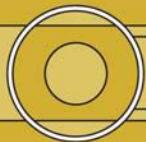


Public Document Pack



ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS TOWN FORUM

A G E N D A

**Thursday 21 July 2016 at 6.30 pm
Council Chamber, Royal Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN1 1RS**

1 Apologies for absence

2 Membership changes

a Membership applications

The Town Forum's Management Committee has approved an application for membership submitted by the Calverley Park Gardens Residents' Association. Their nominated representative is Jennifer Hemming, with Christian Nouyou as a substitute member.

b Changes of representatives (for information)

Bob Atwood, the Chairman of the Friends of Tunbridge Wells Cemetery, has stood down as Chairman - and a Committee member - and will therefore not be eligible to attend Town Forum meetings. No details of his replacement as representative on the Forum have yet been received.

There is a new substitute representative for the Calverley Park Residents' Association. Deborah Cooper has been appointed in place of Martin Prentice.

3 Chairman's announcements (5 mins)

4 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 19 May 2016 (Pages 1 - 14)

5 Actions from previous meeting (5 mins)

7 Public realm improvements to the town centre

A verbal update will be provided on an issue raised under this minute, relating to the concerns expressed about the use of the public highway by the CAU restaurant in Mount Pleasant Road, where they have established a seating area.

10 TWBC's Overview and Scrutiny function

It was resolved at the last meeting that: "the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be requested to include within their work programme a study of the importance of taking a co-ordinated approach in project planning, such as has been illustrated in the next phase of the public realm scheme" (set out under minute 7 of the 19 May meeting).

This suggestion was forwarded to TWBC's Scrutiny and Performance Officer for action. The Chairman of the O&S Committee, Cllr Catherine Rankin, has responded by thanking the Town Forum for this proposal, adding that the suggestion will be considered by the Committee at their 15 August meeting, where additions to the work programme will be determined.

6 Update from the Leader of the Council (10 mins)

7 Local Plan Review (20 mins) (Pages 15 - 30)

TWBC have now started a formal review of the Local Plan and the Town Forum will be advised on how they can feed into this process. Jane Lynch, TWBC's Head of Planning, and Kelvin Hinton, TWBC's Planning Policy Manager, will be attending the meeting to explain the process and answer questions.

Alongside this, Mark Booker, the Chairman of the Town Forum's Planning and Development Working Group, has produced a discussion paper on the 'call for sites' aspect of the Local Plan review. A copy of this discussion paper is attached, which the Town Forum will be requested to approve for submission to the Borough Council as the Forum's formal response.

8 Site Allocations Local Plan (10 mins)

On 20 July (i.e. the day before the Town Forum meeting), the Full Council of TWBC is expected to have adopted the Tunbridge Wells Borough Site Allocations Local Plan as part of the Development Plan for the Borough. The Town Forum, who made formal representations on the draft document, will be advised on the implications of the adoption of this Plan.

Jane Lynch, TWBC's Head of Planning, and Kelvin Hinton, TWBC's Planning Policy Manager, will be attending the meeting to explain this issue and answer questions.

9 Active Travel Strategy (10 mins) (Pages 31 - 34)

Attached is a copy of the Town Forum's response to KCC's consultation document on 'Active Travel', June 2016. This response has been prepared by the Transport Strategy Working Group. Due to the deadline set by KCC, this response has already been submitted and is attached for information.

10 Reports from the Town Forum Working Groups (10 mins each) (Pages 35 - 46)

(a) Transport Strategy – Jane Fenwick, Acting Chairman of this working group, has provided the attached update report.

(b) Planning and Development – Mark Booker, Chairman of this working group, will present the attached update report.

(c) Water in the Wells – Michael Holman, Chairman of this working group, will present the attached update report.

(d) Tourism and Leisure – The Town Forum will be provided with an update report.

(e) Finance and Other Issues – David Wakefield, Chairman of this working group, will provide an update report.

(f) Culture – Linda Lewis, the Chairman-elect of this working group, will present the attached update report.

11 Any other business (5 mins)

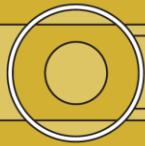
Date of the next meeting

The dates of future meetings are:

Thursday 22 September 2016 at 6.30pm

Wednesday 23 November 2016 at 6.30pm (beginning with the AGM)

Thursday 19 January 2017 at 6.30pm



ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS TOWN FORUM

ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS TOWN FORUM

Thursday 19 May 2016

Attended: Bob Atwood, Caroline Auckland (sub), Sally Balcon, David Barnett, Adrian Berendt, Lorna Blackmore, Mark Booker, Stephen Bowser, Cllr Ben Chapelard, John Cunningham, Jane Fenwick, Alex Green, Cllr Lawrence Heasman, Dorothea Holman, Michael Holman, Bill Kern, Katharina Mahler-Bech, Kyrios Kyriacou, Cllr Peter Lidstone, Cllr Tracy Moore, Chris Morris, Marguerita Morton, Altan Omer, Tim Tempest, Alastair Tod (Chairman), David Wakefield (sub), Mary Wardrop, Denise Watts, Philip Whitbourn (sub), Pat Wilson and Cllr Chris Woodward

TWBC officers present: Jane Clarke (Head of Policy and Governance), Kevin Hetherington (Head of Communities and Wellbeing), Gary Stevenson (Head of Environment and Street Scene) and Mike McGahey (Democratic Services Officer)

Also present: Cllr Alan McDermott (Deputy Leader and Portfolio-holder for Planning and Transportation) and David Scott

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were reported from: Bill Acker (sub), Cllr Ronen Basu, Cllr Peter Bulman, David Bushell, Cllr Mrs Barbara Cobbold, Adrian Cory, Sue Kaner, Brian Lippard, Cllr David Neve, Angela Phillips (sub), Charles Pope, Cllr Catherine Rankin, Cllr James Scholes, Cllr Don Sloan, Anne Stobo and Cllr Lynne Weatherly.

2. MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

Mike McGahey reported that Adrian Cory was standing down from the chairmanship of the Number One Community Trust and would no longer be attending Town Forum meetings. He would be replaced by Janet Phythian.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting dated 24 March 2016 were submitted for approval.

Cllr Tracy Moore asked if her name could be added to the list of those who had given their apologies for absence, having notified the Forum's Administrator in advance of the meeting.

RESOLVED – That, with that amendment, the minutes of the meeting held on 24 March 2016 be approved.

4. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman made the following announcements:

(a) Town Forum website – Mr Tod acknowledged the considerable amount of work which Katharina Mahler-Bech had undertaken in recent years in maintaining the Town Forum's website. He added that the Forum's Management Committee had considered

how best to enhance the Forum's profile more generally and had concluded that establishing a Facebook page would be more advantageous. Mr Tod advised that Alex Green had offered to take a lead in setting this up. In terms of the action point agreed at the last meeting – of listing the working groups and their membership – the Chairman said that this would form a part of the Facebook data available. He added that people wishing to learn more information would be advised to contact Mike McGeary.

Mr Tod advised that the Facebook page would also provide: (i) details of the Forum's Constitution; (ii) information about the Forum's aims; (iii) an opportunity for the different working groups to post regular updates on their work; and (iv) a link to various reports of general interest which the Town Forum had produced.

(b) Amendments to the Constitution – The Chairman advised that the Forum's Management Committee had examined the current Constitution and would be setting out a number of proposed amendments for the membership to consider at the Annual General Meeting to be held on 23 November. Mr Tod added that the proposed changes were mainly minor and technical in nature but, overall, reflected how the Town Forum operated in practice.

(c) Chairmanship of the Tourism and Leisure Working Group – The Chairman advised that Dorothea Holman was standing down from the chairmanship of this working group. He expressed his gratitude and thanks to Mrs Holman for her work over a number of years, adding that the group would still function and meet, as and when necessary.

(d) Civic complex – The Chairman advised that TWBC had conducted a stakeholder event for interested parties, where the Council's appointed consultants – Allies and Morrison – had outlined the proposals for new offices and a replacement theatre and had invited guests to share their views. Mr Tod felt that the consultants' presentation had been well-conducted, adding that the majority view expressed was that the proposals were viewed as a positive opportunity for wide community benefit.

5. ACTIONS FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

24 March 2016

3 Working group membership

(This is covered under minute 4(a) above.)

9(d) The Grove – lighting

Mike McGeary advised that Gary Stevenson, the relevant Head of Service, had acknowledged that there had been a number of faulty lights in the Grove but had advised that all of the reported defects had now been put right.

9(e) Taxis

Mike McGeary advised that the same Head of Service had responded to the various points raised at the last meeting as follows: (i) TWBC had a policy in place which set out a maximum number of hackney carriages that could be licensed; (ii) the policy was kept under regular review and was informed by an independent survey of hackney carriage services; (iii) at the time of the last review, TWBC's Licensing Committee had agreed to maintain the policy to limit the number of licensed hackney carriages and not to increase that total;

(iv) the next survey of services was due later this year; and (v) if there were particular concerns about a licensed driver's conduct, these could be investigated by TWBC's licensing officers.

6. UPDATE REPORT FROM TWBC'S CABINET

Cllr Alan McDermott, TWBC's Deputy Leader and Portfolio-holder for Planning and Transportation, reported that the Leader of the Council had sent his apologies for this meeting. Cllr McDermott provided the following update on issues of general interest:

- (a) The civic complex** – adding to what the Chairman reported under minute 4(d) above, Cllr McDermott advised that further engagement work would start soon on TWBC's proposals for new offices and a replacement theatre; he stressed that the Town Forum was recognised as a key consultation group in this respect.
- (b) Cinema site** – Cllr McDermott reiterated that this site had now been sold to the privately-owned real estate company Altitude who, he added, had been one of the bidders who had actively engaged with the Borough Council at the time when the site was first marketed. He added that senior councillors and officers were pressing the developer to ensure completion of the necessary 'due diligence' and to come forward with a workable scheme in line with the Council's requirements for the site.
- (c) Public realm** – Cllr McDermott advised that TWBC had been successful in its bid for support from the West Kent Local Sustainable Transport Fund (a part of the Government's 'Local Growth Fund') in respect of the next phase of the public realm scheme in Mount Pleasant Road. The sum secured was £1m, he added, which represented approximately 75% of the estimated scheme costs. Cllr McDermott said that these proposals would be taken into account by the architects for the Cultural and Learning Hub and the 'masterplan' for the future of the existing Town Hall site.

Michael Holman referred to the 'snagging' works for phase I of this scheme, which were still to be carried out. He asked when these works would, in the Council's opinion, be finished, especially around the Millennium Clock area. Cllr McDermott advised that a timetable for the works was still being discussed with KCC, which would attempt to minimise the level of disruption. Gary Stevenson, TWBC's Head of Environment and Street Scene, acknowledged that there had been issues with the quality of workmanship in some areas and that there were snagging items to complete. He added that the high level of overrunning of the tactile paving had created a need to increase the specification of the sub-base. He added that it would be the second contractor used on the scheme who would be undertaking the works to complete the scheme.

Marguerita Morton sought confirmation that the remedial work was being carried out at the contractor's expense. Cllr McDermott confirmed that the Borough Council would not be required to pay for the work to rectify the quality of workmanship issues and snagging items.

- (d) Cultural and Learning Hub** – Cllr McDermott reported that TWBC was preparing to tender for specialist consultants to progress the funding bid through the next stage of the Heritage Lottery Fund process. He added that a lead architect and an interpretational designer would be recruited shortly, leading towards a stage 2 bid which needed to be submitted in July 2017.

Dorothea Holman asked how the cultural and learning hub and the next phase of the public realm scheme could be delivered in harmony, in order to provide the

maximum benefit. Cllr McDermott felt that the best solution would be for the two schemes to be implemented simultaneously but, if that were not possible, then the Council was ensuring that details of each scheme were being carefully co-ordinated by the Property Service. He added that the Borough Council was keen to re-locate the bus stops adjacent to the war memorial, to provide a more appropriate setting for commemoration services.

Gary Stevenson, the Head of Environment and Street Scene, added that Alan Legg, TWBC's Urban Planner, was closely involved in both schemes and would provide the necessary co-ordination. He added that the architect's brief for the cultural and learning hub scheme, which was due to be issued within the next three weeks, would contain an instruction for full collaborative working with the public realm team.

