



**Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 20 January 2022,
held online via Zoom, starting at 6pm**

ATTENDANCE

1

Member Organisations:

Banner Farm Residents' Association and Tunbridge Wells Older People's Forum – Veronika Segall-Jones | Beulah Road Residents' Association – Stuart Anderson | Boyne Park Residents' Association – Dorothea Holman | Calverley Park Residents' Association – Jane Fenwick | Civic Society of Royal Tunbridge Wells – Brian Lippard | Clarence Road Users' Association – Paul Sinclair | COCA – Sue Pound | Culverden Residents' Association – Mark Booker | Friends @ The Amelia Scott – Mike Trudel | 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 – Margaret Ginman | Grantley Court Residents Association – Lorna Blackmore | Grove Hill House Residents' Association – Robert Chris | Molyneux Park Gardens Residents' Association – Don Sloan | Nourish Community Foodbank – Dawn Stanford | Poona Road Residents' Association – Alastair Tod | Rotary Club of Tunbridge Wells – Graham McNeilly | Royal Tunbridge Wells in Bloom and Telephone House Neighbours' Association – Katharine Mahler-Bech | Royal Tunbridge Wells Together – Sarah-Jane Adams | Sorooptimist 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 – Steve Walter | Tunbridge Wells Repair Café – Chris Murphy | Tunbridge Wells Twinning and Friendship Association – Michael Holman | Warwick Park Residents' Association – Neil Williams.

Councillor Members:

Broadwater ward – Cllr Chris Woodward | Culverden ward – 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 and Cllr Rob Wormington | St. John's ward – Cllr Mark Ellis, Cllr Peter Lidstone and Cllr Marguerita Morton.

Others in Attendance:

Co-optees – Marianne MacDonald | County Councillors – Cllr Paul Barrington-King (TW East) and Cllr Becki Bruneau (TW South) | Borough Councillors – Cllr Harry Allen (Speldhurst & Bidborough), Cllr Matthew Bailey (Paddock Wood West), Cllr Alex Britcher-Allan (Rusthall), Cllr Tom Dawlings (Benenden & Cranbrook and Leader of the Council) | Cllr Dr Linda Hall (Goudhurst & Lamberhurst), Cllr Dianne Hill (Southborough & High Brooms), Cllr David Knight (Goudhurst & Lamberhurst), Cllr Alain Lewis (Southborough & High Brooms), Cllr Jane March (Brenchley & Horsmonden), Cllr Alan McDermott (Brenchley & Horsmonden), Cllr Bev Palmer (Hawkhurst & Sandhurst), Cllr Hugh Patterson (Capel), Cllr Trevor Poile (Southborough North), Cllr Matthew Sankey (Speldhurst & Bidborough), Cllr Nancy Warne (Benenden & Cranbrook) | Parish Councillors – Cllr Elizibeth Akenhead

(Brenchley & Matfield), Cllr Liz Ellicott (Rusthall), Cllr Meryl Flashman (Paddock Wood), Cllr David Hurst-Brown (Lamberhurst), Cllr Charles Mackonochie (KALC), Cllr Raymond Moon (Paddock Wood) Cllr David Reilly (Pembury), Cllr Colin Russell (Horsmonden), Cllr Anthony Staples (Frittenden) | Borough Council Officers – Amanda Bonny (Elections Officer), David Candlin (Head of Economic Development and Property), Jane Clarke (Head of Policy and Governance), Renee Dillon (Democratic and Executive Support Manager), Michaela Evans (Elections Officer), Ellen Thirkell (Elections Officer), Jo Williams (Elections Officer) | Parish Council Officers – Tracie Dodd (Lamberhurst) | Local Government Boundary Commission for England – Allison Evison (Programme Manager) and Yemi Fagun (Review Officer) | Presenters – Paul Avis (Chair of Civic Society of Tunbridge Wells) | Guests – Angela McPherson, Joy Podbury, Judith Symes, David Wakefield | Secretary – Mark O’Callaghan.

TUNBRIDGE WELLS ELECTORAL REVIEW

2 Alison Evison (Programme Manager) and Yemi Fagun (Review Officer) from the Local Government Boundary Commission for England presented – The Commission:

- Independent of government and the council.
- Legal duty to propose equal and fair wards.
- Follows a clear process defined by law.
- All representations (redacted as appropriate) and reports are published online.
- Responsive to outside input, changes are accepted in 95% of cases.
- The commissioners are easily contactable.

