road was fast and unrelenting, particularly at school bus hours and there was no safe crossing. The bus stop was situated where the traffic moved up and down Frant Road and turned left onto Forest Road and left onto St Mark's Road, therefore anyone crossing to get to the bus stop was negotiating traffic coming from four directions.

Sharon stated that the Tunbridge Wells Joint Transportation Board had met on 21 January 2008 and agreed that an initial design for a pedestrian refuge or crossing on Frant Road between St Mark's Road and Forest Road should be drawn up and that it would be submitted for consideration in the next PIPKIN assessment process.

However, the residents had concerns over the County Council's lack of action on this matter. The Borough Council's Cabinet approved the minutes of the Joint Transportation Board at their meeting on 28 February and strongly supported the two recommendations relating to Frant Road.

Cabinet asked that a letter be sent to the Chairman of the Highways Advisory Board at Kent County Council from the Director of Services to the Community advising of the Cabinet's comments and endorsing the decisions made at the Joint Transportation Board, with a copy to all parish and borough councillor representatives.

Councillor Scholes, in his capacity as a Kent County Councillor, stated that he had offered to part-fund the pedestrian crossing out of his KCC allowance.

The Town Forum thanked Sharon for her attendance and in bringing this matter to their attention.

The Town Forum requested that a copy of the letter that was sent to the Highways Advisory Board be circulated to the Town Forum (copy attached as appendix B to these minutes). The Town Forum agreed that they submit their own letter to Keith Ferrin, County Portfolio Holder for Highways advising of the Town Forum's comments and endorsing the decision to have a pedestrian crossing.

Actions:

- 8.1 That a copy of the Director of Services to the Community's letter to Highways Advisory Board be disseminated to members of the Forum (see appendix B to these minutes).
- 8.2 That Christopher Thomas write a letter to Keith Ferrin, County Portfolio Holder for Highways expressing the Forum's endorsement of the Joint Transportation Board's recommendation dated 21 January 2008 and Sharon Hunt's campaign.

9. Circlehealth Presentation

Christopher Thomas, as Chairman of the Town Forum, introduced this item. He informed the Town Forum that he had been invited to view the details of a proposed small hospital to be built at Longfield Road by Circlehealth. Christopher and Mr Canzini, representative from Circlehealth, and Dr Larsen viewed the plans and agreed that three representatives from Circlehealth would attend the Town Forum meeting.

Circlehealth was a partnership of local doctors, GPs and Clinicians who were committed to increasing the availability and quality of healthcare available to people in Tunbridge Wells. The Centre for Clinical Excellence would be a small hospital designed and run by doctors and nurses. The hospital would be a modern healthcare facility with state-of-the-art medical technology to ensure better and quicker service for its patients and the Centre would compliment the existing Pembury Hospital providing specific and advanced specialised care.

Members of the Town Forum were informed by Nick Boyle, representative of the Circlehealth, of the plans and usage of the hospital should it get planning approval.

Nick stated that there would be public displays of the plans and drawings of the hospital on:

Saturday 15 March from 11.30 until 4.30pm at Abbey Well Room, Hotel du Vin,
Crescent Road, Royal Tunbridge Wells
Sunday 16 March from 12 noon until 4.30pm at Esporta Leisure Centre, Knights Park,
Royal Tunbridge Wells

All members of the Town Forum were welcome to attend.

The Town Forum thanked Nick for his presentation. The Chairman asked that should any member of the Town Forum have a question, could they please forward the question on to Samantha Timms who would then email presentation is shown as appendix C to these minutes for the members' information.

Actions:

- 9.1 That a copy of the presentation be submitted to Daniel Bech for inclusion on the Town Forum's website. Action completed.
- 9.2 Any questions regarding the hospital to be sent to Samantha Timms who would then email them to Circlehealth for answering.

10. Town Forum's Aims and Objectives and A4 Poster

Christopher Thomas introduced this item. He stated that all members of the Town Forum had received the aims and objectives for the Town Forum for the forthcoming year; everyone present approved these.

The poster advertising the Town Forum was also approved and that should anyone have any comments or changes they should contact Daniel Bech and himself for adjustment.