David Wakefield thanked the Deputy Leader for the update report provided. He welcomed the planned re-location of the bus stops away from the war memorial, adding that the presence of buses with engines running at, for instance, the Armistice Day memorial ceremony was a constant problem.

- (e) **'Love where we live' awards** – Cllr McDermott encouraged Town Forum members to submit nominations for these annual awards. He read through the various categories, adding that the deadline for nominations was 29 July. Further details can be found from the following link:

<http://www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk/residents/news/website-news-articles/2016/april/love-where-we-live-awards-2016>

- (f) **Site Allocations Development Plan Document** – Cllr McDermott said that the authority was expecting to receive the Government inspector's final report on this issue within the following 10 days. He added that the timetable for the formal adoption of the document had still to be determined.

7. PUBLIC REALM IMPROVEMENTS TO THE TOWN CENTRE – PHASE 2

Mark Booker, the Chairman of the Planning and Development Working Group, summarised his discussion paper which had been circulated with the agenda. The purpose of the paper, he advised, was to draw together a number of different strands related to the next phase of the public realm improvements in the town centre, covering: traffic management; forthcoming changes to the nature – and use – of neighbouring buildings in Mount Pleasant; the palette of materials to be used; and the execution and project management of this next phase.

Mr Booker drew attention to the criticism of some of the materials which had been used for phase 1 of the scheme, from which it was possible to set out a number of recommendations for the next stage. These were listed in the discussion paper and included: maximum use of the traditional materials prevalent in other parts of the historic centre and a greater emphasis on quality even if this may reduce the area that can be treated in the short term, etc.

Jane Fenwick endorsed the need to take a comprehensive approach to the town centre improvements, covering the range of elements set out in the paper. She also stressed the importance in the design of phase 2 and any further stages of encouraging walking and cycling. Mrs Fenwick felt that the public realm initiative should be based upon achieving a fully pedestrianised area, not one that provided a shared space. She added that it should be a prime objective to reduce the amount of

traffic in the town centre but also to be aware of the consequent impact on 'feeder' routes, such as Crescent and Lansdowne Roads.

Dorothea Holman expressed her support for Mr Booker's discussion paper, which she felt should be viewed as the first part of the Town Forum's formal response to the proposed phase 2 work.

Mrs Fenwick raised a number of other, related issues: (i) the stationing of white vans on the pedestrian precinct related to a recent shop-fitting, which had a significant impact on pedestrian flow. Mrs Fenwick felt there should be a proper process of regulating this activity; (ii) with planning permission having been given for a major enhancement scheme for RVP, Mrs Fenwick asked how construction traffic would be managed for such a large-scale scheme. She urged that nearby residential streets should be protected from excessive parking by contractor vehicles; (iii) the restaurant CAU in Mount Pleasant Road had set out a large area of enclosed, outdoor seating for diners, which was drawing a significant number of complaints as it was using two-thirds of the paving.

Mr Stevenson responded to the points made: (i) he advised that there were no formal parking restrictions in place on the pedestrian precinct but added that he would investigate whether some control mechanism might be appropriate; (ii) when the detailed plans are submitted for the RVP expansion, the Council would look very carefully at the construction traffic aspect and determine whether parking restrictions in nearby residential streets might be appropriate; (iii) he was aware of the level of disquiet over CAU's external seating area, adding that the company had subsequently submitted a planning application to regularise the position. Mr Stevenson acknowledged that an excessive area was being used and he added that he would provide contact details for people to lodge a formal objection through the planning process, if they wished to.

Mr Stevenson also responded to the quality issues raised in respect of phase 2 of the public realm scheme. He advised that the Leader of the Council was examining the option of appointing a 'clerk of works' type role, in order to ensure full compliance with the agreed specification. He added that phase 2 of the scheme would not prohibit vehicular traffic. He advised that this was an aspect of the 'sustainability' test of the scheme.

Mr Stevenson added that he had previously met with Mr Booker to talk through aspects of the public realm scheme and that he would be agreeable to further discussions on the points raised in his paper, in order to look at the detailed points set out.

Cllr Ben Chapelard felt that the phase 2 public realm plans were premature, due to: (i) no decisions having yet been made on the cinema site; (ii) the uncertainty of the impact of the cultural and learning hub on Mount Pleasant Road; and (iii) if £1m were being made available for 'sustainable transport' in the town was this the best way of spending such a sum. He felt there was a strong case for learning the lessons from phase 1 first, before any consideration was given to subsequent phases. Cllr McDermott advised that the £1m from the West Kent Local Sustainable Transport Fund had been granted for this scheme alone and not for any other use.

Dr Philip Whitbourn expressed his dismay at the inclusion of railings in phase 1 of the public realm scheme; he felt that they served no useful purpose. Mr Stevenson explained that the railings had not been part of the original scheme design but that, when the pelican crossing safety audit had been carried out, one of its conclusions was that pedestrian protection was required at the adjacent crossing junction. Mr

Stevenson added that it was hoped that, with less vehicular traffic resulting from completion of phase 2 of the scheme, it would be possible to remove these railings.

John Cunningham welcomed the general move towards the ‘café culture’ feel of many parts of the town centre. He felt, however, that it was not only CAU that was taking liberties; he believed the same applied to some parts of the Pantiles. He therefore asked if it were possible for regular inspections to be conducted by the Borough Council, to see if café and restaurant owners are operating within specified limits. It was noted, however, that the Pantiles was owned by Targetfollow, thus the Borough Council had no power to act under the circumstances described.

Alex Green said that a Section 106 agreement was in place in respect of highway improvements in Camden Road; he asked if the same contractor employed for the Fiveways’ works could also be used for the potential work that may take place on Camden Road from the associated planned section 106 contribution from the RVP development, to help ensure consistency. Mr Stevenson advised that RVP would be employing their own chosen contractors for the scheme, so the Borough Council had no control over this element. However, he added that Alan Legg would be involved in the scheme details and would be able to provide some consistency of approach.

Stephen Bowser felt that the bus shelters aspect of phase 1 of the public realm scheme had not resulted in improvements to the visual landscape. Mr Booker felt that there was no ideal solution but that it was important to relocate the shelters away from the war memorial; he believed that the shelters on the opposite side of Mount Pleasant Road could probably remain.

Mr Stevenson added that the Borough Council had already started to look at the possible rationalisation of bus shelters as part of phase 2 but added that it was not the intention that they should all be moved to the area outside the Metro Bank. He also responded to the comments made about the signage installed under phase 1. He reiterated that all of the signs were compliant with the relevant legal requirements. With the implementation of phase 2, he added, it might be possible to rationalise the number of highway signs.

In concluding the debate, the Chairman asked for views on whether the discussion paper circulated with the agenda should be formally adopted as the Town Forum’s initial response to the phase 2 public realm proposals. Katharina Mahler-Bech supported this suggestion, provided that it did not include the relocation of all bus shelters to the area outside the Metro Bank. It was confirmed that there was no such reference within the discussion paper.

RESOLVED – That the discussion paper produced by the Chairman of the Planning and Development Working Group be agreed as the Town Forum’s initial response to TWBC’s proposals for phase 2 of the public realm scheme.

8. TUNBRIDGE WELLS BOROUGH SPORTS AND ACTIVE RECREATION STRATEGY 2016-21

Kevin Hetherington, TWBC’s Head of Communities and Wellbeing, began by providing an update on the Borough Council’s proposals for a cultural and learning hub, based on the Museum, Library and Adult Education Centre buildings. He advised that there were two distinct work streams being worked on, with the timetable being dictated by the various funding bodies.

The first of these was the construction element with an open tendering process to be started shortly, through the required OJEU (Open Journal of the European Union)

Agenda Item 4

Thursday 19 May 2016

ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS TOWN FORUM

contract route. He added that the delivery panel which the Council had established would also be appointing an architect for the scheme in October, followed by a full public consultation process in February 2017 and a planning application expected to be made in July 2017.

The other work stream, Mr Hetherington advised, was the ‘people and services’ element of the project, with its focus on exactly what functions would be taking place within the hub.

Dorothea Holman sought confirmation that it was the Council’s intention to transfer the Gateway and the Tourist Information Centre (TIC) to the hub. Mr Hetherington advised that this was the intention, adding that the provision of these services had been an important aspect of the funding bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund. He explained that the inclusion of these services would help to attract a ‘different demographic’ to the traditional museum environment, which was seen as a clear benefit. Mr Hetherington added that, over the course of the next three to four years, there was a clear expectation that a different Gateway ‘model’ would be expected, with its base more aligned to an interactive and self-service process.

Bob Atwood reiterated his concerns about the proposal to incorporate both the Gateway and the TIC service within the hub building. He explained his unease about the mix of services that would result and was not convinced that the ‘different demographic’ argument was sufficiently robust.

Mr Hetherington suggested that it might be helpful for Mr Atwood to speak to the managers of both the Library and the Museum, to hear at first hand their support for the concept. Mrs Holman advised that she had viewed at first hand tourist information placed within a gallery and museum reception, which was well used by the public.

Mr Hetherington next turned to the Tunbridge Wells Borough Sports and Active Recreation Strategy, which had just completed a period of formal public consultation. He explained how the focus was not just on sports but also on healthy lifestyles, including encouraging more people to walk and cycle.

Mr Hetherington advised that, following representations from Mark Booker, the document had been amended to take account of the key findings of the Town Forum’s Green Network study from last year. He added that the document was being submitted to the Cabinet on 22 June, where it was hoped it would be formally adopted.

Sally Balcon drew attention to the condition of some of the Council-owned sports pitches and urged that more be done to make the surfaces playable, especially those that suffered from poor drainage, such as in Grosvenor and Hilbert Park. Mr Hetherington advised that the Strategy did not focus on individual playing fields or sports pitches but contained much more of a focus on the benefits of sports and activity.

On the specific issue raised by Mrs Balcon, Gary Stevenson acknowledged that the lower football pitch in Grosvenor and Hilbert Park was adjacent to a number of active springs, which on occasions had an adverse impact on the quality of the playing surface.

Mark Booker welcomed the publication of the Strategy and its reference to, and recommendations of, the Town Forum’s Green Network study. He felt that there should be less of a distinction between ‘walking’ and ‘sport’, adding that combining the health benefit of both was a key element.

Jane Fenwick asked if there were any specific funds available to help deliver the main aspects of the Strategy. Mr Hetherington advised that there were no specific capital funds earmarked at this stage but that a small revenue budget existed in the form of grants, which were intended to encourage sports development, for example the popular 'park runs'.

The Chairman thanked both Mr Hetherington and Mr Stevenson for the report and for responding to the points raised.

There were no specific action points arising from this report.

9. AIRCRAFT NOISE

Further to the presentation provided by TWAANG for Town Forum members at the January meeting, Gary Stevenson, TWBC's Head of Environment and Street Scene, gave an update report. He advised that his Principal Environmental Health Officer, John McCullough, had undertaken a thorough review of the 'Independent Arrivals Review Team' report. He added that Gatwick Airport Limited, the operators, had agreed to all of the recommended actions in the report and were now consulting on their proposed response. Mr Stevenson advised that many of the 'Arrivals Review' report's recommendations were quite easy to implement.

Cllr Lawrence Heasman provided a summary of the current position, particularly the importance of the establishment of a Noise Monitoring Board. He stressed the need to ensure that the residents of the town had an effective channel through which to voice their concerns about noise levels, adding that he was pressing for better representation on the Monitoring Board.

Marguerita Morton sought further information about the restrictions on night flights. Cllr Heasman advised that a certain number of flights were allowed, partly because some were caused through delayed departures from overseas. He added that, under such circumstances, the Gatwick operators did have the power to impose heavy fines on the relevant airline companies but that this was rarely enforced.

Jane Fenwick read out the key issues from a briefing note provided by TWAANG, which had been provided for her Transport Strategy Working Group. The main focus of the update was on the representation of the proposed Noise Management Board. Mrs Fenwick warned that there seemed to be a strong likelihood that there would be little or no possibility for the direct input of the views of Tunbridge Wells residents into the work of the Board.

Mrs Fenwick advised that the relevant community groups were being asked to agree a proposal on representation, in time for the first meeting of the Board which was due to take place on 21 June.