Electoral Review:

- A review considers the electoral arrangements for a local authority, it determines:
 - The total number of councillors.
 - The total number of wards.
 - The boundaries and names of each ward.
 - The number of councillors per ward.
- At the conclusion of the review, proposals will be set before Parliament and come into effect the following election.
- Tunbridge Wells had not been reviewed since 2002 and had a number of inconsistencies in the equality of electors across the borough (developed since the last review).

Process:

- Phase 1 – Councillor numbers:
 - Based on evidence of need supplied by the council.
 - Phase complete – determined that 39 councillors was the right number (9 fewer than current).
- Phase 2 – Warding arrangements:
 - Based on evidence collected through consultation.
 - Currently underway.
 - The views of individuals and local organisations on where communities are located are very important.
 - First consultation runs 11 January – 21 March 2022.
 - Representations may be made regarding the whole borough or just your local area.
 - Draft proposals will be prepared and published on 5 July 2022.
 - Second consultation will run 5 July – 12 September 2022.
 - Views as to what is right is equally important as what may be wrong.

- Final proposals published on 29 November 2022.
- Possibility of a third round of consultation on specific points prior to publishing final proposals.
- Phase 3 – Parliament
 - At the end of the review, the proposals are set out in an Order in both Houses of Parliament.
 - The Order goes through the Draft Negative Resolution Procedure which means it sits in Parliament for 40 sitting days without any objection.
 - Parliament may reject an Order but they cannot amend it.
 - No Orders had been rejected since the LGBCE was founded in 2010.
 - Unless it is rejected, the Order automatically becomes law – expected Spring 2023.
- Phase 4 – Implementation
 - The new arrangements would be implemented through an all-out (whole Council) election in 2024.

Consultation responses:

- The commission is bound by law to only consider statutory criteria:
 - Electoral equality }
 - Community identities }
 - Effective governance } see details below.
- Absolute equality is not possible but proposals must be as close as possible.
- Effective representations will address the criteria.
- No one criteria is paramount, the Commission needs to try to balance all three.
- The Council elects by thirds (i.e. one third of members elected each year with the fourth year fallow). There is, therefore, a presumption that each ward will have three councillors. Exceptions are very rare.

Electoral Equality:

- Ideally each councillor will represent the same number of electors.
- Over time, new housing or institutions such as universities will change the distribution of residents and create an imbalance.
- The Commission wants to ensure the imbalance does not happen too quickly after amending the boundaries so uses distribution forecasts for 2027.
- Forecasts have been published on the Commission's website.
- Variance in the electoral equality in any particular ward must be no more than 10% of the average for the borough.

Community Identities:

- The commission wanted to ensure that wards reflected local communities.
- Residents would know their communities better than the Commission ever could so it was important for residents to tell the Commission about their communities.
- Communities were formed by the amenities, infrastructure, organisations and social groups accessible to people in a local area.
- Features on a map which may appear to show a gap or dividing line could actually be unifying features (for example, around a nature reserve). It was important that local people told the Commission about what made their community to avoid existing communities being split up.

Effective governance:

- These are factors which enable cohesion of an area, such as strong natural boundaries.

- Names should be easily recognised and reflect the area.

Parishes:

- The review would not create, abolish or affect the external boundaries of any parish – these could only be changed as part of a Community Governance Review by the local authority.
- However, if a borough ward boundary intersects a parish, a parish ward will be created.
- A parish council would be specifically consulted if it would be affected by warding.

Consultation Exclusions:

- The Commission cannot accept consultation responses about political consequences, for example, whether the changes would benefit any political party.
- “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it” – more than 30% of wards in Tunbridge Wells are imbalanced so the Commission must act to rebalance.
- The review will not affect parliamentary boundaries or postal addresses.
- There is no evidence that ward boundary changes affect house prices or insurance premiums.
- The Commission cannot change the external boundaries of the Borough.

Answers to questions and comments from members included:

- The Commission had determined that 39 councillors was the ideal number. However, if during the course of drafting the warding arrangements it was not possible to reasonably get a uniform pattern of 3-councillor wards there was the possibility of making an exception and therefore there might need to be a different total number of councillors. – This happened in only 1 out of 6 or 7 reviews so was quite rare.
- The unparished area of Royal Tunbridge Wells constituted a significant and distinct part of the whole borough and the Town Forum would like to keep it intact by ensuring ward boundaries did not cross parish boundaries.
- The Commission could not change the external boundaries of parishes and therefore the boundaries of the unparished area would not change, but borough wards could cut across the parish boundary. The case would need to be made, through the consultation, as to why ward boundaries should not cross parish boundaries.
- The presumption would be for three-councillor wards. If there was a genuine case for a distinct area which would otherwise be too small for a 3-member ward then the Commission would consider deviating – but the case would have to be very strong.
- The Local Plan proposed significant numbers of houses in the north of the borough around Capel and Paddock Wood but even if the Plan is accepted the majority of those houses will not be delivered by 2027 and so the warding arrangements would likely become out of date very quickly.
- Five-year distribution forecasts was required by law and, in practice, had proven to be a reasonable measure. No measure would be infallible and it was more about making a reasonable prediction.
- One tactic for addressing expected imbalances where development is predicted, is to set out warding arrangements with the lowest possible number of electors so that when the development is delivered it is not as imbalanced as it might otherwise be.

