

## ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS TOWN FORUM

**Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 27 November 2019 held at  
Town Hall, Royal Tunbridge Wells, Kent, starting at 6.30pm**

**Members:** Sally Balcon (Friends of the Commons), Tim Ball (Calverley Park Crescent Association), Jenina Bas-Pendry (Dudley Road Residents' Association), Adrian Berendt (Tunbridge Wells Bicycle User Group), Lorna Blackmore (Grantley Court Residents' Association), Mark Booker (Culverden Residents' Association), Diana Butler (Banner Farm Residents' Association), Robert Chris (Grove Hill House Residents' Association), John Cunningham (Warwick Park Residents' Association and Civic Society of Royal Tunbridge Wells), Marieke de Jonge (Tunbridge Wells Friends of the Earth), Andy England (Tunbridge Wells Access Group), Margaret Ginman (Friends of Woodbury Park Cemetery), Carolyn Gray (The Forum), Dorothea Holman (Boyne Park Residents' Association), Michael Holman (Tunbridge Wells Twinning and Friendship Association), Delphine Houlton (Hawkenbury Village Association), Adrian Johnson (Kingswood Residents' Association), Marianne MacDonald (Nourish Community Foodbank), Katharina Mahler-Bech (Telephone House Neighbours' Association), Paul Mason (Tunbridge Wells Bicycle User Group), Angela McPherson (Soroptimist International of Tunbridge Wells and District), Chris Morris (Beulah Road Residents' Association), Paul Sinclair (Clarence Road Users' Association), Don Sloan (Molyneux Park Gardens Residents' Association), Anne Stobo (Friends of the Tunbridge Wells Museum, Library and Art Gallery), Tim Tempest (The Avenues Residents' Association), Alastair Tod (Poona Road Residents' Association and Tunbridge Wells Puppetry Festival), David Wakefield (Tunbridge Wells Twinning and Friendship Association), Denise Watts (Tunbridge Wells Over Fifties Forum), Philip Whitbourn (Beulah Road Residents' Association) and Carol Wilson (Inner London Road Residents' Association)

**Borough Councillors:** Councillors Cobbold (Broadwater ward), Lidstone (St. John's ward), Morton (St. John's ward), Pound (Sherwood ward), Scott (Culverden ward) and Woodward (Broadwater ward)

**Others in Attendance:** Stephen Baughen (Head of Planning, TWBC), Sue Pound, Paul Taylor (Director of Change and Communities, TWBC), Mark O'Callaghan (Scrutiny and Engagement Officer, TWBC and Secretary to the Town Forum)

### APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- 1 The following apologies, as noted at the preceding Annual General Meeting, were received:
- Dave Barnett (Friends of Grosvenor and Hilbert Parks);
  - John de Lucy (Friends of Tunbridge Wells Cemetery); and
  - Jane Fenwick (Calverley Park Residents' Association).

### DECLARATIONS OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

- 2 The following substitute members were representing their respective organisations:
- Janina Bas-Pendry (Dudley Road Residents' Association);
  - John Cunningham (Civic Society of Tunbridge Wells);
  - Paul Mason, (Tunbridge Wells Bicycle User Groups);
  - Angela McPherson (Soroptimist International of Tunbridge Wells and District);
  - Chris Morris (Beulah Road Residents' Association);
  - Paul Sinclair (Clarence Road Users Association);
  - Alastair Tod (Tunbridge Wells Puppetry Festival);

- David Wakefield (Tunbridge Wells Twinning and Friendship Association); and
- Carol Wilson (Inner London Road Residents' Association).

## MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

### 3 a) Changes to Membership

The following changes in membership were noted:

- The Avenues Residents' Association – Rob Tumber was no longer the Deputy and we are awaiting details of a replacement. Tim Tempest remained the Representative.
- Friends of Tunbridge Wells Museum, Library and Art Gallery – Helen Hitcham replaced by Mike Trudel as Deputy. Anne Stobo remained the Representative.
- Kingswood Residents' Association – Kyrios Kyriacou replaced by Adrian Johnson as Representative. There remained no Deputy for the time being.
- Hawkenbury Village Assoc' – Delphine Houlton replaced Joan Boenke as Representative. Mary Wardrop was no longer Deputy and the organisation had declined to appoint a replacement at this time.
- U3A in abeyance – Adrian Twiner was unwell and the U3A have opted not to send a representative.
- Clarence Road Users Association – elected new representatives at recent AGM, awaiting details. Paul Sinclair in attendance tonight.

### b) New Membership Applications

Three requests for new membership applications had been received. Details were awaited.

## MINUTES OF THE MEETING DATED 12 SEPTEMBER 2019

### 4 a) Approval of the Minutes as a correct record

No amendments to the minutes were proposed.

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the meeting dated 12 September 2019 be approved.

### b) Matters Arising

None

## UPDATE FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

5 Councillor McDermott (Leader of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council) and Stephen Baughen (Head of Planning, TWBC) gave a verbal update and answered questions which included the following matters:

- There was a new Leader of Kent County Council – Roger Gough (Sevenoaks Borough Councillor).
- Amelia Scott:
  - Work due to begin at the end of January 2020.
  - Due to complete at the end of 2021.

- Accessibility was very good, but it was suggested that an additional disabled car parking space be provided at the rear of the building for those who would find the distance from the War Memorial side too far.
  - Funding for the scheme was secure.
- Public Realm work was almost complete. Remaining work would be carried out in early 2020.
- The new Waste Service was slowly improving. Officers had worked very hard to rectify the issues that arose. Resources would be increased over the Christmas period.
- The Leader agreed to attend the next Tunbridge Wells Access Group Meeting. Andy England to send details of next meeting date.
- Climate Emergency declaration:
  - Cross-party Working Group had been set up.
  - 2 meetings had taken place with Terms of Reference and an outline programme agreed.
  - First stage of the programme was to commission a Carbon Footprint Audit. Then put forward an action plan.
  - Second stage, a Forum to be set up to engage with young people and other stakeholders.
  - Suggestion that the Carbon Footprint Audit not be restricted to the Council as this would have limited impact. It needed to cover the whole Borough.
- No power existed to revoke the CPO that related to the Calverley Square project. As such it would remain until May 2022 but the Council had no intention to implement it.
- £900 had been raised at a quiz held by the Friends of the Tunbridge Wells Museum, Library and Art Gallery for the preservation of the Georgian Gown.
- Local Plan:
  - Consultation period ran from 20 September to 15 November 2019.
  - A wide consultation process was undertaken and several thousand comments were received – including from neighbouring authorities. These were now being uploaded.
  - Comments would then be reviewed by officers. This process would continue until summer 2020. Work with the Neighbourhood Development Group would also take place.
  - Subject to any amendments, a further consultation period would be undertaken between August and September 2020 for a period of at least 8 weeks. The aim would be to submit the plan by the end of 2020.
  - Policies associated with Climate Change and Active Travel were already included in the draft Local Plan. Consideration would be given to any further comments made, but it was noted that the key period of time for making representations had now passed.
  - Health was a key element of the Plan, particularly around infrastructure and health provision. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan provided further details of infrastructure provision and how it was being planned.
  - The presence of a Plan was fundamental to having a structured planning process and avoided a scenario of planning by appeal.

- Well being would be included as part of the Plan, with consideration given to smaller infrastructure items, e.g. benches.

## **CIVIC COMPLEX CROSS-PARTY WORKING GROUP**

6 Councillor Scott, the Chairman of the TWBC Cross-party Working Group, gave a verbal update and answered questions which included the following matters:

- Draft Report due to be available on 9 December 2019, to be presented at Full Council on 18 December 2019.
- Membership of the Working Party was not commonly known at this time, this was to allow members to focus during the early stages.
- There would be opportunities to comment as the work progressed. The Town Forum would be actively encouraged to make strong representation on the work going forward.
- There was no power to revoke planning permission on the Calverley Square grounds.

