



# A G E N D A

**Thursday 24 March 2016 at 6.30 pm  
Council Chamber, Royal Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN1 1RS**

- 1 Apologies**
- 2 Membership changes**
  - a Membership applications (for decision)
  - b Changes of representatives (for information)
- 3 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 28 January 2016** (Pages 1 - 12)
- 4 Actions from previous meeting**

There were no specific actions points arising from the last meeting.
- 5 Update report from the Leader of the Council (10 mins)**
- 6 TWBC's plans for the Town Hall and the Assembly Hall - report by the Town Forum's Chairman (5 mins presentation, plus 20 mins of Qs and As)** (Pages 13 - 16)

Alastair Tod, Chairman of the Town Forum, will present his attached paper. Jonathan MacDonald, TWBC's Director of Planning and Development, and Adam Chalmers, TWBC's Head of Partnerships and Engagement (who has line management responsibility for the Assembly Hall Theatre), will both be present, to answer Town Forum members' questions.
- 7 Urban Design Framework Supplementary Planning Document (15 mins)** (Pages 17 - 20)

TWBC has recently published its recommended final version of the 'Urban Design Framework Supplementary Planning Document'. This document, once approved, will provide a framework for future development within Tunbridge Wells town centre, which seeks to promote a local distinctiveness, incorporating guidance on matters of accessibility, connections and linkages and improved quality of the public realm and townscape.

The document can be viewed via the following link. It will have been examined by TWBC's Planning & Transportation Cabinet Advisory Board on 21 March (Item 6), before Cabinet is asked to adopt it at its meeting on 14 April.

<http://democracy.tunbridgewells.gov.uk/documents/g3500/Public%20reports%20pack%202016%2018.30%20Planning%20Transportation%20Cabinet%20Advisory%20Board.pdf?T=10>

Attached is a summary of the key differences between the draft version of the document, consulted upon last year, and the one submitted for approval now.

Alan Legg, TWBC's Urban Designer, will make a 5-minute presentation on the Framework's key elements and answer members' questions on its content and role.

- 8 Reports from the Town Forum Working Groups (10 mins each)** (Pages 21 - 30)
- (a) Tourism and Leisure** – Dorothea Holman, Chairman of this working group, will provide an update report.
  - (b) Transport Strategy** – Jane Fenwick, Acting Chairman of this working group, has provided the attached update report.
  - (c) Planning and Development** – Mark Booker, Chairman of this working group, will provide an update report (to follow). He also would like to draw attention to the attached 'response to TWBC's consultation on the proposed modifications to the 'Submissions draft Site Allocations Development Plan Document', (item 8(c)(ii), which had to be submitted to the Borough Council ahead of this meeting.
  - (d) Water in the Wells** – Michael Holman, Chairman of this working group, will present an update report.
  - (e) Finance and Other Issues** – David Wakefield, Chairman of this working group, will provide an update report.
  - (f) Culture** – Bob Atwood, Chairman of this working group, will provide an update report.

**9 Any Other Business**

**Date of the Next Meeting**

The dates of future meetings are as follows:

Thursday 19 May at 6.30pm

Thursday 21 July at 6.30pm

Thursday 22 September at 6.30pm

Wednesday 23 November 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 28 January 2016

**Attended:** Bill Acker (sub), Bob Atwood, Caroline Auckland (sub), Sally Balcon, Lindsay Barker (sub), David Barnett, Cllr Ronen Basu, Lorna Blackmore, Mark Booker, Stephen Bowser, Beverley Brown (sub), David Bushell, Cllr Mrs Barbara Cobbold, John Cunningham, Shauna Dupuy, Andy England, Jane Fenwick, Alex Green, Cllr Lawrence Heasman, Sue Kaner, Brian Lippard, Katharina Mahler-Bech, Sally Manning (sub), Marguerita Morton, Cllr Tracy Moore, Chris Morris, Charles Pope, Nick Pope, Cllr James Scholes, Cllr David Scott, Cllr Don Sloan, Tim Tempest, Alastair Tod (Chairman), David Wakefield (sub), Mary Wardrop, Denise Watts and Pat Wilson

**TWBC officers present:** Adam Chalmers (Head of Partnerships and Engagement), Hilary Smith (Economic Development Manager), Gary Stevenson (Head of Environment and Street Scene) and Mike McGeary (Democratic Services Officer)

**Guest speakers:** Irene Fairbairn and Angus Stewart (item 8)

**Also present:** Cllr Jane March (Portfolio-holder for Tourism, Leisure and Economic Development), Cllr Alan McDermott (Deputy Leader of the Council), Ann and John Pickering and Mike Westphal

#### 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were reported from: Cllr Bob Backhouse, Adrian Berendt, Cllr Peter Bulman, Cllr Ben Chapelard, Adrian Cory, Michael Doyle, Tim Harper, Michael and Dorothea Holman, Ann Hughes-Wilson (sub), Bill Kern, Claire Luxford, Cllr David Neve, Altan Omer, Peter Perry (sub), Angela Phillips (sub), Cllr Catherine Rankin, Kate Sargeant (sub), Anne Stobo, Cllr Lynne Weatherly and Cllr Chris Woodward.