Cllr Heasman voiced his support for TWAANG being one of the representative groups, adding that they were well-regarded amongst their peers.

Cllr Heasman and Gary Stevenson were thanked for their update report. There were no specific action points arising from this item.

10. TWBC'S OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY FUNCTION

Jane Clarke, TWBC's Head of Policy and Governance, explained the Borough Council's overview and scrutiny function. She invited Town Forum members to propose topics or issues which might be suitable for detailed study for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee through their councillor-led 'task and finish group' work.

Cllr Chris Woodward provided some examples of studies which had been undertaken in the recent past, but added that the task and finish groups established by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee only had limited resources at their disposal for research and administrative support.

Stephen Bowser asked whether it might be appropriate to suggest that compliance with the national transparency code be examined, particularly with respect to parking data. Ms Clarke advised that compliance with the code was a mandatory requirement, adding that, specifically relating to parking data, there was already some information available on the authority's website. She said that more detailed data was being added (in addition to the mandatory requirement), with a more accessible route being provided shortly, to make this an easier process.

Lorna Blackmore asked whether the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was politically-balanced, in accordance with the relevant legislation. Ms Clarke confirmed that this was the case.

Dorothea Holman proposed that the Town Forum agree on a maximum of three topics which could be put forward for inclusion in the Overview and Scrutiny's work programme.

Jane Fenwick asked if one of those proposals could be an examination of transport functions in the Borough as a co-ordinated approach. She felt that this was an important element in relevant project planning which was currently missing. Michael Holman supported this proposal, adding that it was an aspect which had been raised earlier – under minute 7, the public realm item – where the Borough Council was being urged to take account of a number of linked issues in its consideration of the next phase.

Ms Clarke noted this proposal and added that the Committee and its task and finish groups had the option of co-opting non-voting people with relevant expertise to assist councillors in their work.

Bob Atwood very much supported this proposal. He said that this principle was a central feature of the former Town Centre Area Action Plan, adding that he had regretted the Borough Council's decision to replace this initiative.

RESOLVED – That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be requested to include within their work programme a study of the importance of taking a co-ordinated approach in project planning, such as has been illustrated in the next phase of the public realm scheme set out under minute 7 of this meeting.

11. TWINNING

Michael Holman provided an update on recent developments in the Borough's formal twinning link with Wiesbaden. He explained how his interest in promoting the potential of the 'water heritage' of Tunbridge Wells had been largely inspired by the example of Wiesbaden, where their spa heritage was 'magnificently and profitably exploited for the benefits of residents and tourists alike'.

Mr Holman advised that he had recently handed over the chairmanship of the Tunbridge Wells Twinning and Friendship Association – a position he had enjoyed for the past 12 years – to Cllr Julian Stanyer. He added that Cllr Stanyer and the current Tunbridge Wells Mayor, Cllr David Elliott, had both visited Wiesbaden at the launch of 'The Year of Twin Towns' initiative, which the German city had declared in recognition of the designation of two of Wiesbaden's other twin towns – San Sebastian and Wroclaw – as European Capitals of Culture. The important aspect, Mr Holman

stressed, was that the twin town network had the potential to provide significant benefit to Tunbridge Wells in the promotion of international relations on a communal level.

The full text of Mr Holman's report is attached for members' information at Appendix A.

There were no specific action points arising from this report.

12. WORKING GROUPS

Update reports were made from the working groups as follows:

Tourism and Leisure – Dorothea Holman, Chairman of this working group, advised that she had been maintaining contact with those leading on the 'Tunbridge Wells Together' town centre initiative, adding that, as soon as a manager had been appointed, the working group would be looking to work closely with them.

Mrs Holman added that a report on the recent questionnaire survey would be made shortly by Nick Pope, who had been leading on this work. She also advised that Mike Westphal had been informed of TWBC's Cycling Strategy including the leisure cycling path from Penshurst to Tunbridge Wells, adding that he had been provided with information about the West Kent Partnership, to which he could apply for funding for the project, if needed.

Mrs Holman advised that she was stepping down from the chairmanship of this working group but that its work would continue.

Transport Strategy – Jane Fenwick, Acting Chairman of this working group, referred to her written report, which had been distributed with the agenda. This had covered a wide range of key topics, including: KCC's dropping of the Crescent Road refuge proposal and Cllr Bulman's subsequent representations; traffic volumes and speed along Calverley Park Gardens; a number of cycling-related initiatives; progress with the 'self-guided vehicles trial'; the preparation of an outline transport strategy/vision for the town; a list of the 'top 10' potholes for action; Gatwick aircraft noise; and the co-option of David Scott as a member of the working group.

Planning and Development Strategy – Mark Booker, Chairman of this working group, reported on the following issues:

- (i) Union House – Dandara had completed consultation on their revised scheme details and a response was awaited;
- (ii) Arriva bus depot – Mr Booker advised that this site was likely to come forward soon, with a probable 'extra care' housing scheme being proposed. He added that legal opinion was that this type of housing provision would count towards the Borough's overall housing target;
- (iii) Mr Booker had recently met with TWBC's Head of Planning Services and the Planning Policy Manager, from which he had been concerned to learn how central government policy over-ruled local planning policy. He added that the most recent evidence in support of that position was in respect of planning appeal decisions at both Hawkhurst and Sissinghurst.

Mr Booker explained how, under the existing Local Plan, 75% of new dwellings in the Borough would have to be provided in Tunbridge Wells town and Southborough. He added that, based upon a recent central government ruling, both 'green belt' and 'AONB' land might be at risk because of the significance of the recently-introduced 'housing needs assessment'. Interestingly, Mr Booker advised, the creation of new

'garden towns' provided some mitigation against the imposition of increased housing targets.

Cllr Lawrence Heasman, who was a member of TWBC's Planning Committee, acknowledged the pressure which local government faced in terms of planning inspectors imposing government policy over local plans; he added that work was underway to resolve this situation as quickly as possible.

The Chairman asked that this topic should feature as one of the key items for the next meeting.

Water in the Wells Working Group – Michael Holman, Chairman of this working group, provided an update report. He advised that the group continued to encourage, to monitor and to 'chivvy', both developers and the Borough Council, to win support for the role that water could play. He focused on four key projects, details of which are set out in the attached Appendix B. Specific attention was drawn to Grosvenor and Hilbert Park, where the restoration programme was almost complete. He expressed concern that, unless there was an effective maintenance contract and regime in place, the water pumps could fail and the build-up of debris become increasingly unsightly. He advised that members of the working group would continue their monitoring of the situation and seek an assurance from TWBC Parks Service regarding a proper level of maintenance for the pumps and lake.

Finance and Other Issues – David Wakefield, Chairman of this working group, advised that there were no specific issues to report on.

Culture – Bob Atwood, Chairman of this working group, advised that there were no specific issues to report on.

RESOLVED – That the progress reports be accepted.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Roundabouts – The poor condition and appearance of some high profile roundabouts was highlighted, with a suggestion that some of the local garden centres could be encouraged to provide and maintain plants. The Chairman advised that KCC did not favour access to roundabouts because of the health and safety aspect of work being carried out.

Michael Holman responded by suggesting that, if TWBC were eventually to assume responsibility for highways, it would provide an opportunity for the installation, for instance, of dry water features, which would greatly improve the appearance of roundabouts, with no maintenance implications.

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 21 July 2016 at 6.30pm

The meeting concluded at 8.25pm.

APPENDIX A**TWINNING**

1. For more than a quarter of a century the Borough has had a formal twinning charter with Wiesbaden – our only twin town. (Wiesbaden has more than a dozen!) The link, however, goes back more than half a century. In the last fifteen years it has been sustained, promoted and developed almost entirely by the Tunbridge Wells Twinning and Friendship Association of which I was Chairman between 2004 and the end of April this year and which I have represented on the Forum.
2. Of late my voice in the Town Forum has been raised largely to promote the water, health and wealth heritage of Tunbridge Wells as an inspiration for the town's future development. My interest in promoting the potential of this heritage, however, has been largely inspired by the example of Wiesbaden. As anyone who has visited the town will know, in Wiesbaden the spa heritage is magnificently and profitably exploited for the benefit of residents and tourists alike.
3. From 1 May this year Cllr. Julian Stanyer has taken over from me as Chairman of TWTFA. I am delighted to be able to pass the twinning baton to Julian. He was Mayor 2014-15 and enthusiastically supported our 25th anniversary celebrations.
4. The number of Wiesbaden's twin towns clearly demonstrates the importance it attaches to twinning in the promotion of international relations on a communal level.
5. This year two of Wiesbaden's twin towns, Wroclaw in Poland and San Sebastian in Northern Spain, are European Capitals of Culture. To mark this honour the Lord Mayor of Wiesbaden declared 2016 'The Year of Twin Towns'. In April he invited Mayors and Chairmen of Twinning Associations in all Wiesbaden's twin towns to a grand launch. Our Mayor, David Elliott, and Julian Stanyer both attended this launch and came back hugely impressed by the cordiality of their welcome, official and unofficial. They were also impressed by the twin town network of which Tunbridge Wells is part and which could be exploited for mutual benefit. (I am sure they would be happy to tell you about their impressions.)
6. Twinning is clearly alive and well in Wiesbaden, and I am confident that Julian and his TWTFA Committee will keep it alive and well in Tunbridge Wells too.
7. Although I have now stood down as Chairman of TWTFA, I have been asked to continue as TWTFA representative on the Town Forum. I will do this with pleasure and will continue to promote Wiesbaden, water, health and wealth as an inspiration for Royal Tunbridge Wells.

(Michael Holman, 19 May 2016)

APPENDIX B**WATER IN THE WELLS WORKING GROUP**

Progress report for Town Forum Meeting 19 May 2016

Over the past two months the Working Group has continued its monitoring, encouraging and chivvying operation, both with developers and TWBC, seeking to win support for the role water might play in promoting the town's future health, wealth, leisure and pleasure.

I will concentrate on four key projects: one still hanging fire at the conceptual stage; one soon to be started; one nearing completion, and finally, one almost completed, but needing a little further monitoring to ensure that money spent has been well spent.

1. Fiveways: still hanging fire until we are given to understand that refurbishment phase one - the area round the Millennium Clock – has been well and truly finished. Until this part of the project has finally been signed off by KCC and TWBC, we are not keen for Water in the Wells to be too publicly associated with it.
2. Knights Wood: construction start imminent. The new school shell is in place and the open space a little further in to the right lies ready for a local firm to begin work for Dandara. Completion is still planned before the start of new school year in September.
3. Royal Wells Park: nearing completion. One can now see from Mount Ephraim where the feature will run. We are attempting to discover when the opening ceremony will be held. It is essential for a management company to conclude maintenance agreement. Three Wiesbaden cycle stands are on order. Elegant and practical, they will serve to establish a visual link to parts of the town's public realm where the stands are already in place.
4. Grosvenor and Hilbert Park: almost completed. For the 2 May launch, water was being pumped through the Victorian Dripping Wells and flowing strongly, generating sound and spectacle, putting the modest trickle of the Pantiles Chalybeate Spring in the posh part of town to shame! Marnock Lake is full - most of the time – but debris is building up, now at one end of the lake, now at the other, depending on the wind direction. We are seeking assurance from the Parks Department not only that regular inspection and removal will be carried out, but also that a maintenance contract be signed to ensure that the pumps continue to push the water through. If this is not done, the lake will very soon silt up and become an eyesore rather than an attraction. The Town Forum recognises that water features need regular maintenance, and the Working Group will continue to be vigilant, monitoring progress and making sure that the Heritage Lottery money has been well spent. At the launch on 2 May, work on the Wetlands again appeared to have been halted. Visitors to the park were, however, able to enjoy in the extensive excavated area lower down the valley a fine view of the largest expanse of chalybeate water in the town.

(Michael Holman, 19 May 2016)

This page is intentionally left blank

Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum

Response to TWBC Call for Sites Consultation

Executive Summary and Conclusions

In July 2008 the Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum submitted proposals to the previous TWBC Call for Sites. We now repeat this exercise in relation to the new Local Plan 2013-33. We do not have rights of access to private property, nor to ownership or valuation records. The analysis and suggestions below are simply intended to assist in development of TWBC's Key Issues and Options stages.