- Population distribution would never be fixed so you had to put your marker somewhere and make the most reasonable arrangements possible. The Commission could undertake a mini-review is absolutely necessary.
- No changes would be made to the electoral cycle until the Order is made by Parliament. All councillors in all wards would then be subject to new elections in May 2024. 2025 was the 'fallow year' for county elections. The cycle of elections by thirds would resume from 2026.
- Rural wards would be more effected by the changes as three-councillor wards would be geographically larger and cover more settlements which may have no previous association.
- It was possible to move away from three-councillor wards but the justification would have to be strong and in accordance with the three criteria (size of the ward alone did not meet the criteria).
- The review would be looking at wards which would be designed to reflect communities. Polling Districts were an administrative division managed by the borough council.
- Ward boundaries could not extend beyond the borough boundaries.
- Parishes and communities can, and were encouraged to, inform the commission on their local areas, they did not need to propose boundaries for the whole borough.
- The average elector : councillor ratio was approximately 2,400 electors to each councillor, each ward must be within 10% of this average.

A full recording of this agenda item is available on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ho-YaHlK-vk&t=7s>

MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

3

a) Changes of representatives

The following changes were noted:

- Stuart Macdonald is now the primary representative for Calverley Park Crescent Association, previously Tim Ball. There is currently no substitute representative.

b) New Membership Applications

A new application has been accepted from:

- Royal Wells Park Residents' Group. Liz Grant is the primary representative. Helen Walton is the substitute representative.
- Rotary Club of Tunbridge Wells. Graham McNeilly is the primary representative. John Cook is the substitute representative.

Graham McNeilly introduced the Rotary Club of Tunbridge Wells. In addition to the social elements of the Club the main purpose was to raise funds for good causes including the Tree of Light campaign for Hospice in the Weald. The Club also assisted local events such as providing marshals for the Tunbridge Wells Half Marathon. The Club hoped membership on the Town Forum would facilitate better understanding of the needs of the community and lead to new partnerships.

MINUTES OF THE AGM ON 11 NOVEMBER 2021 (FOR NOTING)

4

The minutes were attached for information ahead of formal agreement at the next AGM. Amendments may be submitted outside the meeting.

MINUTES OF THE ORDINARY MEETING DATED 11 NOVEMBER 2021

- 5 On page 7 of the minutes (page 11 of the agenda pack) under the Water in the Wells update, Refresh Tunbridge Wells was referred to as a 'Community Interest Organisation', this should have said 'Charitable Incorporated Organisation'. Subject to the above amendment, the minutes were noted.

UPDATES FROM MEMBER ORGANISATIONS

6 Tunbridge Wells Twinning and Friendship Association

Michael Holman presented on 'Twinning Under Covid and Beyond Brexit':

- Twinning Association founded in 1960 by four local servicemen who travelled to Wiesbaden, Germany in the hope of healing divisions caused by the war.
- Both sides supported reconciliation and a partnership agreement was signed in 1961, followed by a full twinning agreement in 1989.
- The object of the Association remains to build bridges between like-minded people. Many exchanges had taken place inclusive of people from all walks of life.
- Covid-19 had made travel impossible but links had been maintained through online meetings and other exchanges such as articles in the respective press on the local experience of covid.
- New post-Brexit export regulations had not stopped 100 bottles of Biddenden wine being sent to the Wiesbaden Twin Cities Wine Festival.
- In November, the Director of the Wiesbaden Music Academy presented to the Association on his role over 30 years building up their communal music scene, with many lessons for Tunbridge Wells.
- Representations had been made to Ministers urging the simplification of student exchange visas.
- An exhibition for Wiesbaden artists in Tunbridge Wells was being planned and it was hoped to be able to arrange a visit by Tunbridge Wells learning-disabled students to Wiesbaden.
- Four more iconic Wiesbaden cycle stands and the new fountain at the end of the Pantiles had been installed in Tunbridge Wells.
- It was important to maintain links with European friends and new members of the Association would be welcome.
- Details of the Association's activities would be circulated. Town Forum members wishing to create or strengthen links overseas could get in touch.
- School exchanges were still taking place but were much more difficult, particularly for the German students who now needed expensive passports (before they only needed ID cards which are common in Germany).
- The Association would gladly support a school or others wishing to lobby the government to make exchange visits easier.

