



ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS TOWN FORUM

Minutes of Meeting dated Thursday 18 January 2007

1. Present:

Jenny Alexander (Rusthall Village Association), Daniel Bech (Telephone House Neighbours' Association), Jenny Blackburn (Vice-Chairman of the Town Forum / Rusthall Village Association), Graham Bradley (Rock Villa and Hanover Road Residents' Association), June Bridgeman (Soroptimist International of Tunbridge Wells and District), John Cunningham (Royal Tunbridge Wells Civic Society), Betsey Dix (Calverley Park Crescent Freeholders' Association), John Goodfellow (Banner Farm Residents' Association), Matt Goodwin (Chairman of the Town Forum / Tunbridge Wells Village Residents' Association), Richard Gould (Calverley Park Crescent Freeholders' Association), Michael Hicks (Inner London Road Residents' Association), John Higgs (Hanover Road and Rock Villa Road Residents' Association), Michael Holman (Twinning and Friendship Association), Michael Larsen (Friends of the Grove), George Lawson (Friends of Commons), Caroline McCann (Beulah Road Residents' Association), Ian Naismith (Hanover Road & Rock Villa Road 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 Residents' Association), Chris Thomas (The Goodwins No.1/No. 2 Residents' Companies), Gill Twells (Royal Tunbridge Wells Civic Society), Mary Wardrop (Hawkenbury Village Association), Philip Whitbourn (Beulah Road Residents' Association) and Chris Wright (Calverley Park Residents' Association).

TWBC Cllr Adrian Ekins-Daukes, TWBC Cllr Mayhew, TWBC Cllr Leonard Price, TWBC Cllr James Scholes.

In attendance: Cllr Roy Bullock, Samantha Timms (Senior Committee Administrator, TWBC) and Sean Clark (Head of Financial and Property Services) and Mary Harris from The Courier.

2. Apologies:

Michael Doyle (Hawkenbury Village Association), Simon Joyce (Benhall Mill Road Residents' Association), Ed Tomlinson (St Barnabas Community), David Webster (Clarence Road Users' Association) and Chris Weller (Calverley Park Association).

TWBC Cllr Mrs Cobbold, Cllr Peter Crawford, Cllr David Wakefield, Cllr Frank Williams.

3. **Membership Changes** – None to report, however, Borough Councillor Price asked if Mr Fogle, Hackney Carriage Proprietor, could become a member of the Town. The Chairman, Matt Goodwin, replied that Mr Fogle was more than welcome to attend Town Forum meetings as an observer but as he did not live in the borough, it was felt that he should not become a Town Forum member. Other members of the Town Forum agreed with the Chairman.

4. Minutes of Last Meeting Dated 23 November 2006

The minutes were agreed, subject to the following amendments:

Amendment to minute 1 'Present'

Remove 'Vice-Chairman of the Town Forum' from after June Bridgeman's name and insert it after Jenny Blackburn. Amend the wording after George Lawson to read 'Friends of the Tunbridge Wells Common'.

Additional paragraph to minute 8 'Terms of Reference - Transport Committee'

"Mr Shovelton pointed out that a Survey of Parking in the Central Zone was at present being carried out by Highways, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. The issue of space for taxis would have to be considered as part of that Review. At present there were virtually unused taxi spaces in Calverley Road and opposite the Library. The issue of a new taxi stand in Mount Ephraim/Lime Hill Road could not be considered in isolation. Councillor Bullock agreed with Mr Shovelton's intervention."

Additional paragraph to minute 8 'Terms of Reference - Planning Committee' - third paragraph, fourth line from the bottom

Following "Local Development Framework" the brackets should read: "(which will replace the Local Plan)" and should not be "otherwise known as..."

Amendment to minute 9 'Any Other Business – Habitat Building' – second paragraph, first line

Add 'ed' at the end of the word 'Reform'.

