



**Minutes of the AGM held on Thursday, 24 November 2022, at 6pm
Council Chamber, Town Hall, Royal Tunbridge Wells, TN1 1RS**

ATTENDANCE

- 1 Member Organisations:
Beulah Road Residents' Association – Stuart Anderson and Chris Morris |
Boyne Park Residents' Association – Sue Bishop and Dorothea Holman |
Calverley Park Residents' Association – Jane Fenwick | Civic Society of
Royal Tunbridge Wells – John de Lucy | Friends @ The Amelia Scott – Helen
Mitcham | 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 – David Bushell | Grantley Court Residents Association – Lorna
Blackmore | Inner London Road Residents' Association – Carol Wilson |
Molyneux Park Gardens Residents' Association – Don Sloan | Nourish
Community Foodbank and Sherbourne Close Management Committee –
Marianne MacDonald | Soroptimist International of Tunbridge Wells and
District – Caroline Auckland and Cat Mennell | St John's Road Residents'
Association – Marguerita Morton | The Forum – Carolyn Gray | Tunbridge
Wells Bicycle User Group – Adrian Berendt | Tunbridge Wells Friends of the
Earth – Steve Walter | Tunbridge Wells Twinning and Friendship Association
– Michael Holman | Upper Stone Street Residents' Association – Helen
Featherstone | Warwick Park Residents' Association – Neil Williams.

Councillor Members:

Culverden ward – Cllr Justine Rutland | Pantiles and St. Mark's ward – Cllr
Wendy Fitzsimmons | Park ward – Cllr Victoria White | St. John's ward – Cllr
Peter Lidstone and Cllr Marguerita Morton.

Others in Attendance:

Borough Council Officers – Terry Hughes (Community Safety Manager) |
Guests – Insp Ian Jones (Kent Police), Jill Ruddock, Angela McPherson,
Oliver Diggins, Roz Heaton. Thomas Appleby, Jayne Sharratt | Secretary –
Mark O'Callaghan.

REGISTER OF MEMBERS

- 2 The Secretary returned the list of members of the Town Forum as set out in
the agenda.

VOTING ENTITLEMENT FOR MEMBER ORGANISATIONS AND COUNCILLORS

- 3 The Secretary confirmed that the voting entitlement of those who had
achieved the required level of attendance was as set out in the agenda.

MINUTES OF THE 2021 AGM

- 4 The Chair noted that the minutes had been agreed in principle at the
meeting in January 2022 but were submitted here for formal approval.

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the AGM held on 11 November 2021 be approved.

CHAIR'S ANNUAL REPORT

- 5 The Chair summarised the annual report which highlighted the breadth and depth of activities the Town Forum had in their busy year.

Extra meetings were held such as the Forum Focus on 12 May 2022 which looked at the Forum's activities and ways it could function more effectively, virtual meetings for the local elections were held and those may be held as hybrid sessions going forward.

During the year the Forum was involved with more partnerships with the Borough Council which had been set up throughout the year and those included the town centre area plan, cooperation on Ukrainian refugees, the cost of living crisis and the shared prosperity levelling up.

Transport and active travel were highlighted.

It was confirmed that the Town Forum was supporting the Council to achieve its carbon neutrality objective by 2030.

There were 4 new members confirmed and those were:

- The Royal Wells Park Residents Group
- The Potteries Residents and Owners Group
- Tunbridge Wells Fair Trade Group
- Rotary Club of Tunbridge Wells

Attendance was named as an issue as that had dropped by 10 per cent.

Town Hall Space Limited were named as the consultants for the Town Hall co working.

Thanks was given to working groups for the amount of work they put in and they were considered to be were the backbone and drivers to the Town Forum.

Thanks to the Borough Council for their help at facilitating the meetings and in particular to the Secretary Mark O'Callaghan for all his support.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

- 6 The Secretary introduced the report and confirmed that nominations had been received as set out in the agenda.

The Secretary confirmed that the constitution allowed for two Deputy Chairs.