DECIMUS BURTON PROJECT

- 7 Paul Avis (Chairman of the Civic Society of Royal Tunbridge Wells and Chairman of the Decimus Burton Society) presented on the potential to develop 9 & 10 Crescent Road into a museum and study centre of national importance dedicated to the work of Decimus Burton:
- The building is all that remains of the original Calverley Terrace and Calverley Parade which were demolished in the 1930's to make way for the current Civic Complex.

- A heritage statement prepared by the council confirms that the building is largely intact and of significant aesthetic and historic value.
- The Civic Society and Town Forum produced a paper in 2013 giving suggestions for the potential redevelopment of the Civic Complex. Whilst the Amelia Scott was nearing completion and discussions on the use of the Town Hall were ongoing, these did not impede proposals concerning the Decimus Burton building.
- A centre of national importance with links to other institutions and the Amelia Scott would serve as a focus for tourism and help rejuvenate the centre of Tunbridge Wells.
- The building could be restored to provide a permanent exhibition of Burton's work, space for touring exhibitions and a base for study and events for students, academics, architects and other visitors.
- Burton was an architect of international repute, Tunbridge Wells has the highest concentration of Burton's buildings in the country.
- The Decimus Burton Society and the Civic Society already had links with prestigious organisations associated with Burton including Royal Institute of British Architects and the Victoria & Albert Museum and many others which could exhibit at the centre in Tunbridge Wells.
- The ground and first floors were largely intact with several original features so it was proposed that these provide the majority of the museum space decorated and furnished in period style. Basement and second floor areas, which had had some alterations, would provide most of the learning, archive and meeting space.
- The restored garden would provide a highly visible focal point for the museum and visitor amenities.
- Modern technology would make the various spaces highly flexible and engaging for visitors.
- The Decimus Burton Society had professional historians and archivist as members so had the expertise on hand to properly curate the collections.
- A Burton museum would complement the Amelia Scott and contribute to a cultural hub, along with Trinity and Calverley Grounds, at the top of the town centre.
- There was an opportunity to tie in with the local history elements of the National Curriculum and showcase latest developments in architecture and sustainability.
- Tunbridge Wells was also an important place for photogrammetry technology which provides the opportunity for virtual tours, learning and study.
- Historic rooms provided the opportunity to generate income through private and public events.
- The Civic Society were seeking a period of one year with access to the building from the Council to develop ideas and business plan before any commitments were made.

TOWN HALL CO-WORKING SPACE

8 David Candlin (Head of Economic Development & Property, TWBC) presented on the plans to share the Town Hall with a co-working space provider:

- The Town Hall was underused and expensive to maintain.
- A cross-party working group had been founded in 2019 looking into alternative uses.

- Covid had proven new ways of working was possible, the workplace market had significantly changed. Companies no longer needed huge offices but wanted flexible and collaborative work spaces.
- The Council only needed approximately 1,000m² leaving 2,000m² surplus to requirement.
- Council looking for a 15 year lease with investment to help the Council modernise and reduce the carbon footprint of the building.
- Council would retain ownership of the building and would therefore be responsible for the fabric of the building. It was investing in a new roof and windows to make the building weather tight.
- The market for co-working space was growing, particularly in the west of the county and in creative sectors where Tunbridge Wells is already a hub.
- The Council would have the cede some control over the use of the building in order for the lessee to be able to make their business model viable.
- There were a range of co-working models around but in general most offered some form of short-term desk or office hire with shared facilities and amenities.
- The plan would require Planning consent to change the use of the building from Sui Generis Use to Commercial and any changes to the fabric of the building would need Listed Building Consent.
- Following soft-market testing a supplier engagement event was held to refine the Council's offer prior to issuing a formal invitation to tender.
- The plan was not without risk but the risk had been reduced by ensuring cross-party support and extensive market testing.
- If successful, the plan would:
 - Reduce the cost of maintaining the Town Hall for at least 15 years.
 - Bring wider economic benefits to the borough.
 - Help new and existing local businesses grow.
 - Reduce carbon footprint and costs.
- In March, Cabinet would be asked to issue a provisional award notice to the preferred provider subject to agreement of detailed terms.
- Potential timeline, including gaining Planning consent and refurbishing works, could see the building opening as a co-working space by January 2023.
- The Public consultation raised concerns about the viability and risk of the project which will be addressed through the procurement process.
- More information was available through the consultation portal: <https://talkingpointtunbridgewells.uk.engagementhq.com/>

