



ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS TOWN FORUM

Minutes of Meeting dated Thursday 26 November 2009

1. Present:

Stuart Anderson (Beulah Road Residents' Association), Daniel Bech (Telephone House Neighbours' Association), Michael Doyle (Hawkenbury Village Association), Alison Finlay (Inner London Road Residents' Association), John Higgs (Hanover and Rock Villa Residents' Association), Michael Holman (TW Twinning & Friendship Association), Arthur Hutchins (4 Roads Residents' Association), George Lawson (Inner London Road Residents' Association), Ian Naismith (Hanover and Rock Villa Residents' Association), Altan Omer (Benhall Mill Road Land Association), Peter Perry (Calverley Park Crescent Freeholders' Association), Kate Sergeant (Clarence Road Users Association), Christopher Thomas (Chairman of the Town Forum and The Goodwins No's 1 & 2 Residents' Company/Woodbury Close Residents' Association), Alastair Tod and John Cunningham (RTW Civic Society); and David Wright (Calverley Park Residents Association).

RTW Ward Councillors: Bob Atwood (Rusthall), Ronen Basu (Culverden), Peter Crawford (Vice-Chairman) (Broadwater), Catherine Mayhew (Park), John Miller (Culverden), Tracy Moore (St John's), Frank Williams (Sherwood) and Chris Woodward (St John's); - Roy Bullock (Leader of the Council).

Others in attendance: George Carey (NW Kent Access Groups), Graham Goddard (Hospital Development Director, Maidstone & Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust), Alan Hewett (Maidstone & Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust), Ashley Scarff (Head of Business and Corporate Planning, Maidstone & Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust); - Helen Kitchener (Kent & Sussex Courier), Robert Patterson (Business Development Manager, Arriva), Irene Rukerebua (Observer); - Lee Colyer (Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, Head of Finance and Governance), Mike McGeary (TWBC Democratic Services Manager).

2. Apologies:

Betsy Dix (Calverley Park Crescent Freeholders' Association), Jane Fenwick (Calverley Park Residents Association), John Goodfellow (Banner Farm Residents' Association), Simon Smith (Inner London Road Residents' Association), Mary Wardrop (Hawkenbury Village Association), David Webster (Clarence Road Users' Association) and Councillors Mrs June Crowhurst (Pembury), Mrs Lesley Herriot (St John's) and James Scholes (Pantiles and St Mark's).

3. Budget Setting Process

Town Forum members had previously agreed that Lee Colyer, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council's Head of Finance and Governance, should attend this meeting to provide a presentation on the Council's budget and special expenses.

Lee explained that due to the economic climate the public sector debt forecast was likely to hit £1.4 trillion and inflation would be RPI negative. It was noted that interest rates were at an all time low and unemployment was rising with high levels of personal debt. The Town Forum was informed that the Borough Council's original forecast for 2010/11 was a net deficit of £828,000 with a ten-year cumulative deficit of £5.4m.

The Council had asked its heads of service to identify unavoidable growth and any possible savings over the next three-years; this had been achieved and savings had been identified across the organisation. Savings had also been identified through the senior management restructure and more would be required under phase two of that process. These actions had since reduced the deficit for next year to £454,000.

However, there were uncertainties, namely: Environmental Information Act: LGA defence on legal challenge on the ability to charge for local search fees, and the reduction in Government grant from 2011/12 (5% each year, leading to a 30% reduction over that period); the grant would be £7 million in 2010/11.

Lee explained Special Expenses and, since 1974 local government reorganisation, how these had been used as a way of attempting to ensure that different areas pay according to the cost of services that were provided in their area for the benefit of that area; an example of this was parks and commons. Lee added that 'concurrent functions' were discretionary services provided by parish and town councils within their own areas, as well as by the Borough Council in another area, for example, footway lighting.

Another significant area of expenditure, Lee explained, was with the concessionary fares scheme, where current year costs were at £1.3m i.e. approximately 10% of overall net expenditure. He stressed that the Council had no discretion other than to have to meet this cost.

Town Forum members focussed on a number of key expenditure areas, namely Special Expenses, concessionary fares, the Rusthall parish review, the performance expectations of the Delivery Unit, and the Council's reserves. The Leader of the Council invited the Town Forum – either individual members or collectively – to feed in their suggestions for how the authority might make further savings or reduce costs (or raise additional income). The Chairman undertook to act as a central point for members wishing to comment.

