



ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS TOWN FORUM

Minutes of Meeting dated Thursday 28 September 2006

1. Present:

Jenny Alexander (Rusthall Village Association), Daniel Bech (Telephone House Neighbours' Association), Grahame Bell (Pantiles' Traders), Jenny Blackburn (Rusthall Village Association), June Bridgeman (Soroptimist International of Tunbridge Wells and District), John Cunningham (Royal Tunbridge Wells Civic Society), Betsy Dix (Calverley Park Crescent Freeholders' Association), Michael Doyle (Hawkenbury Village Association), John Goodfellow (Banner Farm Residents' Association), Bruce Goodwin (Grove Hill Road Residents' Association), Matt Goodwin (Chairman Town Forum / Tunbridge Wells Village Residents' Association), Mike Hardy (Pantiles' Traders), John Higgs (Hanover Road and Rock Villa Road Residents' Association), Michael Larsen (Friends of the Grove), , Altan Omer (Benhall Mill Road Land Association), Janet Naim (Regina Court Residents' Association), , Gill Twells (Royal Tunbridge Wells Civic Society), TWBC Councillor David Wakefield, Mary Wardrop (Hawkenbury Village Association), Chris Weller (Calverley Park Residents' Association) Philip Whitbourn (Beulah Road Residents' Association), Tricia Wright (Calverley Park Residents' Association).
TWBC Cllr Peter Crawford, TWBC Cllr Adrian Ekins-Daukes, TWBC Cllr Mrs Mayhew, TWBC Cllr Len Price, TWBC Councillor Frank Williams.

In attendance: TWBC Cllr Roy Bullock, Mike McGeary (Democratic Services Manager, TWBC), Sam Timms (Senior Committee Administrator, TWBC).

2. Apologies:

Graham Bradley (Hanover Road and Rock Villa Road Residents' Association), Mike Hicks (Inner London Road Residents' Association), George Lawson (Friends of the Common), Ian Naismith (Hanover Road & Rock Villa Road Residents' Association), Keith Perry (Benhall Mill Road Land Association), Chris Thomas (The Goodwins No.1/No. 2 Residents' Companies), Roger Walsh (Upper Stone Street Residents' Association) and David Webster (Clarence Road Users' Association).
TWBC Cllr James Scholes.

3. HIGHLIGHTS FROM THIS MEETING

- Structure of Town Forum – the Forum agreed a revised structure, aimed at making it more effective and relevant.

4. Minutes of Last Meeting Dated 24 August 2006

The minutes were agreed, subject to the following additional wording after "...lack of preparation and local knowledge..." under minute 5 **Highways/Transport**: "...,despite being sent copies of questions in advance.

5. Matters Arising from the Meeting dated 24 August 2006

- **Painting of hoarding of property in Church Road** – The Forum was advised that the hoarding erected outside a property in Church Road had now been repainted in a more acceptable colour.
- **Re-naming of SEERA Sub-Committee** – Michael Larsen proposed, and the group endorsed, that this sub-committee be renamed the Strategy Sub-Committee.
- **Consultation on TWBC Housing Strategy** – Michael Larsen summarised his proposed response on behalf of the Town Forum but advised that, in view of TWBC's proposals on renewable energy (minute 6 below), he would be adding that the Forum wished to reserve the right to comment further, in the light of the energy issue.

6. TWBC Update

- **Senior management appointments** – Cllr Roy Bullock confirmed that all the Directors and Heads of Service were now in post, with the exception of the Head of Planning Services, who would join in October and the Head of Economic Development, where no appointment had yet been made. Mike McGeary added that, in response to the group's request for more detailed information about the new management posts, he would précis the job profiles given to him and circulate this asap, including placing the information on the Council's website.
- **Government White Paper on Local Government re-organisation** – Cllr Roy Bullock advised that the Government's timetable for publishing its White Paper had slipped again. He added that the Lyons Inquiry into local government funding was due to issue its report at the end of November.
- **Council Tax proposals** – Cllr Roy Bullock advised that TWBC would shortly begin consulting on its Council Tax proposals for 2007/08, adding that the Town Forum would be an important consultee in the process.
- **Renewable energy policy** – Cllr Roy Bullock advised that a report was being submitted to the Cabinet in October on proposals for a renewable energy policy, as part of a suite of documents on this important topic. Again, he added that the Town Forum would be an important consultee.
- **Collection of unwanted items** – Cllr Len Price drew attention to a recent TWBC Cabinet portfolio-holder decision, which introduced a charge of £25 for the removal of each unwanted household item. He felt that the charge had been set at a level which would encourage fly-tipping and asked that the Town Forum discuss the consequences of this policy at a future meeting with the Head of Environment and Street Scene. This proposal was agreed.

