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# ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS TOWN FORUM

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## Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum

### Draft Minutes of Meeting - 17 January 2006

#### Present:

Daniel Bech (Telephone House Neighbours' Association), Jennifer Blackburn (Rusthall Village Association), Graham Bradley (Rock Villa & Hanover Residents' Association), Michael Doyle (Hawkenbury Village Association), John Goodfellow (Banner Farm Residents' Association), Bruce Goodwin (Grove Hill Residents' Association), Michael Hicks (Inner London Road Residents' Association), John Higgs (Rock Villa & Hanover Residents' Association), Michael Holman (Tunbridge Wells Twinning and Friendship Association – up to and including item 4), Michael Larsen (Friends of the Grove), George Lawson (Friends of the Common), Ian Naismith (Rock Villa & Hanover Residents' Association), Altan Omer (Benhall Mill Road Land Association), Keith Perry (Benhall Mill Road Land Association), Patrick Shovelton (Inner London Road Residents' Association), Fred Sirman (Warwick Park Area Residents' Association), Chris Thomas (The Goodwins No 1/No 2 Residents' Company), Grace Thomsett-Hill (Clarence Road Users' Association), Mary Wardrop (Hawkenbury Village Association), David Webster (Clarence Road Users' Association), Cllr Cobbold, Cllr Mayhew, Cllr Wakefield

#### In Attendance:

- (1) Councillor Roy Bullock and Ellie Broughton. Tony Fullwood, Judy Price and Alan Legg (all TWBC Strategy & Development) up to and including paragraph 26.

#### Apologies

- (2) Jenny Alexander (Rusthall Village Association), Mr Dutton (Clarendon Area Residents' Association), Jane Fenwick (Calverley Park Association), Matt Goodwin (Chairman & Tunbridge Wells Village Residents' Association), Councillor Ekins-Daukes.
- (3) Christopher Thomas took the Chair and Town Forum members asked for their best wishes to be passed to Matt Goodwin and his wife.

#### Membership changes

- (4) No changes to report.

#### Minutes of meeting 20 December 2005

- (5) Approved subject to the following corrections:
  - (a) *Item 6, 11<sup>th</sup> paragraph*
    - Ptolemy did NOT believe that the assessment of 'beyond economic repair' to be justified.
    - Gill (Twells) said that she understood the residents of Bedford Terrace had NOT agreed to contribute to the cost of the new lamp standard.
  - (b) *General*
    - David Webster said that the discussion of future maintenance of street lighting had not been minuted.

It was agreed that paragraphs be numbered in future.

## **Matters arising from minutes of last meeting**

- (6) Daniel Bech advised that eight people had reported a grot spot via the new website facility. He has also prepared a virtual forum on the site to promote dialogue which is yet to go 'live'. Daniel said that the website register contains 150 reporting spots. Gary Stevenson (TWBC) had raised a concern that the Council may not be able to keep up with demand if the site is opened up to the wide public at this stage so it was agreed to restrict the site to Town Forum members only at this time. Daniel will provide members with a password accordingly.
- (7) Bandstand – Cllr Bullock advised the Town Forum that a paper went to Cabinet last week outlining options for the future of the bandstand in Calverley Park. A press release has been issued accordingly. Subject to its condition it is still hoped that the bandstand will be available for the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations. Cllr Bullock suggested the Town Forum should consider what submission they wish to make on the Bandstand's future. Michael Holman asked when the Health and Safety inspection is likely to be – Cllr Bullock thinks it's continuous and for specific performances. Any remedial works will be subject to the cost.
- (8) Grot spots – Gary Stevenson is keeping the sub-committee appraised of progress.
- (9) Lamppost – ongoing
- (10) Highways (including pavements) – it was clarified that the action point noted from the last meeting was for the Town Forum and BC to keep a 'watching brief' on highways issues despite responsibility passing to KCC. Cllr Bullock said that a contact number can be provided for reporting faults (08458 247800).
- (11) Licensing – report next time.
- (12) Kent Vision – report next time.