No challenges to the provisional result where received therefore it was declared that the votes cast were as follows:

- Don Sloan, Chair: Unanimous
- Adrian Berendt, Deputy Chair: Unanimous
- Jane Fenwick, Deputy Chair: Unanimous

The Chair thanked for his position and advised that they would do what they could in the coming year. Members of the Forum were invited to join working parties if they were minded.

RESOLVED:

1. That Don Sloan be elected Chair for 2022/23 until the date of the AGM 2023; and
2. That Adrian Berendt be elected Deputy Chair for 2022/23 until the date of the AGM 2023;
and
3. That Jane Fenwick be elected Deputy Chair for 2022/23 until the date of the AGM 2023.

The Chair ended the Annual General Meeting and passed over to the Secretary who continued with the general meeting as per agenda.



Minutes of the ordinary meeting held on Thursday, 24 November 2022, at 6pm Council Chamber, Town Hall, Royal Tunbridge Wells, TN1 1RS

ATTENDANCE

1

Member Organisations:

Beulah Road Residents' Association – Stuart Anderson and Chris Morris | Boyne Park Residents' Association – Sue Bishop and Dorothea Holman | Calverley Park Residents' Association – Jane Fenwick | Civic Society of Royal Tunbridge Wells – John de Lucy | Friends @ The Amelia Scott – Helen Mitcham | 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 – David Bushell | Grantley Court Residents Association – Lorna Blackmore | Inner London Road Residents' Association – Carol Wilson | Molyneux Park Gardens Residents' Association – Don Sloan | Nourish Community Foodbank and Sherbourne Close Management Committee – Marianne MacDonald | Soroptimist International of Tunbridge Wells and District – Caroline Auckland and Cat Mennell | St John's Road Residents' Association – Marguerita Morton | The Forum – Carolyn Gray | Tunbridge Wells Bicycle User Group – Adrian Berendt | Tunbridge Wells Friends of the Earth – Steve Walter | Tunbridge Wells Twinning and Friendship Association – Michael Holman | Upper Stone Street Residents' Association – Helen Featherstone | Warwick Park Residents' Association – Neil Williams.

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Others in Attendance:

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MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

2

- The secretary confirmed that the update referred to The Civic Society of Royal Tunbridge Wells only and did not include the Older People's Forum.
- The secretary listed out the changes as per the agenda.
- Since publication of the agenda it was confirmed that there was a fourth change; Kat Minaou was now the substitute representative for the Soroptimist International Tunbridge Wells and District, previously Angela Mcphearson. Caroline Auckland remains the primary representative.
- There were no new membership applications.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING DATED 16 JUNE 2022

3 **RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting dated 16 June 2022 were taken as a true record of the proceedings.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING DATED 21 SEPTEMBER 2022

4 The secretary advised that the minutes of the meeting dated 21 September 2022 were to follow.

UPDATES FROM MEMBER ORGANISATIONS

5 There were no updates from member organisations for consideration.

SPOTLIGHT ON SAFETY IN TUNBRIDGE WELLS

6 Caroline Auckland, Soroptimist International Tunbridge Wells and District outlined some of the survey findings which outlined the safety issues faced by women in Tunbridge Wells this was accompanied the use of visual aids.

- 112 people responded and 90% of those had experienced some form of sexual harassment in Tunbridge Wells.
- Grosvenor and Hilbert, St Johns Road and The Common as well as many more places were named as places people would avoid at night.
- Lighting was named as a major issue for people.
- Public transport for example High Brooms Station was named as somewhere people avoided.
- More Police, better education in schools were named as solutions.
- A supportive message from MP Greg Clarke was noted and welcomed.

Gill Ruddock, Soroptimist invited Members of the panel to respond to key points that were highlighted in the survey. What measures are in place to keep people safe and the need to highlight these to vulnerable people.

Inspector Jones, Police spoke about the need for a continuous dialog from the people in the borough and giving them the confidence to come forward to report offences and to know that they were taken seriously.

The possibility of a change in legislation was welcomed, to make these specific offences and allow more sterner sentencing powers; fine imprisonment or both depending on the offence.