#### 2. MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

Mike McGeary reported the following: (a) Michaela van Halewyn had stepped down as representative for the Calverley Park Crescent Association (Beverley Brown was representing the organisation at this meeting); and (b) the Town Forum's Management Committee had approved a membership application from the Friends of Trinity Churchyard. Charles Pope (1<sup>st</sup> nominee) and Bill Acker (substitute) were welcomed to their first meeting.

#### 3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting dated 26 November 2015 were submitted for approval.

Katharina Mahler-Bech drew attention to page 18 of the agenda, specifically the reference to Trinity Garden. She disagreed with the statement "while these draft plans are not a perfect solution, they represented a significant improvement over the present situation". Mark Booker, Chairman of the Planning and Development Working Group, within whose report this statement appeared, advised that this was the view of the Working Group. He added that the summary of the Working Group's consideration of

planning matters had been appended to the Town Forum minutes for 26 November because time had not permitted any discussion on these issues at that stage.

The Chairman of the Forum, Alastair Tod, advised that if there were any difference of opinion on the proposals for Trinity Garden these should be taken up direct with those concerned.

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2015 be approved.

#### 4. ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

26 November 2015

##### 9 Electoral equality and arrangements

Mike McGeary advised that the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been submitted to the Full Council meeting held on 9 December 2015. He set out the decision of the Council and had provided a link to the minutes of that meeting, for Forum members wanting to learn more about the different arguments put forward.

#### 5. UPDATE REPORT FROM TWBC'S CABINET

Cllr Alan McDermott, Deputy Leader of the Council, reported on the following areas of interest:

**(a) TWBC's budget** – He advised that central government was planning to cut TWBC's revenue support grant (RSG) by 49% in 2016/17, contrary to earlier indications, leaving the Borough Council with an additional shortfall of over £500k to fund the provision of services. In addition, while the Council had been anticipating its RSG to reduce to zero in 2018, the Government had also announced that its grant would 'go negative', by reducing the authority's baseline share of business rates. This too was contrary to earlier reassurances that there would be no change in policy before 2020 and undermined the Government's commitment to reward councils financially if they were able to deliver economic growth.

Cllr McDermott advised that strong representations had been made to Greg Clark MP over these grant settlement proposals, adding that some of the impact of this dramatic policy change would be temporarily mitigated through use of a 'grant volatility reserve' which the authority had established.

**(b) Cinema site** – Cllr McDermott reported that the Borough Council was very disappointed to learn that the owners of this site – the Carlyle Group – had decided to place it back on the market, especially after initial planning discussions with a prospective developer had been so positive.

**(c) Culture and Learning Hub** – Cllr McDermott reiterated the fact that nearly £5m of external funding had been allocated for this scheme (£4m from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and £900k from the Arts Council). He added that a 'memorandum of understanding' had been signed that day, setting out how KCC and TWBC would work together to deliver the project; he also advised that the HLF had given permission for TWBC and KCC to begin work on stage 2 of their funding application.

**(d) Ice rink and pantomime** – Cllr McDermott advised that, despite the mild weather, over 34,000 people had enjoyed use of the rink leading up to and just beyond Christmas. He added that over 21,000 people had also enjoyed this season's pantomime at the Assembly Hall, a show which had received very favourable reviews from the 'trade' press.

Bob Atwood felt that the Cabinet update had been both helpful and encouraging, apart from the news about TWBC's grant settlement from central government. He asked whether, in view of the dramatic reduction in available revenue reserves, it might be prudent for the Council to defer its plans for new offices and a replacement theatre.

Cllr McDermott felt that deferment of these developments would most likely lead to greater scheme costs at whatever time the Council wished to proceed, so it might therefore lead to false economy to delay their implementation. He advised that the added shortfall of £500k in 2016/17 was a manageable position for the authority, because of its prudent financial approach.

There were no action points arising from this report.

## 6. **PROPOSED RESPONSE BY THE TOWN FORUM TO TWBC CONSULTATION ISSUES**

David Wakefield, the Chairman of the Finance and Other Issues Working Group, had submitted a formal response to TWBC, following the Council's six-week consultation on its draft budget for 2016/17 and its corporate priorities for the same period. A copy of that response had been circulated with the agenda, for the endorsement of the full Town Forum.

Ahead of Mr Wakefield summarising the response, the Chairman invited Mark Booker, Chairman of the Planning and Development Working Group, to reiterate that group's views on TWBC's proposals for new Council offices and a replacement theatre for the Assembly Hall; this was a key feature of the consultation response.

Mr Booker advised that his Working Group was supportive of the proposals, subject to two key provisos, as set out on page 16 of the agenda papers, as part of the Group's update report dated November 2015. He added that, in part, these provisos had also been identified by TWBC's Cabinet Advisory Board, ahead of consideration of the matter by the Cabinet in December.

Cllr David Scott, whose professional background was in risk management, stressed the importance of TWBC keeping its options open while it progressed the scheme details. That way, he advised, members of the Council would have the full facts in front of them at the time when a decision needed to be taken.

Mr Wakefield then summarised the response prepared on TWBC's draft budget and corporate priorities, which had been set out in full on pages 19 and 20 of the agenda, to which the Chairman invited the Forum's response.

