

Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum

Draft Minutes of Meeting Wednesday 26 October 2005

Present: Jenny Alexander (Rustall Village Association); Daniel Bech (Telephone House Neighbours' Association); Jane Fenwick (Calverley Park Association); John Goodfellow (Banner Farm Residents' Association); Richard Laiten (Cosove); George Lawson (Inner London Road Residents' Association); Keith Perry (Benhall Mill Road Land Residents' Association); John Ribbins (Chancellor House Freehold & Estate); R J Soden (Telephone House Neighbours' Association); Jeremy Syers (Benhall Mill Road Land Residents' Association); Chris Thomas (The Goodwins No 1/No 2 Residents' Company); Mary Wardrop (Hawkenbury Village Association); David Webster (Clarence Road Users' Association)

Cllr Catherine Mayhew, Cllr Leonard Price, Cllr David Wakefield, Cllr Peter Crawford

In attendance: Cllr Bullock (Portfolio Holder for Community Development and Law and Order, TWBC); Cllr Peter Davies (Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Transport); Gary Stevenson (Head of Environmental Services, TWBC); Estelle Grant (Community Planner, TWBC – Minutes)

It was agreed that Cllr Bullock take the Chair in the absence of Matt Goodwin and any elected Deputy Chair.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Mr Higgs; Patrick Shovelton; Patricia Smith; Val Joy; Wal Waller; Cllr Adrian Ekins-Daukes; Cllr David Neve; Ellie Broughton.

2. Minutes of meeting 26 September 2005

The minutes were approved subject to the following change:

David Webster represents Clarence, not Clarendon, Road Users.

3. Matters arising from the last minutes

- Terms of reference have been revised, and these are item 8 on the agenda.
- The current officer structure has been received by all Town Forum members.
- A guidance note on licensing will be prepared by 25 November and will be published on the website and sent to Town Forum members.
- All Town Forum members have received details of Portfolio Holders' responsibilities.
- The Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum website is now operational, and the Town Forum thanked Daniel Bech for all his work. Each association is invited to have their own page on the website.

ACTION POINT: All associations to send text about their association to Daniel Bech for publication on the website.

3b. Additional item added to the agenda: Morrisons/Safeway Store

Cllr Peter Davies provided a brief update of the current situation.

Queries arising included:

- Would the Council insist that the Post Office is re-opened and dispensing pharmacy continued by new owners? Whilst the Council's preference would be that this is the case it has no power to enforce this.
- Are there any other possible Post Office sites if the supermarket does not have a Post Office? There have been discussions with the Post Office, including by the MP, regarding the factors that would influence whether an in-store Post Office was viable and finding suitable premises in this part of the town.
- Who owns the lifts to the store/car park as they need to be made safe and the smell of urine needs to be removed? Gary Stevenson will look into this.

- Is the Council able to decide what will be on the site through its Planning Committee, since if it is not a supermarket this will require a change of use. Cllr Davies answered in his role as Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and noted that he does not sit on the Western Area Planning Committee, the committee that a change of use would be referred to. Although Cllr Davies is able to say what he would like to see, he cannot influence the Western Area Planning Committee.
- A comment was raised that it took three and half years to get a Post Office in Ramslye but there was now one with all facilities.

ACTION POINT: Gary Stevenson to look into ownership of the lifts.

Matt Goodwin apologised for being late and took the Chair.

4. Election of a Deputy Chairperson

Daniel Bech proposed Cllr Catherine Mayhew. Cllr Mrs Mayhew said she would be happy to accept but asked whether the Forum would be happy with a Councillor as Deputy Chair.

Matt Goodwin suggested that an association representative should step forward. Chris Thomas volunteered and was proposed by Cllr Peter Crawford and seconded by John Ribbins.

5. South East Plan

The recently formed sub-committee had submitted a response on the South East Plan proposals on behalf of the RTW Town Forum. The Forum thanked the sub-committee for all of their work.

Tony Fullwood was on the agenda to attend for this item but since the response had already been compiled he suggested that this was no longer needed.

6. Town Forum website

This was dealt with earlier in the meeting (under Matters Arising), and Matt Goodwin added his thanks to Daniel Bech.

7. Licensing – report of sub-committee

Chris Thomas summarised the report of the sub-committee. The terms of reference of the sub-committee covered four main aspects:

- Maintaining two-way communication with the Council/Police on licensing matters.
- Keeping the Town Forum informed.
- Ensuring there are simple ways to complain when problems arise.
- Representing the views of the public.

