



ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS TOWN FORUM

Minutes of Meeting dated Thursday 10 April 2008

1. Present:

Daniel Bech (Telephone House Neighbours' Association), Graham Bradley (Hanover & Rock Villa Residents' Association), Michael Doyle (Hawkenbury Village Association), Bruce Goodwin (Grovehill Road Residents' Association), Matt Goodwin (Tunbridge Wells Village Residents' Association), John Higgs (Hanover & Rock Villa Residents' Association), Michael Holman (Tunbridge Wells Twinning & Friendship Association), Michael Larsen (Friends of the Grove), George Lawson (Inner London Road Residents' Association), Ian Naismith (Hanover and Rock Villa Residents' Association), Altan Omer (Benhall Mill Road Land Association), Keith Perry (Benhall Mill Land Association), Kate Sergeant (Clarence Road Users' Association), Simon Smith (Inner London Road Residents' Association), Christopher Thomas (The Chairman of the Town Forum and Woodbury Close Residents' Association), Philip Whitbourn (Beulah Road Residents' Association)
 Councillors: Mrs Mary Lewis (St James), Mrs Catherine Mayhew (Park), John Miller (Culverden), Leonard Price (Culverden), David Wakefield (Culverden) and Chris Woodward (St John's).

Others in attendance: Samantha Timms (Town Forum Secretary) and Ranendra Basu (known as Ronen, candidate standing for Culverden Ward in the Local Elections).

2. Apologies:

Jenny Alexander (Rusthall Village Association), Jenny Blackburn (Rusthall Village Association), Councillors Roy Bullock and Peter Crawford, John Cunningham (Royal Tunbridge Wells Civic Society), Betsey Dix (Calverley Park Crescent Freeholders' Association), Phyl Griffiths (Woodbury Close Residents' Association), Richard Gould (Calverley Park Crescent Freeholders' Association), Alastair Tod (Royal Tunbridge Wells Civic Society), Gill Twells (Royal Tunbridge Wells Civic Society), Mary Wardrop (Hawkenbury Village Association) and David Webster (Clarence Road Users' Association).

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

3. Membership Changes

Peter Unwin (Broadmead/Broadwater Down) was welcomed as a new member of the Town Forum at the March meeting of the Town Forum; unfortunately, Peter felt that he was now unable to continue with his membership and therefore was no longer a member of the Town Forum.

Peter Gurr, Camden Park Residents' Association has resigned from the Town Forum.

4. Minutes of Last Meeting Dated 6 March 2008

The minutes were agreed, subject to the following amendments:

Amendment to minute 11 'Reports from Working Groups' - Local Development Framework Working Group - Core Strategy

The last two paragraphs should actually fall under the Vision Committee heading and not the Local Development Framework Working Party heading.

Amendment to minute 11 'Reports from Working Groups' – Vision Committee

Second paragraph, Michael Larsen did not attend the Draft Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment workshop (Camden Centre 6 March 2008) as stated in the minutes; it should read 'Daniel Bech, Kate Sergeant, Philip Whitbourn, and attended'.

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 was 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?”

- **Matters Arising:** None received.

5. Matters Arising/Actions Completed from the Meeting dated 6 March 2008

Actions outstanding from 10 January 2008 Town Forum:

Action:

- 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 from 10 January meeting:

- 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. The Town Forum had subsequently established the following detail, although a letter had never been formally received through Councillor Bullock or from Network Rail.

It has been noted that Network Rail were within their rights to delay demolition of the existing building until a redevelopment had been approved that satisfied engineering criteria for the stability of the railway tunnel beneath.

Actions Completed from 6 March meeting:

- 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.

Christopher Thomas informed the Town Forum that discussions had taken place and it was felt that Council approval was not required for the Town Forum's poster. Copies of the poster had been printed and Christopher asked that any Town Forum member wishing to volunteer to display posters speak to him.

