



Thursday, 29 March 2012

Present: David Wakefield (Chairman), Jane Fenwick (Vice Chairman), John Goodfellow, Chris Morris, Dorothea Holman, Betsy Dix, John Forster, David Webster, Sally Balcon, David Barnett, Jonathon Brooks, Anne Stobo, Angela Phillips, Lorna Blackmore, Michael Doyle, George Lawson, Stephen Marshall, Stephen Bowser, June Bridgeman, Katharina Mahler-Bech, Kate Sergeant, Maggie Fraser, Michael Holman, Christopher Thomas.

Councillors: Cllr Basu, Cllr Mayhew, Cllr Neve, Cllr Derrick, Cllr Williams.

Other Members in Attendance: Councillors

1. APOLOGIES

John Cunningham, Cllr Scholes, Alan Bullion, Mary Wardrop, Peter Perry, Marguerita Morton, Tony Mole, Cllr Poile, Kyrios Kyriacou, John Mattei, Cllr Price, Cllr Bulman, Altan Omer, Cllr Chapelard.

2. DECLARATIONS OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

None.

3. MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

None.

4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 23 FEBRUARY 2012

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record with the following change:

6A Water in the Wells Working Group

Discussion

“It was noted that the Ice Rink had made a loss of £100,000, which was due in part to the warm weather and the need to bring in an electricity generator.”

5. ACTIONS TAKEN SINCE THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Chairman informed the Forum that this would be a new standing item included on each agenda to ensure actions decided at the meeting would be followed up.

23 February 2012

5A Public Realm Scrutiny Update

AS Action: The disabled access group agreed to feed in further comments to the scrutiny review via Anne Stobo (AS).

AS would speak to Michael Coggles regarding comments the disabled access group may wish to feed in.

Ongoing.

DW Action: The Chairman agreed to organise a presentation from Alan Legg, Urban Design Team Leader, for a future meeting.

DW would arrange for Alan Legg to attend the April meeting of the Forum.

Completed 04.04.12.

5B Letter to County Councillors Regarding Library Photo Booth

DW Action: Members noted the item and the Chairman agreed to follow this up and report back to the meeting at a future date.

DW reported that he was awaiting statistics for use of the photo booth from the library and would report back at a future date. To give weight to the issue he urged Forum members to complain individually to the Library and to County Councillors about the severe reduction in notice board space.

Ongoing.

5C Draft Consultation Response for Local Heritage Assets

DW Action: The Chairman agreed to send in a consultation response with the discussion points included.

Completed 27.02.2012.

6A Water in the Wells Working Group

ALL Action: Forum members agreed to help raise the profile of the initiative by talking to their own group about the project, and ensuring that when speaking to Councillors and officers, they would press for it always to be on the agendas of the decision making groups within the Council.

Ongoing.

7A Neighbourhood Planning Workshop

DW Action: It was agreed that the Chairman undertake an exercise to plot the areas already represented across the town, and seek to fill any areas where there were gaps. The Forum could then start work on a set of individual Neighbourhood Plans.

Ongoing.

7B Joint Transportation Board Update

ALL Action: Members who had comments to make about railings in town could contact County Councillor Roy Bullock, Borough Councillor David Neve, County Councillor Kevin Lynes, County Councillor James

Scholes or Borough Councillor Catherine Mayhew.

Cllr Mayhew reported that the group had looked at railing placements with recommendations to remove some and retain others. Cllr Neve welcomed that KCC officers had listened to local concerns and knowledge and felt the exercise was a success.

Completed 03.2012.

JG/
ALL Action: John Goodfellow would feed in the Town Forum's views on this issue to the JTB. Members who had specific comments to feed in could contact Mr Goodfellow separately before the JTB meeting.

Completed 03.2012.

7C TWITA

ALL Action: Members interested in attending the launch event should contact the Local Democracy Officer for more details.

Completed 03.2012.

6. MATTERS ARISING

6A. TWITA

Councillor Derrick informed the Forum that this initiative had been launched on 1 March 2012. Child casualties on roads had been rising and the number of road incidents in the Borough was higher than the national average. TWITA had been formed to address these issues, and was aimed primarily at educating children between 10 and 14 years old, but also expanding to 16-17 year olds and 17-24 year olds. It was noted that road accidents were the biggest killers of the 17-24 year old age group.