- Alex Green felt that referring to the Assembly Hall as 'losing money' with the programme it offered was missing the essential point. He believed that the Theatre, which received Council support for its operation, had a good record of investing in culture for the benefit of its residents and the town's visitors, adding that this was very much a worthwhile activity.
- Bob Atwood asked whether the premise that a larger replacement theatre would attract West End shows was still correct. He added that, with changing fashions, including touring companies that offered slimmed down productions, there was an

argument that a larger theatre was not necessarily a good investment. He urged that TWBC ensured it obtained the best consultant advice possible on this aspect, before proceeding much further. Mr Atwood also suggested that, if one of the key motivators of a new theatre was to attract visitors to the town, and therefore lead to greater prosperity for the Borough, this might be achieved through reducing parking charges.

- Brian Lippard felt that, with factors such as the continuing rise of 'National Theatre Live' (NT Live), the easy availability of theatre productions on-line, a cinema within the RVP complex etc, there might be a danger of a new, larger theatre being unused for significant periods. He also asked what the 'key milestones' (referred to in the Finance and Other Issues Working Group response) might be. Mr Wakefield advised that a key milestone was the need for detailed costings, especially how the funding gap was to be bridged.
- Mr Green responded to one of the above points. He stressed that the current theatre was not viewed as a competitor by Trinity, adding that he welcomed the proposals for a new theatre. He advised that NT Live – which had become a very popular part of Trinity's programme – was not seen as a threat to live stage performances. He also advised that obtaining the necessary licence to offer NT Live was a carefully managed process and he felt it unlikely that a similar licence would be issued for a second location within the town, such as a new theatre, because of the 'diluting' effect it would have on the product.
- Cllr David Scott was strongly of the view that, in risk management terms, it was important not to allow 'risk' to frighten organisations into inaction.
- Mr Booker endorsed the view about live stage performances, citing the success of the pantomime, with its 21,000 visitors.
- Cllr Jane March stressed the importance of the Borough Council's ambitions (set out in its Cultural Strategy) that: 'By 2024 the Borough of Tunbridge Wells will be nationally recognised for its vibrant cultural provision'. She added that a new theatre would attract much more than just 'large shows' and would continue to make a positive economic impact.
- Jane Fenwick stated that the public had only been able to comment on just the one scheme for a new theatre so far. She reiterated her view that other options should be prepared and made available for public comment. Cllr McDermott advised that a key factor with the option that had been widely presented was that the land was already in the Council's ownership, adding that its location adjacent to the Calverley Grounds offered the opportunity to link with events in the park.

Adam Chalmers, TWBC's Head of Partnerships and Engagement, acknowledged the significance of the Assembly Hall's 'flat floor' in terms of its ability to accommodate a wide range of events. He added that this element would be taken into account by the consultants with whom the Council was working.

Mr Chalmers thanked Forum members for their many comments on TWBC's draft budget. He added that he would ask the Director of Finance to respond to the points raised, once the Full Council had considered these – and other – comments at their meeting on 24 February.

Specifically on the comments made concerning the new Council offices and a new theatre, Mr Chalmers added that, at the December Full Council meeting, TWBC had made an 'in principle' decision to move to the next stages. He stressed that much of what had been raised by the Town Forum – the funding gap, success criteria, the need

for expert advice etc – was very much being examined and worked on. Mr Chalmers welcomed the Forum's appreciation of the openness with which the Borough Council was consulting on its proposals, adding that the Town Forum was viewed as a key consultee in the process.

**RESOLVED** – That the proposed response to TWBC's draft budget and corporate priorities, as set out in the agenda, be endorsed.

## 7. ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS TOGETHER

Cllr Jane March advised that Royal Tunbridge Wells Together (RTWT), the business-led town centre organisation, had been formally launched the previous evening. She added that the event had been attended by over 100 people from a range of businesses across the town centre.

Cllr March added that a total of £105,500 funding had been raised to date from business sponsors, the principal companies being: RVP, Cripps, Thomson Snell and Passmore, AXA-PPP, Fenwicks, Markerstudy, Targetfollow, Dandara, Berkeley Homes, G Collins and Arriva.

Cllr March also advised that two posts were currently being advertised, namely for a Town Centre Manager and for an administrator. These would both report to the RTWT Board which was being established. It was noted that RTWT would be a company limited by guarantee and a community interest company.

- The Chairman asked what benefits RTWT would be able to bring. Cllr March advised that RTWT had been responsible for a promotional campaign for the town over Christmas and additional festive decorations – particularly the Christmas tree at Fiveways. As for the future, Cllr March said that RTWT was looking at promoting the town more widely and at taking over responsibility for operating the Shopmobility scheme. Hilary Smith, TWBC's Economic Development Manager, added that there would be a focus on drawing together many of the existing town centre management partnerships and initiatives, to provide a more effective, co-ordinated approach.
- Cllr Scholes reminded the Forum that a formal Town Centre Management (TCM) initiative had been in place in the 1990s, adding that, after some years of success, it had lost its momentum and come to an end.
- David Wakefield asked for further details of the job description for the Town Centre Manager post. Mrs Smith advised that she could make the job description available, if anyone wished to view a copy. She stressed that the difference between the former TCM initiative and Royal Tunbridge Wells Together was that the latter would be business-led, rather than run by the Borough Council. Mrs Smith added that the role of the Town Centre Manager would be to build up capacity within the town, through drawing businesses together and finding out in a much more co-ordinated way what they saw as the priorities.
- Marguerita Morton said that she supported the aspirations of the RTWT initiative, adding that she would like to see how their collaboration will contribute to tourism in the town as a whole. She asked whether RTWT would be taking steps to market the town as a destination not only for shopping but also for cultural and leisure reasons too. Ms Morton also was interested to learn how much marketing expertise existed within RTWT. Mrs Smith advised that RTWT will promote the town centre as a whole and not limit its activities just to the retail sector. She added that many of the sponsors of RTWT were employers that were fully committed to the town. Mrs Smith advised that it was expected that RTWT would support the Council's Destination

