



ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS TOWN FORUM

Minutes of Meeting dated Thursday 25 September 2008

1. Present:

Daniel Bech (Telephone House Neighbours' Association), Grahame Bell (The Pantiles Traders' Association), Graham Bradley (Hanover and Rock Villas Residents' Association), June Bridgeman (Soroptimist International / Friends of Woodbury Park Cemetery), John Cunningham (Royal Tunbridge Wells Civic Society), Michael Doyle (Hawkenbury Village Association), Peter Gemmill (Albion Road Residents' Association), John Goodfellow (Banner Farm Residents' Association), John Higgs (Hanover & Rock Villa Residents' Association), Michael Holman (TW Twinning and Friendship Association), Robin Hiller (Transition Tunbridge Wells), Michael Larsen (Friends of the Grove), George Lawson, (Inner London Road Residents' Association), Ian Naismith (Hanover and Rock Villa Residents' Association), Altan Omer (Benhall Mill Road Land Association), Keith Perry (Benhall Mill Road Land Association), Kate Sergeant (Clarence Road Users' Association), Simon Smith (Inner London Road Residents' Association), Alastair Tod (RTW Civic Society), Christopher Thomas (The Chairman of the Town Forum and The Goodwins No's 1 & 2 Residents' Company/ Woodbury Close Residents' Association), Mary Wardrop (Hawkenbury Village Association) and Philip Whitbourn (Beulah Road Residents' Association).

Councillors: Ronen Basu (Culverden), Peter Crawford (Broadwater), Mrs Catherine Mayhew (Park); John Miller (Culverden); James Scholes (Pantiles & St Mark's), Christopher Woodward (St John's).

Others in attendance: Mary Harris (Courier Newspaper); Graham Hill (Kent and Medway Networks (LINK)), Mark Panter (Panter Hudspith Architects); Sarah Robinson (Panter Hudspith Architects); and Samantha Timms (Town Forum Secretary).

2. Apologies:

Jenny Blackburn (Rusthall Village Association / Friends of the Commons), David Webster (Clarence Road Users' Association), Tricia Wright (Calverley Park Residents' Association).

Councillors: Robert Atwood (Rusthall), Bothwell, Roy Bullock (Leader TWBC), John Miller (Culverden), David Neve (St James),

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

3. Membership Changes

Robin Hillier became a new member of the Town Forum and represents **Transition Tunbridge Wells**.

John Newman, Chair of **Sherborne Close** had been replaced as Chair by Pastor Richard Blackwell.

4. Minutes of Last Meeting dated 31 July 2008

The minutes were agreed as an accurate record, subject to the following amendments:

Amendment to minute 11 'Any Other Business', Faith Forum, 4th para down, page 5

Add to end of first sentence after 'area', '*as that of most members of the Town Forum*'.

Delete second sentence and replace with '*Councillors Mrs Mayhew and Bullock have attended some of the meetings and other Councillors are to be invited to attend future meetings.*'

Amendment to minute 11 'Any Other Business', Heritage open Days, 5th para down, page 5
 Second line down should read 'would take place *between 11 and 14 September 2008 and there would be 35 properties taking part, together with eight events.*

Matters Arising: None received.

5. Actions Completed from the Meeting dated 31 July 2008

ON GOING ACTION

9.3 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.

Actions Completed from 31 July 2008 meeting:

- 7.1 Should any Town Forum member have any further questions to send them direct to Jane Gould or Graham Webb:
jane.gould@southeastwater.co.uk graham.webb@southeastwater.co.uk
- 8.1 That Forum members should they have any views/comments/concerns relating to an introduction of a cycle path around Tunbridge Wells and Rusthall Common, to submit them to Christopher Thomas and also Michael Larsen.
- 10.1 That Christopher Thomas write a letter to the Council asking for them to re-consider entering into the Britain in Bloom competition next year.
- 11.1 That a Five-Ways working group be established to consider the pros and cons of pedestrianising Five-Ways.

6. Reports from Borough Councillors

Councillor Mrs Mayhew – Councillor Mrs Mayhew updated the Town Forum on a number of strategic issues, mainly:

Vision 2026 – This document was currently out for consultation and the comments received back would inform Councillors what the long-term visions for the Borough were. The document builds on the information from a variety of sources and provided by many people.

<http://www.townforum.org.uk/consultation/vision2026consultationdraft2008.pdf>

Cinema Site – The Town Forum was informed that a planning application had now been received by the Council in relation to the Ritz Cinema site.