Answers to questions and comments from members included:

- There was a wide sense of public 'ownership' of the Town Hall and greater consultation at an earlier stage would have been appreciated.
- There needed to a plan for the wider town centre area and, in time, a cost/benefit analysis to the borough. A lot of this information was commercially sensitive, Councillors would have access but it could not be made public at this time.
- Tunbridge Wells had a big creative industry which would benefit from more specialist facilities such as screening rooms or sound editing studios. Several of the tenderers have engaged with local businesses and have experience of providing such facilities.
- 15 expressions of interest following soft-market tested resulted in five formal submissions.

- The Council would not be embarking on this plan unless it would provide an income stream. This plan also saved two-thirds of the maintenance costs and business rates. An estimated 300 workers would be brought into the town centre which would benefit other businesses.
- The project was a good example of successful cross-party working group. The proposals were in accordance with the published intentions from 2019.
- Plans were underway for the wider area but members of the cross-party working group did not want to delay on a part of the plan on which they all agreed and this plan did not preclude other work on other parts of the town centre.
- Access to the Town Hall for community activity, such as the Town Forum, would be managed by the co-working provider. Public access to formal council meetings had been assured.

UPDATE FROM THE BOROUGH COUNCIL

9

Councillor David Scott (Deputy Leader of the Council) presented – Carbon Neutrality:

- Confident the Council would meet its target of carbon neutrality by 2030.
- The Council had been successful in getting grant funding for upgrading buildings but much more was needed, particularly for upgrading the leisure centres.
- Carbon emissions from Council operations was only a small part of the issue and a concerted effort would be needed across the borough.

Amelia Scott:

- On target to open by end of April 2022.
- An extensive programme was being planned for the following 12 months and future years.

Cinema Site:

- AXA had put forward the funds to redevelop the site. The developers, Retirement Villages, had shown positive steps to engage with the public.
- Plans were well developed and planners were optimistic of a viable scheme being completed.

Town Centre:

- The Pantiles and High Street were thriving.
- National retail chains were hardest hit by the downturn but British Land have said they remain committed to Royal Victoria Place.
- A number of positive developments in the top end of town were expected in the near future.

Culture and Leisure:

- Pantomime and Ice Skating exceeded targets, sold £50,000 tickets.
- Trinity Theatre struggling. Council considering grant funding but all are encouraged to check out the programme and buy tickets.

Council Finances:

- Local Government Finance Settlement, through which the government sets out support for local government, agreed very late on 23 December.
- No direct funding for Tunbridge Wells but the New Homes Bonus was carried over. Last year, Tunbridge Wells provided 600 new homes, 200 of which were affordable, this means the Council was awarded £900,000 in grant funding.

- KCC's Adult and Child Social Care budget had increased substantially, this would result in cuts to some services. Services were protected for this year but the borough council would need to ensure support was in place for the following year.

Garden Waste:

- A second ad-hoc collection, including Christmas trees, was being arranged.
- Pressure was being applied to reintroduce regular fortnightly services without impacting on statutory household waste services.

Town Centre Area Plan:

- First meeting of the working party held.
- Top priority to engage with the public over and above the statutory consultation processes.
- Would be looking for any quick wins along the way rather than waiting for the whole plan to be completed.
- Councillor Dawlings added:
 - This would be a land use plan for the town centre which would include infrastructure and transport.
 - Meetings of the working party would be chaired by Stephen Baughen, Head of Planning Services, TWBC.
 - Very little new residential was being delivered in the town centre with most focus on business.
 - The Plan would form part of the wider Local Plan for the borough.

Transport:

- Public transport needed an overhaul.
- Navigating related legislation, some dating back to Victorian times, was complex but there were several innovative options.
- On-demand mini-busses were being trialled in Sevenoaks and something similar could be trialled in Tunbridge Wells.
- Transport services were not well co-ordinated and needed improvement.

Answers to questions and comments from members included:

- The first meeting Town Centre Area Plan working party had been a comprehensive and positive meeting.
- The Leader of the Council would be having a meeting with Greg Clark MP on Afghan refugees, particularly with respect to a number of individuals with which the Council had a direct connection. No update on housing numbers was available at this time.
- New signs and enforcement action was planned for the shared space on Mount Pleasant Road (near the war memorial). Actions were agreed and signs were ordered but a commencement date was awaited.

