



**Minutes of the ordinary meeting held on Thursday 11 November 2021,
held online via Zoom, starting at 6.15pm**

ATTENDANCE

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Member Organisations:

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

Councillor Members:

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

Others in Attendance:

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

MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

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a) Changes of representatives

The following changes were noted:

- Friends of Tunbridge Wells Museum, Library and Art Gallery have changed name and are now "Friends @ The Amelia Scott". Anne Stobo remains the primary representative and Mike Trudel remains the substitute.
- Geoff Shewry is now the primary representative for Hawkenbury Village Association, previously Delphine Houlton. There is currently no substitute representative.

b) New Membership Applications

A new application has been accepted from:

- Tunbridge Wells Repair Café. Chris Murphy is the primary representative. There is currently no substitute representative.

A pending application has been received from Royal Wells Park Residents Group.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING DATED 17 JUNE 2021

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

MINUTES OF THE MEETING DATED 23 SEPTEMBER 2021

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

UPDATES FROM MEMBER ORGANISATIONS

5 Tunbridge Wells Repair Café

Chris Murphy introduced the Repair Café based at Trinity Theatre. Once a month a group of experts volunteer their time to fix items which might otherwise get thrown away. Approximately 170 repairs had been undertaken at the last meeting.

UPDATE FROM THE BOROUGH COUNCIL

- 6 Councillor Dawlings (Leader of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council) presented and took questions on –

Public Safety:

- Primarily a police matter but supported by the Borough Council who welcomed the recent focus on reassuring the public in Tunbridge Wells.
- Tunbridge Wells remained the safest district in Kent.

Town Hall Co-working:

- Underused for the past 18-months with most staff successfully working from home.
- Council only needs 10k sq.ft. so 20k sq.ft. was surplus to requirement.
- Plans for co-working supported by all parties and wide supported across the Council.
- Soft-market testing suggests the small-office layout is wanted and a number of partners have expressed an interest.
- The plans could bring 300 regular workers into the town centre which should help support the wider local economy and bring a new income stream for the Council.
- Visits of sites managed by any Tenderers would take place ahead of interviews in December and a decision in the new year.

Active Travel:

- A long planned cycle scheme on the A26 had been refused following a withdrawal of support from KCC on safety grounds.
- The key learning was that such schemes could only succeed by working in partnership with KCC. KCC were focusing on utilising existing rights of way so this would be the Borough Council's priority when bidding for funding in future.

Housing:

- The conversion of Crescent Road properties for homeless people had been completed in the summer.
- Of the 6 properties, 5 were occupied by people working towards social or private rental properties and the remaining 1 due to be occupied soon.
- The scheme was well supported by the community.
- Jay Khadka, owner of the Russell Hotel and supporter of the homeless throughout the 'Everyone In' initiative had got the top award at the Love Where We Live Awards.
- Although funding for the Everyone In initiative had ended the Council was determined to end rough sleeping. Currently 3 people were in emergency accommodation and receiving specialist support into assisted accommodation.
- The number of people in nightly-paid accommodation had reduced from 50 to 23 over the past 6-weeks. There were 52 people in temporary accommodation.
- A decision whether the winter shelter was required would be made soon.

Queen's Jubilee

- The Council was co-ordinating the Queen's Green Canopy , an initiative to plant trees for the Platinum Jubilee.
- 70 specimen trees had been purchased for council land and other public spaces and a further 700 saplings would be made available to residents, businesses and parish councils.
- Parish councils were planning their own activities for the Jubilee. The Borough Council was planning further activities but nothing to announce at this time.
- Royal Tunbridge Wells Together (Business Improvement District) was focussed on Christmas but was expected to look to plans for the jubilee in the new year.

Benches:

- The report on benches has been received and discussed internally but no further action had been taken at this time. Work would be picked up as soon as time and resources allowed.

Councillor Scott (Deputy Leader of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council) presented and took questions on –

Local Economy:

- The pandemic, climate change and developments in the town centre would mean that more people would act more locally.
- There were many opportunities.

Consultation:

- The Council new consultation software reflected a new approach to involving the public in decision making and ideas generation.
- Wider consultation would help avoid problems from lack of public support and unintended consequences

Comments from members included:

- A key aspect to address climate change was reducing the overall energy used to move vehicles. Electric vehicles may be a red herring.
- Plans for co-working space at the town hall were widely supported.
- 903 people were still on the housing register awaiting housing.
- There was an increasing disconnect between the generations as children and grandchildren moved away due to house prices. Tunbridge Wells needed more affordable housing in the town centre.

- If Tunbridge Wells was to flourish it would need key workers living in the town.
- Rotary club was celebrating its centenary at the same time as the jubilee and was presenting outdoor gym equipment to Dunorlan Park.
- Tunbridge Wells Symphony Orchestra was also celebrating its centenary and there may be opportunities to coordinate for the jubilee.

