



ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS TOWN FORUM

Minutes of Meeting dated Thursday 22 March 2007

1. Present:

Daniel Bech (Telephone House Neighbours' Association), Jenny Blackburn (Vice-Chairman of the Town Forum / Rusthall Village Association), June Bridgeman (Soroptimist International of Tunbridge Wells and District), John Cunningham (Royal Tunbridge Wells Civic Society), Roger Doswell (Clarendon Area Residents' Association), Michael Doyle (Hawkenbury Village Association), Stanley Dutton (Clarendon Area Residents' Association), John Goodfellow (Banner Farm Residents' Association), John Higgs (Hanover Road and Rock Villa Road Residents' Association), Michael Larsen (Friends of the Grove), George Lawson (Friends of the Commons), Ian Naismith (Hanover Road & Rock Villa Road Residents' Association), Altan Omer (Benhall Mill Road Land Association), Keith Perry (Benhall Mill Road Land Association), Christopher 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).
 Cllr Peter Crawford (Broadwater), Cllr Mrs Catherine Mayhew (Park), Cllr James Scholes (Pantiles, St Marks), Cllr David Wakefield (Culverden), Cllr Frank Williams (Sherwood)

In attendance: Cllr Roy Bullock (TWBC Cabinet Portfolio Holder Law & Order), Samantha Timms (Senior Committee Administrator, TWBC)

2. Apologies:

Jenny Alexander (Rusthall Village Association), TWBC Councillor Mrs Cobbold, Betsey Dix (Calverley Park Crescent Freeholders' Association), Matt Goodwin (Chairman of Town Forum and Tunbridge Wells Village Residents' Association), Richard Gould (Calverley Park Crescent Freeholders' Association), Michael Holman (Tunbridge Wells Twinning and Friendship Association), Father Ed Tomlinson (St Barnabas Community), David Webster (Clarence Road Users' Association), Chris Weller (Calverley Park Association) and Tricia Wright (Calverley Park Association).

 (Jenny Blackburn, Vice-Chairman, took the Chair for the duration of the meeting)

3. Membership Changes

Fred Sirman had resigned from his position representing Warwick Park Residents' Association. It had not been possible to find a replacement but John Cunningham, Civic Society, had agreed to look after the interests of the association as well as Tunbridge Wells Civic Society.

Simon Joyce was no longer a representative of Calverley Park Freeholders' Association.

Caroline McCann had resigned as chairperson of Beulah Road Residents' Association, Dr Whitbourn had taken over as chairperson for the association.

4. Minutes of Last Meeting Dated 18 January 2007

The minutes were agreed.

5. Matters Arising/Actions Completed from the Meeting dated 18 January 2007

Actions outstanding from 18 January 2007 Forum:

- Action 5.1 – 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. No response had been received from Councillor J Cunningham.
- Action 5.2 – Matt Goodwin agreed to contact Janet Naim regarding the job description for the Press Officer.

- Action 5.4 – Councillor Bullock informed the Forum that the land ownership for the strip of land between the Station and Morrison’s car park was still ongoing and he would report back to the next Town Forum meeting on the progress being made.
- Action 5.5 – 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.
- Action 5.7 – The Committee Administrator agreed to ask Robert Cottrill to reply to Mr Goodfellow’s questions direct.

Actions:

- 5.1 That the Committee Administrator would contact Councillor J Cunningham again and ask for the reasoning behind the charge £25 per item for disposal of bulky waste.
- 5.2 Matt Goodwin to contact Janet Naim regarding the job description for the Press Officer.
- 5.3 Councillor Bullock to report back to the next Town Forum meeting on the progress being made on land ownership at the Station/Morrisons.
- 5.4 Matt Goodwin to circulate the dates of his meetings with the Directors to the Forum as soon as possible.
- 5.5 Mr Goodfellow agreed to email the Committee Administrator with his questions again and that the Committee Administrator would put them to Robert Cottrill for reply.