5. Matters Arising/Actions Completed from the Meeting dated 23 November 2006**Actions outstanding from 23 November 2006 Town Forum:**

- Action 6.1– the decision to charge £25 per item for disposal was still outstanding and that a report be submitted to a future Town Forum meeting.
- Action 6.2 – Matt Goodwin to follow up with Janet Naim on the job description for the Press Officer
- Action 6.3 – Daniel Bech to update the Town Forum on his correspondence with Lois Howell. The Town Forum agreed to discuss this item at the next full Town Forum meeting on 22 March 2007.
- Action 6.4 – Councillor Bullock to report back on the land ownership for the strip of land between the Station and Morrison's car park.
- Action 6.5 – Matt Goodwin to circulate dates of meetings with TWBC officers and Directors as and when they are set up.
- Action 6.6 – Vision Committee Terms of Reference – The Town Forum agreed to discuss this item at the next full Town Forum meeting on 22 March 2007.
- Action 7.1 – The Committee Administrator to seek a reply from Robert Cottrill regarding Mr Goodfellow's questions.

Actions:

- 5.1 Action 6.1 – It was agreed that the Committee Administrator would contact Councillor J Cunningham and ask for the reasoning behind the charge of £25 per item for disposal of bulky waste.
- 5.2 Action 6.2 – Matt Goodwin agreed to contact Janet Naim regarding the job description for the Press Officer.
- 5.3 Action 6.3 – That Daniel Bech report to the next full Town Forum meeting due to take place on 22 March 2007.
- 5.4 Action 6.4 – Councillor Bullock informed the Forum that this was still ongoing and he would report back to the next Town Forum meeting on the progress being made.
- 5.5 Action 6.5 – Matt Goodwin stated that he had not yet met with the other Directors and that he would circulate the dates to the Forum as soon as possible.
- 5.6 Action 6.6 – That the Vision Committee submit their Terms of Reference to the next full Town Forum meeting due to take place on 22 March 2007.
- 5.7 Action 7.1 – The Committee Administrator agreed to ask Robert Cottrill to reply to Mr Goodfellow's questions direct.

Actions Completed:

- Action 6.7 – The Committee Administrator to circulate to all Town Forum members the power point presentation and script of Robert Cottrill's presentation from 26 October 2006 meeting. Completed December 2006.
- Action 7.1 – That the Town Forum frequency of meetings be discussed at the January meeting of the Town Forum. See minute 9 below.
- Action 8.1 – That in the economic and social interests of Tunbridge Wells, the Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum calls on the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and Kent County Council to urgently install temporary new taxi stands at Fiveways and in Camden Road. See minute 11 Transport Committee
- Action 8.2 – That the Committee Administrator forward the concerns of the Town Forum, their recommendation and background report to the Portfolio Holder for Transport, Councillor Davies, for action. Completed December 2006.
- Action 8.4 – Housing and Environment Committee consider the additions/amendment to their Terms of Reference and if in agreement, provide updated Terms of Reference to the next Town Forum. See minute 11 below Housing and Environment Committee.

6. Report from Councillors

Councillor Mrs Mayhew – Reported that Cabinet met on 11 January 2007 and agreed the **Empty Property Strategy**; the minutes and the report were available on the Council's website: www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk Also at that meeting a tendering process was agreed to develop **plans in relation to town centre regenerations** involving Tunbridge Wells, Paddock Wood, Southborough and Cranbrook.

Councillor Mrs Mayhew went on to say **private street lighting charges** would be submitted to Cabinet shortly – the Town Forum noted this.

John Higgs asked that he be provided with information relating to the number of people who could occupy a one bed roomed flat; Councillor Mrs Mayhew agreed to supply this information.

Councillor Bullock – Informed the Town Forum that the cut-off date for the **White Paper unitary bid** was 25 January 2007. A clearer picture would be given once the bid had been placed.

Councillor Ekins-Daukes – Mentioned **planning enforcement** and the fact that it is stricter in different areas of the borough; there was a lack of consistency. On behalf of the Town Forum, it was resolved that Philip Whitbourn as representative of the Planning Committee should write to the Planning Department to express the Town Forum's deep concerns over inadequate and inconsistent enforcement of planning conditions.

Councillor Scholes – Informed the Town Forum that the **Tour de France** would be cycling through certain areas of the town later in the year and if members of the Town Forum wished to know the route then they should contact him direct. He also offered the attendance of the event organiser at a future Town Forum meeting to go through the plans for the Tour.

Actions:

- 6.1 That Councillor Mrs Mayhew supply John Higgs with the necessary information relating to his question.
- 6.2 That Phillip Whitbourn attend Western Area Planning Committee due to take place on 24 January 2007 and write to the Planning Department expressing the Forum's concerns.
- 6.3 That should any member of the Town Forum wish to receive information relating to the Tour de France to contact Councillor Scholes.