REPORTS FROM THE TOWN FORUM WORKING GROUPS

10

a) Strategic Planning Working Group

Mark Booker presented:

- Details of the public examination of the Tunbridge Wells Local Plan had been released.
- Deadlines for getting involved were complicated:
 - Stage 1 would look at the Duty to Cooperate, compliance with the Habitat Regulation Assessments and sustainability as to the balance of development across the borough.

- Deadline for registering at stage 1 = 4 February.
- Stage 2 is concerned with specific sites or locations. Hearings will run from March through May.
- Deadline for registering at stage 2 = 28 February.
- Details to be circulated after the meeting.

b) Transport Working Group

Report on agenda.

c) Culture, Leisure and Tourism Working Group

Carolyn Gray presented:

- Winter Lantern Parade on 5 February starting at 5.30pm from Calverley Road. (19 February reserved in case of bad weather.)

d) Finance and Other Issues Working Group

Report to be circulated.

e) Water in the Wells Working Group

No update.

URGENT BUSINESS OR TOPICS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

- 11 Public safety, environment and Jubilee celebrations would be coming up at future meetings. No urgent business for this meeting.

FUTURE MEETINGS

- 12 ● 24 March 2022

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Reports from the Town Forum Working Groups, 24 March 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

Report from the working group attached

Verbal update from Carolyn Gray

d) Finance and Other Issues Working Group

Verbal update from David Wakefield

e) Water in the Wells Working Group

Report from the working group attached

Verbal update from Michael Holman

(The Wellbeing Working Group is in abeyance.)



Examination of the Tunbridge Wells Local Plan

Inspector: Matthew Birkinshaw BA(Hons) Msc MRTPI

Programme Officer: Charlotte Glancy

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Nichola Watters Bsc (Hons) MA MRTPI
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17 March 2022

Dear Ms Watters,

1. Thank you for providing the additional information requested at the Stage 1 hearing sessions on 1 and 2 March 2022. Amongst other things, this includes details of meetings held between Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and Maidstone Borough Council and the meetings of the Strategic Sites Working Group.¹
2. The additional information was provided to help demonstrate how the Council has engaged constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis with Maidstone Borough Council and Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council in the preparation of the Local Plan. More specifically, the main issues discussed at the hearings included how the Council had explored the possibility of meeting housing needs beyond the Green Belt and the High Weald AONB, and the "serious concerns"² raised by Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council regarding potential cross-boundary impacts of the proposed new settlement at Tudeley Village.
3. Having reviewed the additional information, I still have outstanding questions regarding the Council's engagement with neighbouring planning authorities on these issues. As you are aware, Section 33A of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 places a duty on the Council to engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis insofar as it relates to a strategic cross-boundary matter.
4. Given the importance of this issue, and in the interests of fairness, I therefore conclude that a further hearing session is necessary to answer these questions before the examination can progress to Stage 2.

¹ Examination Documents TWLP-006 and TWLP-008

² Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council Matter 1 Hearing Statement, REP-24863-001

5. The Stage 2 hearings are currently scheduled to start on Thursday 24th March (sitting for a single day), with strategic matters, including site allocations, discussed from Tuesday 29th March until Friday 1st April. To avoid any abortive work, unfortunately it will therefore be necessary to postpone these hearing sessions until I have the answers to outstanding questions on the Duty to Cooperate. For the avoidance of doubt, the deadline for the submission of hearing statements for Week 3 and beyond are therefore also postponed.
6. Should the examination proceed to Stage 2, then additional dates for hearing sessions and the submission of statements will need to be agreed and relevant notices issued. However, it is anticipated that the majority of postponed hearing sessions could be re-scheduled for days already in the programme.
7. I recognise that both the Council and participants will have already committed time and resources to preparing hearing statements for the Stage 2 sessions. Most of the first day of the examination was also spent discussing the cooperation which took place in the preparation of the Plan. However, I trust that you will appreciate the importance of this matter for the examination. Unlike issues of soundness, a failure to comply with Section 33A cannot be rectified post-submission by recommendations from myself. It is therefore necessary to resolve these outstanding queries before progressing further.
8. Moving forward it appears that the majority of participants who attended the first Duty to Cooperate session are also due to attend on Tuesday 29th March. Given that the Council chamber is also presumably still available, I would therefore be grateful in the first instance for the Council's views on this date (or other previously notified dates that week) to hold the additional Duty to Cooperate session. Clearly this will also be dependent on the availability of participants and the Programme Officer will need to make contact with the relevant parties. It is not expected that any further written statements will be necessary. Instead, it is proposed that a short, focussed agenda will be used to guide discussions.
9. I have asked the Programme Officer to upload a copy of this letter to the website for those following the examination and circulate to participants scheduled to attend upcoming sessions. In the meantime, should you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Matthew Birkinshaw

Inspector

Report from the Transport Working Group to the RTW Town Forum on 24th March

The TWG last met on 10th January. Members: Jane Fenwick (chair), Lorna Blackmore, Cllr David Scott, Cllr Peter Lidstone, Carol Wilson, Katharina Mahler Bech, Adrian Berendt, Chris Ferguson-Gow.

