



ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS TOWN FORUM

Minutes of Meeting dated Thursday 25 February 2010

1. Present:

Daniel Bech (Telephone House Neighbours' Association), Jonathan Clark (Rusthall Village Association), John Cunningham (Royal Tunbridge Wells Civic Society), Michael Doyle (Hawkenbury Village Association), Jane Fenwick (Calverley Park Association), Maggie Fraser (Tunbridge Wells Over Fifties' Forum), John Goodfellow (Banner Farm Residents' Association), John Higgs (Hanover and Rock Villa Residents' Association), Michael Holman (Tunbridge Wells Twinning & Friendship Association), George Lawson (Inner London Road Residents' Association), David Morris (Rusthall Village Association), Ian Naismith (Hanover and Rock Villa Residents' Association), Peter Perry (Calverley Park Crescent Freeholders' Association), Simon Smith (Inner London Road Residents' Association), Christopher Thomas (The Chairman of the Town Forum and The Goodwins No's 1 & 2 Residents' Company/Woodbury Close Residents' Association), Alastair Tod (Royal Tunbridge Wells Civic Society) and Mary Wardrop (Hawkenbury Village Association and Chair of Sherborne Close).

RTW Ward Councillors: Ronan Basu (Culverden), Peter Crawford (Vice-Chairman and Broadwater), Barry Edwards (Rusthall), Mrs Catherine Mayhew (Park), Frank Williams (Sherwood) and Chris Woodward (St John's).

Others in attendance: William Benson (Chief Executive), Denise Shortall (Gateway Manager), Samantha Timms (Senior Committee Administrator) and Mary Harris (Courier).

2. Apologies:

Betsey Dix (Calverley Park Crescent Freeholders' Association), Mike Miller (Tunbridge Wells Over Fifties' Forum), Altan Omer (Benhall Mill Road Residents' Association), Kate Sergeant (Clarence Road Users' Association) and David Webster (Clarence Road Users' Association).

(Christopher Thomas in the Chair for the duration of the meeting.)

3. Membership Changes

New members - Tunbridge Wells Over Fifties Forum represented by Maggie Fraser and Mike Miller from the Over Fifties' Forum. Maggie introduced herself to the Town Forum and gave a short background on the Over Fifties' Forum including their aims and objectives.

New representative for Rusthall Village Association - David Morris, Rusthall Village Association.

4. Gateway Presentation Update

Mary Wardrop introduced this item. Mary gave some background to the topic and stated that last year the Town Forum was going to review and share its experiences of the Gateway from those residents and groups in the unparished communities represented by the Town Forum.

The Town Forum noted that Councillor Mrs Mayhew, who represents Park Ward including Hawkenbury, had facilitated a meeting between Denise Shortall, Gateway Manager and Mary Wardrop. William Benson, at the time, Director of Change and Business Support, had given Mary a guided tour of the whole building and together with Denise Shortall had answered questions. William had explained the origins of the Gateway's project and the link between Kent County Council and the Borough Council.

Informal visits to the Gateway had taken place following consultation with members of the Hawkenbury Village Association, residents of Sherborne Close and other individuals in Southborough and Tunbridge Wells. On 1 February 2010, both Mary Wardrop and Alastair Tod had visited the Gateway and met with Denise and William where they were able to follow-up previous issues and the changes implemented so far.

Mary introduced both William Benson and Denise Shortall to the Town Forum.

William thanked the Town Forum for their invitation to attend their meeting and updated them on the success of the Tunbridge Wells Gateway. William explained the background to why the Council pursued the Gateway initiative and stated that the Town Hall reception facilities were inadequate with too many reception points.

The Gateway, at 8 Grosvenor Road, Royal Tunbridge Wells, was the place to go to access a wide variety of council and public services in a modern, user-friendly location. It was set up as a joint venture between Kent County Council and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council; it works with other public sector agencies, volunteer and charitable organisations to offer information and advice on everything from benefits, housing, skills learning and business advice to legal or debt services. Members of the public could also go there to access the internet free of charge and make automated payments.

The Town Forum noted that the Gateway concept had operated on the principle that services would follow customer need and not the other way around. The location of the Gateway was central to the town centre, was DDA compliant and many more improved facilities including a 'Changing Place' toilet facility allowing people with complex physical needs and their carers to use the Gateway.

