



Strategy for the Town Forum – Some Thoughts

Our attention over the past two years has been served well by having a committee structure, which was set up in such a way so as to enable us to answer the myriad of Consultation papers thrust our way and to look at local issues relating to those committees.

Whilst being given the chance to answer these papers this has taken up a vast amount of time, which could be devoted to other activities, which are varied and could well be seen as more productive.

As we do not have a further meeting until 10 January 2008, I propose that the entire committee structure now be reviewed. I propose that each Chairperson of each committee step down and that the Town Forum look to having “working parties” to tackle particular issues that are raised as and when.

Specific issues for example include:

- Promotion of the Town Forum to the wider audience. To date we simply fall well short of whom we should be representing. While we have many Resident Associations and certain other group representatives on board, we do not have much further involvement with other groups/areas in our ‘patch’. It is true that we have tried to have people come, such as representatives from Sherwood, but we failed in not realising what they wanted to talk about, which is why they only turned up once or twice. Indications are that our conversation was too technical and not getting to their problems.

I am aware that John Goodfellow is involved with members of Sherwood in obtaining a crossing, however, this is only the tip of the iceberg. We must therefore give ourselves time to reach these communities. However, at the same time we have Councillors who may well represent their area, but do we ever get to hear from them what their constituent concerns are? Some Councillors do not even live in the ward they represent.

- How do we promote ourselves? Daniel has come up with an extremely good idea where he is prepared to create a newsletter for us all to distribute. Perhaps we can ask the Council to fund a simple black and white copy?
 - John Goodfellow has contacts to bring into the fold, but who else does? All ideas for contacts should be collated centrally so that we can start a simple contact database.
- Newspapers. Would they be prepared to insert an article into their paper about the Town Forum, which people could respond to by sending a letter to the Town Forum.
- Business, it has been muted but nothing happens.

Naturally, we must have flexibility as to who sits on whatever working party so that we, the Town Forum, can ensure that any activities that are undertaken are engaged with broad cross-town Town Forum consensus and are not left on the back burner. We must promote our ‘Getting around Tunbridge Wells’ report as an example.

If we have working groups we will not be in the position of having committees which do not meet for many months due to one reason or the other and we will also have time to engage in activities to promote the Town Forum to that all-important audience – not everybody has the internet.

Finally, and most importantly, I would like each member of the Town Forum, including Councillors, to think about what they feel is wrong with our town? What they would like to see happen. What they would like to do. I would like each person to come up with TEN items.

Following receipt of these responses, we will collate what you are saying and then we will concentrate on those aspects. There will become the Aims and Objectives of the Town Forum. Where there is a natural crossover of activity with groups, such as, the Civic Society or the Soroptomists, the Town Forum will support their aims and together we will achieve further objectives.

We will evaluate our results as the end of the year.

Thank you.

Christopher Thomas
Chairman of the Town Forum

10.12.2007

– distributed with the Minutes of the RTW Town Forum Meeting 29.11.2007