Actions Completed:

- Action 5.3 – That Daniel Bech report to the next full Town Forum meeting due to take place on 22 March 2007 regarding the correspondence with Lois Howell relating to third party letters. See minute 12A below.
- Action 5.6 – That the Vision Committee submit their Terms of Reference to the next full Town Forum meeting due to take place on 22 March 2007. See minute 10 below.
- Action 6.1 – That Councillor Mrs Mayhew supply John Higgs with the necessary information relating to his question.
- Action 6.2 – That Philip 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.
- Action 6.3 – That should any member of the Town Forum wish to receive information relating to the Tour de France to contact Councillor Scholes.
- Action 7.1 – That Sean Clark be asked to attend another Town Forum meeting in May 2007. Sean agreed to attend 24 May meeting.
- Action 8.1 – That Samantha Timms follow up a response to the Forum in relation to the Taxi rank issue and Habitat. See minute 7 below.
- Action 10.1 – That the Vision Committee take the Comprehensive Equality Policy and Scheme as part of their work programme.
- Action 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.
- Action 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.
- Action 11.3 – That Philip Whitbourn write on behalf of the Town Forum to the Planning Department of TWBC on enforcement of planning conditions.
- 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. See minute 10 below.
- 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. See minute 8 below.
- Action 12.1 – That a letter to third parties be discussed at the next Town Forum meeting due to take place on Thursday 22 March 2007. See minute 12A below.

Actions:

- 5.6 That Councillor Scholes invite a TWBC Officer to attend 24 May 2007 full Town Forum meeting to discuss the Tour de France route and times.

6. Report from Borough Councillors

Councillor Mrs Mayhew – informed the Forum that a PCT meeting had taken place on Thursday 15 March; this meeting had been a great success.

Councillor Wakefield – stated that the Council was looking for a new logo for Tunbridge Wells; as of yet no ideas had been successful, as the logo must represent both the town and the rural parts of the borough. Councillor Wakefield asked that should anyone have any ideas regarding a new logo to forward their ideas direct to him or to Di Talbot, Publications Manager.

Actions:

- 6.1 That any member who has any ideas as to the new Tunbridge Wells logo to submit them direct to Councillor Wakefield or to Di Talbot, Publications Manager.

7. Written Responses from the Leader of the Council Relating to the Taxi Rank and Habitat Site

Jenny Blackburn, Vice-Chairman, in the Chairman's absence informed the Town Forum that at the last meeting, Matt Goodwin 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 refer – and asked for a response to the resolutions.

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

Members of the Town Forum noted the replies had been received from the Leader of the Council, Councillor Melvyn Howell. June Bridgeman asked that Councillor Bullock provide Members of the Town Forum with an update on the new taxi stands at the next full Town Forum meeting.

Actions:

- 7.1 That Councillor Bullock speak with Kent County Council as to the new taxi stands and report back to the next full Town Forum meeting with an update.

8. Town Forum Transport Committee Work Shop – Tabling for endorsement the discussion paper developed from the workshop and background research, meetings, discussions and a survey.

June Bridgeman gave an in-depth presentation relating to "Getting Around Tunbridge Wells - Residents Views Discussion Paper". June explained in detail the reasoning behind the report and how the Town Forum gathered the information.

The report listed the priorities identified, the "ABC for action" list, outlined the dangerous places for motorists and pedestrians and what the longer term strategy should be.

The priorities that emerged were: sustained support for public transport; restrictions on heavy lorries; reduction of day-long on-street parking with tough enforcement action; significant expansion of vehicle free zone around Five Ways and pedestrian precedence over vehicles down the centre of the town; park and ride schemes to be moved ahead; and urgent discussions with rail undertakings.

June explained the dangerous places around the town for pedestrians, such as: Vale Road and station area; The Common; Grosvenor Road and around Tesco; and Carrs Corner. Dangerous spots

for motorists were identified as: Pembury Road and its many turnings; Grosvenor Road/Mount Ephraim/St John's; and Vale Road. Members agreed with all these places.

