



ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS TOWN FORUM

Minutes of Meeting dated Thursday 26 February 2009

1. Present:

Daniel Bech (Telephone House Neighbours' Association), Graham Bell (Pantiles Traders Association), June Bridgeman (The Soroptimists International), John Cunningham (RTW Civic Society), Betsy Dix (Calverley Park Crescent Freeholders' Association), Michael Doyle (Hawkenbury Village Association), Bruce Goodwin (Grove Hill Road Residents' Association), John Goodfellow (Banner Farm Residents' Association), Arthur Hutchins (4 Roads Residents' Association), Michael Larsen (Friends of the Grove), George Lawson (London Road Residents' Association), Ian Naismith (Hanover & Rock Villa Residents' Association), Altan Omer (Benhall Mill Road Land Association), Keith Perry (Benhall Mill Road Land Association), Peter Perry (Calverley Park Crescent Freeholders' Association), Kate Sergeant (Clarence Road Users' Association), Simon Smith (Inner London Road Residents' Association), David Stocker (4 Roads 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 (RTW Civic Society), Philip Whitbourn (Beulah Road Residents' Association).

Councillors: Robert Atwood (Rusthall), Peter Crawford (Vice-Chairman / Broadwater), Barry Edwards (Rusthall), Mrs Mary Lewis (St James), Mrs Catherine Mayhew (Park), John Miller (Culverden), Mrs Tracy Moore (St John's), Leonard Price (Culverden), James Scholes (Pantiles & St Marks), Frank Williams (Sherwood).

Other Councillors in attendance: Roy Bullock (Leader of the Council), Paul Barrington-King (Cabinet, Environment/Streetscene), Michael Tompsett (Pembury).

Others in attendance: Greg Clark MP, Conrad Froud (Hubs and Spokes), Kevin Powley (Hubs and Spokes), Samantha Timms (Senior Committee Administrator), Mrs Marguerita Morton (Southborough Town Councillor), visitors from the Cyclists' Touring Club and six members of the public.

2. Apologies:

John Higgs (Rock Villa & Hanover Residents' Association), Michael Holman (Tunbridge Wells Twinning and Friendship Association), Mary Wardrop (Hawkenbury Village Association);

Councillors: Colin Bothwell (Southborough Town Council), David Marriott (Paddock Wood East), Chris Woodward (St John's)

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

Councillor Peter Crawford, on behalf of The Town Forum asked Greg Clark to pass on their condolences to David Cameron and his family on the sad loss of their son.

3. Cycle Ways in Royal Tunbridge Wells

3.1 Opening Speech by Greg Clark, MP

Greg Clark, MP (Shadow Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change) attended the Town Forum and gave an opening speech on Cycle ways in Royal Tunbridge Wells. He went on to say that he thought the initiative was a very positive scheme and that he supported both Borough Councillor Mrs Tracy Moore and 'Hubs and Spokes'.

3.2 Introduction by Councillor Mrs Moore

Borough Councillor Mrs Moore introduced the Cycle Ways presentation that was being given by Conrad Froud and Kevin Powley of 'Hubs and Spokes' and gave an explanation of why a scheme would be of benefit.

She went on to say that a questionnaire had been carried out amongst secondary school children during October and November 2008 regarding cycling to and from school. The results were being analysed but preliminary results showed that currently, only 1.3% of pupils cycled, although 30% would like to cycle to and from school but the roads were too dangerous to do so.

The Town Forum noted that a Feasibility Study was being carried out by Kent Highway Services and the results of the study would be available in four to six weeks' time. It was hoped that with the outcome of the results, a bid would be sought to assist with the cycle scheme. The Chief Executive of Sustrans, Malcolm Shepherd, announced in January 2009, that there was £17m for 'safe routes to school' and bid applications were invited.

Councillor Mrs Moore concluded by saying that every child has the right to a safe walking and cycling route to school; she then passed over to Conrad Froud and Kevin Powley.

3.3 Part 1 given by Conrad Froud and Kevin Fowley

Conrad Froud was welcomed to the Town Forum. Conrad explained that the 'Hubs and Spokes' was made up of residents of Tunbridge Wells and parents of school age children; they were not linked to any political agenda or party, would not be making any commercial gain from their thoughts or proposals, were not a formal planning or cycle lane decision making authority, and were not holding a budget to implement their plans.

Conrad's presentation would help promote a cycle as a tool to help with the challenges of: safety, pollution, healthy lifestyle, getting pupils between schools on time, get residual traffic moving, reduce residents' transportation cost in a recession, reduce demand for fossil fuel and help town traders boost their sales. He went on to say that proposing a cycle network connecting residual zones with schools, sports centres, playing fields, edge of town, religious centres and other residential zones around Royal Tunbridge Wells, Southborough and the immediate surrounding areas, would be a move forward and would improve healthier lifestyles, reduce dependence on private cars around the town, improve safety for cyclists, reduce pollution, encourage out of town shoppers to visit Tunbridge Wells and reduce the demand for fossil fuel.

