



ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS TOWN FORUM

ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS TOWN FORUM - ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday 23 November 2016

Attended: Caroline Auckland (sub), Sally Balcon, Cllr Ronen Basu, Adrian Berendt, Lorna Blackmore, Mark Booker, Stephen Bowser, Cllr Peter Bulman, Cllr Mrs Barbara Cobbold, John Cunningham, Michael Doyle, Jane Fenwick, Chris Gedge, Tim Harper, Cllr Lawrence Heasman, Jennifer Hemming, Dorothea Holman, Michael Holman, Rachel Jenman, Bill Kern, Kyrios Kyriacou, Linda Lewis, Cllr Peter Lidstone, Brian Lippard, Katharine Mahler-Bech, Cllr Tracy Moore, Peter Perry (sub), Angela Phillips (sub), Cllr Catherine Rankin, Cllr James Scholes, David Scott, Tim Tempest, Alastair Tod (Chairman), David Wakefield, Mary Wardrop, Denise Watts, Pat Wilson and Cllr Chris Woodward

TWBC officers present: Jane Clarke (Head of Policy and Governance), Lee Colyer (Director of Finance and Corporate Services), Kevin Hetherington (Head of Communities and Wellbeing), Paul Taylor (Director of Change and Communities), Jo Wiltcher (Museum Manager) and Mike McGeary (Democratic Services Officer)

Also present: Cllr Mrs Julia Soyke and Reg Bandy

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were reported from: David Bushell, Cllr Bob Backhouse, Cllr Ben Chapelard, Alex Green, Cllr David Jukes, Altan Omer, Nick Pope and Cllr Don Sloan.

2. DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS ENTITLED TO VOTE

The Democratic Services Officer had circulated a list of organisations which had achieved the required level of attendance at meetings to be able to vote at the AGM, as determined by the Town Forum's Constitution.

3. MINUTES OF THE 2015 AGM

The minutes of the 2015 AGM, held on 26 November 2015, were submitted. It was noted that these had been presented to the January 2016 meeting, where they had been noted.

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the AGM, held on 26 November 2015, be approved.

4. PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE TOWN FORUM'S CONSTITUTION

The Chairman, Alastair Tod, advised that the Town Forum's Management Committee had studied the Constitution and, as had been reported 12 months earlier, were proposing a number of changes. These, he added, were largely to reflect more accurately how the workings of the Town Forum had evolved.

Alastair Tod advised that there was one amendment of significance which was being presented to Forum members for approval, namely under section 3, 'voting entitlement'. It was proposed that TWBC town ward members should no longer have any voting rights, other than at Annual General and Extraordinary General meetings. It was explained that this should assist town ward members in avoiding any 'conflict of interest' charges where, through taking part in a vote at a Town Forum meeting, they might have fettered their discretion ahead of formal TWBC committee discussion.

Attached to the agenda were (a) a 'tracked changes' version of the Constitution and (b) a copy of the revised Constitution, should the proposed changes be approved.

RESOLVED – That the revised Constitution be agreed, for immediate implementation.

5. REPORT FROM THE CHAIRMAN ON THE TOWN FORUM'S ACTIVITIES OVER THE PAST YEAR

The Chairman of the Town Forum for 2015/16, Alastair Tod, summarised his report on the work of the Forum over the past year, which was a requirement of its Constitution.

Alastair Tod began by focusing on the two major issues which had dominated the past 12 months, namely: (a) TWBC's Site Allocations Development Plan Document; and (b) the Borough Council's proposals for a new cultural and learning hub in Mount Pleasant, as well as new offices and a replacement theatre.

On the former issue, he advised that the Town Forum had broadly supported the proposals but regretted the lack of specific policies for the 'areas of change' and the downgrading at a late stage of one specific site, thereby removing the obligation to 'master-plan' the area.

On the second issue, the Town Forum had applauded the objectives of the hub and had expressed the hope that some of the skills that existed amongst Forum members could be used to help shape what will become a major community asset. With the new offices and replacement theatre, the support expressed by the Town Forum came with three conditions: that the design and the environmental impact of the new buildings should be worthy of such a major step; that the funding should be assured and affordable; and that the current listed civic buildings should be substantially preserved in an appropriate use. Alastair Tod added that the Forum also understood that the new offices would be designed as a civic centre with access for the community.

Alastair Tod also referred to the potential for a town council, an initiative which he said was currently in abeyance because of changes – both actual and planned – to the way that local government services are provided, through partnership arrangements as well as possible responsibility transfers.

Alastair Tod thanked the leaders and members of each of the six working groups for the excellent work they had completed during the past 12 months, including the production of well-argued responses to the Borough Council's consultation strategies and policies. He urged other members of the Forum to volunteer their time and efforts to join a working group, to maintain this high standard of work.

Alastair Tod also wished to place on record his thanks to the Borough Council for their continued hospitality and support for the Town Forum, and the help afforded by the secretariat, as well as all the members of the Forum for their constant engagement and interest.

As for the future, the Chairman raised the following issues:

- (a) Alastair Tod drew attention to the lack of TWBC feedback to reports produced by the Town Forum and its working groups; he asked that this aspect be pursued with some vigour;
- (b) Alastair Tod emphasised the Forum's concern over the difficult position which the Borough faced in delivering the Government's housing numbers, particularly the lack of control of development. He also expressed concern over the congestion difficulties which existed in the town. He hoped that these two matters would be closely watched and acted upon.

Councillor Woodward raised a technical point on the town council aspect of the Chairman's report. He said that, when he had previously asked about the process that was required to be followed, he had been told that a town council could not be created where the resultant population was more than 40% of the total within the Borough.

Alastair Tod advised that he was aware that the rules for creating a town council had changed in recent years, adding that he was unaware of the population limit element. Cllr Scholes added that his understanding of the population limit was that there had previously been a limit of 28,000.

It was agreed that Mike McGeary would seek the view of the Borough Council's Legal service on this point.

In conclusion, Mark Booker thanked Alastair Tod for his calm and measured leadership over the past two years which, he added, had led to the Town Forum's increased standing not only within the Borough Council but widely across the town.

RESOLVED – That the Chairman's report on the work of the Town Forum for 2015/16 be accepted.

6. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE FOR 2016/17

Jane Clarke summarised a report, which set out the election process for the appointment of a Chairman and two Deputy Chairmen of the Town Forum.

Ms Clarke explained that there had been one nomination for the position of Chairman and only one for the two Deputy Chairmen positions, as follows: Chairman – Adrian Berendt; Deputy Chairman – Alex Green. Ms Clarke advised that Mr Green had already served two terms of office as Deputy; she added that, while the Forum's Constitution specified two terms as the maximum for holding office, provision was also included for a further term of office, subject to the agreement of members at the AGM.

Alastair Tod proposed the election of Adrian Berendt as Chairman for 2016/17; this was seconded by Mark Booker. Linda Lewis proposed the re-election of Alex Green as Deputy Chairman for 2016/17; this was seconded by Jane Fenwick. These nominations were endorsed unanimously.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That Adrian Berendt be formally declared elected to serve as Chairman for 2016/17, until the date of the 2017 AGM;
- (2) That Alex Green be formally declared re-elected to serve as one of the Deputy Chairmen for 2016/17, until the date of the 2017 AGM.

The meeting concluded at 6.50pm.