## **Local Development Framework**

- (13) Tony Fullwood, the Borough Council's Head of Strategy & Development attended with two of his team, Alan Legg and Judy Price, with the aim of 'unscrambling' the programme for the Local Development Scheme (LDS) for members. He reminded members that legislation relating to the LDS came in during 2004. Progress is reviewed annually in a statutory annual monitoring report and TWBC submitted the last one in November 2005.
- (14) He provided a timetable charting the suite of policy documents making up the LDS and the programme for their formulation and adoption. Strategy documents within the LDS fall within a hierarchy, with different levels of detail and status and he summarised those differences. The core documents he drew particular attention to were: the Local Plan Review; the Statement of Community Involvement; and the Core Strategy.
- (15) Development Plan Documents are all statutory documents which will eventually replace the Local Plan Review. The core strategy deals with size of growth, numbers of housing, development land etc – it is the broad statement about the future of the borough. It will not have specific allocations – only broad indications. TF then spoke about two specific issues: the evidence base; and consultation.
- (16) In terms of the evidence base he referred to the government's planning policy statements which have a big impact on the Borough, for example one on housing land availability assessments and another on housing provision (see the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM)'s website) affecting future issues such as housing density and housing parking standards. The Council will have to undertake a number of studies to inform the LDS development. These include urban capacity, employment review (for example looking at loss of office space), and a retail study (for example considering competing pressures), an open space study and a community venue study (how well is the town served by community space). This latter study would benefit from the Town Forum's help in checking the Council's initial assessment.

<p><b>ACTION POINT</b> – Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum to be asked to check and comment on the draft community study (Tony Fullwood, TWBC).</p>
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- (17) Engagement – The Community Plan work is helping to establish local priorities...some of these do not require land but those that do need to be addressed in the LDF. Consultation throughout the LDS development process is a statutory requirement and TF highlighted key stages.
- (18) TF then highlighted some of the more imminent or relevant documents. Key points included: the Council had postponed further work on its Affordable Housing Supplementary Guidance pending imminent Government advice; and RTW Conservation Area Appraisals are scheduled for review in 2008. The rate of progress on the LDS is dependent on the availability of staff resources: TF's team cannot do everything at once and therefore must be phased. John Cunningham from the Civic Society said they would seek earlier review of the Conservation Area Appraisal. TF said that the document was relatively up to date and that a review is a major exercise adding that some conservation areas elsewhere in the Borough have not yet been appraised. However if Town Forum members wish to influence programme then comments should be submitted ready for the next annual monitoring report (probably autumn) when the annual review of the programme will take place. Rephrasing might be possible.
- (19) John Goodfellow asked to what extent the Council's LDS guidance is generated internally. TF explained that all work must be tested for 'soundness', i.e. whether it meets national standards, so although it may be generated internally the scope is constrained by a framework. JG commented that he found the information depressing: 'we have a lovely town and I am frightened that ODPM etc are on the way to ruining it as in Ashford, Maidstone and elsewhere'.
- (20) J Higgs asked for Sheila Wheeler to come and address the Town Forum given her comments about the need to develop the town and to discuss her reorganisation and budget proposals. Cllr Bullock said that inviting Sheila at this stage would be premature and he talked about the various consultation opportunities in which people could challenge or support that view. There was also discussion about the Town Forum's opportunity to comment on reorganisation proposals. Ellie Broughton clarified it was the budget not reorganisation proposals on which the Council is currently inviting comments.
- (21) John Goodfellow suggested a discussion with the Business Forum should take place, perhaps including RVP, and it was agreed this should be discussed separately (see paragraph 31).
- (22) Alan Legg and Judy Price then summarised two policy guidance areas under review: Alterations and Extensions, and Open Spaces respectively. They highlighted the consultation timetable (the Council has opted for the maximum six-weeks allowed under the Government's rules) requesting that all comments be made in writing. Both Documents viewable on website, in Council offices, at the library.
- (23) John Cunningham commended the documents – felt they were useful, easy to follow. Gill Twells asked whether the documents would aid good design. AL said there was the opportunity to refuse applications on design grounds. Gill Twells expressed views about the need for all developers to contribute (financially or other) to leisure / open space provision – Cllr Bullock asked her to submit that proposal formally.
- (24) Town Forum members debated whether to make a group or individual submissions. It was agreed that comments should be co-ordinated through Daniel Bech.
- (25) John Cunningham referred members to the Royal Victoria Place (RVP) scoping report which he said the Civic Society has already commented on. TF confirmed that proposals to extend RVP had been accepted by the Inspector for the new Local Plan. The Council was now awaiting detailed proposals from Westfield.