Action:

- 3.1 That representations be made, either individually or collectively, on how best the Council can achieve further savings or cost reductions or even raise additional income.

4. Maidstone & Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust

Graham Goddard, Hospital Development Director from Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust, attended for this item, along with Ashley Scarff and Alan Hewett, and provided the Town Forum with a presentation on updates with the new Pembury Hospital.

Robert Patterson, Business Development Manager from Arriva, was also present to respond to any issues regarding whether there would be an adequate bus service to meet the demands of the public, who required public transport to/from the hospital.

George Carey from the Tunbridge Wells Access Group had earlier set out a number of concerns in a letter and Graham was able to provide an up-to-date report on most of the issues identified. Graham's report was, generally, very positive and encouraging. He acknowledged that the NHS Trust was not always able to 'get things right' first time and he therefore emphasised the importance of forums such as this, which helped to clarify issues.

The Chairman also read out a series of questions raised by John Goodfellow (appendix A to these minutes), who had given his apologies for this meeting. Graham advised that he needed clarification on John's rationale behind the questions, and would therefore welcome further discussions with him.

Graham's report and the discussion covered a wide range of topics, including: cardiac, rheumatology, dermatology, renal and mental health services and reorganisation of the Ambulance Service, car parking and public transport. Graham's emphasis was very much on the Trust's 'whole health economy' approach to service provision.

In response to an enquiry from the Chairman as to how employers could encourage greater public transport use on under-utilised routes, Robert Patterson advised that there was a 'salary sacrifice scheme' in place, which aimed to address this problem.

Action points arising from the discussion were: (a) Graham Goddard (GG) to contact the Ambulance Service, for clarification on their reorganisation proposals for a 'make ready' centre; (b) Robert Patterson to look again at the 'ticketing boundary' to investigate the viability of its extension to Pembury Hospital; (c) GG to seek clarification from Kent & Medway Social Care Trust on whether in-patient services are/will be provided from Maidstone; (d) Daniel Bech to send GG a link to the 'mosaic' customer data information; (e) Peter Crawford was encouraged to contact Steve Phoenix, Chief Executive of the PCT, to lobby them into commissioning a replacement limb service at the new hospital; and (f) GG to look to provide a 'who does what' chart on their website.

This was requested as there was much confusion as to who was actually responsible for what and why the hospital will be providing some services and others not. Graham hoped that on his return to the Town Forum that he would have colleagues from the Pembury Care Trust to explain this further.

The Chairman thanked the Trust representatives for their very helpful update, adding that another invitation would be made in the new year, in order to build on the positive exchange of views that had developed. Graham responded by saying he would be happy to attend again.

Actions:

- 4.1 Graham Goddard to contact the Ambulance Service for clarification on their reorganisation proposals for a 'make ready' centre;
- 4.2 Robert Patterson to look again at the 'ticketing boundary' to investigate the viability of its extension to Pembury Hospital;
- 4.3 Graham Goddard to seek clarification from Kent & Medway Social Care Trust on whether in-patient services are/will be provided from Maidstone;
- 4.4 Daniel Bech to send Graham Goddard a link to the 'mosaic' customer data information;
- 4.5 Peter Crawford was encouraged to contact Steve Phoenix, Chief Executive of the PCT, to lobby them into commissioning a replacement limb service at the new hospital; and
- 4.6 Graham Goddard to look to provide a 'who does what' chart on their website which could also be sent to the Town Forum for publication.

5. Appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair

Christopher Thomas and Peter Crawford were elected Chair and Vice-Chair of the Town Forum, respectively. (Daniel Bech had proposed Christopher Thomas as Chair, seconded by George Lawson. Daniel had also proposed Peter Crawford as Vice-Chair, seconded by Alastair Tod.)

6. Membership Changes

No membership changes were reported.

7. Minutes of Last Meeting Dated 29 October 2009

The minutes were agreed.

Matters Arising: None received.

8. Actions from Previous Meetings

On-going Action

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.

The Chairman, Christopher Thomas, reiterated the fact that if any association/member wishes other Town Forum members to be aware of their organisation's activities, they need to inform Daniel Bech in order for them to be included on the Town Forum's website. All representatives are reminded to inform the Town Forum of concerns held by residents, who may not be represented on the Town Forum, but wish for a platform to raise such concerns.