TOWN CENTRE CHRISTMAS PREPARATIONS

7 Hilary Smith (Economic Development Manager) presented and took questions on the following –

Ice Rink:

- Opens Friday 19 November from 5:30pm, runs until 3 January.
- Main rink same as last year but with an additional rink for parents and toddlers during the day and curling during the evening.
- Ticket sales are up compared to pre-covid.
- Concession stands, Santa's Grotto and live music were also available.
- The German market was not available this year.

Royal Tunbridge Wells Together (RTWT):

- Sarah-Jane had recently taken over at RTWT and had a very full workload, she would welcome an opportunity to speak to the Town Forum at a future meeting.
- RTWT were running self defence classes (linking to the earlier item on public safety) for employees working in the town.
- RTWT publicised its activities through its website and various business-to-business channels.

Christmas plans:

- RTWT had taken responsibility for the town centre lights (with a significant financial contribution from the Borough Council).
- Switch on was Thursday 18 November.
- More lights were planned for Camden Road.
- The snowman at Fiveways would be a reindeer this year.
- Door bows and other decorations would be made available to businesses.
- Live music and street performers were planned throughout the town.
- A film featuring Father Christmas and several local businesses was being made to promote the town, this would be available on the BID website and YouTube shortly.
- RTWT was creating a promotional magazine for the town, this would mainly be for business-to-business promotion but copies would also be available publicly.
- The latest edition of So magazine featured businesses in Camden Road and would cover other areas in the next edition.
- RTWT working with Royal Victoria Place would be setting up 'living gift guides' in vacant units to promote other businesses in the town.

Comments from members included:

- Residents had a vested interest in the prosperity of the town and would welcome more information on what was being planned and by whom.
- Business-to-residents communications could be discussed at a future meeting.
- The Borough Council's weekly email newsletter had not yet mentioned Christmas plans but could be used to communicate news from the RTWT.
- The next edition of Local magazine would feature Christmas plans.

HIGH STREET CHANGES

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Hilary Smith (Economic Development Manager) presented and took questions on the following –
High Street consultation:

- Collaboration between the Council and Town Forum talking to businesses and shoppers in person on 22 September and via the Council's new engagement platform.
 - This was an early use of the new software so followed a traditional consultation model. Responses showed the platform was easy to use.
 - In person surveys were also important to ensure a range of views were received.
- Local residents were written to with details how to access the online platform.
- Good response: 71 businesses and 170 from residents and 424 other visitors to the area.
- More than 60% supported the scheme as it is (70% for residents).
- 59% of businesses, 67% residents and 62% other visitors supported making the scheme permanent.
- Top three supporting comments were: 1) now a more pleasant environment, 2) less traffic/quieter and 3) more outside space to eat and drink.
- Top three opposition comments were: 1) more traffic in surrounding roads, 2) poor quality planters/parklets and 3) preferred two-way access.
- Top three suggested improvements were: 1) Footway widening should be permanent, 2) planters/parklets should look more permanent and 3) High Street should be access only or fully pedestrianised.
- A small number of businesses still have concerns about space for deliveries.

Proposed changes:

- Marking out designated delivery bays
- Providing disabled parking bays
- Permanently fixing the planters/parklets in place (some had been moved by disgruntled parkers).
- Looking specifically at concerns from businesses in Castle Street.
- Would be working with KCC to implement changes and make the Traffic Regulation Order to make the scheme permanent.

Comments from members included:

- The new consultation platform reflected a new approach which would take time to bed in.
- The High Street was welcoming and bustling, in contrast to Calverley precinct.
- Making the High Street one-way had been an ambition since the 1950's so the scheme was welcome. Pedestrianisation should be considered.
- Full pedestrianisation may not be possible due to access needs. KCC would need to agree.
- There were proposals to pedestrianise the centre of the High Street. This would stop through traffic, allow restaurants to use the full space and maintain limited access for residents and business from either end.
 - Officers had not seen said proposals but would be happy to consider them.

- The wider implications of any changes would need to be explored.
- There was the perception of a loss of car parking on the High Street but in fact no spaces had been lost.

OURTOWN - COMMUNITY INTEREST COMPANY AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH TOWN FORUM

- 9 Councillor Scott (Deputy Leader of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council) presented and took questions:
- There were gaps in the services provided by the Borough Council, Royal Tunbridge Wells Together and other bodies.
 - A Community Interest Company (CIC) was a vehicle to raise funds and put plans into actions.
 - The Town Forum was not a legal entity so could not do this.
 - The CIC had been established with minimal people behind it to simplify the process. Bank accounts were in the process of being opened.
 - The CIC would work with partners but not take over responsibility for any existing services. It could raise funds for new initiatives
 - Wider engagement would enable people to be involved in developing plans.
 - CIC would be non-political.
 - CIC could be open to individual membership either through donating time or money. The structure was under consideration.
 - Upon reaching a threshold of membership the trustees were required to resign and new trustees would be elected.