ACTIONS:

- 6.1 Mike McGeary to provide a summary of the areas of responsibility of the new TWBC Directors and Heads of Service.
- 6.2 At a future Town Forum meeting, to discuss TWBC's decision to charge £25 per item for disposal.

7. Feedback from meeting with Behdad Haratbar, KCC Highways

June Bridgeman reported back on the outcome of a meeting held between Matt Goodwin, Behdad Haratbar and herself which was very helpful. However, she and Matt Goodwin had become concerned that the only effective link between TW residents to KCC was through the JTB and that this was an area of considerable weakness for the town exacerbated by the fact that TWBC no longer employed a specific, dedicated transport professional to assist in identifying transport priorities; other issues discussed had been: access for disabled (transport routes); contractors' signage; and signage on lamp columns. June added that Mr Haratbar had offered to address the Town Forum again, on specific topics.

On the matter of TWBC priorities, Cllr Roy Bullock advised that this already existed and was set out in the Transport Strategy, which was subject to annual review by councillors. It was agreed that the Transport Sub-Committee be asked to examine all of the issues arising from this discussion and report back with recommendations to the Town Forum. In addition, Cllr Roy Bullock undertook to provide John Higgs with copies of the TWBC/KCC Joint Transportation Board (JTB) minutes, in respect of the Transport Strategy.

ACTIONS:

- 7.1 The Transport Sub-Committee be asked to meet and report back to the Town Forum on the key issues arising from meeting with Mr Haratbar;
- 7.2 Cllr Roy Bullock to forward copies of relevant JTB minutes to John Higgs.

8. Job definition for position of Press Officer

The group considered a job definition for the position of Press Officer. It was agreed that the definition required some re-drafting, specifically: point (1) diluting the apparent power given to the postholder; point (2) changing "...agree the message in advance with the Press Officer..." to "...informing the Press officer in advance..."; point (5) add "the BBC" to the list of contacts. (Please also see minute 10 below.)

ACTION:

- 8.1 The Chairman be asked to re-draft, incorporating the above points.

9. Feedback reports from recent action points and sub-committees

- Daniel Bech reported on the work of the *Brighten Up Tunbridge Wells Sub-Committee*, specifically that the 'grot spot' property in Warwick Park had now been sold; the owner of the property at 16 Monson Road was now undertaking urgent repair work; an application had been made to convert the Greyhound pub into 14 flats; the re-painting of litter bins and bollards was taking place; and a proposal to dispose of the St John's bus depot site for housing (although Cllr Roy Bullock advised that this site was not allocated for housing within the Local Plan). There was also concern expressed about the future of the Morrisons' supermarket building, with one proposal put forward that this would be an ideal location for a covered/indoor market.
- Daniel Bech sought support for a proposal that the sub-committee's powers be extended to provide the authority to write to grot spot land or property owners, to draw attention to the problems caused by their poor or deteriorating condition. It was agreed that this should form part of the consideration of the restructuring of the Town Forum's sub-committee structure and terms of reference.
- On the specific issue of Morrisons and the Railway Station, it was agreed that TWBC would report back on land ownership, following a land search enquiry.

ACTIONS:

- 9.1 As part of the Town Forum's restructuring proposals, the Townscape and Streetscene Sub-Committee to consider the practicalities and legalities of including within its remit the power to write to owners/occupiers of run-down properties;
- 9.2 TWBC to report back on land ownership at the Morrisons'/Railway Station site.

