



ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS TOWN FORUM

Minutes of Meeting dated Thursday 26 March 2009

1. Present:

Stuart Anderson (Beulah Road Residents' Association), Daniel Bech (Telephone House Neighbours' Association), Graham Bell (Pantiles Traders Association), June Bridgeman (The Soroptimists International), Betsy Dix (Calverley Park Crescent Freeholders' Association), Michael Doyle (Hawkenbury Village Association), John Goodfellow (Banner Farm Residents' Association), John Higgs (Hanover and Rock Villa Residents' Association), Arthur Hutchins (4 Roads Residents' Association), Michael Larsen (Friends of the Grove), Ian Naismith (Hanover & Rock Villa Residents' Association), Altan Omer (Benhall Mill Road Land Association), Keith Perry (Benhall Mill Road Land Association), Kate Sergeant (Clarence Road Users' 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) Mary Wardrop (Hawkenbury Village Association) and Philip Whitbourn (Beulah Road Residents' Association).

Councillors: Ronen Basu (Culverden), Barry Edwards (Rusthall), Mrs Catherine Mayhew (Park), John Miller (Culverden), James Scholes (Pantiles & St Marks) Chris Woodward (St Johns).

Other Councillors in attendance: Roy Bullock (Leader of the Council)

Others in attendance: Katharina Mahler (Telephone House Neighbours' Association), Sharon Banks (TWBC Senior Planning Officer), Alan Legg (TWBC Principal Design and Heritage Officer), Louise Phillips (TWBC Planning Policy Team Leader) and Samantha Timms (TWBC Senior Committee Administrator / Secretary of the RTW Town Forum).

2. Apologies:

Councillors Peter Crawford (Town Forum Vice-Chairman / Broadwater), Lesley Herriot (St John's), Mrs Tracy Moore (St John's) - John Cunningham (RTW Civic Society), Michael Holman (Tunbridge Wells Twinning and Friendship Association), George Lawson (Inner London Road Residents' Association), Peter Perry (Calverley Park Crescent Freeholders' Association), Simon Smith (Inner London Road Residents' Association) and David White (Kingswood Residents' Association).

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

3. Membership Changes

The Town Forum noted that Philip Whitbourn, Beulah Road Residents' Association, was standing down from the Town Forum. Stuart Anderson would be replacing Philip.

The Town Forum thanked Philip for his hard work and dedication to the Town Forum and wished him well for the future.

4. Minutes of Last Meeting Dated 26 February 2009

The minutes were agreed, subject to the following amendment:

Amendment to minute 1 'Attendance': Add Councillor Lesley Herriot to the apologies list.

Matters Arising: None.

5. 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 26 March 2009 meeting:

- 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. Philip informed the Town Forum that he had submitted the letter and that the planning application had since been refused by the Council.

6. Reports from Borough Councillors

Councillor Ronen Basu – He informed the Town Forum that he was working on a project called '**Greener and Cleaner Town**', which was in keeping with '**Love Where You Live**' project. Councillor Basu had spoken to a number of organisations who were all supportive. Tunbridge Wells Borough Council was very supportive and pro-active on the project. He encouraged the Town Forum to become involved and submit suggestions on how to improve the local area by making it greener and cleaner; any ideas should be sent to Councillor Basu direct.

June Bridgeman gave her support on behalf of the Soroptimists International; should Councillor Basu wish to look at the work that the Soroptimists had undertaken, he was more than welcome.

Action

- 6.1 Should any Town Forum member wish to submit any ideas/suggestions relating to the '**Greener and Cleaner Town**' project, to contact Councillor Basu direct.

7. Town Centre Area Action Plan

Philip Whitbourn introduced this item and highlighted the LDF Newsletter which was circulated to the Town Forum. The purpose of the newsletter was designed to keep the public up to date with the latest news on planning policy matters and progress on the Local Development Framework (LDF). The introduction of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act in 2004 meant that every local authority had to produce a collection of planning documents (the LDF) which, together with the Regional Spatial Strategy (the South East Plan), would provide the framework for planning in Tunbridge Wells Borough up to 2026.

Philip drew the Town Forum's attention to the back of the newsletter, in particular, the up-coming events, namely: the Core Strategy, the publication was due at the end of April 2009, of which there would be a six-week period where members of the public could make comments on the 'soundness' of the plan before it would be submitted to the Secretary of State in July 2009; and the Town Centres Area Action Plan and Allocations DPD, early engagement on these two documents had already started. Philip then explained the 29 issues of aspirations for inclusion in the new Area Action Plan for Royal Tunbridge Wells.

He informed the Town Forum that the linear form of Royal Tunbridge Wells town centre had resulted from the linking together of the Old Town, around the Pantiles and the High Street in the south, with Decimus Burton's Calverley new Town in the north. The Central spine, from Grosvenor Road through Mount Pleasant and the High Street was by-passed from north to south by the A26 London Road, but was intersected at the Town Hall crossroads by the A264 main east-west road (Church Road / Crescent Road).