## **PUBLIC REALM WORKS, LOCAL TRADERS AND RESIDENTS**

7 Paul Taylor, Director of Change and Communities, TWBC, gave a verbal update and answered questions which included the following matters:

- Work was nearing completion. The outstanding work included:
  - Dressing to the steps by the war memorial. The stone arrived on 27 November, with work due to start soon and expected to be completed early in the new year.
  - Further work was needed on signage.
  - Tree planting either side of the memorial.
  - Work was being undertaken on the wall outside the library.
- The scheme would be reviewed 1 year and 3 years after implementation.
- A closedown report would be produced and would include 'lessons learnt'.
- Once signing had been reviewed and amended as necessary, there would be a period of transition prior to any enforcement measures being introduced.
- Benches would be introduced, further details on their design and placement would be provided when known.
- A meeting had taken place with residents from York Road and Dudley Road to discuss their issues regarding an increase in traffic and associated safety concerns. The position was being monitored.
- There were currently no plans for a third phase of the scheme.
- TWBC were meeting KCC where the issue of tree maintenance would be discussed. The outcome would be fed back at a future meeting.
- It was not normal practice to put a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) on Highways Authority trees.
- A working group was set up to discuss issues raised by local traders. TWBC wrote to the 48 businesses in the immediate vicinity to request information to be submitted to the Valuation Office Agency. TWBC received 16 responses, although not all provided evidence of material loss. The 16 cases would be submitted to the Valuation Office Agency who would consider and reply direct to the businesses involved.

## HAWKENBURY PUMP TRACK

- 8 Paul Taylor, Director of Change and Communities, TWBC, gave a verbal update and answered questions which included the following matters:
- Scheme put forward by Hawkenbury Village Association.
  - A Pump Track to sit adjacent to the all weather track.
  - A presentation took place at RVP – 3 sites were identified to start the discussion. Over 100 people supported the scheme, with only 2 people unhappy with the proposed sites.
  - More research was being undertaken by Hawkenbury Village Association. Once this had been put together, further liaison with the Council would take place.
  - Funding was expected to come from Community Funding from Barclay Homes. A grant application had also been submitted to the British Cycling Association.
  - Hawkenbury Village Association agreed to present at the next Town Forum meeting.

## TUNBRIDGE WELLS IN BLOOM

- 9 Katharina Mahler-Bech gave a presentation and answered questions which included the following matters:
- Royal Tunbridge Wells received Gold in the South and South East in Bloom awards.
  - It also received a number of other awards (parks, small parks, cemetery etc.).
  - Sherwood Close in Hawkenbury received a special award.
  - Royal Tunbridge Wells also received a Gold from Britain in Bloom.
  - The scheme was launched each year in April and everybody was encouraged to participate.
  - A photographic competition had taken place, with prominence given to horticultural themes. The results would be announced in the RVP in December. There would be a small exhibition of the 12 winning photographs.
  - 2020 would be the tenth year and the theme would be sunflowers.

## UPDATES FROM LOCAL RESIDENTS' GROUPS

- 10 Michael Holman noted that friends (local store holders) from Wiesbaden were due to visit 13,14 and 15 December 2019. They would be located (as usual) near the ice rink.

## HISTORIC ZONE 20MPH

- 11 Adrian Berendt gave a presentation and answered questions which included the following matters:
- Proposal for a 20mph zone in the historic centre of Tunbridge Wells.
  - The new proposal would include Inner London Road out to Prospect Road, Calverley Road, Calverley Park Gardens, Monson Road, Camden Road etc.
  - Town Forum to support the scheme with the aim of putting it forward to the next Joint Transport Board meeting in January 2020.
  - There was a need to ensure that any measures introduced forced drivers to adhere to the 20pmh speed limit.