7. Sean Clark, Head of Financial and Property Services – briefing on the Council's council tax and financial position and planning.

Sean Clark, Head of Financial and Property Services, gave members of the Town Forum a power point presentation that briefed them on the Council's council tax and financial position.

Sean informed the Town Forum that the budget was not just about figures but incorporated the Council's key issues, forward planning, Medium Term Financial Strategy and budget proposals; all of which would need to be taken into account when setting the budget and explained them in some detail.

The Town Forum noted the figures provided to the Council's over the years from the Central Government Grant and that for 2007/08 the grant had decreased by 0.18%; Sean concluded that savings would need to be made by the Council.

Sean concluded his presentation by answering questions from the floor. The Town Forum thanked Sean for his attendance and that he be asked to attend another Town Forum meeting, probably in May 2007, to explain the public consultation and revenue budget processes.

The full power point presentation that Sean Clark showed is appended to these minutes for the members' information.

Actions:

- 7.1 That Sean Clark be asked to attend another Town forum meeting in May 2007.

8. Response to Chair's letters on behalf of the Town Forum on the resolutions from the November 2006 meeting on taxis and future use of the Habitat premises.

Matt Goodwin, the Town Forum Chairman, informed the Town Forum that he had written on behalf of the Town Forum to the Leader of the Council to inform him of the Town Forum's resolutions regarding the Habitat premises and Taxi stands at Fiveways and Camden Centre - minutes 8.1 and 9.1 of the 23 November 2006 meeting refers – and asking for a response to the resolutions.

Matt had subsequently received a letter from one of TWBC's officers stating that there were commercial parties interested in the Habitat building and therefore that none of the non-commercial uses which the Town Forum had urged be considered would in fact be so.

Matt had not received even the courtesy of a reply as yet to the Town Forum's resolution on Taxis and requested that Samantha Timms should follow this up.

Actions:

8.1 That Samantha Timms follow up a response to the Forum regarding the above.

9. Town Forum Frequency and Format of Meetings

The Town Forum agreed that the meeting due to be held on Thursday 22 February 2007 at 7.30pm would take place in the form of a Transport Committee Workshop. The Town Forum also agreed that the next full meeting of the Town Forum would take place on Thursday 22 March 2007 at 7.30pm.

10. Comprehensive Equality Policy and Scheme – Consultation

The Town Forum was informed that Tunbridge Wells Borough Council had produced its first Comprehensive Equality Policy and Scheme. The documents showed how, over the next three years, the Council planned to eliminate discrimination and promote equality in the Council's roles as community leader, service provider, employer and purchaser of goods and services.

To ensure that the Council had identified the right priorities for race and disability equality and to inform the priorities that the Council adopt in relation to gender, age, religion/belief and sexual orientation, a consultation was currently being undertaken and the closing date for replies was 16 February 2007. A copy of the draft Comprehensive Equality Policy, Scheme and consultation document was attached to the Town Forum's agenda for information.

Members of the Town Forum were informed that should they wish to complete the consultation then they could do it either of two ways, by completing the form or by visiting the Borough Council's website at: www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk/equality

The Town Forum agreed that the Vision Committee should take this project on board and for them to invite John Higgs to their meetings.

Action:

10.1 That the Vision Committee take the Comprehensive Equality Policy and Scheme as part of their work programme.

11. Reports from Committees

Planning Committee (formerly Town Forum Strategy Committee) – Philip Whitbourn briefed members of the Town Forum on two important pieces of work that had come to light over recent months; Local Development Framework (LDF) and Open Space Policy.

He went on to say that the Planning Committee were communicating with the Director of Planning and Development and Borough Councillor Bullock regarding the Local Development Framework. Should any member of the Town Forum have any comments with regard to the Framework please could they submit them in writing to him.

Philip also stated that the Open Space Policy was taking up much of the Committee's time and that the Committee would be contacting resident associations that have open spaces nearby, for example Inner London Road Residents' Association and Friends of the Common. Philip urged any member/group with a special interest in such areas to contact him direct with their views.

As noted under section 6 above, it was resolved earlier in the meeting that Philip Whitbourn as representative of the Planning Committee should write to the Planning Department to express the Town Forum's deep concerns over inadequate and inconsistent enforcement of planning conditions.