Management Plan. She added that there would be some benefit in undertaking more work around 'business intelligence', to help increase marketing potential.

- Stephen Bowser recommended that the town centre management model in existence in Bury St Edmunds was well worth exploring. Mrs Smith confirmed that lessons had been learnt from TCM schemes elsewhere in developing RTWT. She added that some TCM schemes elsewhere had then often evolved into 'Business Improvement Districts'. Mrs Smith also reminded the Forum that an important next step was to develop a detailed business plan, which was vital in attracting further sponsors and associated members.
- Lorna Blackmore asked whether the £105k raised to date would be used, in part, to pay for the salaries of the two posts referred to. Mrs Smith confirmed that this was the case, adding that funds were also being built up from smaller businesses.
- Caroline Auckland asked how the guest list had been compiled for the launch. She added that she was part of a medium sized business in Camden Road and had been surprised not to have been invited. Mrs Smith advised that the invitations had been based upon a reliable contact list, adding that she was happy to update this as additional businesses became known to the Economic Development team.
- Cllr Moore expressed her full support for the RTWT initiative, adding that both the local authority and the Town Forum should be making every effort to maintain the economic vitality of the town.

There were no specific action points arising.

## **8. AIRCRAFT NOISE – PRESENTATION BY TWAANG**

Irene Fairbairn and Angus Stewart, leading members of the Tunbridge Wells Anti-Aircraft Noise Group (TWAANG), were welcomed to the meeting. They provided detailed feedback from that morning's report and meeting of the Independent Arrivals Review Team, which had taken place at Gatwick.

Ms Fairbairn advised that the TWAANG campaign had been started in the Autumn of 2015 to press for quieter and cleaner skies in Tunbridge Wells. The situation, she stressed, had become noticeably worse for many residents as a result of two factors: since late 2013, Gatwick westerly arrivals at the airport had been moved eastwards; and the spread of arrivals had been narrowed by more than half, sending aircraft, day and night, over Tunbridge Wells. Ms Fairbairn described the above developments in technical terms: she advised that, previously, aircraft would join the Instrument Landing System at a point between seven and 12 nautical miles to the east of Gatwick; in late 2013, this had been extended further eastwards to 14 nautical miles, requiring a wider arc to be followed and having much more of an impact on Tunbridge Wells.

Ms Fairbairn added that it was hoped that the 'continuous descent approach' would be raised from 6,000 ft to 7,000 ft. She advised that this did not take into account the impact on residents living on higher ground, as the target related to the height above the landing runway. It was noted that there was a recommendation in place to raise this height requirement to 8,000 ft.

Ms Fairbairn advised that there was a further recommendation that the fleet of A320 aircraft should have modifications undertaken in order to remove a distinctive engine whine. It was noted that the recommended deadline for this was December 2017, otherwise penalties would be imposed on the airline companies.

One further recommendation of significance was highlighted, namely that 'stacking' of aircraft be undertaken further out than at present, preferably over water rather than land. The report also stressed the importance of proper communications with affected communities.

Forum members raised a number of questions as follows:

- Stephen Bowser warned of the situation worsening, should Gatwick be selected for a second runway, with the number of flights likely to almost double. Ms Fairbairn added that such a situation would have a significant impact upon the relative tranquillity of the town.
- Cllr Ronen Basu felt that the Gatwick authorities should be pressed harder to say what the impact on air quality was when flights took off and landed. He added that when he had last asked the question, he had been given an inadequate response.
- Brian Lippard asked what the likely decibel level might be under the 'continuous descent approach' changes. He also enquired whether a second runway – if approved – was likely to change that decibel level. Ms Fairbairn advised that the probable decibel level would be 55dB, adding that she was unsure whether this would be any different with the advent of a second runway.

Angus Stewart said that he had concerns at the way that the aviation industry assessed aircraft noise, adding that it seemed that monitoring stations rarely reflected levels above 57dB. He hoped that parameters for registering noise might change in the near future.

Mr Lippard asked whether the 55dB level applied before or after the anticipated A320 aircraft modifications. Mr Stewart advised that this would be after the changes.