The longer term strategy was mainly ideas that could be feasible, such as: creating a major new link between the A21-A26 from east to south of Royal Tunbridge Wells; handling the increased inbound traffic from the duelled A21 and improved A228; finding an alternative route to the A264; improving dreadful access to the industrial and trading estate and Pembury Hospital; and using the railway proactively to redirect some of the transport flows.

The Town Forum thanked June Bridgeman for her hard work and dedication.

Actions:

- 8.1 That the Town Forum welcomes and endorses the ideas set out in "Getting around Tunbridge Wells – Residents' Views" as a contribution on behalf of residents of Royal Tunbridge Wells to the development of more effective transport policies for their town;
- 8.2 That the Town Forum urges Tunbridge Wells Borough Council to disseminate them for wider debate and to consider them as a key input to the preparation of the proposed Town plan, the update of the Borough Transport Strategy and the roll forward for the Community Plan;
- 8.3 That Matt Goodwin, Chairman of the Tunbridge Wells Town Forum, arrange a meeting with Kent County Councillor Ferrin, Portfolio Holder for Highways, together with Borough Councillors Cunningham, Portfolio Holder for Environment, Davies, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Highways and Economic Development and opposition leader, Mills, to discuss the document and to receive a detailed response to each of the matters that the report raises;
- 8.4 That the "Getting around Tunbridge Wells – Residents' Views" be submitted to the next available Tunbridge Wells Joint Transportation Board; and
- 8.5 That East Sussex County Council, Wealden District Council, Network Rail, Arriva and any other partners be supplied with a copy of the document.

9. Commons Conservators Open Spaces Policy - Draft

Jenny Blackburn briefed members of the Town Forum on the Open Spaces Policy and informed them that both Inner London Road Residents' Association and the Friends of the Commons were in favour of the submitted draft.

Members discussed the document and it was agreed that there should be two amendments, namely:

Under the title appropriateness:

- (i) The words 'are commercial organisation' should be inserted after 'unsuitable if they'.
- (ii) The words 'organised by charitable organisations/not for profit organisations' should be inserted after 'consideration if they are'.

Paragraph titled 'Profit'

Members asked that this paragraph be clarified – is Linden Park Cricket Club a Charity?

The Town Forum also asked that the Policy make reference to the Tunbridge Wells Improvement Act, 1890 (so far as it relates to the Tunbridge Wells Commons) and the Tunbridge Wells and Rusthall Commons Bylaws.

Actions:

- 9.1 That Jenny Blackburn submits the Town Forum's views/amendments as above in writing to the Commons Conservators.

10. Reports from Committees

Planning Committee – Members of the Town Forum noted the report submitted related to the Local Government White Paper and their agenda/minutes of the meeting of 7 March 2007.

Townscape and Street Scene Committee – Members noted the report relating to ‘Grot Spots’.

Vision Committee – The Vision Committee’s Terms of Reference were submitted. These were adopted by the Town Forum subject to some minor amendments/changes as follows:

Paragraph (4) should be discussed with the Housing and Environment Committee to make sure that duplication does not take place.

Paragraph (6) should also have the word ‘equality’.

Actions:

10.1 That the Vision Committee liaise with the Housing and Environment Committee to ensure that duplication does not take place between the two committees.

10.2 That ‘Equality’ be added to paragraph (6).

Transport Committee – Nothing further to report.

Housing and Environmental – Christopher Thomas informed the Town Forum that Tunbridge Wells would be ‘buying in’ the equipment in future for gum removal. He also mentioned that he had had a meeting with the Town and Country Housing Group and their committee now had two topics to work on.

12. Any Other Business

(A) Letters to Third Parties – Daniel Bech reminded the Town Forum that on 28 September 2006, the Town Forum agreed that the Town Forum should give powers to its Committees to write to third parties, more specifically, that the Town Forum could have a ‘pre-warning / awareness’ role with regard to ‘Grot Spots’ where private residents were involved. It was agreed at that meeting that Daniel seek legal advice from Lois Howell, Head of Legal, HR and Democratic Services; this took place on 5 December 2006.