Comments from members included:

- The recently established Youth Forum could provide a good source of ideas.

REPORTS FROM THE TOWN FORUM WORKING GROUPS

- 10 The Chair noted that the Working Groups were at the centre of what the Town Forum does, contributing to consultations, taking forward issues for members and getting involved on the ground. Volunteers were always needed to keep the working groups strong and effective.

a)Strategic Planning Working Group

Mark Booker presented:

- A full report would be circulated after the meeting.
- The Working Group had contributed in the consultation on a number of important government policies.
- The Borough Council had made several Article 4 Directions in response to changes to Permitted Development Rights to safeguard important infrastructure.
- The Town Forum had been a key contributor on the Local Plan, submitting 65 responses on various points, and welcomed the Town Centre Area Plan.
- The Local Plan had now been submitted and would be subject to public examination.

b) Transport Strategy Working Group

Jane Fenwick presented:

- A report would be circulated after the meeting.
- The Working Group was preparing thoughts on the likely future of transport in the town so that it could contribute to future discussions and proposals that were likely to come up.
- Work was ongoing finding an alternative site for the school buses which currently park at the bus stand on London Road.
- Gatwick were consulting on plans to expand the airport, the consultation closed on 1 December and all were encouraged to respond.

c) Culture, Leisure and Tourism Working Group

Carolyn Gray presented:

- A report would be circulated after the meeting.
- The recent Puppetry Festival had been successful.
- A number of concerns relating to the Pantiles had been discussed, including a planning application for the Dipper's Hall, encroachment on to public rights of way, a lack of conveniences and a general move to more exclusive events making the area feel unwelcoming. Work was ongoing to address these concerns.

d) Wellbeing Working Group

No update.

e) Finance and Other Issues Working Group

No update.

f) Water in the Wells Working Group

Michael Holman presented:

- The opening of the Pantiles water feature and unveiling of the Wiesbaden plaque, attended by the Mayor and reported at the last meeting, had received good coverage by the press. This had even been picked up by the Wiesbaden press.
- A planning application for the chalybeate spring on the Pantiles was available on the Council's planning portal. The time for comments was now closed and a decision was pending.
- Mr Danby, the applicant, had so far declined invitations to discuss the plans with the Town Forum.
- The Working Group shared the long-term view that the spring was not being used to best effect but had concerns on the specific proposals.
- It was believed that Mr Danby had applied for a 5-year lease with a 3-year break clause so that if the plans did not come to fruition the community may have the opportunity to provide alternative proposals, perhaps through the Community Interest Company OuRToWn.
- Water in the Wells is already an established Community Interest Company with links to the Community Interest Organisation Refresh Tunbridge Wells. There may be opportunities in the future to merge the organisations.

ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS OR TOPICS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

- 11 Anne Stobo noted that the winners of the Friends @ The Amelia Scott poetry competition had been announced and would receive their prizes at a special event hosted by the marquess of Abergavenny at the Amelia Scott.
- Cllr Nicholas Pope noted that the Friends of Calverley Grounds would soon be without a Chairman. The trustees of the Group held some funds in trust for the maintenance of children's play areas but the Friends Group may be at risk of becoming dormant without volunteers.
- Cllr Justine Rutland noted that a candlelit vigil was being arranged at the steps to the town hall on 25 November from 5.30pm to mark the UN 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence.
- Mark O'Callaghan noted that the Remembrance Parade would be held on 14 November from 10.4am and road closures would be in place from around 10am.

FUTURE MEETINGS

- 12
 - 20 January 2022
 - 24 March 2022



Reports from the Town Forum Working Groups, 20 January 2022

a) Strategic Planning Working Group

Notice relating to the public examination of the Local Plan attached for reference

Verbal update from Mark Booker

b) Transport Strategy Working Group

Report from the working group attached

Verbal update from Jane Fenwick

c) Culture, Leisure and Tourism Working Group

Nothing to report

d) Finance and Other Issues Working Group

Verbal update from David Wakefield

e) Water in the Wells Working Group

Verbal update from Michael Holman

(The Wellbeing Working Group is in abeyance.)



TUNBRIDGE WELLS BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN

NOTICE OF INDEPENDENT EXAMINATION UNDER REGULATION 24 OF THE TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (LOCAL PLANNING) (ENGLAND) REGULATIONS 2012

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council submitted its Local Plan for independent Examination on 1 November 2021.

The Secretary of State has appointed Matthew Birkinshaw BA(Hons) MSc MRTPI to undertake an independent Examination of the Plan and subsequently issue a report with his conclusions.