Actions:

- 11.1.1 That any members of the Forum who have a comment relating to the Local Development Framework to put them in writing to Philip Whitbourn as soon as possible.
- 11.1.2 That any members of the Forum or groups who have special interests in open spaces to put them in writing to Philip Whitbourn as soon as possible.
- 11.3 That Philip Whitbourn write on behalf to the Planning Department of TWBC on enforcement of planning conditions.

Vision Committee – It was agreed by the Town Forum that the Vision Committee's Terms of Reference would be discussed at the next Town Forum meeting due to take place on Thursday 22 March 2007.

Action:

- 11.4 That the Vision Committee's Terms of Reference be discussed at the next Forum meeting due to take place on Thursday 22 March 2007.

Transport Committee – June Bridgeman submitted a report on behalf of the Transport Committee that sought the Town Forum's agreement to hold a 'discussion' evening on transport issues. June highlighted to members that the aims of the evening would be to:

- * have an enjoyable and purposeful meeting focussed on the key transport issues;
- * enable real life knowledge and ideas to be brought forward in a relevant way without needing technical expertise in transport;
- * provide some background briefing to provide a shared basic knowledge base;
- * let everyone have their say, by breaking up into smaller discussion groups;
- * have a useful product at the end of the process; and
- * develop a plan for following it through.

The Town Forum also agreed that an outside 'facilitator' to attend the workshop to help structure the evening and give assistance, be appointed.

June Bridgeman also reported that following a Joint Transportation Board meeting that took place on Monday 15 January 2007, a report had been submitted by the Head of Environment and Street Scene Services relating to Tunbridge Wells Town Centre Taxi Ranks; the following was agreed:

- (1) That the provision of a new taxi rank at the junction of Mount Ephraim Road and Lime Hill Road be supported;
- (2) That the Traffic Regulation Order that controls the existing Tunbridge Wells town centre ranks be amended to enable drivers to leave their vehicles for a short period of time; the location of such a facility should be agreed in consultation with the trade; and
- (3) That the Head of Environment and Street Scene Services investigate the level of usage of the taxi rank in Civic Way outside the Museum with a view to converting it to bays for parking for disabled persons.

The Town Forum expressed their thanks to June Bridgeman and to all others concerned for their hard work and dedication to the taxi ranks – a decision well made by the Joint Transportation Board.

Action:

- 11.5 That a 'discussion' evening take place on Thursday 22 February 2007 at 7.30pm to consider transport issues and that a facilitator be invited to attend.

Townscape and Street Scene Committee

see: REPORT 18.01.2007 online: www.townforum.org.uk/focusgroup/grotpotupdate-for180107.pdf

Housing and Environmental – Christopher Thomas informed members of the Town Forum that the Committee had considered the Town Forum's amendments/additions to their Terms of Reference and the Committee agreed not to add the three subjects under the heading Initial Aims. The Committee felt that the three subjects would be covered by other areas of their work.

12. Any Other Business

- (A) Update on the Cosmo Restaurant Extractor Fan** – Mr Higgs reminded the Town Forum that he had written to the then Interim Head of Planning Services, Mr Rowberry, in August 2006, regarding the fumes from the Cosmo Restaurant and of the substantial adverse impact on the lives of local people and that the extractor problem was in the hands of Mr Haynes from the Environmental Health Department.

The Town Forum were informed that communications between the Planning and Environmental Health departments had improved and become more consistent between sharing information and consent of planning applications. Mr Rowberry's response also acknowledged the importance of monitoring and enforcement as an integral part of the planning process which had been recognised in a wider review of Planning Services.

- (B) Letters to Third Parties** – It was agreed that this would be brought to the next full Town Forum meeting by Daniel Bech.

Actions:

- 12.1 That the letter to third parties be discussed at the next Town Forum meeting due to take place on Thursday 22 March 2007.

- (C) Town Forum Members' reports from their representative bodies** – in order to better demonstrate the representative nature of the Town Forum Matt Goodwin asked that members give thought to the ways in which they can show that they are bringing forward views of their residents' associations/ other organisations.

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

- Thursday 22 February at 7.30pm – Work Shop, June Bridgeman is organising
- Thursday 22 March at 7.30pm – full Town Forum meeting

22 March 2007 Town Forum - Any reports/short papers to be emailed/posted to Samantha Timms no later than 10am on Thursday 8 March 2007.