



ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS TOWN FORUM

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Minutes of Meeting dated Thursday 25 November 2010

Present: Jenina Bas Pendry (Residents First), Lorna Blackmore (Grantley Court Residents' Association), Andrew Bridge (Royal Tunbridge Wells Civic Society), June Bridgeman (Sorooptimists International, Tunbridge Wells), Jonathan Clark (Rusthall Village Association), Betsy Dix (Calverley Park Crescent Freeholders' Association), Michael Doyle (Hawkenbury Village Association), Jane Fenwick (Calverley Park Residents' Association), Alison Finlay (Inner London Road Residents' Association), John Forster (Royal Tunbridge Wells Civic Society), Maggie Fraser (Tunbridge Wells Over 50's Forum), John Goodfellow (Banner Farm Residents' Association), Jonathan Hodge (Beulah Road Residents' Association), Michael Holman (Tunbridge Wells Twinning & Friendship Association), Matt Goodwin (Village Residents' Association), George Lawson (Inner London Road Residents' Association), Katharina Mahler-Bech (Telephone House Neighbours' Association), Altan Omer (Benhall Mill Road Land Association), Peter Perry (Calverley Park Crescent Freeholders' Association), Kate Sergeant (Clarence Road Users' Association), Fred Sirman (Warwick Park Residents' Association), Christopher Thomas (The Chairman of the Town Forum and Woodbury Park Residents' Association), David Wakefield (Royal British Legion, Friends of Tunbridge Wells Museum, Library and Art Galleries), Mary Wardrop (Hawkenbury Village Association), Philip Whitbourn (Beulah Road Residents' Association).

RTW Ward Councillors: Ben Chapelard (St James'), Peter Crawford (Broadwater, Vice-Chairman of the Town Forum), Lesley Herriot (St Johns & Skinners, 6 Roads Residents' Association), Catherine Mayhew (Park), Tracy Moore (St John's), David Neve (St James'), Trevor Poile (St John's), Len Price (Culverden), James Scholes (Pantiles and St Mark's and KCC) and Frank Williams (Sherwood).

Others in attendance: Roy Bullock (Leader of the Council), John Cunningham (Royal Tunbridge Wells Civic Society), John Dutton (Observer), Helen Featherstone (Member of the Library Working Group/Observer), Anne Forster (Friends of Tunbridge Wells Museum, Library and Art Gallery/Observer), Katrina Gilman (Observer), John de Lucy (Member of the Library Working Group/British Library, Observer), Robert O'Callaghan (Residents First/Observer), Jacqueline Prance (Observer), Lesley Rich (KCC Community Engagement Manager, Observer), Councillor Mrs Julia Soyke, Anne Stobo (Friends of Tunbridge Wells Museum, Library and Art Gallery/Observer) and Helen Whitaker (Observer).

Kevin Hetherington (Head of Housing and Wellbeing, TWBC).
Mary Harris (Kent & Sussex Courier)

Apologies: Linda Chamberlain (TW & District CAB), Michael Larsen (Friends of the Grove) and Chris Woodward (Federation of Small Businesses).

1. **Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum Terms of Reference Working Group**

Christopher Thomas advised that, following the level of disquiet expressed at the procedure followed at the previous meeting over his re-election as Chair, he was standing down as Chair of the Town Forum until after the Terms of Reference Working Group had completed its work and its recommendations had been accepted by the Town Forum. A copy of his statement is appended to these minutes (appendix 1).

It was agreed that the Vice-Chair, Councillor Peter Crawford, would act as Chair of the Town Forum until that point.

Peter Crawford in the Chair for the remainder of the meeting

2. **Membership Changes**

A New Representative Request was made by Alastair Tod, as representative for Poona Road Residents' Association.

It was noted that this application was subject to the findings of the above Working Group and therefore no decision could be made at this point.

Replacement Representative – It was agreed that John Forster would be replacing Andrew Bridge as the representative of the RTW Civic Society, with immediate effect.

Temporary Replacement (1) – It was agreed that Jonathan Clarke will be temporarily replacing David Morris as the Rusthall Village Association representative until January/February 2011.

Temporary Replacement (2) – It was agreed that Philip Whitbourn will be acting in a temporary capacity as the representative for the Beulah Road Residents' Association.

3. **Minutes of Last Meeting Dated 28 October 2010**

The minutes were agreed, subject to the following amendments:

Amendment to Item 1 'Present'

Move Michael Holman from the list of members present to the 'apologies for absence' list in the minutes for 30 September, not Michael Doyle, as stated in the 28 October minutes.

Additional 'apology for absence'

It was agreed that Councillor James Scholes would be added to the list of those who had given their apologies for absence.

On-going Action Outstanding from meeting dated 27 May 2010

Remove the following item from 'outstanding actions':

- Graham Goddard to find out if the hospital is to be named 'Acute or General'.

In respect of minute 6 from the 28 October meeting – Appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair – the Vice-Chair confirmed that these would be corrected as part of the work of the Terms of Reference Working Group, under the Chairmanship of Matt Goodwin.

Matters Arising: See minute 1. above.