The TWBC Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2015 (SHMA) identifies an Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) of some 648 housing units per annum in the Borough as a whole, more than double the existing Local Plan target. We question the assumptions behind this assessment. If continued throughout the new plan period this could result in an increase in housing stock of some 9720 units and a population increase of up to 20,000 (well over 25%) in Royal Tunbridge Wells and Southborough alone if the present percentage allocations to different towns in the Borough were maintained.

Such an increase would fundamentally change the character of Royal Tunbridge Wells requiring building in broadly the whole of the existing Green Belt in addition to denser town centre development, some of which would threaten the heritage fabric of the town. This is not considered a sustainable option as it would also have significant implications for schools, utilities and transport infrastructure, adding massively to the existing acute traffic, congestion, atmospheric pollution and parking problems in the town. The theoretical OAN should therefore be moderated by the above constraints as is provided for in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

While the clear need is for Affordable Housing (not least for key public sector employees, policemen, teachers and NHS staff required to support the population) the SHMA relies unconvincingly on market housing to cater for most future housing need. Market housing will tend to draw in new residents from outside the area instead of providing for proven rather than theoretical need.

The SHMA points out that employment has flat-lined in the town over the last 25 years and that forecasts of 16% growth in the next 20 years based on government models may not be reliable. This is all the more likely as conversion of offices to residential units continues apace and a number of industrial sites have already ceased in that use and others are allocated to do so under the existing Local Plan. Without substantial new allocations of employment land, it seems most unlikely that the town will see significant employment growth and this should influence the computation of housing numbers.

We consider in our response some of the key issues which should inform the development of the Local Plan. Some additional housing and other development will need to take place and we therefore go on to identify a number of sites in the town centre and in the existing Rural Fringe which might assist in the sustainable development of the town over the next 20 years. This includes the nomination of four further proposed Areas of Change where development according to a Masterplan

Agenda Item 7

should be envisaged, at the old West Station, in the area centred on Meadow Road/Grosvenor Road, in the area comprising Chapman Way/High Brooms brick quarry and the former refuse tip and in a refinement of the existing Area of Change on Crescent Road/Monson Road.

In Conclusion:

1. The “objectively” assessed housing need for the borough could require unsustainable growth in a town where planned growth levels under the existing Local Plan are already challenging. Growth significantly above this could threaten both the Green Belt and the historic fabric of RTW.
2. Moderating the figures will require assessment of potential sites, mainly nominated by developers, which can take up to two years;
3. In the meantime the town and Borough will be vulnerable to opportunist applications for market housing, as has been demonstrated in recent planning appeals. This pressure for market housing makes it difficult to achieve the necessary levels of affordable housing;
4. Sustainable growth requires land for housing, land for ancillary uses including employment, and infrastructure;
5. Employment and infrastructure in the town are already under strain, with increases in travelling out to work and resulting road and rail congestion;
6. Failure to provide sufficient sustainable sites for primary education adds to these congestion problems and is a further constraint to be considered. Part of the solution to the “school run” will lie in the development of safe walking and cycling routes;
7. Optimising the supply of land will require intervention by TWBC in consultation with other public authorities to ensure the most suitable use of sites including those in public ownership;
8. A proper assessment of nominated sites will require explicit policy criteria to be developed and applied in relation to any future growth in RTW;
9. As a contribution to the debate about sustainable sites for future growth, the RTW Town Forum proposes 4 new or modified Areas of Change where sustainable mixed-use development would be possible and sites within the existing Rural Fringe also worthy of consideration.

Key Issues

1. Employment

The TWBC Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2015 (SHMA) states that employment in the Borough has been virtually static since 1993. According to the SHMA, the East of England Forecasting Model, which Local Authorities are required to use, forecasts “higher growth...than has been seen historically”. Consequently the SHMA raises doubts about the reliability of the model which postulates up to 16.8% employment growth. It recommends that the council conduct a “*review of economic growth potential... through preparation of economic employment land studies and if appropriate consider updating the assessment of Objectively Assessed housing Need*”. One may infer that this might require a *downward revision* of OAN.

The SHMA report then moves on to other topics but the worries it expresses concerning the reliability of statistical methods should set alarm bells ringing with regard to the *sustainability* of any new housing postulated on employment growth which has not materialised in Tunbridge Wells over some 3 decades.

It is arguable that the situation for future *sustainable* employment is significantly worse than considered in the SHMA:

- National policy allowing virtually untrammelled conversion of office accommodation to C3 Residential use is already having a major impact in Tunbridge Wells town centre with examples including Union House, x and y with further conversions likely, for example the accommodation soon to be vacated by Cripps in Mt Ephraim Rd
- Manufacturing and “distribution” type jobs and the sites on which they may be based are also disappearing or set to disappear at the Dairy Crest and Arriva depots, BT engineering depot and Turners factory with smaller “windfall sites” currently providing employment also likely to disappear.
- While there may be a welcome growth in some major retail sites such as RVP, the accelerating trend towards internet shopping suggests that retail employment overall is likely at best to be static through the new Plan period.

In this context the 10,000 extra jobs anticipated for the Borough by 2033 seem rather unlikely to materialise unless a significantly different strategy is adopted. In Tunbridge Wells and Southborough it is also difficult to see where those jobs could easily be sited. There may be continued growth in home working (already high at 8,177 out of 57,630 workers in the Borough) but it is also likely that there will be a significant increase in out-commuting from the Borough and, of this increase, the largest part will be from Tunbridge Wells and Southborough.

Projected future employment patterns would therefore be likely to place further strain on road and rail infrastructure in the area at peak times, without taking into account any further increase in projected population and the strain this will also place on infrastructure. However there is considerable scope for TW, with its large pool of local quality labour, to attract higher added-value employers if suitable sites could be found.

There is another counter-balancing opportunity to which little attention is still paid and that is the opportunity to turn Royal Tunbridge Wells’ green and heritage assets to employment advantage through strong promotion of leisure and recreational employment beyond the already well-provided catering trades. Leisure and

recreational businesses spanning cultural activity, hotels and tourism, sport and green recreation such as rambling, cycling and equestrian pursuits offer the opportunity of employment to the whole range of abilities in the town from unskilled manual to higher managerial functions. They would mostly be sited in existing locations or locations not competing with housing or office need and their clients would not create additional road congestion at peak hours.

2. Demographic and housing need assumptions

As with employment growth predictions, local planning policy is constrained by national statistical methods and assumptions. These are questionable, being largely built on “predict and provide” criteria extrapolating from past trends, but it seems not to be open to a Local Authority to challenge them. Thus the population of the Borough is predicted by the SHMA to rise from 115,693 in 2013 to 134,903 in 2033 and the number of households from 48,032 in 2013 to 60,158 in 2033, a 25% increase which is above that in neighbouring areas, all of this set against a likely flat employment situation in the Borough and great long term uncertainty in the World economy.

It is this predicted growth in the number of households which is largely responsible for the astonishing rise in the Objectively Assessed housing Need (OAN) from some 300 dwellings per year under the 2006 Local Plan to around 648 per year advocated in the SHMA. Assumptions underlying the predictions include:

- A continued trend towards family break up, even though the maintenance of two households may become yet more financially burdensome than at present for families, to a point where alternative solutions are sought
- Major trend for increased elderly single-person households although the overall economic factors (and in particular failing pension systems) may well make this trend less financially sustainable for the individuals concerned
- Assumptions and guidelines over what constitutes “overcrowding” based on a socio-economic model which is based on the world of the 1960s and at least as questionable as the above assumed trends
- Assumptions about household formation among younger generations who may never again have the relative financial resources to support separate households unless housing costs diminish significantly. Insofar as house-building remains preponderantly financed and undertaken by commercial enterprises, such dramatic falls in the value of new properties is very unlikely to materialise.

Tunbridge Wells Borough may be required in future to provide not just a 5% but a 20% safety margin or “buffer” in its 5 year housing supply figures. This would further distort the required over-provision of housing so that, far from meeting objectively assessed need, the extra market housing built would be occupied by those moving in from outside the Borough. One only has to consider the advertising of the new Knight’s Wood development to appreciate that this is in part angled at potential purchasers from outside the Borough and not to meet the OAN.

Public examination of the 2015 Site Allocations Development Plan Document (SADPD) has shown the projected housing supply of some 300 dwellings per annum across the Borough to be achievable. The 648 dwellings per annum projected in the SHMA is an unadjusted figure and within the finally established figure, the

percentage allocation to RTW and Southborough also has to be agreed. While sceptical of the OAN figures and sceptical about the possibility of substantially increasing supply in RTW/Southborough over the 300 figure, given infrastructure and Green Belt constraints, we identify on the map at appendix A a few larger sites where additional provision may be feasible in later stages of the new Local Plan.

3. Affordable Housing

The SHMA finds that gross Affordable Housing need represents up to 54% of total housing need in the Borough but goes on to try to finesse these figures both to reduce them and to seek to show that it may be possible to provide for the need through continuation of a 35% Affordable Housing requirement on market housing schemes of 10 or more dwellings. However, in practice, many market housing schemes which have come forward under the current Local Plan have successfully reduced their allocation of Affordable Housing by pleading commercial un-viability of the 35% figure.

At a national level, ONS statistics (table 224 house building by tenure series) show that there has been a steady fall in provision of new affordable housing by Local Authorities and Housing Associations since the end of the 1970s. The figures also show the inherent inability of market housing to meet housing need since the Second World War, which should not be a surprise when so much need is for affordable housing.

	Market housing	Public housing
1950-1959	82,261	150,894
1960-1969	177,594	123,546
1970-1979	141,303	116,235
1980-1989	136,249	44,068
1990-1999	124,704	25,716
2000-2009	127,947	18,999
2010-2014	87,628	25,196

In 2013/14 Housing Benefit cost the Exchequer £23.8bn, about 30% of the entire welfare budget. The total cost of constructing dwellings produced by the public sector in the same period was around £4bn. There would be benefits to the public purse nationally and locally for the public sector to reduce revenue subsidies by producing more dwellings, thus reducing rent levels and then releasing more funding for public sector new build. Such affordable housing also tends to meet genuine local need rather than promoting sometimes unjustified provision of particular types of housing to meet desire patterns rather than needs.

4. Areas of Change

The current Local Plan identifies a number of areas in the town where comprehensive redevelopment on the basis of Masterplans is envisaged. There is scope to extend the Area of Change principles to at least three other areas in the new Local Plan. Also, within the already designated AL/RTW2 Crescent Road/Church Road Area of Change there is scope to investigate new uses to which the large area lying beyond the Civic Complex could be put. Opportunities could then be seized to mitigate the problems of the A264. We identify the three new proposed Areas of Change as A, B and C on the

Agenda Item 7

map in appendix A and they each fall on our proposed high frequency public transport route identified by a blue line on the same map.

A measure of compulsory purchase may be necessary in the same way as was the case with RVP in order to secure the optimum planning gain in some of the proposed Areas of Change and in others value equalisation negotiations between landowners may be required. In neither case should this act as a deterrent to a pro-active approach.

Area of Change A

This proposed area of change comprises the present industrial premises grouped in the former High Brooms Brick Company quarry and Chapman Way, the stretch of North Farm lane passing by and including High Brooms Station and the site of the former Tunbridge Wells refuse tip (AL/GB4).

Our proposal would be to relocate the present industrial premises to the west of the railway overbridge to a purpose built new estate on the site of the former tip with access to the main road network via Longfield Road and the A21. The vacated space would then be suitable primarily for sustainable residential development with potential for some additional office development. In addition to all being within 5-10 minutes' walk of public transport from High Brooms station, this redevelopment could form one end of the high frequency public transport route canvassed in the transport section of this response, thus meeting additional policy objectives of the Local Plan.

Area of Change B

This proposed Area of Change comprises the island formed by Upper Grosvenor Road, Meadow Road, Goods Station Road and Grosvenor Road. Although very close to the heart of the town, it is not at present occupied in an optimal manner. Its redevelopment for mixed use would allow additional residential, retail and business uses. It would also allow a rationalisation of the town centre traffic system to enable some semi-pedestrianisation and the development of a small public transport interchange on Grosvenor Road. This interchange would be on the route of the high frequency service canvassed in the transport section of this response.