- 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 Town Forum (see appendix B to the 6 March minutes).
- 8.2 That Christopher Thomas write a letter to Keith Ferrin, County Portfolio Holder for Highways expressing the Town Forum's endorsement of the Joint Transportation Board's recommendation dated 21 January 2008 and Sharon Hunt's campaign. (Circulated to all Town Forum Members.)
- 9.1 That a copy of the presentation be submitted to Daniel Bech for inclusion on the Town Forum's website. (Also see appendix C to the 6 March minutes.)
- 9.2 Any questions regarding the small private hospital to be sent to Samantha Timms who would then email them to Circlehealth for answer. None received.
- 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.

One received from John Cunningham, however, looking at his proposals it would not be in the Town Forum's best interest to take his suggestions on, as they seemed to 'water down' the original poster.

- 12.1 That Christopher Thomas write a letter to the Council's Monitoring Officer regarding attendance by Councillors at Town Forum meetings. (Circulated to all Town Forum Members.)

Action:

- 5.1 That any Town Forum member wishing to display the Forum's poster should liaise with Christopher Thomas or Daniel Bech.

6. Reports from Borough Councillors

Councillor Mrs Mayhew – Councillor Mrs Mayhew informed the Town Forum that the Council's Parking Attendants were now able to issue penalty charge notices for the dropping of litter/cigarette butts etc. The Council was the only one in the County to have its Attendants trained for this. It was hoped that this would be the beginning for them to take on much wider roles and hopefully be perceived amongst the public more respectfully.

Christopher Thomas asked Councillor Mrs Mayhew if the Parking Attendants were able to give on the spot fines; she was unable to answer this but assured Christopher that she would find out and respond to him directly.

Councillor Mrs Mayhew suggested to the Town Forum that perhaps they should invite Councillor Barrington-King, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Street Scene, to address one of their meetings regarding recycling and Parking Attendants. The Town Forum agreed with this and asked that the Chairman of the Town Forum write and invite Councillor Barrington-King to one of their meetings; Christopher would then inform the rest of the Town Forum which meeting he would be attending.

Please note that following the Town Forum meeting of 10 April, it was agreed by Christopher Thomas and Kate Sergeant, that Councillor Barrington-King be invited to the June workshop as this would tie in better with the Environmental issues that will be taking place. Kate Sergeant agreed to inviting Councillor Barrington-King herself, as she was arranging the workshop in conjunction with John Goodfellow.

Christopher Thomas also raised the question as to why the Council holds its local elections for only certain Councillors rather than all Councillors each year. Why could all Councillors not be elected every four years? Would this not save money as you would be holding elections every four years and/or having all Councillors elected at the same time each year? There was no definitive answer given. Perhaps having this process enacted would generate enough savings to provide for the Crescent Road toilets.

Councillor Price – Councillor Price urged the Town Forum to keep a 'watchful eye' on proceedings such as the Development Partner; the Town Forum should be more involved in the process.

Councillor Price also introduced Ranendra Basu, also known as Ronen. He was the Conservative candidate standing for Culverden Ward in the Local Elections.

Action:

- 6.1 That Councillor Mrs Mayhew inform Christopher Thomas whether or not the Parking Attendants can give 'on the spot' fines for litter dropping (chewing gum, cigarette butts etc).
- 6.2 That Kate Sergeant invite Councillor Paul Barrington-King to the Environmental Issues Workshop taking place on 19 June 2008. Action completed. Attendance would depend upon Councillor Barrington-King being re-elected.

7. Grot Spots Revisited

Daniel Bech gave an update to Town Forum members on the top 10 grot spots within Royal Tunbridge Wells. He went on to say that a Focus Group had been set up to work on the spots that were first identified in 2005. Those 10 spots were:

- Ritz Building - Cinema Site
- Eridge Road (Land behind Petrol Station)
- Tunbridge Wells Central Station
- Balustrades and Colonnade of Monson Road
- Greyhound Public House
- 30 Warwick Park
- Summerhill House, 73 Inner London Road
- 32 Mount Ephraim
- Albert Street (opposite RVP Car Park)
- RTW Wiesbaden Twin Town road signs

Two additions to the spots were added, namely: Premises in Quarry Road (next to Barnabas school) and Medway Depot / TWBC Printing Dept.