- Members made a number of suggestions for additional roads to be included as part of the proposal:
  - Camden Hill,
  - the upper part of Church Road
  - Culverden Down
  - A26 (Mount Ephraim Road)
  - Sandrock Road (particularly outside St James School).
- Education about speed limits was important but it was recognised that this took time.

## REPORTS FROM THE TOWN FORUM WORKING GROUPS

- 12            Culture, Leisure and Tourism Working Group:
- Working Party Report on Culture Strategy – page 42, ‘Planning should recognise the need for a robust business plan but not be dominated by seeking to avoid an operating deficit which could be traded against capital costs’. It was agreed that an explanation of this would be provided later.
- Water in the Wells Working Group:
- The Fountain in Dunorlan Park – it would be nice to see it in operation on a more regular basis.
  - Reference to water features and water health in the Town. Developers would now be guided towards this.
  - The Beacon was not going to restore the old bath, but to build a new one. A cold bath and a new hot bath.
- Wellbeing Working Group:
- Nourish Community Food Bank to hold a fundraiser on 7 and 8 December in RVP.

## ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 13            There was no other business.

## FUTURE MEETINGS

- 14            23 January 2020  
              19 March 2020

NOTE: The meeting concluded at 8.55 pm.



## **TOWN FORUM – 30 JANUARY 2020**

### **REPORTS FROM THE TOWN FORUM WORKING GROUPS**

a)	Strategic Planning Working Group	Attached
b)	Transport Strategy Working Group	Verbal
c)	Culture, Leisure and Tourism Working Group	Verbal
d)	Wellbeing Working Group	Verbal
e)	Finance and Other Issues Working Group	Verbal
f)	Water in the Wells Working Group	Verbal

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## **Tunbridge Wells Town Forum Strategic Planning Working Group**

### **Update report for the meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2020**

#### **Local Plan development**

There was not enough time at the last Forum meeting to report on the response submitted on behalf of the Town Forum to the formal consultation on the Preferred Draft Local Plan which had been extended to 15<sup>th</sup> November 2019. The response has been circulated to members and ran to some 69 pages. There is much to welcome in the draft, such as setting higher standards for building design, serious attempts to encourage more affordable housing, initial policies on climate change mitigation, more specific heritage policies and continuing protection for much of the Green Belt immediately surrounding Royal Tunbridge Wells. We did though, among other things, express concerns over the possible loss of parts of existing playing fields, even if this is predicated on major development of replacement state of the art facilities at Hawkenbury Rec.

With regard to overall policy objectives, we advocated placing *wellbeing* at the heart of all policies with an additional specific objective of seeking to enable it in the Borough. This would range from the provision of adequate benches and public toilets in the town centre, improved doctors' surgeries, through changes to primary school provision to enable access to local schools by local residents, to the positive enabling of active travel by provision of adequate walking and cycling routes in and around the town centre.

#### **1. Housing numbers and housing need**

We took into account the continuing political realities of acute government pressure on local authorities to allow substantial building in their areas, even beyond the latest calculated housing need, in making our response. It seems clear from the rejection of both the draft Sevenoaks and Wealden Local Plans that there is a determination in government to override local concerns and even some of the stated policies in the National Planning Policy Framework. Against this troubling background, TWBC's decision to endeavour to produce a plan which will be found "sound" by the Planning Inspectorate at Public Examination does appear pragmatic if not ideal. We *do* need an up to date Local Plan as soon as possible so that the worst kind of unplanned development does not take place in default. There is currently no reason to hope that a more logical framework for housing numbers and housing need will emerge from the current national administration and it is probably only in pressing for greater density of development to prevent urban sprawl that we have much chance of influencing events locally.