Actions:

- 10.1 That should any Town Forum member wish to suggest any changes made to the poster to contact Daniel Bech and Christopher Thomas direct.

11. Reports from Committees and Working Groups

Local Development Framework Working Group - Core Strategy – Philip Whitbourn reminded members of the Town Forum that the Town Forum changed its way of dealing with detailed and technical issues in November 2007 and instead of running a series of established topic committees, a more flexible system was adopted whereby a working group would be set up as necessary to take on specific issues.

In accordance with the above, a working group met to discuss the revised Core Strategy, part of the Council's Local Development Framework, and a response was submitted to the Council in January 2008.

The Town Forum noted that the Core Strategy forms only one stage of a range of Development Plan documents that would be subject to formal consultation over the next two years; the Town Forum can expect to be called upon to provide further responses in due course.

Philip went on to say that periodic liaison meetings took place between himself, Daniel Bech and the Director of Planning and Development and as yet, no meeting had been arranged for the next liaison, however, it was hoped that Philip would be able to brief the Town Forum at their next meeting due to take place on 10 April 2008 on the outcome of the meeting.

Michael Doyle (Hawkenbury Village Association) informed the Town Forum that he also attended a Draft Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment workshop on 6 March 2008. [additional attendees: Daniel Bech (RTW Town Forum / The Telephone House Neighbours Association), Philip Whitbourn (RTW TF / Beulah Road Residents Association)]

Comments relating to the TWBC Strategic Plan 2008-2011 were submitted on 1 February 2008 - copies were around the table for members' information.

Vision Committee – Michael Larsen circulated to the Town Forum before the meeting, a Vision Committee memorandum that updated them of the Committee's discussion regarding the Town Forum's response to various documents that took place at their meeting on 25 February 2008. The memorandum was available on the Town Forum's website.

www.townforum.org.uk/vision/vision-memo-committeemeeting210208.pdf

12. Any Other Business

Planning Application – George Lawson made comment relating to a planning application at Summerhill House, 73 London Road, Royal Tunbridge Wells and that the Council were not consulting sufficiently. Town Forum members should make comments as required.

International Women's Day – June Bridgeman reminded members that it was International Women's Day on Saturday 8 March. Everyone was welcome to attend the rainbow scarf celebration that was taking place at Oxfam from 11am.

Benhall Mill Road Planning Application – Altan Omar informed the Town Forum that the planning application for the 72 houses in Benhall Mill Road, Tunbridge Wells was refused at the Western Area Planning Committee dated 5 March and that the applicants were going to appeal, he would keep the Town Forum up to date on any progress.

Withdrawal of Councillors – Michael Doyle asked that Christopher Thomas write a letter to the Council's Monitoring Officer stating the unfairness of Borough Councillors leaving the meeting during certain issues under discussion, for example, planning matters/applications.

Amendment to minute 12 'Any other Business' 'Withdrawal of Councillors' – Change of wording to paragraph to read: “Withdrawal of Councillors - Michael Doyle asked that Christopher Thomas write a letter to the Council's Monitoring Officer asking for clarification as to why/when Borough Councillors should leave Town Forum meetings when invited guests, who have made planning applications, come and talk. This request being made because Councillors elected to vacate without even knowing what was going to be said. When is information relevant to a planning issue and when is it not? If information given does not relate to the planning request is that information inappropriate to be heard?”

Actions:

12.1 That Christopher Thomas write a letter to the Council's Monitoring Officer

13. Dates of next meetings of the Town Forum – The Town Forum agreed to the following:

- Thursday 10 April 2008 at 7.30pm – Update on Grot Spots
- Thursday 15 May 2008 at 7.30pm
- Thursday 19 June 2008 at 7.30pm
- Thursday 31 July 2008 at 7.30pm
- Thursday 25 September 2008 at 7.30pm
- Thursday 30 October 2008 at 7.30pm
- Thursday 27 November 2008 at 7.30pm
- Thursday 18 December 2008 at 7.30pm (3rd week in December due to last week being Christmas day)

10 April 2008 full Town Forum - Any reports/short papers to be emailed/posted to Samantha Timms by no later than 10am on Tuesday 25 March 2008.

14. The meeting closed at: 9.45pm