- Cllr Lawrence Heasman advised that he too had been at the Arrivals Review Team presentation. He understood that the A320 modifications would result in a 9dB noise reduction but at a high frequency level. He added that there remained much argument about the height changes. He understood that a change to 8,000 ft above the runway height would deliver a 6-7dB improvement. As for the monitoring of noise, Cllr Heasman felt that the equipment used was considerably out of date, adding that the establishment of an effective 'management board' in control of the process would be a welcome starting point.
- Cllr James Scholes felt that fining airlines for failing to meet height targets would act as an effective deterrent. Ms Fairbairn advised that there had been no such suggestion of this at the Gatwick meeting.
- Cllr Tracy Moore asked if it were known whether Gatwick planned to continue with their current narrow band for incoming flights. Ms Fairbairn advised that the recommendation coming out of the review was to widen the approach path but it was known that Gatwick would not support that view. The review team had proposed that the swathe of incoming flights be moved even further East, which would have even more of an impact on Tunbridge Wells, Ms Fairbairn added.

In summing up, Jane Fenwick, as Chairman of the Transport Working Group, thanked Ms Fairbairn and Mr Stewart for their very informative presentation. She added that she hoped that both the Town Forum and TWBC would follow up on what had been learnt, to respond to this growing concern for the residents of Tunbridge Wells.

Gary Stevenson, Head of Environment and Street Scene, said that John McCullough, his Principal Environmental Health Officer who specialised in noise nuisance, had attended the Gatwick meeting that morning. Mr McCullough would be preparing a report on the Review Team's findings and would be briefing TWBC councillors shortly, either in the format of a 'member briefing' or by means of a formal Cabinet and Full Council report. He added that this process would determine what follow-up action the authority might wish to take.

Mr Stevenson advised that he would keep the Town Forum members informed on progress. In the meantime, Stephen Bowser encouraged concerned parties to sign the petition that had been established on the Parliament website, urging more stringent restrictions on night flights at Gatwick.

There were no other specific action points arising from this presentation.

## 9. 20's PLENTY – ROAD SAFETY UPDATE

On behalf of Adrian Berendt, Cllr David Scott provided the following update on the 20's Plenty road safety campaign.

- A working group had now been set up, which was due to report to the TWBC/KCC Joint Transportation Board on 15 February, with a final report to be made at its April meeting.
- At a national level, 20's Plenty was placing a particular focus on the non-metropolitan counties, such as Kent, for 2016 as it was felt that they lagged behind metropolitan and unitary authorities. Adrian Berendt would be speaking at their national conference on 26 February at the Guildhall in London.
- A 20's Plenty Kent umbrella grouping was being established, in order to bring together the individual campaigns and to challenge KCC's policy on 20mph, which it was claimed did not comply with Department for Transport guidelines.
- New 20's Plenty campaigns were starting in Langton Green, Otford, Tonbridge and Malling, Tenterden and Westgate-on-Sea, in addition to existing campaigns in Ashford, Deal, Sandwich, Thanet, Canterbury, Maidstone and Faversham.
- Maidstone Borough Council recently approved a motion to investigate more 20mph schemes.

Cllr Scott added that, in the St John's ward, some speed checks were being carried out, with the focus being on reducing the incidence of high levels of speeding. Mark Booker asked if there were specific streets which were being targeted. Cllr Scott advised that there were six streets within the Upper Grosvenor Road and Yew Tree Road area where the problem existed, an area which was not felt appropriate for 20mph limits, but where it might be realistic to successfully target high speed drivers.

Marguerita Morton asked if the far end of St John's Road could be considered, where there were currently junction improvements taking place. Cllr Scott advised that the key issue was safety and while the 20's Plenty campaign was concerned with the whole Borough, he was keen to achieve some success in the short term.

Cllr Barbara Cobbold asked whether plans to implement a 'speedwatch' campaign within her ward (Broadwater) would be a hindrance to the initiative taking place in St John's. Cllr Scott advised that any efforts to educate drivers and to tackle speeding were welcome and he encouraged any such initiative.

There were no specific action points arising from this presentation.

## 10. FIVEWAYS PUBLIC REALM - UPDATE

Cllr Ronen Basu, as the Cabinet Portfolio-holder leading on this scheme, advised that a very helpful meeting had been held with Mark Booker, to discuss the Borough Council's plans for addressing the outstanding concerns from the first phase of this scheme.

Mr Booker thanked Cllr Basu and Gary Stevenson, TWBC's Head of Environment and Street Scene, for the meeting, at which he had learnt that the remedial work would start in late-February. He added that an assessment of the impact on the town's public realm of the first phase of this scheme was already underway, in terms of both its use and appearance.

Mr Booker felt that the scheme had undoubtedly resulted in a much more pleasant environment in this part of the town centre. In terms of appearance, he stressed that there had been a number of successes. As was commonly acknowledged, there had also been some difficulties in implementation, due to either the wrong choice of materials or poor workmanship.

Mr Booker felt it was right to now consider the benefits of the next phase of the scheme and drew attention to the need to take account of the Cultural and Learning Hub's impact when devising the future plans. Mr Stevenson displayed an indicative sketch of the main features of phase 2, which would see the scheme move southwards, to link with the Crescent Road/Church Road junction. He added that the views of Town Forum members on this next phase would be very welcome, adding that certain lessons had been learnt from the initial phase. Mr Stevenson advised that the emphasis would be on discouraging traffic in this section of Mount Pleasant Road, adding that surveys would be undertaken to determine where existing traffic was travelling from and to. He advised that a bid of £1m had been made to the Local Sustainable Transport Fund and that a proposed £300k allocation had been included in the Council's draft capital budget, to fund this phase.