As part of the Examination process hearings sessions will be held as follows:

Dates and Times:

Tuesday 1 March 2022, 10am
Wednesday 2 March 2022, 9.30am
Thursday 3 March 2022 10am (Reserve)
Thursday 24 March 2022 10am
Tuesday 29 March 2022, 10am, Wednesday 30 March to Thursday 31 March 9.30am, Friday 1 April, 10am
Tuesday 19 April, 10am, Wednesday 20 April to Thursday 21 April 9.30am,
Friday 22 April, 10am
Tuesday 3 May, 10am, Wednesday 4 May to Friday 6 May, 9.30am
Monday 23 May, 9.30am to Thursday 26 May, 9.30am
Friday 27 May, 9.30am (Reserve)

Hearing arrangements: Hearing sessions are expected to be held either physically at the Town Hall, Mount Pleasant Road, Royal Tunbridge Wells, Kent, TN1 1RS and/or held virtually and live streamed via the Council's website – link details will be published at <https://tunbridgewells.gov.uk/localplanexamination>.

The Inspector will consider the latest Government guidance in respect of Coronavirus (COVID 19) when determining how each session will be held. The most up to date information about hearing sessions will be published on the Council's website at <https://tunbridgewells.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/local-plan/examination-of-the-local-plan>.

Additional information about the Examination, including the programme for the hearing sessions, can be viewed on the Borough Council's website at <https://tunbridgewells.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/local-plan/examination-of-the-local-plan>.

An independent Programme Officer, Charlotte Glancy, has been appointed to organise the Examination on behalf of the Inspector. If you have any further queries regarding the hearings, please contact the Programme Officer:

E-mail: bankssolutionsuk@gmail.com

Tel: 01903 776601 / 07519 628064

Postal: C/O Banks Solutions, 80 Lavinia Way, East Preston, West Sussex, BN16 1DD

Report from the Transport Working Group to the RTW Town Forum.

The TWG met on 10th January. Attending: Jane Fenwick (chair), Lorna Blackmore, Cllr David Scott, Cllr Peter Lidstone, Carol Wilson, Katharina Mahler Bech, Adrian Berendt, Tom van den Bergh, Chris Ferguson-Gow. Apologies: Ian Rennardson and Don Sloan.

Agenda

1. **Buses on London Road:** JF and AB met with TWBC officers and relevant councillors on 10th November to discuss alternative locations for the school buses to park. In December, GO buses agreed with KCC to no longer deliver its passengers to Bennett School but to let off and pick up at Skinners School. This has reduced congestion in the Culverden area, but the buses continue to park on London Road. In addition, school buses have parked all day in the bus stop at Meadow Road resulting in the Parking Department closing the bus stop altogether and inconveniencing regular customers on the 281 bus route in particular. The use of bus stands a bus depot is unacceptable and our complaints will continue.
2. **Alleyways project :** JF has requested a meeting with Hilary Smith and Stephen Baughn to discuss how the TWBC intend to secure the future of the alleyways and twittens recorded by the Town Forum in 2021 that are not registered as PROW. No response so far from them but JF will chase.
3. **Active Travel England:** This new agency was established this year to enforce new cycling design guidance, provide advice to improve scheme design, implementation and stakeholder management, and be a statutory consultee.
4. **Changes to Highway Code:** Important changes to the Highway Code coming into force later this month include a new hierarchy of road users which puts more responsibility on the drivers of larger vehicles to look after the safety of more vulnerable road users such pedestrians and cyclists. This is a very important change and the TWG will encourage publicity of these changes in local press, social media and TWBC's Local magazine
5. **Progressing change in RTW:** TvdB outlined how transport decisions are made locally in the Netherlands using his home town of Woerden as an example. He stressed the importance of obtaining a political consensus for a transport plan in a country with coalition style of government. AB reported that Faversham's success in implementing 20mph, winning bids for Active Travel funding and volunteering to trial mini-Holland areas was to identify common concerns, and offer possible solutions for consultation before developing a 'plan'. DS outlined how he was also working to obtain cross party agreement in TWBC for a 'mission statement' that would guide decisions making in future.
Obtaining consensus of politicians and people was a common factor in all three approaches. The role of the TWG needed to change from commenting on plans and projects to encourage a consensus for changes to the transport environment among RTW residents in particular, that could generate support for active travel, quiet streets, lower speeds etc. This could involve events, cycle training, guided walking, club car demonstrations, electric car and bike shows, etc.
6. **AOB:** LB reported several 'prangs' at the junction of Vale Road and London Road and had requested a yellow box junction installed to prevent this. DS offered to help. CFG reported a debate on Next Door about pavement parking. It was noted that the result of national consultation to ban pavement parking is expected soon.
7. **Next JTB meeting** will be on Monday 31st January

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