Waste Collection and Street Cleansing Contract – It was noted that the waste collection and street cleansing contract was one of the Council's single biggest contract that the Council lets; tenders for the contract were being received at the present time.

Strategic Housing Land Allocation Assessment (SHLAA) – was currently being worked on by Officers. The document identified all land with potential for development, but was not an indication to the land that the final Local Development Framework would actually allocate.

Tourist Information Centre, Pantiles – The Town Forum noted that the Local Economy and Housing Select Committee for Tunbridge Wells Borough Council had met last week (18 September) and had discussed the possible relocation of the Tourist Information Centre. It was decided by this Committee that various options should be considered before a firm decision

be made as to the relocation. The Town Forum had also independently come to the conclusion that full research based on full statistical information must be undertaken prior to any decisions being made. Councillors Mrs Mayhew and Scholes stressed that no formal report/research had been written or carried out.

Audit Commission – Councillor Mrs Mayhew stated that the Council was being considered for re-categorisation by the Audit Commission in November of this year – she stated that the Chairman of the Town Forum, Christopher Thomas, would be interviewed as the Town Forum was considered as a key partner/stakeholder.

Councillor Scholes highlighted to the Town Forum that the first leisure survey of parks, recreation grounds and open spaces across the borough was being carried out. The survey was being sent to 5,000 households across the borough. The survey responses would then be divided up into wards/parishes and as well as providing valuable information about open spaces in Royal Tunbridge Wells, each Town and Parish Council would receive feedback relevant to their area. The survey forms would be sent out over the next two weeks, for return by the 23 October.

Councillor Basu – The Government was taking a keen interest in health and he asked the Town Forum whether or not they would like to become more involved in health matters. The Town Forum agreed that they would.

7. LINKs (Local Involvement Networks)

Town Forum members had previously agreed that a representative from LINK should attend the September meeting to talk about how the LINKs would work in the area, how people could get involved and what sort of activities they could get involved with. John Goodfellow of the Town Forum introduced Graham Hills, the Operational Director of Kent and Medway Networks Ltd.

The Town Forum noted that LINKs had been set up to help communities influence the way health and social care services were to be delivered. LINKs are networks of groups and individuals that had been set up to make sure that health and social care services were planned and delivered to meet the needs of the people who use them.

A LINK would give everyone a chance to say what they think about local health and care services – what was going well and what was not so good; give people a chance to check how care services were planned and run; and provide feedback on what people had said about services so that things could change for the better.

Graham went on to say that a LINK would provide an opportunity for the whole community to say what they think about local services, to raise issues of concern and to question those who run services. LINKs were supported by a Host organisation to help them develop and work. This would mean that any voluntary or community organisation, such as the Town Forum, could get involved and influence the work of the LINK.

LINKs had been given powers to help them carry out their role and include: asking the Commissioners for information about services and expect a response; make recommendations and expect a response from Commissioners; and refer matters to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the Local Authority. It was noted that these powers could help to strengthen the voice of the voluntary and community sector.

Graham urged Town Forum members to make contact with LINK now and not wait for the launch event that would take place in November/December 2008 – views would be needed in order to raise the issues higher on the agenda of the statutory sector, to talk to those who make the decisions about new or existing services and to be able to join forces with others' concerns and not have duplication. For any more information please visit their website www.nhscentreforinvolvement.nhs.uk

The Town Forum thanked the representatives from LINK for their attendance and in-depth presentation and for answering questions.

Action:

That Town Forum members submit their views regarding the LINK to:
 The Kent LINK - Local Involvement Networks
 Unit 23, Folkestone Enterprise Centre
 Shearway Road
 Folkestone
 Kent CT19 4RH

or email: info@kmn-ltd.co.uk

8. CINEMA SITE

Daniel Bech had arranged for a 30 minutes presentation relating to the replacement of the Ritz Cinema Site to be given by the architects Panter Hudspith, architects of the winning new design. The Town Forum was introduced to Sarah Robinson and Mark Panter of Panter Hudspith.

Mark informed the Town Forum that Panter Hudspith had won the Council's competition that had run earlier in the year and that a planning application had now been submitted to the Council for consideration and consultation.