Terry Hughes, Community Safety Manager spoke about the camera and lighting options available.

- It was advised that those were expensive to implement and it was important to undertake a survey on the location to confirm what changes could be made to make improvements and not making a situation worse rather than improving it.
- The report from the PCC survey and the Home Office reporting tool were mentioned. It was confirmed that 38 locations were logged from that tool and information taken from those assessments highlighted problem areas with issues such as graffiti, drug and alcohol use amount others highlighted.
- Over the coming calendar year the CSU and the Police Crime Reduction Officer were scheduled to hold Environmental Visual Audits in specific problem areas to gain more specific information about

- costings and possible solutions that could be implemented.
- It was mentioned that the budget for CCTV would be looked at with the CCTV Manager and the possibility of extending the CCTV reach to problem areas.
- Solutions such as Mobile rapid deployment cameras were difficult to implement but could be a solution.
- Widening footpaths in some areas was mentioned.
- The Town centre was raised as an area for issues lighting; example Clarence Road.
- Areas such a back alley to the Tunbridge Wells train station was mentioned as a potential problem area although it was fairly well lit, and had been cleaned up. Perception that no one cares, looked at for clean ups.
- The CSU Partnership plan next year along with a group of agencies will determine what the priorities will be and what actions will be taken.
- Although it was acknowledged that the town was thriving and a strong night time economy the goal was to be in a position where everyone can say Tunbridge Wells is a safe place.

Roz Heaton, Business Crime Manager Safe Town Partnership spoke about her role with the licence premises and the retailer to prevent crime in their premises and also keeping customers safe.

It was stated that within the night time economy, the violence against women and girls especially within the last 12 months had been taken very seriously by the Licensee and they understand that the onus is on them to keep their customers safe.

A lot of work had been done with 'Ask for Angela' posters, there are more bar runners in place and floor staff are performing more extensive searches.

At the end of October, a survey carried out across 3 premises and 3 separate weekends; Opera House, Aura and Pitcher and Piano with the age range between 18 – 35 plus highlighted issues such as:

- Lighting, trees from Mount Pleasant.
- Monson Road on the left under the colonnade was felt by some to be unsafe.
- Pantiles was felt by some to be unsafe.
- The 4 people who said they felt unsafe were from the younger age group and had either been a victim of crime or witnessed a crime.
- Spiking was mentioned a lot, however people had returned to a venue where spiking had occurred after security changes had been made.
- Cat calling and harassment.
- On a positive note, a lot of them said how boys/men of stepping in and challenging bad behaviour.
- More police, more security, female taxi drivers, female security were suggestions made by some in order to increase feeling of safety.
- Better public transport as after midnight it's a walk home.
- Personal alarms, safety tips cards were handed out to participants.

Reponses to questions included:

- Inspector Jones agreed that education was key now and from an early age and would allow people to understand what formed a healthy relationship and what boundaries were.
- Suggestions were taken on board of tip cards for men to advise them on how to behave, and posters in the toilets advising them to 'be the Angela' for girls/women that are at risk.
- Despite there being a funding issue related to the recruitment of Police Community Support Officers, it was advised that there was a

massive budget for the uplift for Police Officers and there was a large number of student officers in the Kent Police Offices and those will be manning the streets of Tunbridge Wells once trained.

- A department had been assembled to carry out work which ensured there was a police service that was representative of the community it served in terms of gender, race and all other aspects.
- Through the Police and Crime Commissioner there were funds allocated to Kenwood Trust charity for risk reduction related to drugs and alcohol and employees are deployed into areas where young people frequent. Also funded are the street pastors which are a good presence and provide help to vulnerable people.
- Terry Hughes advised that he would contact Hilary Smith about the cycle path Grosvenor and Hilbert Park and the agreement that it would be lit better.

ENVIRONMENT

- 7 The Chair introduced Mr Radu Corriola who presented with the use of a visual aid information about his Environment agency which was based in Tonbridge and their plan for communities and work on carbon emissions.