Highlighted to the Town Forum were 29 issues from north to south on aspirations for inclusion in the new Area Action Plan for Royal Tunbridge Wells. The 29 issues were as follows:

- Tesco area
- Roadway behind the Post Office
- Meadow Road Bus Stops
- Post Office area
- Five-Ways
- Upper Mount Pleasant
- Monson Road
- Bus Stops in Monson Road
- Town Hall
- Trinity & Environs
- Cinema Site
- Mount Pleasant Avenue Site
- Mount Pleasant
- Great Hall
- Calverley Grounds
- Station Approach
- Vale Road
- Grove Hill Road Crossing
- Station Car Park
- AXA Car Park behind the High Street
- High Street
- Warwick Road Car Park
- Little Mount Sion Car Park
- Mount Sion Crossing
- Broadwater Service Station
- Nevill Street Crossing
- Fairground Site
- Union House Car Park
- Land by Eridge Road Service Station

Full details of each area mentioned above were available on the Town Forum's website <http://www.townforum.org.uk/planning/rtwmasterplan-rtwtf260309.pdf>

The Town Forum congratulated both Philip Whitbourn for his presentation, the "Master Plan group's" ideas and concepts and to Daniel Bech for the visuals.

Councillor Bullock congratulated the Town Forum as a whole for a very in-depth contribution to the Area Action Plan for Royal Tunbridge Wells. He went on to say that Kent County Council (KCC) were responsible for the road-side barriers, bollards and street furniture. Councillor Bullock asked the Town Forum to bear-in-mind that the road-side barriers were in place to guide pedestrians to the correct crossing points and to provide pedestrian safety.

The bollards along Five Ways area were in place to stop vehicles parking on the pavements. Christopher Thomas suggested that automatic bollards be installed; these could then be lowered during the day and raised in the evenings, thus being less unsightly. In relation to the unsightly road-side barriers, if there was an actual need for them, perhaps they could be replaced with new straight road-side barriers?

The Town Forum was informed about the Transport Strategy and that KCC were investing money in

a transport model called 'VISSUM'; however, the model would not be ready until the end of this year. 'VISSUM' would be able to give simulations of alterations to traffic control systems.

Referring to the 'shared space' issue, June Bridgeman stated that the Access Group had concerns about this space at Ashford and asked that this be taken into consideration; details of the concerns were not discussed.

Councillor Bullock, again, thanked the Town Forum and encouraged them to wait for the publication of the Core Strategy and the questionnaire before proceeding any further. The Town Forum would then submit their views and ideas including the presentation to the Council for consideration.

Christopher Thomas stated that KCC should be made aware of the repairs and views of the Town Forum in order that maintenance could be carried out. Christopher suggested that KCC Highways should be lobbied harder for our roads to be maintained better.

Action

7.1 That the Town Forum submit a response to the Core Strategy and questionnaire once published (April 2009).

8. Reports from Vision Committee / Champions (Community, Environment, Faith/Social, Heritage, Planning, Transport, Urban Parishing)

Vision and Arts Committee (Micheal Larsen) – No matters arising.

Planning (Philip Whitbourn) – No further matters arising; most issues were raised in minute 7 above.

Community (Daniel Bech) – minute 9 below.

Heritage (Alastair Tod) – No matters arising.

Urban Parishing (Jennifer Blackburn) – No matters arising as Jenny resigned from the Town Forum.

Environment (Kate Sergeant) – KS updated the Town Forum on a number of 'green' issues as follows:

The Town Forum was informed that dates for the Wiesbaden exchange visit are confirmed as 22-25 May and that there will be a Councillor with responsibility for Environment in the visiting delegation with whom we hope to be able to meet with and learn from.

Transition Tunbridge Wells continues to be very active, including the Community Allotment project (which now has 18 members) and support of the Hubs and Spokes cycle paths proposals, with future plans to respond to opportunities afforded by the Sustainable Communities Act and to apply for grant funding.

The Town Forum noted that the Friends of the Earth had a stall in the Farmers' Market two weeks ago promoting free-cycling (recycling). The promotion was received positively, with a lot of people taking the free-cycling opportunity. - www.freecycle.org/group/UK/SouthEast/TunbridgeWells

Kate also stated that the Tunbridge Wells Environment, Safer and Stronger Select Committee would be meeting on 31 March and would be finalising the recycling setup. The overall preference to date was an open-lidded box rather than bags; however, bags might be more useful for multiple occupation dwellings, where room was not available for another container.

The Town Forum's preference however, was that both bags and boxes be made available, that way residents could choose which recycling container was best for them. Canvass bags was also suggested.