The Town Forum was then shown different diagrams, conceptual design pictures and drawings of the proposals submitted.

www.townforum.org.uk/planning/panterhudspithpresentation092008.pdf

Following the presentation a number of questions were asked of designers while a number of concerns were also raised over the design. These included:-

- Access from the site – how is this to be arranged?
- Will the design include flexibility in plans and usage of space within the development should a different use be considered more appropriate for parts of the building once completed?
- What was the environmental awareness of the project?
- The roof line was not in keeping with other properties and needed rounding off.
- The building appeared rather “square” in design and needed more styling to be in keeping.

Christopher Thomas had to bring these questions and comments to a close and then advised all Town Forum members to make comments and raise concerns in the forthcoming planning and consultation process. He also advised that the architects were wanting to hear comments from the Town Forum members.

9. Reports from the Vision Committee and Working Groups

Various Planning Matters – Philip Whitbourn updated the Town Forum on their recent meeting. Various matters arose:

Killian Pretty Review – The Town Forum noted that the Killian Pretty Review, concerned with speeding the planning process up had been studied and responses to the 17 questions posed were made before the consultation deadline of 5 September.

www.townforum.org.uk/consultation/killianprettyreview-planningprocess-rtwtf290808.pdf

(A copy of the response document was available from Philip should any member require a copy.)

The document reflected the point that what mattered most in the long-term was a satisfactory outcome, rather than a pre-occupation with speed.

DCLG Consultation Documents – Philip informed the Town Forum that two further consultation documents, emanating from the Department for Communities and Local Government, were being studied and responses had been drafted.

– Planning for Town Centres: One of the documents concerned included a section on town centres and out of town development. It was noted that a response was due shortly (submissions until 3 October) that envisaged making out of town developments easier by rendering it unnecessary to show ‘need’.

www.townforum.org.uk/consultation/pps6-towncentresfirst-rtwtf250908.pdf

(The response was also available should members wish to see a copy.)

– The Local Accountability paper which included “Holding local public officers to account”, did not require a response until the 30 October.

Pavements – Philip stated that it was appalling to see huge patches of black tarmac recently laid by Kent Highway Services in the brick pavements on Mount Pleasant. The authorities should be taking utility companies to task when they do tarmac repairs to the town’s brick pavements. It was noted that Kent Highway Services were setting a dreadful example in the town’s main Boulevard – he went on to say that perhaps the new measure for “holding public officers to account” could not come soon enough.

Philip suggested that a well-briefed official from Kent Highway Services should attend the Town Forum regularly to give advanced notice of any scheme for footpaths, signs, lampposts, road works etc, so that the Town Forum could have an opportunity of making representations to them and to our elected representatives accordingly.

Satellite Dishes – Philip highlighted to the Town Forum that a DCLG booklet entitled “A Householders’ Planning Guide for the Installation of Antennas, including Satellite Dishes” was available from the Planning Department. It was noted that from the leaflet, it could be seen that dishes installed on walls facing the road in Conservation Areas required Planning Permission. He stated that Beulah Road Residents’ Association had raised two cases with the Council recently but there were problems over taking enforcement. Philip stated that he would be taking the matter up with the authorities and that should any other association experience similar problems to let him know.

Action:

- 9.1 That any other association experienced similar problems with satellite antennas to contact Phillip Whitbourn.

Vision and Arts Committee – Michael Larsen updated the Town Forum on their meeting that took place on 22 September 2008. Various subjects arose from the meeting, namely:

Celebrating the Centenary – Members of the Committee discussed the matter of celebrating the Centenary of the granting of the Town’s Royal prefix by means of a statue or other monument. Possible locations included the Pantiles, Calverley Road, the ‘green’ outside the Old Post Office and the corner of Mount Pleasant and Church Road – although the Pantiles was the preferred location. The Committee had agreed that Altan Omer would make the necessary enquiries about the possibility of providing a water-feature.

The Tourist Information Centre was also discussed at this meeting.

Pedestrianising Fiveways – It was recognised that the matter was of considerable complexity and was resolved that a working party of the Committee be established to continue the discussions further. The Working Party would consist of: Daniel Bech, Michael Larsen and Christopher Thomas. Invitations would be sent to John Goodfellow, Philip Whitbourn and George Lawson to join the Working Party.

Vision for Kent Consultation Document 2006 – The Town Forum noted that no reply had been received from Kent County Council to the Town Forum's response to the consultation document that had been submitted.

www.townforum.org.uk/kcc-tw/visionforkent2006.pdf - FINAL PUBLISHED DOCUMENT

However, John Davies, KCC Councillor who attended the meeting did come with a copy of a letter replying to the paper and promised the Town Forum that a signed original was being sent by Alex King M.B.E. of KCC to the Chairman of the Town Forum.

www.townforum.org.uk/vision/kentvision-kccalexking220908.pdf

(This letter has subsequently been received and emailed around to all members)

"Consultation and Engagement Strategy 2008-2011" – It was agreed that the identity and role of the Town Forum had not adequately been recognised in the Council's documentation; this would be drawn to the Head of Community and Corporate Planning.