Daniel informed the Town Forum of the changes made in two years since the spots were identified and out of the 12 listed, only 30 Warwick Park had drastically improved, although its parking bay was not ideal. The Greyhound Pub had scaffolding surrounding it, so work was taking place. Summerhill House, London Road, had a planning application for eight flats; this was still with the Council. 32 Mount Ephraim Road had its outside painted but nothing else had changed. 18 Victoria Road, (Albert Street) work was taking place but not everyday; it was taking a long time to rectify and was still not sold.

Unfortunately, the Wiesbaden Twinning signage had still not been replaced. Councillor Mrs Mayhew informed members that new signs were produced and approved, however, the Council was then in the middle of changing its logo and it was felt that there was no reason why the new logo could not be incorporated onto the new twinning signage; this of course now meant that the signage had been delayed but it was hoped that the logo would be approved by Cabinet on 24 April 2008. The new signage would then require Kent County Council Highway approval before being erected. Councillor Mrs Mayhew would update the Town Forum at its next meeting.

Daniel went on to say that he had been invited to attend the "Kent Empty Property Initiative" Launch Event. He received some information that might help the Council in enforcing the 'tidying-up' of these properties that were being used effectively by the Initiative, namely: Enforcement Sale, Empty Dwellings Act and Section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

The Town Forum then viewed clips and photographs of many grot spots around the town, namely:

- Litter being thrown outside business premises and dwellings.
- Lamp-posts that were on during the day and were listing to the side where lorries had collided with them.
- Graffiti artists using old fencing/disused buildings to display vandalism.
- Dog Fouling – was the enforcement signage adequate; were fines issued?
- Cigarette Butts – were being thrown to the ground or in flower pots, outside shop fronts – why was no enforcement action taken against the people who do this and why were they not cleared away by refuse teams?
- Street Clutter – too many signs attached to lamp-posts and some not pointing in the correct directions.
- Refuse Bins, especially commercial bins were cluttering the pavements outside businesses – this surely should have been part of the planning process to accommodate such bins?
- Maintenance of Pavements – why was tarmac used instead of replacing the bricks? It was unsightly and messy.
- Bollards – far too many, why?

All pictures were explained and often were only examples of the various topics.

On concluding, Daniel brought to the Town Forum's attention that the Information Drums throughout the town had a street map of the town inside which was out of date as it still had the old Telephone House on it. Surely visitors to the town would expect more?

The Town Forum agreed that the Chairman should submit a letter to the Kent County Council's Chief Executive to express the Town Forum's concerns regarding all the KCC issues raised above and that perhaps a series of photographs be included for his comment.

Councillor Mrs Mayhew asked the Town Forum that should anyone know of any damaged verge to let her have the details so that she could pass it on to County Portfolio Holder for Environment, Highways and Waste, Councillor Ferrin.

The Town Forum thanked Daniel for his hard work and congratulated him on his presentation; the presentation can be downloaded from:

http://www.townforum.org.uk/focusgroup/grotspots_handout_s100408.pdf

Actions:

- 7.1 That Councillor Mrs Mayhew update the Town Forum at its next meeting with the progress of the Council's logo and Wiesbaden Twinning signage.
- 7.2 That Christopher Thomas write a letter to the Kent County Council's Chief Executive giving details of the Forum's concerns and lack of communications between the borough and the County.
- 7.3 That any Town Forum member that knows of a damaged verge to inform Councillor Mrs Mayhew in order that she can inform the County Portfolio Holder, Councillor Ferrin.

8. Reports from Committees and Working Groups

Various Planning Matters – Daniel Bech circulated information to the Town Forum regarding a meeting that he attended on Friday 4 April 2008 with Robert Cottrill, Director of Planning and Development; Jim Kehoe, Head of Planning Services; Phillip Whitbourn; and Borough Councillor Roy Bullock, regarding various matters relating to Planning, namely: Grots Spots (including the former Cinema Site), Grot Spots – Pavements, Forecourt Parking, Local Development Plan – Housing Land Assessment and Draft Heritage Protection Bill.

Further Daniel circulated information regarding the Draft Heritage Protection Bill.

Vision Committee – Michael Larsen informed the Town Forum that he had been asked by the Chairman to convene an additional Committee to consider and advise on matters concerned with “Public Art, Cultural issues, and the commemoration of the granting of the Borough's Royal prefix in 1909”.