Actions

ALL That Forum members think of ways in which they could get involved with the work of TWITA, in particular ways to hold a fund-raising event to raise the profile of the work.

ALL That Forum members lobby KCC to reduce traffic speeds outside of schools to 20mph.

6B. FRIENDS OF CALVERLEY GROUNDS

The Vice-Chairman noted that a preliminary meeting of this group had been held on 29 February 2012, and the next meeting was set for 18 April 2012 between 7pm and 8.30pm in the Calverley Grounds Cafe.

7. PEDESTRIANISATION IN TUNBRIDGE WELLS

The Chairman informed members that this update would be on North Farm traffic improvements and A21 duelling, rather than pedestrianisation in Tunbridge Wells.

The Chairman introduced the TWBC Portfolio Holder for Planning & Transportation, Councillor Ransley, TWBC Head of Economic Development, David Candlin, and KCC Partnership Officer, Chad Nwanosike, to the meeting.

Councillor Ransley addressed the Forum and said that whilst public transport was the preferred method of transport across the Borough, KCC were reluctant to subsidise buses, and people preferred car travel because it was safe and convenient. He also noted that cars entering town provided much needed parking revenue.

However, North Farm and the A21 were congestion problems that did need addressing, and through the Locality Board KCC and TWBC had agreed to spend £30,000 on a traffic study to produce options for the area.

Sally Balcon suggested a one-way system being introduced for North Farm. Councillor Ransley felt this would impose a lengthy detour on motorists wishing to turn left, and would not work. Mr Nwanosike said that the study would look into the feasibility of a one-way system. Results were expected in May.

June Bridgeman felt a radical solution was needed and queried whether duelling the A21 would make the situation better or worse. She also suggested railway improvements as a measure. Councillor Ransley said modelling showed A21 duelling would have a positive effect. Several of the exits were unsuitable, and a second road tunnel under the railway would be too expensive, so improving the A21 was the best option.

Chris Thomas asked what KCC Highways were doing with regard to traffic light timings at the B&Q turning, and whether any arguments against the traffic increase were put forward at the time of building North Farm. Mr Nwanosike replied that the B&Q turning already had the most sophisticated type of traffic system on the market. Traffic movements in the area were complex, but would be monitored and adjusted remotely in 6-8 weeks time to help with the situation.

John Goodfellow suggested another route for access along Dowding Road and Kings Standing. Mr Nwanosike replied that it would be technically difficult to put another access onto the A21.

Councillor Neve felt that S106 monies from historic developments in the area should have been used to part fund a more radical solution for the present that would properly alleviate traffic issues. He noted a "blue route" had been devised in 2001, and this should be re-considered

Councillor Mayhew felt money would be better spent on improvements to the town centre environment, including pedestrianisation of certain areas. Mr Candlin replied that money was being spent on remedying existing problems to improve the current situation, and it was noted that the A26, A264 and Pembury Road would be assessed as part of the study as well.

Chris Thomas asked how many sites changed planning permission at North Farm and Councillor Ransley explained that planning permission wasn't needed once a use class was granted as it stayed with the building, and several different businesses of a similar type could use it.

Stephen Bowser said that whilst there was no money for A21 improvements, resolving the issues would have an enormous rate of return and benefit for the community if undertaken.

John Forster suggested a one-way scheme through the bridge, which might lengthen distances, but not times. Mr Nwanosike agreed that this could be looked at as part of the study.

Councillor Ransley went on to talk about improvements that could be made to the St John's Road area, and referred to a scrutiny review that had been conducted in 2009 with a six point plan for improvements. He had given out a sketch drawing of the plan to members, and asked for the Forum's opinion on the plans.

Councillors Neve and Derrick agreed that the scrutiny review had been worthwhile and supported the plan.

Forum members raised some concerns over the usability of the scheme for pedestrians, whether there was enough turning space, if a linked roundabout might be more appropriate, and whether the bus lanes would be affected. Councillor Ransley agreed these were all minor issues that needed further investigation. Overall however, Forum members were supportive of the scheme, and asked Councillor Ransley to take it forward in the most appropriate way.

Councillor Ransley went on to talk about shared space schemes, which were more feasible than pedestrianisation. Councillor Mayhew agreed that this was a more modern way forward.