Daniel had received a reply from Legal Services on 20 December 2006. The Head of Legal, HR and Democratic Services stated:

“I don’t think it would have any repercussions for the Council if the Town Forum wrote to property occupants in broadly these terms, but I would have to say that the Council would not be able (as I am sure you will appreciate) to provide support in the form of contact details of occupants or any other information which might be the subject of Data Protection provisions.

It is also important that the letters do not imply that the TF is privy to any other kind of ‘inside’ information held by the Council, or indeed that the TF is able to exert any improper influence on the Council’s decision making processes, but I don’t think it will be sensible for the letters to do any more than you have suggested in your draft to me, i.e. they should not indicate that action will definitely be taken against them, or that any particular kind of action is likely to be taken. There is a range of enforcement options available to the Council in most cases, and I would not want the Borough Council or the TF to face any difficulties in selecting one, when another had been mentioned by the TF. In some cases, despite the Council’s best endeavours, it proves not to be possible to take action, and again, it is important for the credibility of both the Council and the TF that the letters do not try or appear to commit the Council to taking action ‘no matter what’.”

To summarise, the response received stated that no repercussions for the Council should occur but the Council would not be able to provide support in the form of contact details of occupants or any other information that might be subject to Data Protection provisions.

Daniel went on to say that Ms Howell, stressed that the letters should not imply that the Town Forum was permitted to access any kind of 'inside' information held by the Council, or indeed that the Town Forum was able to use any improper influence on the Council's decision making processes.

(B) Town Forum Members' reports from their representative bodies

Telephone House Neighbours' Association – Daniel Bech informed the Town Forum that a planning consent was granted for a commercial car park opposite 8 York Road, Tunbridge Wells. Daniel sought the Town Forum's agreement that he should write a letter of complaint to the Planning Department and to Sheila Wheeler, Chief Executive, outlining the objection to the development.

Action:

12.1 That Daniel Bech write a formal letter of complaint to the Planning Department and to Sheila Wheeler, Chief Executive, outlining the Forum's objection to the development of a commercial car park opposite 8 York Road, Tunbridge Wells.

KCC Local Board Meeting – Jenny Blackburn informed the Town Forum that the next meeting of the Local Board would take place at the Paddock Wood Day Centre on Thursday 16 May 2007 at 6pm. The purpose of the meeting would be to discuss the London Olympic and Paralympic games.

Cosmos Restaurant – John Higgs informed the Town Forum that he had received a pleasant reply from Robert Cottrill updating him on the situation with the Cosmos Restaurant. It was agreed that the letter would be circulated to all Town Forum members.

Action:

12.2 That the Cosmos Restaurant letter received by John Higgs be circulated to all Forum members for their information.

Local Development Framework – Core Strategy - Options and Issues – The deadline for submission of the Options and Issues questionnaire was 2 April 2007; members were reminded that should they wish to complete a questionnaires they could do it via the website or by receiving a paper copy from Planning Reception. The Town Forum had submitted a full response online (19 March 2007).

Trinity Theatre and Arts Centre – Councillor Scholes informed the Town Forum that discussions were taking place with the Trinity Arts Centre and their future. Tunbridge Wells Borough Council had agreed funding to 2008 but was having monthly checks on the Centre.

Matt Goodwin – Members of the Town Forum wished Matt Goodwin, Chairman of the Town Forum, a speedy recovery.

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

- Thursday 19 April at 7.30pm – Robert Cottrill, Director of Planning and Development will be in attendance.
- Thursday 24 May at 7.30pm – Sean Clark, Head of Finance and Property Services will be in attendance. Tour de France to be included on the agenda.
- Thursday 28 June 2007 at 7.30pm – Planning Committee Workshop relating to the LDF.

19 April 2007 Town Forum - Any reports/short papers to be e-mailed/posted to Samantha Timms no later than on Wednesday 4 April 2007, 10am.