- Jane Fenwick asked Mr Stevenson to re-examine the signage within phase 1 for motorists entering the area from side roads. She felt that it was inadequate and lacked sufficient warning that motorists were about to enter a pedestrian priority zone. Mr Stevenson responded by reiterating that the current signage complied with the relevant guidance although he undertook to check whether any new regulations had subsequently been issued.
- Lindsay Barker asked what type of water features might be added to the public realm scheme. Mr Stevenson advised that, within phase 1, provision had been made for a water feature to be added, by means of a water supply and electricity, close to the Millennium Clock, although it was down to the Water in the Wells initiative to come forward with a design and funding, he added.
- Katharina Mahler-Bech asked if the pedestrian barriers, situated close to the Monson Road junction could be removed. She added that, to help mask their visual impact, the Tunbridge Wells in Bloom initiative had at least decorated the

barriers with some fine floral displays. Mr Stevenson acknowledged that the barriers were not a part of the original scheme design but had been installed as a requirement of KCC's safety audit. The expectation, he added, was that the barriers would be removed, as a result of phase 2 of the scheme generating less traffic using this road.

- Brian Lippard asked whether thought had been given to making Monson Road one-way. He added that the refuse bins operated by Pret à Manger were not enclosed in accordance with their planning obligations. Stephen Bowser added that there was also a lack of consistency with some of the litter bins and street furniture. Mr Stevenson thanked Mr Lippard for his suggestion re. Monson Road and added that this was an aspect which would be considered in discussion with KCC. As for the refuse bins, Mr Stevenson undertook to discuss the enforcement aspect with the Planning Service. He advised that the bins were, by design, different from those in the precinct area but the door locking mechanism was an aspect of concern, something which he would be taking up with the supplier.

In conclusion, Cllr Basu urged Town Forum members to share their views about phase 2 of the public realm scheme, through contacting either himself or Mr Stevenson.

## 11. WORKING GROUPS

Update reports were made from the working groups as follows:

**Tourism and Leisure** – Nick Pope, on behalf of the Chairman, summarised the work of this Group. He advised that, as part of the continuing close working with TWBC, both Cllr Jane March and Hilary Smith had been invited to the next meeting, as part of the continuing partnership approach on tourism and leisure matters. He added that the Group was also receiving regular feedback from the newly-established Royal Tunbridge Wells Together business group.

Mr Pope added that a questionnaire had been devised by several members of the Group on the topic of the 'visit Tunbridge Wells' website, with the aim of assisting TWBC in improving its content. It was agreed that Mike McGeary would provide the survey link for all Town Forum members as soon as possible. (NOTE: This was undertaken by e-mail, dated 4 February.)

As for other initiatives, the Working Group was keen to support the completion of the cycle path linking Penshurst to Tunbridge Wells, the remaining aspect being signage for the route.

Finally, Mr Pope advised that in the course of the next month, Group members would be involved in the revision of the Royal Tunbridge Wells tourism leaflet.

**Transport Strategy** – Jane Fenwick, Acting Chairman, referred to her written report, which had been distributed with the agenda. This had covered a wide range of key topics, including the effectiveness of the Joint Transportation Board, the continuing need for proper road markings leading to the Carrs Corner roundabout, the findings of the A26/A264 traffic study, TWBC's Cycling Strategy, parking, buses and aircraft noise.

**Planning and Development Strategy** – Mark Booker, Chairman, provided a verbal update on the issues which the Working Group had considered since the last Town Forum meeting. He began by summarising the issues covered at the latest presentation provided by TWBC's Planning Policy team, where updates had been provided on both the Site Allocations DPD document and the start of the review of the

authority's Local Plan. Attendees at the presentation felt there should be a more positively pro-active approach on development issues in the town so far as this was compatible with existing constraints in the planning process.

Mr Booker added that a model of RVP's proposals would be on display shortly, which would be of wide interest. He also advised that the Working Group had noted that the Aldi proposals for Eridge Road were not consistent with the current Site Allocations use for the site, adding that the case for another supermarket instead of housing (as currently allocated) still needed to be made.

Finally, the Working Group had been considering the proposals for Union House and remained unhappy with some important aspects of the new owner's plans. He added that a proper update on this would be made to the Town Forum in due course.

**Water in the Wells Working Group** – a written update report had been prepared by the Chairman, which had been circulated with the agenda.

One element of that report, Calverley Grounds, was updated by Gary Stevenson, TWBC's Head of Environment and Street Scene. He explained the reason behind the report's reference to TWBC not applying for an HLF grant for major renovation of the Grounds. He advised that this decision had been taken on the guidance of HLF's visiting officer, who had said that, because the Grounds were in "too good a state and area", it was not appropriate to seek funding from their 'Parks and People Fund'. However, Mr Stevenson added that the Borough Council was happy to look at an enhancement scheme for the Grounds, which could be the subject of bids to other HLF funding streams.

**Finance and Other Issues** – David Wakefield, Chairman of this working group, advised that there were no further issues to report on, beyond minute 6 above.

**Culture** – Bob Atwood, Chairman, advised that he planned to convene the first meeting of this group shortly.

**RESOLVED** – That the progress reports be accepted.

## 12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

**(a) Friends of the Commons** – Sally Balcon advised that the Friends group had organised a litter pick of the Commons on the 4 and 5 March. She asked interested individuals and parties to advise John Barber if they wished to join in.