4. Actions from Previous Meetings

On-going Actions Outstanding from previous meetings

- 30 September 2010 – boundary issues in Meadow Road. Councillor Mrs Mayhew is still awaiting clarification as to where the legal boundary of TWBC lies and will inform the Town Forum when she receives the information.
- Graham Goddard to investigate the location of the neurological unit in the new hospital.
- Alan Hewitt to report back to the Town Forum on updates on bus provision for the new hospital.
- Debbie Stock, Strategic Commissioning Manager for West Kent PCT, to look at possible sourcing/funding to encourage more interest in training up specialists for the Tunbridge Wells area – still awaiting reply.
- 24 June 2010 – Linda Chamberlain reported (via e-mail) on her outstanding action point. She advised that, in respect of the proposed re-development, the CAB had not received any enquiries. Action point complete

5. Reports from Councillors

Councillor Mrs Tracy Moore – reported that an extensive consultation process would be starting soon on the future of the civic site; this would be conducted by consultants appointed by the Tunbridge Wells Regeneration Company, namely M&N. Mrs Moore added that, following a member and a press briefing, a range of methods of communications would be used, to obtain the views of as wide a range of the public as possible.

It was noted that, at the end of the consultation period in January, the outcomes would be reported to the Council's Scrutiny Committees, then to the Cabinet, with an option to report to the full Council beyond that.

Councillor Mrs Moore stressed that the purpose of the consultation process was two-fold: to inform the public and to invite their views.

Councillor David Neve asked whether members of the Council could have sight of the consultation questionnaire in advance. Councillor Mrs Moore advised that she would forward a copy to Councillor Neve, as soon as it was available.

David Wakefield enquired about the statement made about the Council's interest in the Land Registry building. Councillor Bullock advised that the Council had 'stepped aside' from this initiative, to allow AXA PPP to realise its plans for its future operation in the town.

6. Changes in the Police Authority and how cuts and funding will affect Kent region

Chief Inspector Martin Wilson, together with Elaine Bolton – who was an elected, independent member of the Kent Police Authority – reported on the current operation of the Police in the Borough and on the scrutiny role carried out by the Police Authority. They also invited members of the Town Forum to comment on what they felt should be the top priorities for the Police service in its budget-setting, against the backdrop of the need to find £53m savings across the County, over the next four years.

A number of issues were raised, including: more effort to tackle under-age drinking; cracking down on anti-social problems associated with 'rowdy' pubs; the need to work more closely with local communities and groups linked to safety and crime reduction; the continued use of mobile phones by some drivers; greater co-operation with local authority staff involved in community development; and the abuse by some motorists of the bus 'gateway' in the town centre.

In response, Chief Inspector Wilson acknowledged that these issues were of concern and, where resources permitted, were already the subject of greater Police focus. On the positive side, he advised that the Police had invested in more effective automatic numberplate recognition technology and greater collaboration was taking place with local authority staff in terms of crime reduction and increased safety. As an illustration of this, Chief Inspector Wilson reported on the establishment of the Community Safety Unit in the Town Hall, where Police officers were working alongside TWBC staff and held focused meetings each morning, to review and learn from the previous day's crime activity.

He added that, during a time of significant cost savings, there might be a problem with two aspects of Police activity, namely: Police visibility in some areas; and achieving further reductions in crime reduction figures.

Finally, June Bridgeman enquired about the future of the existing Police Station in Crescent Road. Chief Inspector Wilson advised that the long term future of the Station had not yet been determined but confirmed that the Town Forum would have the opportunity to comment, if any plans to vacate came forward.

Elaine Bolton urged Town Forum members to continue to make their views known about operational priorities via the Police Authority website (www.kentpoliceauthority.gov.uk) or by phone (01622 677055). Both she and Chief Inspector Wilson were thanked for their informative and helpful presentation.

7. Briefing on the Library

Des Crilley (Director of Cultural Services, KCC), Sue Sparks (Strategic Manager for Libraries, KCC) and Heather Hilton (KCC Library Service) attended and gave a presentation about the current range of services at libraries in the Borough and future operational plans.

Jane Fenwick, who had chaired the Town Forum's Library Working Group (whose other members included: David Wakefield, Helen Featherstone, Jenina Bas Pendry and a seconded member, John de Lucy) raised a number of questions which her group had identified; a copy of these questions had been tabled at the meeting.

Des Crilley welcomed the opportunity to discuss issues associated with the cost of the service, opening hours, charging and the better utilisation of the premises, particularly as the Working Group had identified some possible solutions, thereby encouraging an open and honest debate. He added that he would be happy to explore these issues in greater detail direct with the Working Group members.

Other issues raised more generally included: greater use of co-locating services (TWBC/KCC), e.g. the TIC service could operate from the Library rather than the Gateway; improved local marketing (and is there local discretion given to managers in this respect); problems arising from joint ownership of the Tunbridge Wells Library and Museum; the need for a greater space allocated for publicising local events and groups; the quality of souvenirs; and conflicting thoughts on the permitting of eating and drinking in the Library.