Area of Change C

This proposed Area of Change comprises the site of the old West Station, the Turners factory and BT yard. As with the land in AL/RTW2 Crescent Road, this offers the potential for substantial mixed use development within the town centre.

A feasibility study into proposals for a railway improvement scheme potentially re-linking West Kent to Brighton via Tunbridge Wells and Uckfield and Brighton and Tunbridge Wells to London and Canary Wharf (BML2 Scheme) is currently being undertaken with support from HM Treasury. Possible development of Garden Towns/Villages along the railway line between Ashford and Tonbridge placing further strain on the Tonbridge main line to London Bridge and Charing Cross will further reinforce the case for the BML2 proposals to be implemented.

Agenda Item 7

The former West Station site therefore offers the prospect of a major transport interchange for both trains and buses and the starting point for our proposed high frequency public transport service through the town to North Farm. But given its size and location, it also offers the opportunity for major mixed use development at a time when the existing buildings on the site are close to life expired. This would include a relocated Sainsburys, other retail, multi storey car parking and residential apartments. The topography of the site would happily accept housing on its periphery in an extremely sustainable location. A continued railway heritage centre for the Spa Valley Railway in the old engine shed would complement any such redevelopment.

Area of Change AL/RTW 2

The opportunity should be taken to create a spacious and attractive, largely pedestrianised, mixed-use district within the existing Area of Change to the west of the Town Hall Complex. Within this part of the site there is potential for a substantial allocation of new housing units through a change in land use. This would provide the essential underpinning for the creation of a vibrant new district in the town centre based on interlocking squares.

The area bounded by the Police Station, Calverley Terrace and the boundary with Priplan House could become a new town piazza with mixed uses including residential and specialty shops. It could also provide a venue for the Farmers' Market and other outdoor gatherings.

The present car park is approaching the end of its structural life. It could be rebuilt, turned around on its axis so that it principally lies on Crescent Road with a lower and more attractive frontage incorporating office and/or residential accommodation onto Crescent Road. 2-3 floors at least could be placed underground. This would already provide more spaces than the existing but these underground floors could be continued on the present footprint and also out towards Calverley Road and under the present footprint of the TWBC staff car park, potentially creating a much larger parking area (with at least an additional 500-700 spaces) although having a much smaller footprint above ground. In this way, not only could additional parking be provided for business and retail use, but allocated parking places could be made available as part of the new residential developments on the island and for new occupiers of converted above-shop accommodation elsewhere in the town centre.

The construction of underground car parking might also enable better pedestrian links between the Calverley estate, Calverley Grounds and St Augustines and the town centre while also allowing goods servicing of the new district.

5. Rural Fringe development and Green Belt retention

The public examination of the SADPD proved to the Inspector's satisfaction that the existing Rural Fringe, reviewed as part of the SADPD process, was sufficient as a buffer to specifically allocated sites in the longer term, to meet foreseeable housing supply needs identified in the SADPD through to 2026 and beyond.

We hope that the bald figures for "housing need" as identified in the 2015 Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) will be successfully mitigated by TWBC Planning Policy Officers arguing the high percentage of Green Belt and AONB in the Borough and also problems of inadequate infrastructure. Similarly we would urge that

Agenda Item 7

the final *percentage* allocation of new dwellings to Royal Tunbridge Wells and Southborough be substantially reduced relative to the 70% under the 2006 Local Plan. On a worst case scenario this could otherwise mean some 9720 new dwellings allegedly being “needed” in the two towns by 2033.

While we would hope to see significant reductions in the prospective housing targets for the town, we accept that some additional new housing may be inevitable and some of it could be provided in the existing Rural Fringe if current traffic problems can first be resolved. Much of this is publicly owned land and there is scope for a pro-active approach to facilitate its redevelopment if a proven need is established. We have identified some potential sites on the map at appendix A. The Rural Fringe site at the former refuse tip is eminently suitable for development of light industry, thus releasing equivalent land within the existing LBD for redevelopment for housing as described in section 4 above.

With regard to the Green Belt, the Inspector at the public examination into the SADPD was satisfied that there need be no encroachment into the Green Belt during the life of the present Local Plan. He did not support any of the landowners of land within the Green Belt who had asked him to reconsider the refusal by planning policy officers at TWBC to include their land among the sites allocated for development.

Green spaces help create a sense of place. Tunbridge Wells is set within the surrounding Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) which laps at its edge. We are privileged to have inherited such a location and it is important to preserve the landscape setting of this surrounding AONB by proper stewardship of the areas of high quality Green Belt countryside on the edge of the town which feather imperceptibly into the AONB, some of which were formerly categorised as Special Landscape Areas. This will allow us to maintain the high visual, amenity and cultural value of our landscapes within the town and on its perimeter, something which in no small part contributes to the economic health of the town. A strong sense of place shared by a whole population through such stewardship also generally brings benefits of greater social cohesion and crime reduction as is testified by the recent surveys undertaken by TWBC into local perceptions of security and wellbeing.

In consequence of the above we believe that our existing Green Belt should be accepted as a constraint to development in accordance with footnote 9 to Paragraph 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework such as to override considerations based on a mechanical calculation of housing “need”. The new Local Plan should proceed on the basis of maintenance of the existing Green Belt, though designation of parts of it for Green Belt compatible uses should not be ruled out (eg playing fields, allotments, country parks and compatible outdoor pursuits).

6. Transport and infrastructure provision

There are two fundamental options facing the town of Tunbridge Wells if it is to increase its population in any significant way in the coming years. It can either build further out, on green space, or it can make the existing accommodation footprint denser. From a transport perspective, the former option is less desirable as it requires more infrastructure. Towns and cities with higher density populations need proportionally less infrastructure, because more journeys can be completed on foot or by bicycle.

Agenda Item 7

As far as transport is concerned, our recommendation would be that a site should not be approved for development unless it meets two tests:

- 1) Is it consistent with an integrated transport plan?
- 2) Does it assist or hinder active travel?

Kent County Council's (KCC) Active Travel Strategy aims to make active travel an attractive and realistic choice for short journeys in Kent. By developing and promoting accessible, safer and well-planned active travel opportunities, this Strategy will help to establish Kent as a pioneering county for active travel.

Tunbridge Wells Borough Councils' Transport Strategy has agreed a vision containing three main aims:

- Tunbridge Wells Borough to benefit from a network of higher quality, better integrated, sustainable transport solutions and infrastructure, that will enable the Borough to solve existing and future transport challenges, and enable a vibrant, prosperous economy and inclusive communities.*
- By 2026, Tunbridge Wells will have a transport network which is less reliant on the private car, with a greater mode share towards walking, cycling and public transport, especially for shorter journeys. However, it is recognised that some journeys will continue to necessitate use of the private car, especially in rural areas.*
- The Borough will have a safer environment for all road users, and its air will be cleaner with more low emission vehicles and bicycles sharing road space.*

The town is cut into four quadrants by road transport links that run (roughly) north-south (A26 and A267) and east-west (A264) and motor traffic should be focussed on those roads. On all other roads within the quadrants, priority should be given to walking and cycling, including the implementation of 20mph limits on all residential streets and the town centre.

More should be made of the town's excellent north-south rail link and should be the focus of transport planning with:

- Buses and/or mini transit systems focussed on bringing people to and from the stations to their ultimate destinations;
- Opening up of the West Station as part of the BML2 development;
- Priority given to sites with easy access to either of the two existing stations for residential or, in some cases, office development in order to reduce car dependence;
- Implementation of a mini-transit system from the West station out to North Farm, lining residential areas to retail, office and leisure 'destinations'

Site development needs to be integrated with the parking and loading policy, which should be used to encourage active travel and to avoid obstructing the main roads:

- On the main road transport links, greater emphasis will be needed on no parking / loading and its enforcement. This will reduce delays on the road network and discourage drivers from using rat-runs. Sites which increase

Agenda Item 7

parking or loading on main roads should be discouraged. Loading on main routes should be restricted to early mornings and late evenings – between 9pm and 6am.

- Car parking charges should be sufficiently high to ensure that the public transport alternative is cheaper.
- Preference should be given to off-street car parking, where on-street car parking prevents or discourages active travel as it does on designated cycling routes.
- There should be strict enforcement of restrictions on pavement parking in the town centre. As well as being an obstacle to those walking, particularly the elderly, the disabled and those with children, this leads to expensive maintenance costs for the Borough.

As mentioned in TWBC's cycling strategy, segregated cycle routes need to be built to enable commuting by bicycle. All sites should include sufficient storage / parking for bicycles, to make it the easy choice for residents.

Consideration should be given to enlarging the current Civic Centre development plan to include the Crescent Road car park area. This would enable a better planned access into the car park.

A green infrastructure plan has already been approved. This should be further developed to ensure that anyone living within two miles of the town centre is able to walk or cycle into the town centre, including investment in adequate crossings over the main roads identified.

Finally, in considering infrastructure, the adequate provision of fresh and waste water delivery, recovery and treatment should be concurrent with any additional housing development which should arguably participate in the cost of its provision.

7. Educational provision

There are already a number of educational “black holes” in Royal Tunbridge Wells where substantial residential areas lie outside the catchment of a primary school within reasonable walking distance.

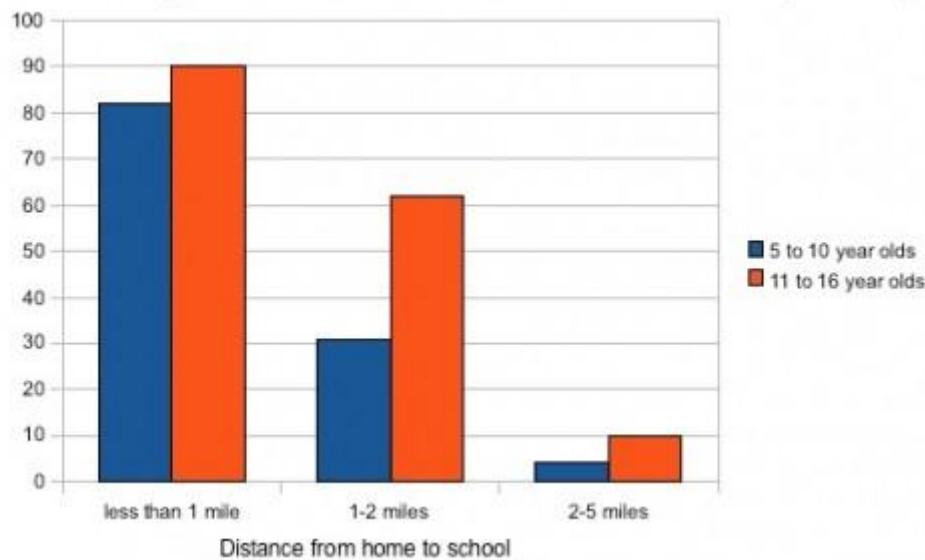
According to the National Foundation for Education Research, proximity is the second most important factor for parents when choosing a school. In Tunbridge Wells many children are forced to attend a school which is not within walking distance as may be seen from the map in appendix B. This illustrates the large swathes of the town which already have inadequate school provision. All areas shown as hatched are areas from which thousands of avoidable car journeys across town originate every day.

‘Statutory walking distance’ is set at 2 miles, meaning that beyond that distance the County Council must provide free transport to school, but Charity ‘Walk-It’ reports that even at 1 mile distance from school, 1 in 5 primary children do not walk to

Agenda Item 7

school. As distance increases beyond 1 mile, walking rates drop to one third.

Percentage of children who walk to school in the UK (2008/09)



Given the higher levels of car ownership in RTW relative to national levels and given the effects on families of the “black holes” in primary school provision mentioned above, the percentage of children walking to school in our town will be significantly below the national average. Every child being driven to school results in *four* car journeys per school day, involving a return car journey both at drop off and pick up, further deterring walking and cycling.

