

## **A fresh start for Royal Tunbridge Wells**

The coming election marks an urgent need for a fresh start in Royal Tunbridge Wells. Over a number of years, a series of major projects in the town have failed to be realised, at great cost. They failed because of disagreement between the parties, and between the Council and the public who felt they were not being consulted. The process has been wasteful and divisive and it's time to move on.

The Town Forum is non-political and, as the nearest to a representative body that we have, we are writing to all the parties taking part in the election to urge them to recognise the point that we've reached and the need for long-term positive plans, to respond to a new situation and to benefit the whole community.

Climate change requires us to alter many of our habits and structures. In Tunbridge Wells the pandemic has wrought havoc with 'the high street', especially shops in the town centre, while bringing more employment into the town in the shape of home working. Emerging from the crisis provides an opportunity to look hard at what we need and what we can do.

The Town Forum sees the following elements in this opportunity:

- \* Build a viable identity based on respect for the character and history of the town;
- \* Take a proactive role in shaping the future, resisting short-term pressures;
- \* Take incremental steps in preference to grand projects that drain energy and resources;
- \* Use the assets available in the town's people, social organisations and environment;
- \* Develop dialogue with the community, including support for the Town Forum.

In the Town Forum we discuss these issues at our regular meetings and in the work of our specialist groups. In 2017 we submitted a Vision for the town as our evidence for the review of the Local Plan. Although now slightly dated we attach it to this letter.

Please bring this letter and the Vision to the attention of your candidates and urge them to commit to working with the community to create a strong future for our town.

Adrian Berendt

Chair, Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum

[ART/Town Forum/Vision/Fresh Start May 2021- final](#)

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Formed in 2005, the Town Forum is the voice of the 50,000 residents of Royal Tunbridge Wells on issues of common interest

### **Town Forum Management Group**

Adrian Berendt (Chair); Alastair Tod (Deputy Chair); Don Sloan (Deputy Chair); Carolyn Gray (Culture, Leisure & Tourism); David Wakefield (Finance); Jane Fenwick (Transport); Marianne MacDonald (Wellbeing); Mark Booker (Strategic Planning); Michael Holman (Water in the Wells)