In response, the KCC Library representatives advised that: they would be happy to discuss in more detail issues such as the greater co-location of services; local service marketing might be possible, but within the constraints of a listed building; and there was overall a mutual advantage of shared ownership of the Library/Museum building.

In conclusion, it was agreed that discussions should continue between the KCC representatives and members of the Working Group, after which a further report would be made to the Town Forum.

The KCC representatives were thanked for their informative talk; a copy of their presentation is appended to these minutes (appendix 2). In addition, the following websites provide additional material which might be of interest to Town Forum members:

<https://shareweb.kent.gov.uk/Documents/leisure-and-culture/libraries/Libraries%20Inspire.pdf>

<http://research.mla.gov.uk/evidence/view-publication.php?dm=nrm&pubid=1161>

8. Any Other Business

- (a) 'Planning in Tunbridge Wells' document – Philip Whitbourn wished that it be recorded that the photograph on the front page of this document actually featured a location in East Sussex.
- (b) Councillor Frank Williams reported that the Friends of Sherwood Lake had been successful in their application to have the Lake area designated as 'common land'.

Meeting Closed at 8.30pm

9. *Dates of next meetings of the Town Forum*

2010

- o 16 December 2010 meeting - CANCELLED

2011

- o 27 January 2011 at 6.30pm
 - **Previously:** a briefing on the Assembly Hall, Paul Taylor, Director of Change and Communities, TWBC
 - Replaced by: presentation and discussion with M&N Communications**
- o 24 February 2011 at 6.30pm
- o 31 March 2011 at 6.30pm
- o 28 April 2011 at 6.30pm
- o 26 May 2011 at 6.30pm
- o 30 June 2011 at 6.30pm
- o 28 July 2011 at 6.30pm
- o August – no meeting
- o 29 September 2011 at 6.30pm
- o 27 October 2011 at 6.30pm
- o 24 November 2011 at 6.30pm
- o 15 December 2011 at 6.30pm

Chairman's Statement - RTW Town Forum 25 November 2010

Before this meeting starts I would like to make it quite clear that I am fully aware that the election process was unsatisfactory, which is the reason why I have placed details on the agenda for this meeting in such an order.

In order to show my concern I made sure that a Working Group was set up with a view to look at the Terms of Reference with a view to amend and improve where required but also to importantly reiterate the responsibilities of all Members and their Representatives. The results and findings of the Working Group will be given and recommendations will be binding on all Members and their Representatives following approval by the Town Forum.

I have not answered letters or emails individually as the best way for a review to be undertaken is for the Working Group to receive these letters and emails and review them all as part of their process. Findings will be made by the Working Group and those findings will be placed upon the Town Forum website to ensure openness.

www.townforum.org.uk

As one of the concerns raised by members was tenure of the Chair and Vice Chair I would confirm that I am asking Peter Crawford to act as Chair until the Working Group has decided upon new Terms of Reference and how the elections should be handled and who should have a right to vote. I will stand aside until that point and then may stand for Chair following the announced election date made by the Working Group.

The Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum is the only vehicle for direct representation that unparished area residents have and that all meeting attendees have the best interest of the town at heart. It is therefore most important that we can all agree that the Working Group is the best way to sort out the unfortunate situation we all found ourselves in. The Terms of Reference were not drafted thinking of contested elections.

The Town Forum is a body where people consult with the Council and rather than being the opposition it is there to raise concerns to the Council and where relevant to work with the Council.

It is important to understand that minutes are not intended to be a verbatim transcript but are intended only to note decisions made and positions taken – it would serve no purpose to include in the minutes any of the detailed proposals other than to inflame arguments over an unsatisfactory process which has happened and which is now being addressed through the working group.

The working Group will consist of:-

Matt Goodwin – Chair of the Group and of the Village Residents Association
 Altan Omer – Benhall Mill Land Association
 Michael Holman – Chairman TWTF
 Cllr Catherine Mayhew – TWBC Councillor, Park Ward
 Jane Fenwick – Calverley Park Residents Association
 John Forster – Chairman – Royal Tunbridge Wells Civic Society

The group will undertake to as follows:-

- Examine the Terms of Reference/constitution of the Town Forum covering:
 - confirmation that the Town Forum is a non political grouping;
 - entitlement to formal membership of the Town Forum;
 - entitlement of the Town Forum to invite other bodies to attend even if they do not qualify for formal membership;
 - governance of annual general meetings and election procedures;
 - duration in the Chair;
 - voting rights;
 - demonstration of formal mandate from the represented organisation;
 - suggestions on how feedback between the representative and the represented organisation might take place - this could cover asking for views on town issues, explaining town issues and developments and giving information on how responses can be made to TWBC consultations".

Considering the nature and tone of some emails I would urge all Members of the Town Forum to look to the future and start to prepare for the forthcoming Civic complex consultation paper. It is extremely important that all views are put forward and that all members put forward those views.

The Town Forum wants to know when this consultation will be so the anguish clearly showing at meetings is actually stopped and that "residents" can put forward their concerns. The Town Forum wishes to know when this consultation will start and wishes for an answer. I also ask that we be informed why the Land Registry building is not being purchased by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.

Christopher Thomas
Chairman

25 November 2010