Action Outstanding from the Meeting dated 30 July 2009

- 8.1 Leonard Price (Culverden Ward) to inform Daniel Bech regarding answers to questions relating to the Cinema site and RTW Conservation Area at Risk (English Heritage Register 2009).
(Repeat outstanding action)

Actions Completed from the Meeting dated 24 September 2009

- 8.2 (Street Scene concerns) Daniel Bech advised that the meeting on 4 November had taken place with KCC Highways' officers. He added that he would submit the notes of that meeting to the January Town Forum meeting. Daniel added that, at Lene Beynon's prompt, he had provided a list of roads where the problems were considered in need of the most urgent action.
- 8.3 (73 London Road) George Lawson advised that the Secretary for the Inner London Road Residents' Association had been advised by TWBC's Planning Service that, as some (minor, it was believed) action had been taken by the owners of this property, section 215 action had been put into abeyance. It was agreed that this remained a problem and the Chairman advised that he would support plans for a letter to be sent to the Head of Planning Services, urging that formal action be taken.
- 8.4 (Royal Tunbridge Wells in Bloom/Love Where We Live) The Chairman advised that KCC Highways had indicated their support for local groups to be involved in clearing and maintaining roundabouts. He invited volunteers to assist with such a project for the Sainsbury's roundabout, to take place in March. Similarly, the Chairman advised, it was hoped to clear the Morrison's flower bed, adjacent to the Station. It was agreed that Daniel Bech would act as the co-ordinator for volunteer names coming forward; Daniel would also follow up the issue with KCC Highways.

Cllr Mrs Mayhew added that, under the 'Love Where We Live' initiative, TWBC were encouraging such groups to improve the appearance of their local areas. She advised that the Council would provide assistance with equipment and guidance.

Actions Outstanding from the Meeting dated 29 October 2009

- 9.1 That Councillor Bullock undertake to find out what planning permission had been given for the Cinema Site hoarding.

Actions Completed from the Meeting dated 29 October 2009

- 9.2 William Benson, Director of Change & Business Support, be asked to give a presentation to the Town Forum at the beginning of 2010. William will be attending the February 2010 meeting of the Town Forum.

9. Reports from Borough Councillors

No reports had been received prior to the Town Forum meeting.

10. Reports from Champions/Vision Committee

No reports had been received prior to the Town Forum meeting.

11. Dates of next meetings of the Town Forum

- 17 December 2009 at 6.30pm

2010

- 28 January 2010 at 6.30pm
- 25 February 2010 at 6.30pm – Gateway presentation update - William Benson
- 25 March 2010 at 6.30pm
- 22 April 2010 at 6.30pm
- 27 May 2010 at 6.30pm
- 24 June 2010 at 6.30pm
- 29 July 2010 at 6.30pm
- 30 September 2010 at 6.30pm
- 28 October 2010 at 6.30pm
- 25 November 2010 at 6.30pm
- 16 December 2010 meeting
 - provisional, there is a possibility of holding this meeting in a different venue and at a different time.

17 December 2009 is the next full Town Forum - Any reports/short papers to be emailed/posted to Samantha Timms by no later than 10am on Monday 7 December 2009.

- 12. The Chairman thanked all those present for attending and the meeting came to a close at 8.30pm.

Questions by John Goodfellow Minute 4 Refers

Question 1

The Trust is obliged by the Planning Grant to fund additional bus services from the centres of Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge and Crowborough (ignoring a service from Borough Green being contested as far too expensive for the meagre use). Can the Trust tell us please their estimate of:

1. The number of staff, patients and carers/visitors using the existing bus services from these town centre, and the additional numbers able to come without hardship because of the additional services;
2. The fraction these additional bus passengers would be of the total number coming from the whole catchment area; and
3. How much each additional (individual) bus journey would cost the Trust, which would have to be taken from patients' care?

Question 2

What is the Trust's estimate of the cost providing each of the extra 103 car parking places, and how far this cost would be met by parking fees reckoned over an initial 10 or 20 year period?

Question 3

Does the Trust agree that Travel Plan targets require around 6% of Hospital users to shift from cars to buses/cycling/walking, probably tripling bus use, but only around 2% reduction in overall fuel consumption would result, along with increased hardship to patients and considerable cost to the Trust?