Expansion of existing schools serving the centre of RTW has reached capacity. Expansions in recent years have put immense pressure on the common facilities of schools such as halls and sports facilities. The problems include the fact that:

- Many schools can only expand intermittently. Bishop’s Down and Pembury Primary schools for example, can accept an additional class for three years running but have subsequently to reduce intake to one class for the following four years, before the mobile units are available to take an extra class again. This results in a perpetual contracting and expanding of catchment areas.
- During the expanded intake, children from further afield are accepted. Their siblings in subsequent years have priority over local children. This results in many local children who do not have siblings at their local school having to go elsewhere, often to surrounding village schools.
- There have also been many instances where whole classes have not only been filled exclusively by siblings, but where even siblings couldn’t be accommodated.
- Where primary school aged siblings are assigned different schools parents are forced to drive to and from schools, even if the schools are at walking distance from their home individually. A two to four mile or more round trip and coinciding start and end times at schools make this inevitable.

There are many cases where, in the Culverden, St John’s, St Peter’s and Village areas of town, parents have therefore had to purchase a car (or a second car) to drive their 4 and 5 year old children between their home and their respective more distant schools. This is an indefensible situation at a time when traffic, pollution and parking are one of the biggest challenges the town faces.

Agenda Item 7

The SHMA provides for a possible increase of 1,957 (9%) in children under 15 in the Borough by 2033. This is in theory the equivalent of 3.5 two-form-entry school and two primary and two secondary schools in practice, since under 15's will be distributed between both. This would only meet the new need but not fill the existing gaps, let alone provide the 5% surplus in school places councils are required to provide for flexibility.

There are insufficient sites currently envisaged by KCC on which to locate schools accessible to those children who will be resident in RTW and Southborough by 2033 even if there should be only a modest increase in housing spread across the town, with the bulk of projected housing allocated elsewhere. TWBC used to have powers to allocate sites for educational purposes under the 2006 Local Plan Policy CS 3. Restoration of those powers would give the Borough Council more leverage with KCC in these matters. We make suggestions on the map at appendix A as to where additional provision might be made and existing provision retained.

8. Retail Provision

Now that the grandiose and unrealistic plans for retail development of the 2009-10 era have gone away we are reasonably confident that the existing allocations in the current Local Plan will be adequate to meet future need and that the market will determine whether these allocations are taken up.

9. Green spaces and links

Our green spaces and links constitute both the heart and lungs of what may be described as the “Tunbridge Wells Brand Identity”. It is important to safeguard and, where possible, enhance these assets as this can produce a whole range of benefits including:

- economic development through increased tourism and leisure pursuits,
- maintenance of a distinct sense of place in an increasingly homogenised world,
- reductions in traffic congestion through localised modal shift,
- improvements in road safety,
- abatement of atmospheric pollution,
- public health benefits through reductions in stress and increased physical exercise,
- maintenance of biodiversity and cherished landscapes through proper stewardship,
- a sustainable future for our children and young people.

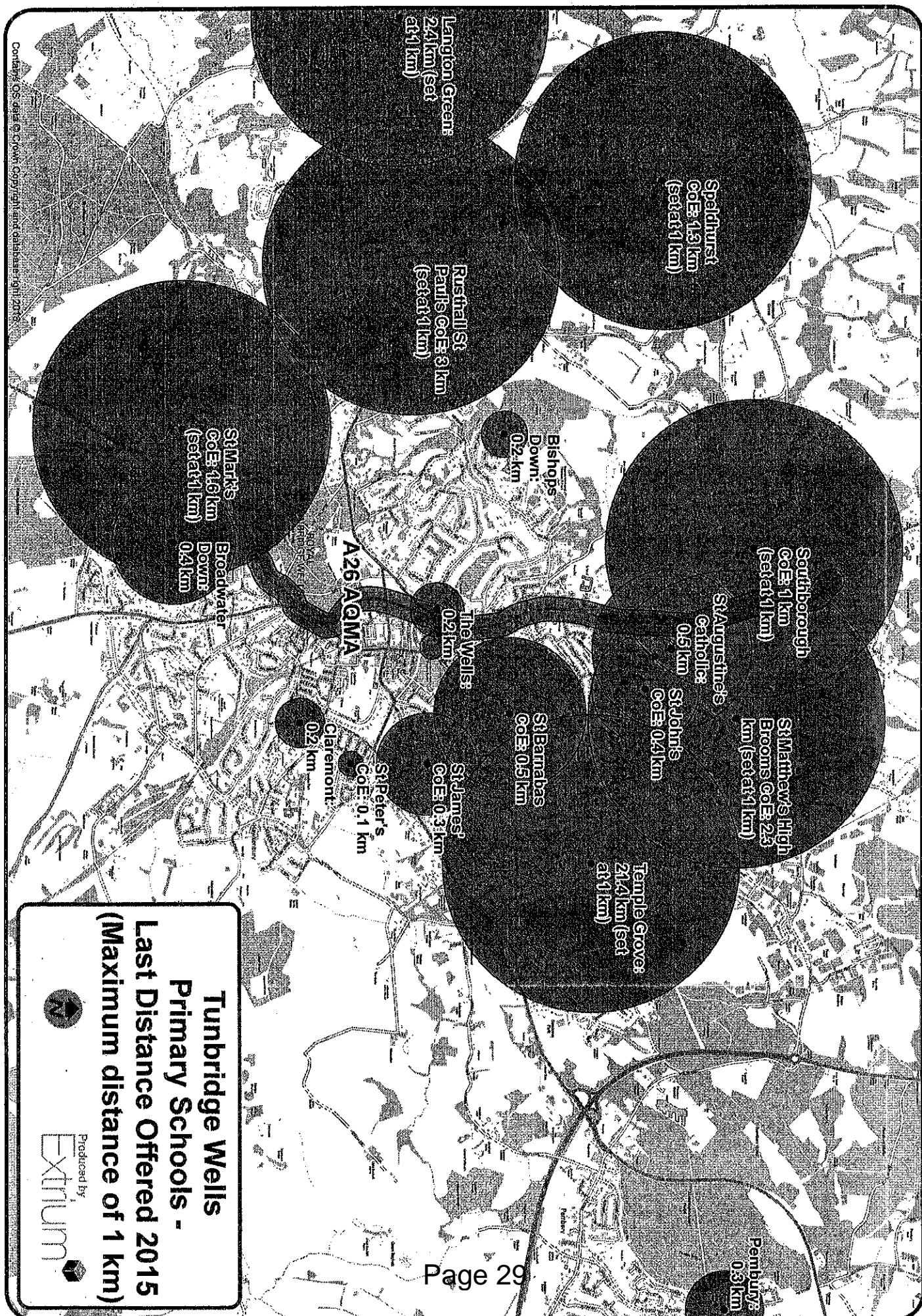
The above benefits were extensively discussed in the May 2015 Town Forum report “*Developing our Green Network*” and we now identify on the map in appendix A specific sites and links which could be developed to increase those benefits for residents of Royal Tunbridge Wells. These include the most needed new pedestrian crossings and pedestrian refuges and quiet routes to schools.

Appendix A: Map of sites and infrastructure links proposed for consideration

Appendix B: Map showing areas in need of additional educational sites

This page is intentionally left blank

Appendix B



This page is intentionally left blank

Agenda Item 9

The Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum

Response to KCC's consultation on Active Travel: June 2016

About the Town Forum

The Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum is the voice of some 50,000 residents and other organisations within the unparished area of the Tunbridge Wells. Formed in 2005, it is recognised by TWBC, it provides authoritative responses to consultations and documents affecting the town's residents.

The Forum meets in public four times a year with Borough Council members for town wards and relevant Council officers to discuss a wide-ranging agenda of current issues. Between meetings, the Forum's business is conducted by a Management Group and specialist Working Groups, covering Transport, Planning, Finance, Water in the Wells, Leisure and Tourism, and Culture. The Working Groups conduct their own work programmes and issue periodic reports.

The Town Forum's Transport Working Group provides expert advice and local knowledge on a range of transport related topics and speaks for the Town Forum at the Joint Transportation Board and other relevant committees in TWBC.

Background

The following comments about the importance of Active Travel to Royal Tunbridge Wells are made in the context of the traffic congestion that the town suffers and which is cited by visitors and residents alike as its key negative aspect. The TWBC's Transport Strategy adopted this year addresses some of these issues particularly in and around the town centre of Royal Tunbridge Wells, but would be greatly enhanced by the parallel adoption of Active Travel proposals.

Tunbridge Wells is a compact town: the wards in the unparished area of the Town Forum have a population of about 50,000 and lie within two miles of the Town Hall. It is also regarded as family-friendly, with popular schools and high numbers of school children, either residents of Tunbridge Wells or commuting in to school from nearby communities in Kent and East Sussex.

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Transport Strategy

In addition to the typical traffic patterns of short journeys described in KCC's Active Travel Strategy, Tunbridge Wells is characterised by a high level of home-working and of both inward and outward commuting. A high proportion of outward commuting is for professional jobs in London – some 10.3% of the working age population commute by train. However, a significant number of lower paid jobs in the town are filled by those living outside the town where housing costs are lower and commuting in either by car and parking on street, or by relatively expensive bus or rail options.

In consequence, Tunbridge Wells is an ideal location for promoting Active Travel as a solution to traffic congestion as well as improving health outcomes. The town's demographics and current travel to work patterns make it likely that the residents will embrace Active Travel, given the opportunity. This is evidenced by the active Cycling Forum in the borough, a well-developed cycling strategy, a policy of promoting 20mph in residential streets – which increases active travel – and a transport strategy that targets increasing active travel.

Agenda Item 9

RTW Town Forum: KCC Active Travel consultation response (cont)

It is worth noting that the most recent traffic count data shows that the numbers cycling on the Pembury cycle path between Skinners Kent Academy and the A21 has doubled – still low numbers, but a definite trend. Anecdotally, we have seen significantly higher levels of cycling in other parts of the town in the past year or two, although the data is not yet available which would support this observation.

The Town Forum notes, and supports, the Borough's existing transport vision:

- *Tunbridge Wells Borough to benefit from a network of higher quality, better integrated, sustainable transport solutions and infrastructure, that will enable the Borough to solve existing and future transport challenges, and enable a vibrant, prosperous economy and inclusive communities.*
- *By 2026, Tunbridge Wells will have a transport network which is less reliant on the private car, with a greater mode share towards walking, cycling and public transport, especially for shorter journeys. However, it is recognised that some journeys will continue to necessitate use of the private car, especially in rural areas.*
- *The Borough will have a safer environment for all road users, and its air will be cleaner with more low emission vehicles and bicycles sharing road space.*

The Town Forum supports Kent County Council's ambition to "Make active travel an attractive and realistic choice for short journeys in Kent" and the Borough's transport strategy. Further, it believes that both could go further in their ambitions and ensure that the **majority** of short journeys are made using active travel. The close geographic and demographic ties with London means that Tunbridge Wells could replicate the major increase in cycling that London has seen – with the corresponding impact on congestion. The Town Forum considers that if it were chosen as an early adopter of the strategy, Tunbridge Wells could be a beacon for Active Travel in Kent.

The Town Forum notes and supports the trial by TWBC of the DfT's propensity for cycling tool to identify where investment could generate the biggest return in increasing the numbers of people using bicycles to get to work, shop and school. This could be useful tool for assessing likely areas to benefit from Active Travel across the county.

The recent [Public Health England guidance on Active Travel for local authorities](#) document sets out clearly how local authorities can implement a successful active travel strategy.

In summary, the Town Forum believes that Tunbridge Wells has the ambition, enthusiasm and the ability to become a beacon for Active Travel in Kent. The Town Forum would be delighted to work with KCC in establishing Tunbridge Wells as an early adopter of the county's strategy and to demonstrate how Active Travel can become THE mode of travel for short journeys in an urban centre.

Agenda Item 9

RTW Town Forum: KCC Active Travel consultation response (cont)

Responses to specific questions:

Was the Active Travel Strategy document easy to understand?

Yes, the Strategy was well written, although we note that some of the references to the existing network were to leisure routes, whereas active travel is defined as transport, specifically excluding leisure.

The recent Public Health England guidance to Local Authorities on active travel is a high quality document, which was issued after KCC's active travel strategy consultation was published. KCC should integrate the guidance into the final version of the Active Travel strategy.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the Active Travel Strategy's ambition to make 'active travel an attractive and realistic choice for short journeys in Kent'?