The Town Forum noted that there were mainly two types of cycle lane, namely: Leisure Cycle Lanes (traffic free) and Utilitarian Cycle Lanes (segregated). Conrad summarised these lanes to the Town Forum together with their benefits and safety.

Kevin Fowley outlined various routes which could be established through Royal Tunbridge Wells and surrounding areas, linking schools together and surrounding areas, such as:

- The Southborough Spoke – this would connect Southborough with the St John's spoke.
- The St John's Spoke – connecting St John's Park, TWGGS, St John's Sports Centre, TWSSB and St Gregory's School.
- Three Stand Alone Spokes – connecting Bennett School, Culverden, Rusthall, Langton and Speldhurst with St John's spoke.
- Bayham Road Spoke – Bayham Road with Foresters Football Club, Town Centre and Mount Ephraim.

The Town Forum thanked Conrad Froud and Kevin Powley for their substantive and informative presentation.

The Town Forum suggested to Conrad and Kevin that Hubs and Spokes should carry out further research/comparisons from central Europe regarding the surface material, lighting and how those countries encouraged people to use their bikes. It was noted that the results of the feasibility study may provide a number of answers.

3.4 Part 2 given by John Goodfellow

John Goodfellow submitted a report that outlined various cycle ways schemes in Royal Tunbridge Wells and outlined their effectiveness, safety and why some were not progressed. John stated that to cycle on roads in relatively congested Royal Tunbridge Wells was dangerous and unhealthy; it was not surprising that only 2% of road journeys in the town were cycled.

Summarised to the Town Forum were various cycleway schemes, such as cycleway/footway along Pembury Road; cycleway/footway from the Town Centre to the Industrial Estate; cycleway from Ramslye Estate to Sainsbury's; Rusthall to Culverden; Home Farm Lane on the Industrial Estate and Hawkenbury to Grove Hill Road. John outlined their usage, benefits and safety. Although the cycleway from Ramslye Estate to Sainsbury's, Rusthall to Culverden and Home Farm Lane, Industrial Estate were not progressed, John highlighted the reasons why.

John gave some suggestions for further cycleways and outlined their benefits, such as: The Grove, Rusthall to Tunbridge Wells Town Centre, Industrial Estate to Tonbridge, Hawkenbury to Pembury and a cycleway/footway by Halls Hole Road.

The Town Forum thanked John for his presentation on current and possible cycleways.

4. Membership Changes

4 Roads Residents' Association is a new member of the Town Forum; Arthur Hutchins and David Stocker are representing the association. The Town Forum welcomed them to the meeting.

Subsequent to the meeting, it was noted that there was a change regarding Calverley Park Crescent Freeholders' Association: Mr Peter Perry would be representing the association.

- Also, Mrs Jennifer Blackburn, representing Rusthall Village Association & Friends of the Commons, had resigned from the Town Forum.

5. Minutes of Last Meeting Dated 29 January 2009

The minutes were agreed, subject to the following amendment:

Amendment to minute 1 'Attendance'

Add Councillor Sean Lockhart to the Councillors in attendance list.

Matters Arising: None.

6. Action Outstanding 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.

Action Outstanding from the Meeting dated 25 September 2008

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

Update - Christopher Thomas stated that he had researched the car parking contract and had been advised the income from this arrangement was put back into the Commons. If this income was not coming then the Commons precept would have been higher. Christopher therefore suggested that the Town Forum invite the Commons Conservators to attend a future meeting to explain what the Commons Conservators do and to make the Town Forum aware of their expenses and figures. The Town Forum agreed this action.

10.1.1 That Christopher Thomas invite the Commons Conservators to a future meeting of the Town Forum to provide awareness of their work and expenses.

Action Outstanding from 29 January 2009 meeting:

- 9.1 That a small working party be established to consider options, the Council's budget etc.

Actions Completed from 29 January 2009 meeting:

- 10.1.1 That Christopher Thomas invite the Commons Conservators to a future meeting of the Town Forum to provide awareness of their work and expenses.
- 7.1 That the Faith/Social Issues Champion be confirmed.

The Champion would be Father Ed Tomlinson, but at present one of his family members was ill and he would therefore not be attending as frequently. The Town Forum wished Father Ed Tomlinson and his family well.

- 8.1 Should any member of the Town Forum wish to join the walk along the spine of the town on 15 February 2009 to contact Philip Whitbourn. See minute 8 below.
- 8.2 That the correspondence received from Andrew Taylor, Planning Development Officer, be circulated to all Borough Councillors. This was completed.

7. Reports from Borough Councillors

Due to the shortness of time remaining, the Town Forum agreed that reports from Borough Councillors would be withdrawn.

8. Reports from Champions/Vision Committee

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

Master Plan for Tunbridge Wells – In response to action 8.1 of 29 January 2009 minutes, ten members had volunteered to gather and walk along the central spine of the town from Tesco in Grosvenor Road to the Pantiles, via Mount Pleasant and the High Street on 15 February 2009.