The Gateway has four principal areas, namely: Meet and Greet, Information and Self-Help, Cross-Agency services and Surgeries. The advantages of a Gateway are that it is based in the heart of the retail environment, is in close proximity of the car parks, bus and rail stops and is of adequate size. William then went through an example of where the Gateway had helped a member of the public.

Denise Shortall outlined numerous organisations that were present within the Gateway, namely: Business Link Kent, Carers FIRST, Citizens' Advice Bureau, Community Wardens, RBLI Trailblazer, RBLI Workstep, Sexual Health Clinic, Kenward Trust, KCC Registrar, Maximus, RBLI Pathways to Work, Victim Support, Volunteer Centre Tunbridge Wells (Voluntary Action within Kent), West Kent Mediation, DSD Law, Hi-Kent, and KCA Young Persons' Service. Denise was keen to stress that this was not an exhaustive list as many more organisations were joining the Gateway or showing an interest in joining.

A Gateway DVD was then shown to the Town Forum for their information. Following the DVD and in concluding, William went on to say that a mobile Gateway for more rural areas was in place and had to date been to a couple of sites across the borough and would be rolled-out further in due course. It was also noted that there was a Gateway team member located at the Weald Information Centre based at Cranbrook who had the same knowledge as the Tunbridge Wells Gateway staff for members of the public who live in Cranbrook and surrounding areas, although the Weald Information Centre was owned by the Parish Council and did not have any partners in the building.

Councillor Mrs Mayhew informed members of the Town Forum that the London Borough of Bromley had visited Tunbridge Wells' Gateway last week and was very impressed with what had been achieved. It was heartwarming to know that other authorities were taking an interest and wanting to visit Tunbridge Wells' Gateway.

Mary Wardrop thanked both William and Denise for their time and presentation and asked members if they had any questions or matters of clarification.

Christopher Thomas asked whether the Department of Work and Pensions was involved with the Gateway. In response, William stated that the Pensions Service was involved. David Morris

stated that he had attended a Pensions' Conference and the majority of people on the day had demanded a central place for services and that was exactly what Tunbridge Wells was providing – well done.

Councillor Williams informed members that the Total Place Initiative was a radical new way of how to improve public services. In return the Town Forum stated that the Gateway was a very positive step forward and thanked all the staff who worked at the Gateway.

Michael Holman asked whether more copies of the 'Welcome to Tunbridge Wells Booklet' could be made available at Gateway. This suggestion was taken on board by both William and Denise.

The Town Forum asked about the cost of the Gateway and were pleased to hear that Kent County Council had contributed 50% to the re-fit and ongoing costs of the Gateway. John Goodfellow raised concerns about planning and having to go to the Gateway only to have his query not answered and having to make an appointment with a member of staff from the Town Hall on another day. Members were informed that in the coming weeks, the Planning Duty Officer and the Planning Information Officer would be combining posts and would be able to assist with more complex planning questions/issues based at the Gateway.

In concluding, the Chairman, Christopher Thomas, expressed thanks to William, Denise and Mary Wardrop. The presentation given by William Benson and Denise Shortall is appended to these minutes for members' information.

5. Minutes of Last Meeting Dated 28 January 2010

The minutes were agreed, subject to the following amendments:

Amendment to minute 1 'Present', Others in Attendance

Dhanna Sharma was in fact a resident in Sherwood and not Ramslye as stated in the minutes.

Amendment to minute 7 'Town Forum's Aims and Objectives Review'

Sixth paragraph, second line 'facility, such as a training centre...', the word 'training' should be 'trading'.

Amendment to minute 8 'Reports from Champions/Vision Committee', Transport and Health

From the third line 'that a planning application...', paragraph to be changed to ' that a planning application was being prepared for a further 100 or so car parking places, but it was not yet known when it would be submitted. The Public Transport Forum realised that the transport to the new hospital at Pembury would be a formidable problem and that both private cars and public transport would need to be used to the full. Any Town Forum member who wished to be involved in any transport discussions would be welcome to contact John Goodfellow direct.'

Matters Arising: None.

6. Actions from Previous Meetings

On-going Action

That all representatives from **any association/member to provide details of activities** that they had undertaken and/or want to promote to Daniel Bech in order for them to be included on the Town Forum's website so that all members could know what was happening. This is particularly important so as to avoid duplication of activity and to show a single voice for Councillors to deal with.

The Chairman, Christopher Thomas, reiterated the fact that if any association/member wishes other Town Forum members to be aware of their organisation's activities, they need to inform Daniel Bech in order for them to be included on the Town Forum's website. All representatives are reminded to inform the Town Forum of concerns held by residents, who may not be represented on the Town Forum, but wish for a platform to raise such concerns.