Discussion arose on some of the finer details of the report, including:

- A 24-hour telephone service was proposed. Comments were made about whether this would be an effective use of resources and a suggestion was made to use an e-mail system instead.
- The interests of bouncers were not represented.
- The responsibility of the Local Authority once a licence had been granted. Gary Stevenson responded that both the Local Authority and the Police have a responsibility for licensed premises, and they are working together on a joined-up approach to make sure that people are not passed between the two organisations unnecessarily. At present the Council's duty officer is only available for emergencies and large-scale events. The Council and Police are working on a joint pro-active enforcement protocol and the Council is looking to carry out night-time visits on selected days.
- Guidance will be produced to help people to know what to do if they need to complain – this is being produced shortly.
- The need for more noise control.
- The difference in police response to noise complaints inside and outside the town centre.
- The issue of premises serving alcohol to children.
- The lack of a Community Police Officer for the town. A new Officer has now started.

- The potential impact of a smoking ban, which may send people outside to smoke.
- Has any progress been made on the alcohol-free zone? Yes, a 12-week consultation is due to take place.
- What about publicans' role? Pubwatch has grown and has been very successful, and lets other publicans know if there is an incident in a pub. Licensees understand their responsibility.
- Mary Wardrop suggested that Chief Inspector Simon Wilshaw attends the meeting. It was suggested that MW arranges this as she is on the sub-committee.

It was agreed that the Town Forum approves the general approach of the sub-committee.

ACTION POINT: Chris Thomas to provide Daniel Bech with the report and his contact details. Daniel Bech to put these on the website. Forum members were asked to feed back to Chris Thomas on the sub-committee report. This is to be circulated at the next meeting.

8. Revised Terms of Reference

Daniel Bech summarised the changes to the Terms of Reference, which are in italics on the report provided. It was agreed that there would be:

- 'One person one vote'.
- No limit to representation on the Town Forum at the present time, but there would only be one voting representative per association.

ACTION POINT: It was agreed that Matt Goodwin's e-mail address would be put on the Town Forum website. Daniel Bech to add this.

8b. – Additional item on the agenda: Sustainability Appraisal consultation

Matt Goodwin pointed out the consultation period runs out the second week in November. It was added that Vision For Kent is also being consulted upon. It was agreed that sub-committees would be considered to respond to these consultations.

9. – Section 215

Daniel Bech listed a number of properties which are derelict and have a detrimental impact on the town. Discussion followed and included the following comments and queries:

- Street Scene Enforcement Officers/ Graffiti Hit Squad would be starting next month.
- The Council has used the Section 215 planning power on the Greyhound pub and the notice has now expired.
- 400th Anniversary of RTW can be used as an opportunity to campaign to get people to improve the appearance of their properties.
- Can RTW Forum write to people to get them to clean up their properties? The Council takes care in these matters as the owner could be vulnerable/elderly etc, and so the appropriate approach must be taken.
- Initial approaches are not confrontational, but if there is no response further action can then be taken.
- Hastings Article in 'The Telegraph' said that the Section 215 had been successful as owners who could not afford the repairs then sold their properties and they were bought by people who improved them.

It was agreed that a sub-committee would be established to look into this matter in detail.

ACTION POINT: Volunteers for the sub-committee on derelict properties to contact Daniel Bech and copy Matt Goodwin and Ellie Broughton.

10. Short Announcements

Consultation on the Council's Budget Proposals for 2006/7 will be taking place. More details of this will follow when the date is known.

Consultation on the priorities for the Community Plan will start on 7 November and continue until 9 December. It was agreed that a sub-committee would be set up for this.

ACTION POINT: Volunteers for the sub-committee on Community Plan consultation to contact Daniel Bech and copy to Matt Goodwin and Ellie Broughton. It was suggested that five representatives would be appropriate.

11. Any other business

Matt Goodwin reported that he had been invited to a meeting of the Commons Conservators in January but is unable to make it as it is a weekday daytime appointment and offered this invitation to another member of the Forum.

He reported that he has also been invited to a Community Plan Networking Event on 25 November from 9am to 1pm, followed by lunch. Six representatives are invited to attend.

ACTION POINT: Volunteers to attend the Community Plan Networking Event on 25 November to contact Estelle Grant, Community Planner, TWBC.

12. Date of next meeting – 29 November 2005