**ACTION POINT:** Members' comments to be directed to Daniel Bech for co-ordination (note paragraph 31 – separate sub-committee to consider Open Spaces proposals).

- (26) The Chairman thanked the officers for their presentation and the insight to the planning system that they gave.

#### **Kent Vision – proposed submission**

- (27) Progress to be reported at the next meeting.

## Community Plan – proposals for joint action

- (28) Daniel Bech advised that there had been no further comments on the draft which would now be submitted on the Town Forum's behalf.

## Grot spot update

- (29) Daniel Bech said he had been advised by Gary Stevenson that the owner of the Warwick Park property had been contacted. He understands two developers have come forward to express interest in the property but at this stage there has been no response from the owner.
- (30) Daniel Bech said a number of the complaints received were about satellite dishes in the conservation areas; a number have been identified that don't have the necessary planning consent. Mr Higgs referred to the number of estate agent signs saying sold which clutter the street scene and are no longer needed. Bags of rubbish are left on the verge and he has also raised concern about bad parking which he has written to Mr Briggs about. Mr Briggs has forwarded the letter to Kent County Council.

## Announcements

- (31)
- The Chairman is due to meet with the Borough Council's Chief Executive on 24 February.
  - Ellie Broughton and David Webster have been invited to the next meeting of the Commons Conservators, 26 January.
  - The Soroptimists would like to attend a future Town Forum meeting.
  - John Goodfellow said that a Business Forum is being formed, yet to have a Chairman. It was agreed there was value in the two forums having joint discussion from time-to-time on issues of common interest.
  - John Goodfellow is involved in progressing improvements to the station. He invited comments from members.
  - Mary Wardrop, Jennifer Blackburn and Jane Fenwick will form a small sub-committee to meet and progress the open space consultation.
  - Ellie Broughton will provide details of an NHS consultation which members may wish to consider. She also summarised issues from the Borough Council's budget consultation which members and their associations might wish to comment on. The Town Forum's initial response is to oppose museum & art gallery changes but further comments may follow. Cllr Bullock commented on the difficulties surrounding the budget round, including Government constraints.

**ACTION POINT:** Ellie Broughton to submit the Town Forum's objection to charging for the museum and art gallery as part of the budget consultation framework.

## Items for future meetings

- (32)
- Local Development Framework – submissions on consultation documents
  - RVP
  - Crime and disorder issues (Linda Mortley, TWBC)
  - Waste collection

## Dates of Future meetings

- (33)
- Thursday 23 February
  - Monday 27 March
  - Monday 24 April
  - Thursday 25 May
  - Thursday 22 June
  - Thursday 20 July

## Any other business

(34)

- Jennifer Blackburn (JB) informed members that weekly lists of planning applications will no longer be sent but will be viewable on the website. Gill Twells identified a number of concerns about the new arrangements which she believes need addressing. In particular she suggested that the ward division be reinstated.
- JB raised two further issues: could the non-parished area of the borough have representation on the Quality Bus Partnership; and what is the future of the proposed Public Transport Forum. JB argued that without representation on these bodies residents are dependent on Kent County Council who tend to have lower levels of resident consultation. She feared democracy being undermined.
- Greg Clark is addressing the Civic Society on 9 February 2006 at 7.45pm - all welcome.

**ACTION POINT:** Planning department to be asked to review procedures for issuing the weekly lists. Enquiries to be made about Town Forum representation on Quality Bus Partnership. (EB / Cllr Bullock). All to note Civic Society invitation.