**(b) The Queen's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday** – Denise Watts asked if any residents' groups were organising a street party as part of the Queen's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations in June. There was an indication that at least five groups planned to do so. It was agreed that there might be some merit in collaborating amongst the participating groups.

**(c) Friends of Trinity Churchyard** – Charles Pope asked if it were appropriate to have details of the Friends group's plans for the churchyard circulated to Town Forum members. The Chairman, Alastair Tod, signalled his approval, but added that there must first be discussions with Alex Green, Trinity's Executive Director, to ensure a co-ordinated approach.

## 13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 24 March 2016 at 6.30pm

The meeting concluded at 8.55pm.

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## Town Forum

### The Council's Plan for Town Hall and Assembly Hall

#### *Report by the Chairman*

*At the last meeting you approved the Council's budget for 2015-6, with cautions concerning the spending on replacing the Town Hall and Assembly Hall. The Forum should be able to consider the wider implications of this before the Council moves ahead. This report is based on the report from the Finance Group you have seen.*

#### *Background*

The Council is proposing a major capital programme (probably about £35m) to dispose of the present civic buildings, to replace the Assembly Hall with a purpose-built theatre, and move its staff and civic functions to a new building in Mt Pleasant Avenue. The future use of the present civic buildings remains to be agreed but the Council intend to ensure the listed parts, including the exterior, are preserved as far as possible in any future use.

In round terms the cost of the new civic centre will be met by the proceeds of sale of the present buildings and a pre-let on part of the new Mt Pleasant office building, but the cost of the theatre (about £25m) will probably be found largely from reserves and an element of public-sector borrowing. So far with all-party support the Council has committed to spending £2m on consultancy and £0.5m on additional specialist staff.

The Council owns the site of the Town Hall and Assembly Hall, the Mt Pleasant Avenue site, and the Great Hall car park. The site of the Museum and Art Gallery where the proposal for a Cultural Hub is going ahead is owned by the County Council but is being transferred to the Borough; it is not affected by the proposals for the other civic buildings. The Council does not own the police station, but the police have long-standing plans to leave a building which is too large and unsuitable for their needs. Optimising the disposal value of the Town Hall and Assembly Hall requires the police station to be part of the package.

#### *Assembly Hall*

The Council has commissioned studies of a new theatre to enable it to replace the present Assembly Hall, preferably on the site of the Great Hall car-park (with the parking replaced). £1.5m has been spent to improve the Assembly Hall for present use, but professional advice is that, with limitations on audience size and backstage facilities, even with this investment it will not attract the larger touring shows. The Assembly Hall could be upgraded to a fully-equipped theatre at a cost of about £12m, but there would be remaining limitations of audience size and backstage facilities.

A wholly new theatre at a cost of about £25m, would add to the cultural standing of the town, and help to bring in visitors and revenue. While this could be built on the site of the Assembly Hall and Police Station, this would be incompatible with retaining the listed parts of these buildings and the restricted site would limit the potential. Since the Council intends the Assembly Hall to remain open until the replacement is ready it seems unavoidable that this is located elsewhere.

## *Town Hall*

There are no structural obstacles to upgrading and re-ordering the Town Hall to make it suitable for modern working, but the cost of doing so has been put at more than £10m. It is too big for current and foreseeable Council needs, with inherent security problems if shared, and costs involved in subdividing it. A replacement building to current standards on another site could be designed to enable part to be rented out, giving an income stream, or leased, contributing to capital cost. The cost of a 40,000 sq ft office building at Mt Pleasant Avenue is estimated at £9m with additional costs for civic facilities, giving a total probably similar to the cost of refurbishing the Town Hall for Council use.

Thus the Council intends to vacate the Town Hall and provide for staff and members at Mt Pleasant Avenue, the move to be largely funded by disposal of the present civic buildings for an alternative use. A new civic centre at Mt Pleasant Avenue in this key central location, with catering facilities, could provide for much improved interaction with the public and space for public functions. Linked to a new theatre on the Great Hall car park site the effect could be a civic statement comparable to the present buildings. It would make possible an improved main entrance to Calverley Grounds, reinstatement of the former north-west entrance to the Grounds, and with sensitive design an improved vista from the east towards the western side of the Grounds, although the theatre fly-tower seems likely to be a prominent feature.

## *Considerations*

After the Council commits to the package, probably at the point where a sale for the existing civic buildings is agreed, there would be very significant costs in abandoning the plan. It is clear the project would require phases and take a number of years to complete. The only commitment made so far is to set aside funding for additional staff and consultancy; these funds will be drawn progressively, and if the project is delayed or abandoned the specialist staff at least could be diverted to other capital projects. But other consequences of abandonment would be more serious.

The package all hangs together. The capital spend can only be committed when the sale of the present civic buildings is agreed, with the price, the future use, and the treatment of the listed parts known. Suitable treatment and a suitable use for these would be sensitive issues. These factors would have to be agreed probably two or three years before the moves take place. It may be this would require an extended partnership with a developer, which itself might be sensitive.