1. **20mph town-wide proposal:** The TWG has been developing a proposal for a town-wide 20mph scheme. Such schemes have already been implemented in Faversham and Tonbridge. RTW has several 20mph limits scattered around the town mainly based on school zones. We argue that this has created a patchwork of speed limits that is confusing to drivers and does not contribute to road safety. It will allow people to walk and cycle more confidently allowing active travel measures be more effective. We will be circulating the proposal to Town Forum Members, and to all TWBC and KCC councillors shortly.
2. **Turners Pie Factory planning application:** The TWG has submitted objections to this residential scheme on several grounds including lack of cycling infrastructure and no consideration of the impact of extra traffic on the junctions at Eridge Road of Broadwater Lane and Broadmead. We also strongly objected to the suggestion from Kent Police that crime prevention would be better if the well-used pathway beside Turners Factory site through to the Sainsbury/Homebase/Lidl retail complex were closed. We argued that this pathway is essential for the whole community in Showfields/Broadwater as the alternative access is a long walk along Eridge Road to Neville Terrace beside heavy and polluting traffic.
3. **Alleyways project :** The planning application above demonstrates why the Alleyways, Paths and Twittens project undertaken by TF members is so important. Alleyways across the town which thousands rely on to get around safely and quickly are vulnerable unless they have been recorded and given some legal protection. JF has again requested a meeting TWBC officers and is expecting an invitation to meet shortly.
4. **Enforcement:** Kent County Council (KCC) is planning to use new powers to improve safety and tackle congestion by enforcing moving traffic offences, including driving through 'no entry' signs, banned turns, entering yellow box junctions when the exit is not clear and driving vehicles on routes marked for buses and taxis only.
5. **Buses on London Road:** Starting this term, GO school buses no longer delivers its passengers to Bennett School, instead dropping off and picking up at Skinners School. This has reduced congestion in the Culverden area, but the buses continue to park on London Road. The TWG is pressing TWBC for a solution to the misuse of the bus stand as a 'bus depot' for all day parking of school buses.
6. **Bus 285:** Concern that the 285 bus route serving Hawkenbury will be lost has resulted in an e-petition being established to ask KCC to support it to continue operating on weekdays. This is the only bus route serving Hawkenbury and it provides an essential link with the town centre shops, schools and station. Sign up here -
<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/mgEPetitionDisplay.aspx?ID=457&RPID=50745182&HPID=5074518>
7. **Next JTB meeting** will be on Monday 31st January.

Agenda Item 10

RTW Town Forum Working Group, Culture, Leisure & Tourism

Report, March 2022, to Full Town Forum.

The working group has met twice this year.

Our first meeting was by Zoom on Monday 28th February, and was well attended. Due to matters arising, Adrian Berendt asked if I would like William Benson to attend, and I decided this would be helpful.

Our first planned guest was Paul Avis, as Chairman of the Decimus Burton Society, for an update on their work, including the archives, and proposed Museum at 9 & 10 Calverley Terrace. We were pleased to hear all is going well, and William Benson was able to discuss with Paul what help the Society needed from the council in regards to the two buildings - the Society has been given a year to prepare a detailed business plan to present to TWBC.

Our second item was a Matter Arising, the concerns of several members about the Town Hall re-purposing as a co-working space. We received some answers and advice from WB, after we had agreed the Town Hall fell under our remit, due to its placement in the Civic Centre. We agreed a second meeting would be held to talk in detail about these concerns, with Adrian Berendt in attendance, due to his role on the Cross Party Working Group. (This meeting was later scheduled for Monday 7th February on Google Meets).

WB gave us a quick update on The Amelia Scott, and borough wide Jubilee Plans.

WB then left the meeting, and we followed up on our concerns about The Pantiles, the basis of our October 2021 meeting. It was good to hear at Feb Full Council meeting that public toilets will be available in the new Pump room, when it opens. We were also pleased to hear that Samuel Danby is now more welcoming to talk to the local community about plans for The Dippers Hall.