Mr Corriola explained different activities they were carrying out in order to reduce their footprint which included among others; currently there were 4,000 cars in their fleet and plans were in place to reduce that to 2,500 and to change to electric cars as soon as possible.

The Chair confirmed that the Tunbridge Wells Forum worked closely with the Tunbridge Wells Friends of the Earth and details of their works would be sent out in the next Forum correspondence.

The Forum would look more closely with the Council's works on the reducing their carbon neutrality.

The Repair café in Trinity in Tunbridge Wells and Rusthall which had started one up and were highlighted.

COST OF LIVING

- 8 The Chair explained that this agenda item followed the cost of living summit in Sept arranged by the Council.

Marieanne McDonald from Nourish Community Foodbank advised that Nourish was now 10 years old and acknowledged the help given over the years from different members of the Town Forum.

- A video was shown to the Forum and Marieanne went on to explain the impact that the years of austerity, the pandemic and the current cost of living crisis has had on the charity.
- The scale of the issue has affected not only food but fuel.
- Distributing fuel vouchers on behalf of the Government and the Council.
- Before Covid, Nourish did not have to spend any money on food as they were supported by the community. During Covid it was decided to give out fresh fruit and vegetables at a cost of £500 per month.

- Customers shopping online more frequently has impacted the amount of donations given in shops.
- £9,000 per month to supplement donations, that including the cost of the fruit and vegetables Nourish are spending approximately £115,000 per year to supplement and meet the need of the community.
- Help is needed, and members of the Forum are asked to support, volunteer, set up collection points and spread the word of the charity.
- Suggestions were welcomed in terms of how Nourish can get better know in the community.
- Charlie's Angels outside Rusthall Church was highlighted and members are asked to help.
- It was highlighted that The Black Horse pub were doing warm food.
- Nourish are registered with smile Amazon and easy fund raising.
- Beulah Road residents association are doing a Reverse Advent Calendar, this was explained and it was suggested that others could do the same for the month or the 12 days before Christmas. The donations will be delivered to Nourish. It was suggested that the donations could be broken up into weeks so a large donation wasn't delivered on 24 December.

ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS CONSULTATION

- 9 Adrian Berendt spoke about the Electoral Arrangements Consultation which was due to finish.
- The electoral arrangements for the for the borough council was changing.
 - There had been a move to see whether there should be all out elections every 4 years.
 - The Town Forum did not have any strong opinions on this however, one concern related to high brooms was raised.
 - Highbroom was considered much more a part of Southborough than Tunbridge Wells and the arrangements would have meant that some of Highbrooms would become part of Tunbridge Wells and it was felt that this should be opposed.
 - Members of the Forum were encouraged to review the information about the electoral arrangements in their area and to please make their views felt if they had any concerns.

UPDATE FROM THE BOROUGH COUNCIL

- 10 Councillor Justine Rutland spoke about the Town Centre plan.
- Workshops were undertaken in October which included pop up consultation and a town centre walking tour.
 - 45 invited stakeholders attend 3 workshops which were broken up into movement, public railway improvements and development.
 - The consultation included a talking point questionnaire that ran for over 4 weeks and there were over 500 respondents to the survey.
 - The consultants LBA were considering the information and preparing a draft study for consideration by the working group and that should be completed in early 2023.

Adrian B explained the process and how the consultants had grasped the challenges and opportunities for Royal Tunbridge Wells were.

- The workshops showed that lots of people had the same concerns.
- Members of the Forum are encouraged to take speak to residents groups about what they wanted to see in Tunbridge Wells and feedback the information.
- From the Local , it was felt that it was made clear from the Planning Inspector's comments that the Town Centre was a missing element.

Councillor Rutland spoke about the cinema site:

It was acknowledged that planning permission had been granted to Retirement Villages. Although this was not the decision the Town Forum had hoped for, thanks were given to those that came to speak. Moving forward RVG were currently looking to finalise their legal agreement which the intention of this being concluded and a decision notice issued before Christmas.