Another meeting of the group has been arranged for Monday 9 March 2009 at 7.30pm at Daniel Bech's house to discuss these issues further and to aid the presentation that would be given to the whole Town Forum on 26 March.

Dunorlan House Planning Application – The Town Forum, at its meeting in July 2008, was informed that the Dunorlan Scheme by Sunrise Senior Living had been refused permission, following a Public Inquiry. The Town Forum was reminded that they had given evidence at the Inquiry in support of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and had favoured a proper review of the whole site of the former mansion and its front garden, before any redevelopment was contemplated. Philip informed the Town Forum that another application had been submitted by Octagon for a block of flats on the site of the present four bed-roomed Dunorlan House. Philip urged the Town Forum to press for proper consideration of this whole area.

Visitors from Friends of Dunorlan Park attended the Town Forum and asked for the Town Forum's support in establishing parameters for the area in relation to a planning application. The Town Forum agreed that Philip Whitbourn would submit a letter to the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council asking for parameters of the whole area.

Councillor Roy Bullock stated that the Core Strategy would be circulated for consultation during April of this year; he suggested that the Friends of Dunorlan Park read the document to see whether some of their concerns are reflected.

Paving – Encouraging News – The Town Forum was reminded that the Road Safety and Transport Working Group's Chairman and the Kent Highway Services were sent some illustrations of some examples of botched tarmac repairs to brick pavements in Royal Tunbridge Wells Conservation Area; since that date, one patch, namely, unsightly, long standing problem at the corner of Garden Road and Camden Road had been properly reinstated with brick. It was noted that a lot more still needed to be done, but a positive move had been made towards improving the appearance of the streets.

Vision Committee / Arts & Culture – No matters arising.

Environmental Issues – No matters arising.

Transport Matters – No matters arising.

Action

8.1 That Philip Whitbourn submit a letter to the Planning Service pressing for parameters of the whole area relating to Dunorlan House and its grounds.

9. Any Other Business

Calverley Grounds Bandstand – Alistair Tod introduced this item. He informed the Town Forum that there was a need to see what would be in the bandstand's place before demolition was carried out; options would need to be considered. The only original part of the structure was the base. The remainder of the structure was in need of repair; perhaps some of the options could be to replace it with a new bandstand, or a more versatile use such as a stage for concerts. Circulated to the Town Forum was a photograph of the Southshields refurbished bandstand; perhaps this was a possibility for Calverley Grounds bandstand. It was also noted that the Courier was launching a petition on Friday 27 February 2009.

The Town Forum agreed that a forward plan was needed with full consultation including the unparished areas, taking place. The Chairman, Christopher Thomas, stated that residents were attached to the bandstand because of its history and may not like an empty space once it was demolished. Christopher suggested that perhaps the demolition of the bandstand be delayed until a proper report was put forward as to what would replace the bandstand, which showed exact detail. He made reference to not wanting another "cinema site" and suggested that further consultation be held.

Councillor James Scholes informed the Town Forum that the bandstand and pavilion were damaged and un-repairable during WW2. The new structure was damaged and was made safe in 2005, however, the structure was now at the end of its serviceable life and was not economical to repair it or repairable. He went on to say that to demolish the bandstand would cost in the region of £20,000 and would require Conservation Area Consent; this was in the process of being done.

Councillor Bullock concluded by stating that in the 21st century, we should have facilities that are fit for purpose and it was easier and less cost to 'buy in' a stage got events in the park than maintain a permanent structure.

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

- o 26 March 2009 at 7.30pm - Town Centre Presentation (Philip Whitbourn / Daniel Bech)
- o 30 April 2009 at 7.30pm
- o 25 June 2009 at 7.30pm
- o 30 July 2009 at 7.30pm
- o 24 September 2009 at 7.30pm
- o 29 October 2009 at 7.30pm
- o 26 November 2009 at 7.30pm
- o 17 December 2009 at 7.30pm - provisional

26 March 2009 is the next full Town Forum

- Any reports/short papers to be emailed/posted to Samantha Timms by no later than 10am on Tuesday 10 March 2009.

11. The meeting closed at: 9.30pm.

NOTE:

- (1) Greg Clark MP and Kate Sergeant (Clarence Road Users' Association) both left the meeting during consideration of minute 3.3 (7.07pm); and
- (2) The following Councillors and representatives of Town Forum members arrived at the meeting during consideration of the following minutes:

Councillor Mrs Mary Lewis (St James) - minute 3.3 (7.16pm).

June Bridgeman (Soroptimists Intl) - minute 3.3 (7.10pm).

John Cunningham (RTW Civic Society) - minute 3.3 (7.18pm).

Councillor Mrs Catherine Mayhew (Parks) - minute 3.3 (7.35pm).

Councillor Robert Atwood (Rusthall) - minute 3.3 (7.56pm).

Councillor Roy Bullock (Leader of the Council) - minute 3.4 (8.06pm).)