The Town Forum was informed that the Royal prefix was granted by Edward VII in 1909 in recognition of the town's long association with royalty. Technically, the prefix was granted to the old borough of Tunbridge Wells as established in 1889. This covered essentially the current 'unparished' area of Tunbridge Wells, Rusthall and Hawkenbury and when the old borough was abolished in 1974 to make way for the current Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, the present Queen gave a fresh grant of the Royal prefix to apply to the geographical area covered by the former borough, hence, the borough was not 'Royal Borough', although it was between 1909 and 1974.

Michael pointed out that there was a total lack of statuary in the Town, and that the proposed and necessary face-lift anticipated for the Pantiles might present an opportunity for the erection of one or more statues. It was understood that there was existing funding available for public art works in the Borough to complement the estate to be constructed between the end of Goods Station Road and the Grosvenor Recreation Ground. It was suggested that the new Committee should advise on this matter.

Michael asked members to come up with any ideas that would be most appropriate to celebrate the Centenary Year in 2009. A Working Party has been set up to include Michael Larsen, Michael Holman, Daniel Bech and Altan Omar; should a Town Forum member wish to join the Working Party they should contact Michael Larsen direct.

Actions:

8.1 Should any member of the Town Forum wish to contribute ideas to how the town should celebrate the Centenary to contact Michael Larsen direct.

8.2 Any member of the Town Forum wishing to join the Working Party to contact Michael Larsen direct.

8.3 Any member of the Forum who has any issues of concern that the Vision Committee/Working Party should be dealing with, to advise Michael Larsen accordingly.

9. Any Other Business

Environmental Protection Service Standards – Christopher Thomas raised this issue. He had received from the Environmental Health Officer for Tunbridge Wells Borough Council information relating to the Environmental Protection Service Standards

He went on to explain that the Council's Environmental Protection Team was setting out its standards of service so that customers and service users would know what to expect from the team and what they would need from the Town Forum so that they could provide the best possible service.

The service had powers under statute to investigate issues such as:

- Noise and vibration
- Odour, smoke and dust emissions
- Light pollution
- Accumulations of waste and noxious deposits
- Filthy and verminous premises
- Private drainage issues
- Air quality
- Contaminated land
- Some industrial pollution control

Christopher informed the Town Forum that the Council would like to hear the views of the Town Forum on what they think of the service standards; these were circulated prior to the meeting.

John Higgs agreed to compile views and thoughts on behalf of the Town Forum and submit them to Christopher Thomas prior to 1 May as all comments had to be received by the Environmental Health Officer no later than 1 May 2008.

Leader Blog www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk/asktheleader – Matt Goodwin had been having difficulty with the Leader Blog in that he had not been receiving replies to any of his questions. Christopher Thomas asked that Matt forward his questions to him so that he could get a response on his behalf.

Internal Communication – Christopher Thomas requested that all representatives from any association/member to provide details of activities that they had undertaken, which was of relevance to other Town Forum members. This information would then be included on the Town Forum's website for all to see.

Activities undertaken and promoted by members at Town Forum meetings should have updates posted on the Town Forum website at regular intervals so that all members could see how matters were progressing.

Christopher specifically asked what had been happening regarding the Friends of Woodbury Cemetery and what activities had been undertaken by the Civic Society.

Actions:

- 9.1 John Higgs to forward view and comments to Christopher Thomas before 1 May and that Christopher submit those views/comments to the Environmental Health Officer before 1 May 2008.
- 9.2 Matt Goodwin to forward his questions relating to the Leader Blog to Christopher Thomas so that he could receive a response on Matt's behalf.
- 9.3 That all representatives from any association/member to provide details of activities that they had undertaken and/or want to promote to Daniel Bech in order for them to be included on the Forum's website so that all members could know what was happening.

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

- Thursday 15 May 2008 at 7.30pm – Parish Councillor Crookall in attendance
- Thursday 19 June 2008 at 7.30pm – Environmental Issues Workshop
- 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)

15 May 2008 full Town Forum - Any reports/short papers to be emailed/posted to Samantha Timms by no later than 10am on Monday 28 April 2008.

11. The meeting closed at: 9.25pm