RVG will now be securing a contractor and design team with a view to starting on site demolition and bulk dig late summer 2023, main contract and starting on site 2024.

They would be happy to provide a greeting to the Town Forum next year and were putting together a Comms team and plan to come back to Cllr Rutland about timings on that.

Councillor Rutland spoke about:

- Christmas lights in the town centre were mainly funded by Tunbridge Wells together BID and the Council has contributed.
- Extra lights in castle street and at the clock tower.
- The trees outside the Town Hall were lit with uplighters which the Council installed.
- Two switch on events in Chapel Place and the Pantiles that were well attended and very positive feedback from local businesses.
- BID gift guide featuring town centre businesses and these were being distributed to areas outside the local town including Sevenoaks and Crowborough to encourage visitors.
- Members of the Forum are encouraged to support local businesses and attractions.

Economic Development Updates included:

- The launch of Love Local_Tunbridge Wells
- Small business Saturday event
- A tourism networking event at Trinity.
- Visit Kent will be holding their winter networking event at Trinity and Calverly Grounds Skating
- Consultation with businesses in the north end of the town centre related to the Market.
- 3 active travel schemes had been submitted to KCC for the possible inclusion in their Active Travel England and we should

hear by the end of December:

- Segregated cycle routes for the Pembury Road with bus priority.
 - Low traffic neighbourhood pilot.
 - Across town route via the Commons.
- Ukrainian Guests
 - Focus of Council is to find replacement hosts for those that are coming to the end of the original 6 month hosting agreement where the host does not wish to continue.
 - More funding has been issued by KCC to hosts to encourage them to extend their hosting.
 - Additional funding from central Government has not been secured.
 - Volunteers are needed
 - Weekly Newsletter issued by Council which provides updates.
- Cost of Living
 - Thanks were given to Nourish and Town Forum Members involved in the support
 - New digital hub tunbridgewells.gov.uk/costoflivingsupport
 - Members are encouraged to add information about areas that may be of benefit to others onto the hub.
 - [Warm.welcome.co.uk](https://warm.welcome.co.uk) is another website which will show you where your nearest warm room is.
- Dunorlan Park – Car Parking Consultation
 - Lots of engagement with local residents and users of the park
 - Most of the respondents drive to park and would not be willing to pay for parking.
- Cabinet
 - Cabinet meetings taking place across the borough.
 - Q and A sessions held after main Cabinet meeting and that section is not webcast. The next session will be held in the Town Hall but information on future venues will be disclosed in due course.

Answers to questions included:

- Town Square and the legal agreements should be determined by the end of the year. Town Forum are down to have some meetings in the Town Hall and other venues around the borough as well as virtual.
- Any suggestions of available venues are welcomed.

Jane Clarke outlined the updates from the Borough Council.

- Jane agreed to issue the slides so they can be circulated to the Town Forum members.

REPORTS FROM THE TOWN FORUM WORKING GROUPS

- 11 Several of the working groups had submitted reports as per the agenda.

Michael Holman, Water in the Wells mentioned that the person reorganising the spring has a website that's up and running www.royaltunbridgewellswater.com and this can be used to get updates on progress and order water from the well.

It was suggested that feedback could be brought before the Forum about the Planning Inspector's comments on the Local Plan and the Council's reaction to this.

URGENT BUSINESS OR TOPICS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

- 12 It was suggested that feedback could be brought before the Forum about the Planning Inspector's comments on the Local Plan and the Council's reaction to this.

It was suggested that the person from the Youth Forum should have been invited to speak and this was agreed, they will be asked to speak more at future meetings.

Councillor Lidstone responded to a question about problems in St John's park and The Meadows:

- It was advised that gangs had been vandalising those parks and forced the café to close.
- It was not felt that enough had been done and future meetings with the Police and CSU along with the Friends of the Park were due to be set up. Information about those meetings would be circulated.
- Residents to the park are involved in monitoring the park and locking gates.

FUTURE MEETINGS

- 13 The Chair closed the meeting and confirmed that the next meeting was scheduled for the 19 January 2023.