#### **2. Allocations policies**

The proposed specific building allocations for Royal Tunbridge Wells were subject to extensive consultation with the Town Forum WG throughout 2019, including half day workshops in February and September. The overall view was that the proposed allocations were either satisfactory or in the case of proposed encroachment into Green Belt and AONB, probably the "least worst" options. Concerns remained over the proposed development at Spratsbrook Farm in the AONB where great care would be needed to avoid harming the views towards Crowborough Beacon from the Beacon Hotel and Rusthall Common. Our comments on a site by site basis are available in our full response.

#### **3. Transport and other infrastructure**

TWBC is not in control of most of the public infrastructure in Royal Tunbridge Wells. The draft Infrastructure Delivery Plan and Transport Strategy Review (available on the TWBC Local Plan website) are excellent aspirational documents but we felt that the policies on transport and water infrastructure in particular were over-optimistic and liable not to be delivered in time to meet the increased demand arising from new development. However, there were also encouraging signs that, in policy terms at least, active travel and reduction in atmospheric and noise pollution had become

mainstream objectives, along with longer term objectives of re-opening rail links to Brighton and Croydon.

## **4. Revised Local Plan timetable**

The approximate timetable for development of the new Local Plan is currently as follows: Final Local Plan consultation (Regulation 19) August-September 2020; Submission of Final Local Plan December 2020; Public Examination of Plan Spring 2021; Entry into force Autumn 2021.

### **Personal note**

I first attended the Forum at the beginning of 2014 on behalf of the Culverden Residents' Association and since then have not missed a meeting. June Bridgeman first involved me in working on an outline for a report on green issues to complement her earlier paper "A place of pleasure and resort". This led to our 2015 report "Developing our Green Network" advocating protection and enhancement of our green spaces and development of green routes for active travel as part of a policy to develop Royal Tunbridge Wells as a destination town. In the late autumn of 2014 I was privileged to take over the planning brief from the late Michael Doyle who had so assiduously followed planning matters at TWBC for the Forum since its formation but was sadly in failing health. I have now completed over 5 years in the role and it has been interesting and rewarding and is still very much a learning experience.

I tried from the start to engage positively with the excellent planning policy team at TWBC whose dedicated mid-level officers have mostly been in post for many years and ensure valuable continuity for our town in a world of constantly changing government planning diktats. After several years of instability at the top, we now have a capable internally promoted Head of Planning in Steve Baughen, with whose team we have consulted on all aspects of the Draft Local Plan. The Town Forum is not a statutory consultee in the same way as a Parish Council and it is particularly pleasing that we have been treated as though we were one during the Local Plan process and have respected the confidentiality that would be required of a statutory consultee. As a result, we have been able to make a substantially stronger input to the whole process than in previous consultations. I have also sought to divide the planning workload logically between the Forum and the Civic Society with the Civic Society using its long-standing expertise on individual planning applications while the Forum has concentrated on more strategic issues. I hope this has made it easier for both organisations to work effectively on planning as a whole with the limited resource available to us.

On the issue of resource, shadowing a whole team of TWBC Officers involved with many different planning issues has proved gruelling and has required fairly relentless effort over the years. In seeking to build up a representative working group, I hoped that members would take on primary responsibilities according to their particular interest in housing, retail, employment, infrastructure and so on with me acting as co-ordinator and editor, but in practice this has not proved achievable. Active members of the Forum are mainly, like me, also involved elsewhere and have limited availability for detailed work. Preparation of the TF response on the Draft Preferred Local Plan therefore involved me in some 26 full working day equivalents in researching, meetings and writing between September and mid November and this is not at present a sustainable pattern for me. I have several years' backlog of personal matters to attend to and also some personal projects I would like to take forward. I therefore seek your indulgence to take a break from all but unavoidable business until the Local Plan process resumes in the late summer. The time may also come when you feel it would be appropriate for someone with fresh ideas and time capacity to take on some or all of the planning work now that our input is well established and respected within Council circles. Besides continuing to represent Culverden Residents' Association, I hope in any event to continue with input on green issues and sustainable transport which is what first brought me into the Forum in 2014.

Mark Booker Leader Strategic Planning Working Group 22.1.20