Transport (John Goodfellow) – JG updated the Town Forum on a recent Working Group meeting relating to road safety and transport. A couple of matters arose:

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council's Working Group on Road Safety and Transport – The Town Forum was reminded that the Local Economy and Housing Select Committee had initially set up the working group to make recommendations on road safety and transport in the borough. The Working Party had presented a draft report to the Select Committee on 26 February which was favourably received. It was also noted by the Town Forum that the draft report that was being submitted to Cabinet had been postponed for further consideration by the Select Committee. The Select Committee had invited John to make further submissions on cycleways in consultation with Conrad Froud to their meeting on 6 April. It was noted that the report had listed 22 recommendations, most of which applied to Royal Tunbridge Wells. John would provide an update to the next Town Forum meeting.

Safe Cycleways in and around Royal Tunbridge Wells – Following the presentation at the last Town Forum meeting, Conrad Froud convened a meeting on 15 March inviting local cycling enthusiasts to attend; Simon Alum, KCC Mobility Officer, together with Lene Beynon, Borough Engineer Officer, Deborah Dixon, Borough planning Policy Officer, also attended. The meeting was very productive and a draft report would be available for public comment from 4th April.

John went on to say that Simon Alum was responsible for promoting cycling throughout Kent and worked closely with Alan Ash from Kent Highway Services. A map displaying all of Kent's cycling routes was currently being compiled.

Michael Doyle stated that safe cycling to schools along St John's Road was a priority; it was important that school children were off the road and arrived to and from school safely.

Action

8.1 John Goodfellow to update the Town Forum at their next meeting on the outcome of the Select Committee's meeting dated Thursday 9 April.

9. Dumping of Rubbish into Front and Rear Patios and Service Alleys in the Town Centre

Daniel Bech highlighted to the Town Forum examples of unsightly rubbish/fly tipping mainly along, and amongst the gardens of the Town Centre, e.g. in Dudley Road and York Road. Service alleys (also examples in the Grove area) were also a prime location for rubbish/fly tipping – who was responsible for service alleys?

The Town Forum thanked Daniel for his presentation and visuals.

Councillor Basu stated that there was rubbish around in service alleys and efforts were being made to clear and educate residents in those areas to be proud of their homes and surrounding areas.

Following on, Councillor Miller informed the Town Forum that the service alleys had been cleared but rubbish was continuing to be tipped. He reiterated the need to educate the residents in the offending areas. It was also suggested that landlords responsible for multiple occupancy should speak with their tenants to inform them that rubbish tipping was not acceptable, perhaps include a clause in their tenancy agreements.

Michael Larsen asked whether there were guidelines/protocol for service alleys to be kept clear for emergency vehicles as they would need enough space to gain access to back gardens etc.

Arthur Hutchins expressed his concern over the health and safety impacts of dumping in alleyways and also the potential barriers to the disabled in such narrow alleys.

Christopher Thomas suggested that Letting Agents should be more active in this arena and suggested that a voluntary code of conduct be investigated by means of an additional sheet being added to

a tenant's letting agreement and that Letting Agents actually enact their duties when they are the Managing Agent.

Councillor Scholes (Portfolio Holder for Stronger and Safer Communities) thanked Daniel for raising this matter and bringing it more into focus.

Full details of Daniel's presentation were available on the Town Forum's website.
<http://www.townforum.org.uk/community/rtwpatiosalleysproblems-rtwtf260309.pdf>

10. Any Other Business

Camden Road, The Musical – Kate Sergeant informed the Town Forum that Camden Road. The Musical would be taking place from the week commencing 8th June for two weeks, opposite St Barnabas' School. The Musical would commence at 7.30pm each evening, Monday to Saturday.

The 'Cubitt' of Tunbridge Wells – June Bridgeman informed members that the publication of William Willicombe's book of life was available to purchase. Anyone wishing to purchase a copy could do so from June direct (Friends of Woodbury Park Cemetery).

Ward Councillors – Michael Doyle expressed thanks to the Ward Councillors who were attending the Town Forum meetings. The Town Forum noted that at each Town Forum meeting, more Ward Members were present.

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

- 30 April 2009 at 7.30pm – Urban Capacity (Alan Legg, TWBC Principal Design and Heritage Officer)
- 25 June 2009 at 7.30pm
- 30 July 2009 at 7.30pm
- 24 September 2009 at 7.30pm
- 29 October 2009 at 7.30pm
- 26 November 2009 at 7.30pm
- 17 December 2009 at 7.30pm - provisional

30 April 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 14 April 2009.

12. The meeting closed at: 9.15pm.

(NOTE: Michael Doyle arrived at the meeting during minute 7 (7.42pm).

Alan Legg, Louise Phillips and Sharon Banks all left the meeting after the consideration of minute 7 (8.41pm). Councillor Woodward left the meeting during consideration of minute 10 (9.10pm).)