Actions Outstanding from the Meeting dated 26 November 2009

- 4.1 Graham Goddard to contact the Ambulance Service for clarification on their reorganisation proposals for a 'make ready' centre.
- 4.3 Graham Goddard to seek clarification from Kent & Medway Social Care Trust on whether in-patient services are/will be provided from Maidstone.
- 4.6 Graham Goddard to look to provide a 'who does what' chart on their website which could also be sent to the Town Forum for publication.

Actions Outstanding from the Meeting dated 28 January 2010

- 9.1 Councillor Crawford to contact the Town and Country Housing Group regarding wheel clamping and inform Mr Sharma of the response.

Councillor Crawford gave an update to the Town Forum and stated that this was an on-going action which would be resolved in due course. The signage regarding wheel clamping in the Ramslye area was not adequate and needed to be looked into further.

Actions Completed from the Meeting dated 28 January 2010

- 8.1 Any Town Forum member wishing to be involved in any future discussions regarding the Pembury Hospital transport/parking to contact John Goodfellow. johnvgtw@tinyworld.co.uk
- 9.2 Should any Town Forum member have any ideas for locations of new benches throughout the town to contact Kate Sergeant direct. (k.sergeant@yahoo.co.uk).

7. Reports from Borough Councillors

Councillor Mrs Mayhew – Members were informed that the Council's budget had been agreed at the full Council meeting that took place on 24 February. Special Expenses would be discussed at a future meeting of the Corporate Services Select Committee.

It was suggested to the Town Forum that perhaps they should take an interest.

A report was being submitted to the Council's Cabinet on 3 March to discuss Urban Parishing (Rusthall) for Cabinet to agree for public consultation to take place with residents of Rusthall. Perhaps the Town Forum might want to consider putting their views forward in relation to Rusthall Parishing as the decision would affect their town areas.

Councillor Mrs Mayhew asked the Town Forum whether they knew of any empty shop windows that could be used by the public/residents' associations. 'Mean While Use of Leases' was currently being promoted which meant that shop fronts could be used to display material of interest to the public.

Members were asked if they knew of any empty office space that the Domestic Violence Help Line Centre could use – if so, please contact Councillor Mrs Mayhew direct.

Councillor Basu – The Town Forum was updated on the current situation of the Royal Tunbridge Wells in Bloom 2010. www.royaltunbridgewellsinbloom.org.uk
He informed members that Tunbridge Wells Garden Centre had agreed sponsorship and the launch of Royal Tunbridge Wells in Bloom 2010 would take place on 5 March 2010. The 'In Bloom' would help improve the visibility of the town centre and encourage homeowners and businesses to smarten-up their frontages.

Daniel Bech stated that the awareness campaign, including the floral competition of the 'In Bloom', was progressing. The aim was to find volunteers, supporters, contributors and sponsors. Some residents' associations were promoting the 'In Bloom' in their residents' letters and the Courier Newspaper would also be highlighting the event. Salomons Centre had volunteered to assist in some way in relation to the awards' presentation.

Councillor Woodward – Members were informed that the borough councillors that represent Royal Tunbridge Wells were now meeting routinely, every month, to discuss town issues and to make it clear to the Council's Cabinet their views relating to various topics and concerns. It was noted that one of the group's top priorities was the cinema site and what the Council was doing to move things forward.

Councillor Woodward also expressed his opinion in relation to the Town Forum's aims and objectives and thought that the aims were good, but what plans/initiatives were in place to achieve the aims identified?

Members of the Town Forum thanked Councillor Woodward for informing them of the news and it was agreed that the Town Forum would work together with the borough councillors.

In concluding, Councillor Woodward stated that the condition of the roads was also a concern.

The Chairman informed members that Lene Beynon, Borough Engineer, was in regular contact with Kent Highway Services and should anyone have a particular road in mind they should contact Lene for her to compile a 'hit list' of roads.