In the town of Tunbridge Wells, we believe that the objective could be more ambitious, with active travel becoming the PREFERRED mode for all short journeys. We would state an ambition of completing the MAJORITY of journeys / journey stages of less than 5 miles by Active Travel. In order to achieve this, we need an integrated approach to transport planning – both private and public transport, including the fast developing driverless vehicles, which could soon be a realistic alternative for urban travel, if implemented correctly.

Integrate active travel into planning?

A combined approach of planning for the future and retrofitting existing infrastructure is needed. For future development, this is key in Tunbridge Wells, where the current congestion and the proposed increase in housing mean that increases in the number of journeys will have to be by a mode other than the car. The increase in population of 10.3% between 2001 and 2011 was outstripped by a rise in car ownership of 14.7% and the borough's projected population rise of a further 10% over the next decade is unsustainable without a reduced reliance on the car as a transport mode. This means that every development project should include a requirement that the project increases active travel in the town. In contrast, recent developments in the town have not included such a commitment.

It also means retrofitting active travel into the existing infrastructure. Together with the Borough Council, the Town Forum has a deep understanding of the local needs of the town. Whilst an integrated approach to planning and transport will need input from the Borough's Joint Transportation Board, local knowledge is required in order for an Active Travel Strategy to be successful.

The Active Travel Strategy refers to 'complete journeys or parts of journeys'. In Tunbridge Wells, this means integrating active travel for part journeys with rail and bus services and, in the future, with a driverless mini-transit system. Sufficient facilities for cycle storage are needed at all stations, as well as bus routes that serve communities – existing and new - within a 5 mile radius, with more stops, bus shelters, electronic information boards, and accessible vehicles for the aged, mums and toddlers and the disabled. All form part of a package of measures to achieve Active Travel.

Agenda Item 9

RTW Town Forum: KCC Active Travel consultation response (cont)

Tunbridge Wells is also open to new technologies to complement the infrastructure needed – walking apps, bus timetable apps, and social media to encourage walking companions etc, as well as driverless vehicles.

Provide and maintain appropriate routes for active travel?

Ensuring the continuity of segregated routes between desired destination points is vital. Where the route cannot be segregated, volume and speed of motor traffic must be reduced. In this respect, the Town Forum has developed a document showing a Green Network of quietways for cycling and walking and supports 20mph on residential streets and in town and village centres. The Town Forum supports TWBC trialling of the Department for Transport's Propensity for Cycling Tool, as a useful aid for determining which routes can achieve the most number of people cycling.

Support active travel in the community?

Whilst everything must be done to encourage active travel, the evidence seems to be that it is segregated, dedicated infrastructure built to the highest design standards plus 20 mph in residential areas and town/village centres which make people feel that it is safe and attractive to walk and cycle.

Please tell us if there is anything else you'd like to see in this Active Travel Strategy, or if you have any other comments to make.

Poor air quality for pedestrians and cyclist along main roads is not mentioned in the strategy but does provide a barrier to Active Travel. KCC should make it a condition of school transport contracts with bus operators that they use cleaner fuels.

KCC's responsibility for education allows it to change school place allocation policy to favour those children who can walk or cycle to school. A change of policy could be that 'sibling preference' will not be given higher priority than locality. There also needs to be better planning around school journeys to ensure that school buses are kept away from residential roads that might be used by those that cycle or walk.

Parking is not mentioned but on-street and pavement parking is a major impediment to walking and cycling in towns. The Tunbridge Wells Borough's Parking Strategy is actively tackling on-street parking and pavement parking and is further reason to believe that Tunbridge Wells can become an Active Travel beacon.

Devolution of responsibility for maintaining roads, pavements, cycle routes, lighting and installing bicycle storage stands to borough level would help to ensure that Active Travel routes are given priority. Currently KCC does not fulfil the role in a way which meets local needs.

Agenda Item 10

Report of the Transport Working Group to the Town Forum 18th July 2016

Members: Jane Fenwick (chair), Lorna Blackmore, Pat Wilson, Stephen Bowser, Peter Perry, Adrian Berendt, Katharina Mahler Bech, David Wakefield, Sally Balcon.

New TWG members: Jennifer Hemmings (Calverley Park Gardens RA) and Cllr Peter Lidstone (St Johns). Co-opted member David Scott

The TWG met on 13th July 2016

1. **JTB on Monday 18th July:** Members of the TWG will attend the JTB meeting. **Calverley Park Gardens** RA member will present proposals for reducing traffic travelling at speed and HGVs using the road to avoid using the A264 and the Royal Oak pub crossroads.
Crescent Road Refuge: TWG has pressed for this refuge to be installed as a high priority. We understand that it now has funding for design and will be completed within this financial year.
CAU pavement grab: TWG has requested that this matter be resolved quickly and that the JTB, or members and KCC/TWBC officers, should consider a protocol for future applications for use of the shared space by retailers.
2. **KCC's Active Travel:** TWG members drafted the Town Forum's response to this strategy which has been commented on and agreed by the management group members, and submitted by the deadline earlier this month.
3. **Call for Sites consultation:** TWG members have contributed to the Town Forum's response on transport issues.
4. **TWBC Draft Parking Charges Review:** TWG will be responding to this review which is expected to be open for consultation later next month. We will argue that car park fees should encourage the use of considerable number of empty spaces in car parks while discouraging on-street parking and creating congestion.
5. **Potholes:** The TWG will be encouraging Town Forum member organisations to report potholes, faint line markings and other road surface issues to KCC to highlight the poor state of Tunbridge Wells' roads.
6. **Public Transport Forum:** TWG will be calling for a new date for the Public Transport Forum cancelled at short notice earlier this month.
7. **Gatwick Aircraft Noise:** TWG is pleased to report to the Town Forum that TWAANG has gained one of the four seats for community groups albeit shared with another 'urban' group located at the western end of the airport. TWAANG's chair, Irene Fairburn, will attend these meetings and TWAANG continues to press for noise reductions.
8. **Cinema Site:** TWG members will attend the consultation by the developers to highlight traffic concerns such as not increasing congestion and encouraging alternative options including walking, cycling and public transport to and from the site once developed.

This page is intentionally left blank

Tunbridge Wells Town Forum Planning and Development Working Group

Update report for the meeting on 21st July 2016: Agenda item 10 (b)

Planning Applications procedures

Planning applications have now been brought back in-house with a new team of 9 staff, a new e-mail address of planning@tunbridgewells.gov.uk and a direct telephone contact line of 01892 554604. Any electronic planning history for an individual site formerly available on the old website has been consolidated with the new TWBC site.

There is currently an unrecovered cost representing some £30 per annum per household in the Borough in relation to planning applications. The aim is to reduce this significantly by increasing a number of fees (for example for pre-application advice) so that they cover actual costs incurred more closely. Other administrative savings could include relying only on site notices and the website to inform neighbours of planning applications made and any major amendments proposed to an application.

Central Government is seeking to pilot schemes with “Alternative Planning Providers” where outside consultants rather than the in-house Local Authority team might assess some planning applications or where one Local Authority could bid for another’s “business”. TWBC will not be volunteering for a pilot and it is thought that there would have to be some kind of internal review system within any Local Authority affected to ensure consistency in planning decisions. This would have cost implications.

Housing and Planning Act 2016 and other recent legislative changes

This received Royal Assent on 16th May and introduces yet more changes in the planning policy system, in line with Central Government policy aims, which may further impact on the difficult planning policy environment in the Borough and add to costs incurred by TWBC.

Provision is made for a new policy on **starter homes and self-build housing**. First time buyers aged from 23-40 will be able to purchase at 20% below market rates. In Tunbridge Wells, with a relevant price of £250,000 this would most likely apply only to one and two bedroom flats. Buyers would face restrictions on resale for a period of 5 years. The policy is likely to place in jeopardy TWBC’s policy of requiring 35% of social housing on major sites as all such sites will be subject to a 20% requirement for starter homes and it is unlikely that an additional 15% social housing could be negotiated in future. Starter homes are intended for purchase and public affordable housing is therefore likely to diminish further against a widely held assessment that more rather than less is needed in Tunbridge Wells. Cost implications also arise as to which public bodies are to be charged with enforcement of the conditions regulating the 20% discounts and this could add to TWBC administrative costs.

The new concept of **Permission in Principle** (PIP) in relation to proposed mixed developments will grant a blanket planning permission in principle subject only to checks on the appropriateness of a location for development, the types of use to be authorised and the amount of any housing. After this only the details of a development would be subject to control. It is understood that sites already allocated for potential development in the TWBC Local Plan following the Inspector’s recent report would most likely be regarded as benefitting from this PIP and that any developments which did not come forward during an existing plan period would be carried forward into the future.

Appendix A

It seems likely that the responsibility for provision of contamination and environmental reports on Brownfield sites will pass from would-be developers to TWBC with consequent manpower and cost implications.

TWBC is continuing its investigation of whether and how to develop a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) scheme for the Borough. This would place great emphasis on highway and schools provision not necessarily in the immediate proximity of a development as opposed to the wider and more local range of purposes (including parks, play areas, heritage) which may be served by the existing system of Sec 106 agreements. There will be full consultation in due course on the implications of any change from the Sec 106 system to CIL system.

Local Plan Review

This is to be the subject of a presentation on 21st July by Jane Lynch and Kelvin Hinton under agenda item 7. The proposed RTW Town Forum response to the Call for Sites consultation (circulated separately with the agenda) is intended as a first step in the dialogue with TWBC over development of the Local Plan as it may affect Tunbridge Wells.

Sustainability Appraisal

The WG will put in a brief response to the current consultation mainly pointing out the many places in which the 2009 draft is out of date (eg references to the Regeneration company) and suggesting further areas in which the Town Forum could usefully be a consulted stakeholder.

Major Developments in the town

A Section 106 agreement has now been reached by which the developers of **Royal Victoria Place Ely Court remodelling** will contribute some £350,000 towards the cost of Public Realm improvements at the junction of Camden Road and Calverley Road.

Prospective developers of the **Cinema Site** are due to hold a drop in session at Trinity Theatre on 18th July at which the Planning WG will be represented.

Dandara have now made a formal planning application in relation to the redevelopment of **Union House** broadly in line with the plans exhibited to the public two months ago. The proposal represents a substantial increase in floor space relative to the present footprint of Union House.

The **Dairy Crest site** has now been cleared under the terms of the existing planning permission which requires them to meet the Section 106 contributions that were agreed under it. McCarthy and Stone are expected to bring forward a new planning application.

The **Arriva site** has been sold to another developer of high-end private housing for the elderly and a planning application is likely to come forward over the coming months.

Proposed new Civic Complex and theatre

The WG has been represented at two recent presentations given by TWBC's appointed Architects Allies and Morrisons. Financial aspects of the proposals are due to be raised in the report of the Finance WG. It is intended by TWBC that final proposals for a combined redevelopment should be put forward by September for possible adoption winter 2016.

Mark Booker Chairman Planning and Development Working Group 13.07.16

REFRESHING OUR SPA-TOWN HERITAGE

MAKING A DIFFERENCE WITH WATER

'In five years time, the thriving town of Royal Tunbridge Wells will have attracted growth and investment to secure its future. It will have a vibrant retail trade and a rich cultural heritage based on music, the arts, leisure and water to continue its spa tradition. It will be a place where people want to live and work.'

(Councillor David Jukes, Leader of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, foreword to *OUR FIVE YEAR PLAN 2014 – 2019*)

The 'Water in the Wells Working Group' of the Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum was formed in 2012. This was followed in 2013 by the incorporation of the 'Water in the Wells Community Interest Company' (CIC). The Working Group and the CIC share the same objectives, namely to work for the regeneration of the spa-town heritage of Royal Tunbridge Wells by promoting the installation of high quality water-themed features at key points in and around the town for the benefit and enjoyment of residents and visitors alike.

Water in the Wells envisages a public art strategy for the town firmly based in its recognised heritage of water, health and leisure. To this end we have been able to establish a new charity – a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) called 'Refresh Tunbridge Wells'. The declared objects of the CIO are 'To advance art for the public benefit by the provision, refurbishment and maintenance of publicly available works of art in Tunbridge Wells', whereby water features are considered to fall within the definition of 'works of art'. We therefore now have in place the two organisational structures that can assist in the realisation of our aims.