A smaller group attended the meeting based on the Town Hall project. We talked for a long time, and AB has summarised our key concerns in this statement, which I have emailed to William Benson, and Cllr Tom Dawlings:

TOWN HALL RE-PURPOSING

I am writing to you as Chair of RTW Town Forum Working Group, Culture, Leisure & Tourism, ahead of The Cabinet meeting on Thursday 17th March 2022, about item 8: Town Hall, Appointment of Co-working Tenderer.

The CLT working group met (by Zoom) on Monday 28th February, and the above item was part of our agenda - William Benson was able to attend this meeting and answer some of our questions. It was agreed the Town Hall fell under our remit, because of its place within the Civic

Agenda Item 10

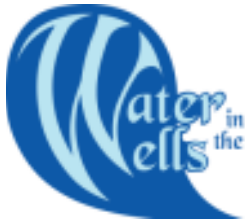
Complex. A small group from the working group then met on Monday 7th March, with Adrian Berendt, in his role as part of the cross-party working group, who helped us further with our questions.

The working group consists of members from Town Forum and RTW Civic Society who are broadly in favour of the proposal to let out the majority of the Town Hall to provide co-working space. Following these two CLT meetings members of both organisations (Town Forum and RTW Civic Society) have a number of detailed concerns, about which we request assurance:

- 1) Control
 - a. The control that Tunbridge Wells Borough Council is giving up to the co-working provider is limited to changing the internal space that it is leasing from TWBC
 - b. The provider will not be able to deny members of the public access to TWBC offices
- 2) Access to councillors and officers
 - a. There will be at least the same opportunity as currently (pre-Covid) for members of the public to meet councillors or officers privately in the Town Hall
 - b. There will be additional space for similar purposes, in the form of a coffee shop or similar
- 3) Lease provides sufficient flexibility to protect future plans, such as:
 - a. Possible development of the Assembly Hall Theatre – e.g. to expand its food and beverage or other operational needs into adjacent spaces, such as the lightwells
 - b. Linking the Amelia Scott building with other buildings – AHT, Police Station, proposed Decimus Burton Museum (9/10 Calverley Terrace)
- 4) Confirmation that the proposal generates both cost savings (operational costs, business rates etc) and additional income. It is understood that surplus income might not be sufficient to do more than cover the costs to maintain the building.
- 5) There will be a full engagement plan with stakeholders and residents about the proposals



ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS TOWN FORUM



WATER IN THE WELLS WORKING GROUP

REPORT TO THE TOWN FORUM 24 March 2022

Current membership: Bob Atwood, John Cunningham, Jane Fenwick, Michael Holman (Chair), Mike McGeary, Altan Omer, David Scott, Alastair Tod, Pat Wilson.

We held a Zoom meeting on 27 January and have been in touch by e-mail and phone as necessary.

My report today is in large part a repeat of my report to the January Town Forum and is again about continuing to 'watch this space'.

1. **Former Cinema Site (Belvedere?):** We anticipate an imminent meeting with the consultant employed by Retirement Villages.
2. **Former Arriva Garage, St John's Road:** A response from the new owners Elysian, (previous developers of the ABC Cinema site), is awaited.
3. **Chalybeate Spring:** Samuel Danby has been invited to attend the Town Forum and brief members on his plan to adapt Dippers Hall and the well building for bottling and sale of chalybeate water.
4. **St John's Park and Meadows:** Together with 'Refresh Tunbridge Wells', the Parks Department and Friends of the Park, we are moving ahead on the project to refurbish the Royal Doulton Fountain. Currently this involves restoring the stonework, planting up the two-tier bowl and adding much needed high-quality wooden seating.
5. **Bottle filling stations:** We continue to press for their installation in The Grove, St John's Park and Meadows and Grosvenor and Hilbert Park.
6. **Dunorlan Victorian Fountain and Cascades:** A comprehensive maintenance plan is still awaited.
7. **The Amelia Scott:** The Centre is due to open on 28 April. We look forward to seeing the two-level drinking fountain in operation and to savouring its water.
8. **Wiesbaden 2022, Jahr des Wassers (Year of Water):** We are working with the Tunbridge Wells Twinning and Friendship Association to produce a Zoom presentation for Wiesbaden about Water in the Wells, Refresh Tunbridge Wells, and the importance of water to our town.

I am always happy to answer questions, if not at the meeting, then by phone or e-mail.

(16 March 2022)

(Michael Holman, Chairman, 'Water in the Wells'. 07799456524; E-mail: michaeldekholman@gmail.com.)

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