Forum members agreed with the idea of more shared space areas, and Anne Stobo and John Goodfellow felt that this should go hand-in-hand with a reduction in speed limits to 10mph or 20mph. Anne Stobo suggested a shared space outside the Town Hall, which would highlight the heritage of the building and improve disabled access.

John Forster and Councillor Derrick proposed non-traditional traffic calming measures such as planting trees to reduce line-of-sight and Mr Nwanosike agreed that speed reduction measures were a better option than speed enforcement measures.

Actions

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| DW | Mr Nwanosike agreed to return to the Forum in June with the results of the modelling study. |
| BR | Councillor Ransley agreed to take the scrutiny review plan to Locality Board in June to progress the St John's Road scheme further. |
| JG? | Councillor Neve requested that a proposed bus extension scheme from Woodbury Park to Mount Ephraim be considered by JTB. |
| BR | The Forum requested that Councillor Ransley press ahead with introduction of shared spaces in the town centre. |

8. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

The Chairman updated the Forum on a Neighbourhood Planning session that he had attended. The Forum could have a role to play under the emerging National Planning Policy Framework by producing a Neighbourhood Plan.

Other members discussed aspects of the Localism Act, the Town Centre Area Action Plan and the Core Strategy, which were all relevant in terms of planning for the town's future. Councillor Mayhew clarified that the Neighbourhood Plan had to take account of the Core Strategy, and other policies, but allowed local people to state what they felt was important for the town.

Visiting Council Member Councillor Hills said that the allocations policy also needed to be considered in terms of uses for different plots of land.

June Bridgeman raised the issue of representation in the Town Forum and felt that the northern parts of town were not well represented. It was noted that this was an action from a previous meeting that was being taken forward by the Chairman.

Actions

DW The Chairman agreed to ask Louise Phillips, Planning Policy Manager, to attend April's meeting to explain Neighbourhood Planning further to Forum members.

9. WORKING GROUPS

9A. WATER IN THE WELLS

Michael Holman gave a further update on the work of the group and said that water features needed to be a part of the TCAAP. There had been £100,000 allocated to Calverley Grounds to install a three-phase electrical generator, but this would only serve current initiatives such as the ice rink. More long-term electricity plans were needed if a water feature in the park was to be a realistic possibility.

The 'Courier' was interested in the work of the group and Mr Holman had done a short interview with a reporter. He had concentrated on the the vision for TW as a town of "pleasure, leisure, health and wealth". He appealed again to Forum members to speak to the residents in their associations to see if any professional skills were available to help with the project. Money would be available for appropriate schemes through S106 contributions. The Friends of Grosvenor and Hilbert Parks had been allocated over £300,000 of 106 monies for work in the parks and had also applied for Heritage Lottery Fund money. It would be good, Michael Holman, observed, if some of the 106 allocated money could be used to bring back water features into the park.

Lastly, Mr Holman referred to the art in the public realm project, which featured art work entries that referred to water in some aspect. He encouraged Forum Members to vote for their favourite entry.

Councillor Mayhew added that the consultation for the art in the public realm had been extended, and that a study had been commissioned to assess

whether the spring waters in the Pantiles had dried up permanently, or if this was simply a temporary issue.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

10A. LOVE WHERE WE LIVE AWARD

The Chairman asked the Forum if they would endorse an application for a Lifetime Achievement Award for the late Councillor Peter Crawford, and this was agreed. Daniel Bech had already been nominated.

Actions

DW The Chairman would write an entry for the Love Where We Live Awards on behalf of Councillor Peter Crawford.

10B. STREET CLEANING

Dorothea Holman alerted Forum members that the Boyne Park Residents' Association had successfully liaised with Cory Environmental and TWBC to have car parking restricted early on two successive mornings and get both sides of the streets properly cleaned.. She urged other residents' associations to get in contact with her for help or advice on how to approach this process if they felt their streets also needed proper cleaning.

10C. TUNBRIDGE WELLS IN BLOOM

Councillor Basu said that Tunbridge Wells in Bloom had been launched this week in Calverley Park, and the group was gradually approaching different parts of the town to do small things around this project. Students had planted snowdrops recently and whilst the lack of rain was an issue, the Olympic route would be decorated with flowers.

NOTE: The meeting concluded at 8.30pm.