This is a big project, but it can be realised in small-scale interventions, each new water-themed feature helping to establish the concept and grow the town's identity. Over the past four years we have been greatly assisted in our aspirations by a wide variety of other organisations and individuals who share our aims: private developers, friends groups and both officers and elected members of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. By identifying common objectives and working together a great deal has already been achieved, but ours is a long term project and much remains to be done.

This report aims to provide a record of the progress of the main water-linked projects in Tunbridge Wells over the past four years. Some were conceived before Water in the Wells was formed, some have already been completed, some are ongoing and many are either still at the planning stage or merely identified as potential opportunities. They all, however, in their different ways demonstrate a coming together of individuals and organisations anxious to build on our heritage to make Tunbridge Wells an even better place to visit, live and work.

PROJECTS COMPLETED:

Fountains Lodge Nursing and Residential Home

Private, new. 2013/15

Fountains Lodge, London Road, Southborough, Tunbridge Wells TN4 ORJ

3-spout fountain installed in forecourt, visible from London Road, one of the main entry points to Tunbridge Wells. Fountains added to plans and name adopted following consultation with Water in the Wells.

Sherwood Lake and Woodland

Public park, regeneration project. 2013-15

Desilting lake, improvement to dam and construction of new paths round lake and in woods.

The project was carried out by Town and Country Housing Group in conjunction with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, The High Weald Partnership and Friends Group. The Sherwood Lake and Woodland area enjoys village green status.

Grosvenor and Hilbert Park

Public park, regeneration project. 2014-16

Restoration of park including Marnock Lake, Victorian Dripping Wells and creation of wetlands area. Supported by grant of £2.5 million from Heritage Lottery Fund. Jointly undertaken by TWBC and contractors, assisted by Friends Group.

Re-opened May 2016. Wetlands nearing completion.

Calverley Grounds

Public park, new. 2011-

Christmas Ice Rink. Water and electricity supply installed. Potential for splash and play water feature with recessed spouts and seating area on site occupied by Ice Rink.

NEARING COMPLETION:

Royal Wells Park

Private developer, new. 2012 - 2016

Site of former Kent and Sussex Hospital, Mount Ephraim, Royal Tunbridge Wells. Berkeley Homes development.

Visible from Mount Ephraim, major water feature running the whole length of the development with water table at top, stepped rill and three cascades down through site centre to two separate features at bottom.

Completion planned by end of 2016.

(Water Feature cited in draft Public Art Strategy Document)

UNDER CONSTRUCTION:

Knights Wood

Private developer, new. 2015 -

Town/village entrance square adjacent to new school. To incorporate large triangular water feature 22 metres long by 4 metres wide tapering to almost zero, with still and moving water areas, spouts, lighting and an engraved text linking to the spa-heritage of Tunbridge Wells

A Dandara development.

Anticipated completion of town square water feature: September 2016.

INFRASTRUCTURE IN PLACE:

North Farm Roundabouts

Public highway, KCC. 2015-16

Ducting for electricity and water ingress and egress installed at roundabouts GS2 (Kingstanding Way) and GS3 (Great Lodge) as part of Longfield Road Improvement Scheme, in readiness for eventual water-themed features. Without consultation, KCC has erected large directional signs on the roundabouts. These would greatly detract from any eventual water-themed feature. We are investigating further.

Fiveways, Tunbridge Wells

Public open space, TWBC and KCC. 2015-16.

As part of Fiveways refurbishment, power and ducting for ingress and egress of water have been installed in readiness for eventual water feature installation.
(Potential for water feature cited in draft Public Art Strategy Document)

PLANNING UNDER CONSIDERATION:

Former Dairy Crest Depot

87a St John's Road, Tunbridge Wells. Private developer, new. 2015-

Planning permission granted to Ashill Land, includes water feature in courtyard and agreed funding provision for refurbishment of existing traditional fountain in St John's Recreation Ground. Site since purchased by McCarthy and Stone. A planning application (16/503755/FULL) has been submitted by Yourlife Management Services to build 48 Extra Care apartments for people in later life.

An assurance has been given that the internal water feature will remain and will be given greater prominence. We understand that in demolishing the Dairy Crest building the present owners are bound by the original planning permission including its Section 106. We will continue to monitor to ensure that the undertaking is adhered to.

Owlsnest Wood

Tonbridge Road, Pembury. Private developer, new. 2015-

Application (15/505823/FULL) for creation of 76-bed health and wellbeing facility plus 22 independent extra care lodges on site opposite entrance to Tunbridge Wells Hospital at Pembury. Developers propose to refurbish lake and provide community access for recreational and leisure use. This access needs to be made into a permanent public right of way to the lake. Quantum Group joint venture.

Calverley Grounds

Public park in town centre, new. 2015-

1. Calverley Adventure Grounds. Community-led project to transform the former bowling green into a children's community play space (designed by Jennette Emery-Wallis) that reflects the town's spa origins with a sand-river feature. Community Interest Company formed. Application for establishment of Charitable Incorporated

Appendix B

Organisation (CIO) submitted. Fundraising under way. Planned construction start mid 2017. (We would welcome the services of a water diviner to establish whether the water channelled into a culvert in Calverley Park actually flows immediately below the bowling green.)

2. Interactive splash and play water feature. There is strong potential for this on the site used by the Ice Rink. Water and power supply already in place.
(Potential for water feature cited in draft Public Art Strategy Document)

Union House

Southern end of Pantiles. Private developer, new. 2015-
Design drawings in preparation for installation of major interactive water feature in new development on site of former Union House adjacent to Linden Park Road.
Planning application for demolition and new build made June 2016 (16/504331). We are in regular communication with the developer concerning the design of the water feature.

A Dandara development. Anticipated start mid 2017.

(Potential for water feature cited in draft Public Art Strategy Document)

UNDER REVIEW:

Pantiles

1. Chalybeate Spring

Public / private space. After nearly a year's interruption, Chalybeate water is now flowing once again. Suitably attired Dippers are dispensing water to those brave enough to try it. The water flow cannot, however, be guaranteed. Nor can the provision of Dippers. The building too is in need of refurbishment and regular maintenance. The Dippers' costumed ritual so attractive to tourists will, therefore, continue to be under a double threat unless a) an alternative source of water not subject to the vagaries of nature can be provided and b) a management structure can be put in place for the maintenance of the ritual, and of the building.

2. Sussex Mews

Public space. We would like to draw public attention to the fact that the Grom Brook still flows in a large culvert below Sussex Mews. We have considered proposals to open up to the light a small section of the culvert and cover with strengthened glass so that the water can be seen flowing below.

Brighton Lake

Originally top of our list, on a main entry route to the town, this small lake seemed an ideal site for a small water feature. Set slightly higher than the road and therefore not currently noticed by drivers, it would also benefit from the aeration provided by a water feature. Approximate costings for provision of power and installation of small floating fountain (cf Goudhurst village pond, Lindfield pond) were obtained in 2013, but further developments were put on hold following a negative response from Commons Conservators.

(Potential for water feature cited in draft Public Art Strategy Document)

POTENTIAL SITES IDENTIFIED IN DRAFT PUBLIC ART STRATEGY DOCUMENT

TW Culture and Learning Hub (Decimus Burton Centre?)

Great potential for water feature(s) to be incorporated in this major development in the centre of town.

Civic Centre Complex

Consultations with architects and planners under way.

ABC Cinema site

The recent sale moves the site of the former ABC Cinema to the centre of our active concern. We will work closely with all concerned to ensure that the water and health heritage of Tunbridge Wells is fully reflected in the development of this high profile, city centre site.

Calverley Terrace forecourt

This must be considered in the context of the redevelopment of the Civic Complex. A water feature in the centre of the space would provide a fine focal point.

Vale Road Gateway

This small triangle of grassland, for many years the final resting place of a rusting First World War tank, forms part of Tunbridge Wells Common. Dependent on re-organisation of traffic flow.

Carr's Corner

Possible site for water-themed public art. Dependent on re-organisation of traffic flow.

Charles the Martyr forecourt

Dependent on re-organisation of traffic flow.

Southborough Hub

A joint project involving KCC, TWBC and Southborough Town Council. Despite our representations, a water feature has not been included in the initial designs. As was the case with the Fiveways refurbishment and the North Farm roundabouts, we will press for the installation of the necessary services (water ingress and egress, power etc) to be included so that a water feature can be added at a later stage at reduced cost.

Beacon, Happy Valley

We will monitor the private owner's ambitious plans to redevelop the Cold Bath and give whatever encouragement and assistance we can.

Great Hall piazza

Dependent on re-organisation of traffic flow.

(July 2016, Michael Holman, Chairman, Water in the Wells CIC)

This page is intentionally left blank

Appendix C

Report for the Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum

Culture working group

Linda Lewis has agreed to take over the Chairmanship of this meeting from Robert Atwood.

There have been two working groups since the last full Town Forum meeting

The first on 24th February 2016 at Trinity

- Agreed that scope be restricted to Cultural Hub only for the time being with a watching brief on future theatre developments (some questioning as to whether a “full size” theatre either needed or wanted in TW, and the practicality of car parking, vehicular access etc at the potential Great Hall site.)
- Concern was expressed that disabled parking requirements should not compromise needed floor area
- Every member was asked by the Chair to send him a list of elements which they thought should be incorporated in a “Hub” e.g. Art gallery; separate artwork displays; museum space; reference library; workshops and perhaps much more.
- Concern was expressed over the potential incorporation of Gateway in the Hub. It was thought that it would be better in the Town Hall
- The Chair agreed to arrange a full presentation by officers of Hub proposal, future management, financials and current status
- It was agreed to try to assemble as much paperwork as possible relating to reports, research, meeting minutes etc. from TWBC.

The main feeling in the meeting was that we wanted to be kept in touch with the journey of this project so that the group could hear, listen and comment and input on aspects of the project at appropriate times and not when it was too late to make an input.

The second meeting on Tuesday 22 March 2016 when we heard an update from

Kevin Hetherington (KH) and Jo Wiltcher (JW) on the planned cultural hub

The discussion which followed after the presentation-

- Consultation with key stakeholders cannot begin before the architect's brief is made public, but TWBC will take suggestions of needs from interested parties at any time.
- Architect's brief is being written in such a way as to allow a joint bid from architect/designer, or separate bids from both. Emphasis is being placed on experience in integrating new build with listed buildings. KCC's procurement team is on hand, their work on the Turner at Margate will be valuable.
- Stuart Page was not looking for a “wow” factor. Philip Whitbourn asked if the TWBC team would use the Burton report on possible uses of the site as a guide? KH replied ‘Yes’.

Appendix C

- Gateway functions were likely to be integrated into the new building, but JW said she was aware of the dangers, as seen at Ashford.
- Anne Stobo contrasted the welcoming features at the Pallant, with the off-putting Novicum gallery just a few meters away in Chichester.
- New exhibition space would be about 2,000 sq.m, compared with the present 650sq.m, and will be used for better displays of the Ashton and Camden bequests, costume collection, local history resources.

Staffing – KH said that whilst more staff might be needed, putting together three resources (Museum, library, adult education) should result in economies of scale.

The main feeling of the meeting was that local groups should have an influence in such things as meeting spaces for our societies (AGMs) and arts organisations, reception areas for weddings, eating facilities and a shop.

Linda Lewis attended the Stakeholder Workshop on Thursday 16th June 2016 when Councillor David Jukes, Leader of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, gave an enthusiastic introduction and welcome to the Civic Complex with the new theatre at the heart of the building.

There was a project briefing by Steve Walker, Director of Allies and Morrison.

Following refreshments, we were split into groups to discuss different aspects of the project. The general consensus of all the groups on the town hall and theatre complex project was positive.

In my group there were questions mainly from local householders on the car parking which is to be below the theatre and the entrances and exits in this mainly residential area.

It was explained by Steve Walker that the large lorries for the theatre, transporting sets etc. would be entering through the back of the Hoopers' car park and therefore any noise would be diminished.

Feedback was given by those attending. We have not yet received the final notes from Allies and Morrison.

The next meeting of the Cultural section of the Town Forum will be held in early August. Date and agenda to be confirmed.

Linda Lewis

14 July 2016