Love Where We Live and Britain in Bloom – Michael stated that these discussions were still very preliminary and would be discussed at the next Committee meeting.

Transport Matters – John Goodfellow submitted a report relating to Transportation, this report was for noting and covered the following issues:

Taxi Stand at Fiveways – John stated that the stand did not seem to be functioning very well. He had checked regularly but had not seen a taxi with a driver waiting in the stand - This was confirmed by the Civil Enforcement Officer (Traffic Warden). The warden also confirmed that the displaced disabled drivers regularly parked on the double yellow area beside Millennium Square, which they were permitted to do for up to 3 hours, as they were not judged to cause an obstruction there. Should any Town Forum member have any further information/knowledge of the situation, please contact John direct.

Traffic Restrictions across Fiveways – The Town Forum noted that at the end of the Town Forum's 31 July meeting, John was asked to lead a consideration of the traffic situation at Fiveways. This work had been carried out and a report had been submitted to the Chairman of the Town Forum.

Meadow Road Bus Stop - This was a major bus stop in the town centre, close to the Royal Victoria Place, used by numerous routes with four/five buses stopping at the same time. It was noted that no bus shelter was present; there should be at least two. John stated that it was a prime candidate for improvement under the Quality Bus Partnership between Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and the main operator Arriva, but worthwhile improvement would require the owners of the Allied Dunbar office block behind the bus stop to accept a re-design (at TWBC's expense) of a tiny portion of their land outside their main boundary walling. The Town Forum fully supported all endeavours made.

Speed Limit reduction on Forest Road – John made reference to The Courier dated 15 August, where it featured the concern of the Hawkenbury Village Association over speeding traffic, particularly where the 40mph limit reduced to 30mph near the Spread Eagle. The Banner Farm Residents' Association shared this concern. Should any member of the Town Forum have any speed limit concerns, please contact John Goodfellow as a general review by Kent County Council of speed limits within the borough was now underway.

New Railway Turn-back Siding for Tunbridge Wells - The work in the cutting behind Delves Avenue, involving use of the Farmcombe Road Open Space bordering Forest Road, which was scheduled to start in July, was now due to start in January 2009 and would be completed before the end of 2009 so a higher capacity peak train service to/from London could be provided.

Action:

9.2 That should any Town Forum member have any speed limit concerns to contact John Goodfellow direct.

10. Any other business

Private Contract Parking – June Bridgeman raised this item and stated that parking at the bottom of the Common was now let out to contract for Private Contract Parking – was this not contrary to the legalities involved? The Town Forum urged the Chairman to write a letter to the Clerk to the Common, Mr Rodney Stone, to find out the legalities of such a contract and to have the situation clarified.

Action:

10.1 That Christopher Thomas write a letter to the Clerk of the Common, Rodney Stone, to seek clarification on the Private Parking Contract.

Christopher Thomas raised the concern that the Town Forum had not been reflected correctly in the Draft Consultation and Engagement Strategy paper. It was advised that he had sent his concern by email to Sheila Wheeler, Chief Executive.

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

- Thursday 30 October 2008 at 7.30pm
- NHS Trust in attendance, Linda Summerfield
- Thursday 27 November 2008 at 7.30pm
- Sheila Wheeler in attendance talking about acknowledging the work of the Town Forum.
- Ailsa Paton of Town & Country Housing Association to give a talk on Domestic Abuse.
- Thursday 18 December 2008 at 7.30pm
- 29 January 2009 at 7.30pm
- 26 February 2009 at 7.30pm
- 26 March 2009 at 7.30pm
- 30 April 2009 at 7.30pm

30 October 2008 is the next full Town Forum - Any reports/short papers to be emailed/posted to Samantha Timms by no later than 10am on Monday 13 October 2008.

12. The meeting closed at: 9.45 pm

NOTE:

Councillor Miller arrived at the meeting during minute 7 (8.15pm).

Councillor Woodward left the meeting after minute 7 (8.30pm);

Councillors Basu and Mrs Mayhew both left the meeting after minute 8 (9.04pm)