8. Town Forum's Aims and Objectives Review

The Chairman informed members that the Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum's Aims and Objectives would not be considered at this meeting but should any member have any comments to make, they should send them to Samantha Timms, who would compile a list of suggestions/comments and send them to Christopher Thomas in time for the next Town Forum meeting due to take place on 25 March 2010. The proposed Aims and Objectives are set out below:

Town Forum's Objectives:

- Improve the town's streetscape and maintain the historic character of its buildings and features
- Improve public transport and private vehicle access and support improved facilities for pedestrians and cyclists
- Support and initiate environmental initiatives such as Royal Tunbridge Wells in Bloom
- Support the maintenance and development of public housing and public services
- Act as expert local champions/experts to support current local issues
- Maintain and improve parks, open spaces, and playground facilities
- Other issues as they arise
- Encourage energy efficiency by residents, business and TWBC
- Encourage sustainable strategies for residents and businesses

Local issues:

- Highlighting and removing grot spots
- Royal Tunbridge Wells in Bloom
- Cinema site development
- Public transport to new Pembury hospital and future development of K&S site
- Consulting with KCC concerning transport and street lighting issues

Town Forum's Aims:

1. Royal Tunbridge Wells be cleared of Grot Spots (with priority on the Ritz Cinema Site Building during 2010)
2. Kent Highways (KCC) delivers the promised "high standard" regarding roads, pavements, streetlights and signs
3. The town centre of Royal Tunbridge Wells becomes more pedestrian friendly
4. Trading be reintroduced at the former Morrison's site, Station Approach
5. Adequate and appropriate leisure facilities be made available for ALL ages
6. Royal Tunbridge Wells be promoted as a centre for Art and Culture
7. The Royal Tunbridge Wells Conservation Area be actively defended
8. Royal Tunbridge Wells in Bloom be re-launched in 2010
9. Improve and expand parks and open space, utilisation of the Commons
10. Tunbridge Wells Borough Council's cost cutting
11. Support and develop employment and businesses within the borough

The above would be re-submitted to the Town Forum on 25 March 2010 for final approval.

Agreed: That the revised Town Forum's Aims and Objectives be resubmitted to the 25 March 2010 meeting of the Town Forum for approval.

Action:

- 9.1 That should any Town Forum member have any questions/amendments to the proposed Aims and Objectives they should send them to Samantha Timms by Monday 8 March 2010.

10. Reports from Champions/Vision Committee

Royal Tunbridge Wells in Bloom 2010 – Website: www.royaltunbridgewellsinbloom.org.uk

Timetable as follow:

Friday 5 March – launch and presentation to the press and sponsors
Monday 31 May – deadline for sponsors to be integrated in publications
Monday 28 June – closing date for returning competition entry forms
Monday 5 to Friday 16 July – Judging period
Friday 17 September – Awards' presentation
Wednesday 22 September – Debriefing for organisers and sponsors

11. Any Other Business

Summerhill House, London Road – George Lawson informed members that appeared to be some activity being enacted at this grot spot and that it appeared to be Under Offer.

Front Garden Parking – Alastair Tod stated that Article 4 Direction was now in planning control and the Royal Tunbridge Wells Civic Society was assisting the Council in currently piloting two areas within the town centre to carefully survey parking in front gardens.

For members' information the an Article 4 Direction started with a presentation by the Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum to the Borough Council's Local Economy and Housing Select Committee last year, on 15 January 2009, entitled 'In Royal Tunbridge Wells, Front Gardens turned into Car Parking Spaces'. Below is a link to that presentation:

www.townforum.org.uk/community/frontgardensparking-leh150109.pdf

Frant Road Crossing – Christopher Thomas informed members that the road safety crossing on Frant Road was being carried out. The Town Forum expressed their thanks to County Councillor John Davis for his assistance in this matter.

12. Dates of next meetings of the Town Forum

2010

- 25 March 2010 at 6.30pm
- 22 April 2010 at 6.30pm
- 27 May 2010 at 6.30pm
 - Graham Goddard, Hospital Development Director, Maidstone & Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust
- 24 June 2010 at 6.30pm
- 29 July 2010 at 6.30pm
- 30 September 2010 at 6.30pm
- 28 October 2010 at 6.30pm
- 25 November 2010 at 6.30pm
- 16 December 2010 meeting – provisional,
there is a possibility of holding this meeting in a different venue and at a different time.

25 March 2010 is the next full Town Forum - Any reports/short papers to be emailed/posted to Samantha Timms by no later than 10am on Monday 8 March 2010.

(NOTE:

Councillor Mrs Mayhew left the meeting during minute 4 above (7.18pm) and returned whilst the discussion was still taking place on minute 4 (7.26pm).

Councillor Woodward arrived at the meeting during minute 4 (7.29pm).

The meeting came to a close at 8.18pm.