(Matt Goodwin, Chairman, joined the meeting at this point)

10. Proposed revised structure for the Town Forum

Matt Goodwin had previously circulated details of a proposed revised structure for the Town Forum and he invited comments.

There was broad support expressed for the proposals, with a number of amendments to the precise details, namely:

- (i) the name of the Town Forum Cabinet to be "Co-ordinating Committee", which will meet monthly, (with the Town Forum as a whole moving to bi-monthly meetings);
- (ii) the next chair of the Town Forum *will normally follow* from one of the two Vice-Chairs;
[--> AMENDMENT on 26.10.2006 --> "the vice-chairmen would be elected each year but neither would automatically become chairman"]
- (iii) the five standing committees will have a minimum of four members but no maximum number;
- (iv) the names of the standing sub-committees will be as circulated, with "Vision for Tunbridge Wells" in place of "Blue Sky";
- (v) any member will be able to attend a meeting of the Co-ordinating Committee, as a non-voting member;
- (vi) the proposed press releases and press contacts proposal be held in abeyance until after a revised job definition has been produced.

Matt Goodwin expressed the hope that each sub-committee would develop its own the terms of reference. A summary of the revised proposals is attached.

It was agreed that Matt Goodwin be appointed as Chairman of the Town Forum for a further year and that consideration of the posts of Vice-Chair be deferred until the next meeting.

ACTION:

- 10.1 The election of two Vice-Chairs to take place at the October meeting of the Town Forum.

11. Feedback from meeting with Tim Pendry

Matt Goodwin reported on the outcome of his meeting with Tim Pendry, which Michael Doyle had also attended. It was noted that the points raised at the meeting had been very helpful, in terms of the best way forward for the Town Forum in developing its method of press contacts and publicity.

Cllr Roy Bullock proposed that Janet Naim be asked to assist Matt Goodwin in re-drafting revised guidance for this role, based upon her professional knowledge.

12. Items for future meetings

In respect of the Chairman's proposed meetings with TWBC's new Directors, Matt Goodwin undertook to circulate details of the dates. It was suggested that it might be helpful if the Chairmen of the Sub-Committees also met with the new Directors.

ACTION:

12.1 Matt Goodwin to circulate details of dates of his meetings with TWBC new Directors.

13. Any other business

- (a) Homeopathic Hospital – David Ratsie, from the Tunbridge Wells Homeopathic Hospital, attended the meeting and reported on proposals to close the homeopathic department of the hospital. There was general concern expressed that the PCT were not following the correct consultation procedure. It was agreed that Michael Larsen would write in protest on behalf of the Town Forum. John Goodfellow, who was a member of the PCT Forum, added that he would be registering his concerns through that group.
- (b) TWBC Draft Leisure Strategy – Attention had been drawn to a consultation process on TWBC's draft Leisure Strategy for 2006-2011. It was agreed that the newly-formed Town Forum Strategy Sub-Committee would respond to the consultation paper, although it was felt that the consultation period was short.
- (c) Public transport for disabled people – Jenny Alexander voiced concerns at the poor services provided by Arriva for disabled people. She asked if one of the early tasks of the newly-formed Transport Sub-Committee might be to lobby Arriva for an improvement. Cllr Roy Bullock added that, if the Town Forum wished to have a presentation on bus services, the contact person was David Hall at KCC.
- (d) Changes to the Parish/Town Council planning application call-in procedure – John Goodfellow reported that he had been invited to a meeting of the Kent Association of Parish Councils in Cranbrook, to discuss TWBC's changes to the call-in procedure for planning applications.

ACTIONS:

- 13.1 Michael Larsen to write to the PCT, to protest at the lack of proper consultation over proposals for the closure of the Homeopathic department.
- 13.2 The Town Forum Strategy Sub-Committee to respond to the Leisure Strategy consultation.
- 13.3 The Transport Sub-Committee to consider whether the Town Forum should lobby Arriva re. improving transport facilities for disabled people.

14. Date of next meeting – Thursday 26 October 2006 at 7.30pm.