# Agenda Item 6

The Town Hall could be sold separately from the Assembly Hall and/or the police station, but it is unlikely that this would obtain the best price or the most satisfactory after-use. Again, the Council could build the Mt Pleasant offices and, if a problem arose, decide not to occupy them, but not if disposing of the Town Hall is needed to fund the project. Once committed to the sale, it seems the Council will be committed to the whole process of replacing the civic centre and theatre, and to the length of programme this entails.

Inevitably the Council has reached the present position without having detailed capital costs, but estimates by the Finance Director suggest a shortfall of about £25m (effectively the price of the theatre). This might be reduced by commercial sponsorship and donations towards the theatre, but these are unquantifiable in advance. At best an extended programme of fundraising would be required, itself adding to costs, taking place at the same time as, or shortly after, fund-raising for the Cultural Hub. Otherwise the Council would be entitled to borrow at favourable rates from the Public Works Loan Board.

On the revenue side, the substantial operating costs of the Town Hall should be reduced by moving to a modern building. The Assembly Hall requires continuing financial support (estimated at £300,000 a year), and it seems likely that the new theatre will also need support, perhaps at a lower level, despite the ability to stage larger shows. There are known competitors, including Trinity, the revived cinema offer, and streaming of live shows and film performances. The commitment to a publicly owned theatre would entail continuing a substantial level of Council support, and assessing this will be part of the brief for the Council's theatre consultant.

## *Issues*

### *Some questions that might be discussed:*

What is our view of the Council's intention to replace the Town Hall and Assembly Hall? Are the sites proposed appropriate?

Is it an acceptable use of the Council's resources, of land and cash reserves, at a time when its revenue is under threat?

What alternative uses for the present civic buildings would be acceptable?

Are we concerned about the Council's ability to halt or vary its plans once certain key steps are taken? Or about the possibility of a long-term partnership with a commercial developer?

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## URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT CONSULTATION SUMMARY REPORT

The consultation draft version of the Urban Design Framework was the subject of a public consultation for six weeks, undertaken between 1 June and 13 July 2015. A drop-in session was also held for interested parties and members of the public on 3 June 2015.

The online questionnaire on the Borough Council's consultation portal sought formal responses to the following questions, and additionally invited any further detailed comments to be submitted.

**Q1.** Do you support the intention of the Urban Design Framework in its purpose of providing guidance on all development activity in Tunbridge Wells based on managing change whilst respecting its character ?

**Section 3, Context & Overview**, describes the urban structure of Royal Tunbridge Wells town centre and provides an overview of some of its issues.

**Q2.** Do you generally agree with the description of the town centre and the particular problems which have been highlighted?

**Section 4, Key Issues**, summarises the key issues to address, and sets out objectives to address them.

**Q3.** Do you agree with the key issues and objectives?

**Section 5, Framework**, provides specific comments and opportunities under the three principles of Movement, Public Realm and Development (some of these are then further illustrated in an accompanying opportunities document).

**Q4.** Do you generally agree with the approach and main project areas which have been highlighted?

**Section 6, General Policy & Design issues**, establishes some general policy and design principles and identifies some important overarching topic areas, which are intended to be taken forward as a series of subsequent topic guides, and **Section 7, Delivery & Implementation**, finally sets out some important considerations related to the delivery and the implementation of the SPD.

**Q5.** Do you support the intention of the Urban Design Framework which seeks to provide further guidance on particular topics?

The accompanying **Opportunities** document is intended to provide illustrative concepts on how some of the key development sites and public realm opportunities could be taken forward.

**Q6.** Is this a useful document to include?

The drop-in session was well attended with 44 people registering their attendance. The Borough Council received just over 100 separate comments to the online consultation. Of those respondents who answered the above specific questions, overall the response was positive, with support ranging between 78% and 100%.

The various written submissions are set out in a separate consultation document, together with the Council's responses to the matters raised and, where appropriate, how this has then been incorporated into the final draft version of the SPD. (The individual responses are available online via the consultation portal and a complete paper copy with TWBC response and recommendations has been provided in the Members' Room.)

## **Overview of matters raised and modifications**

As indicated, representations were mainly supportive of the preparation of the Urban Design Framework and the supporting Opportunities document. In the main, the comments sought inclusion of additional text for clarity, or in order to strengthen reference to particular matters. The list below highlights the main topics and how they have been addressed.

1. Additional reference has been included to some documents that have been prepared by the Town Forum in respect of transport matters and green infrastructure.
2. Stronger wording has been included as to the status of the SPD and the requirement for developers and agencies to take the guidance into account.
3. Reference to the heritage context of the town has been given greater prominence. (Note that the document already includes cross references to the Conservation Area Appraisal for Royal Tunbridge Wells, and therefore does not repeat its content. It is also an adopted Supplementary Planning Document in its own right.)
4. Additional reference in the street-scene section to wayfinding and the issue of management of pavement 'clutter'.
5. There were a number of representations regarding the approaches and first impressions of the town, as well as the arrival points (gateways) to the centre. Further text has therefore been included in several places relevant to the particular location.
6. Reference to cycling was inadequately covered in the consultation draft. This has been remedied by including a specific section and a reference to the recent draft Cycling Strategy.
7. Accessibility text has been enhanced as it is vital to refer to the need for designs to work towards a safe and accessible public realm for all users. (Although there was a late representation from the Access Group, it is considered that it is still relevant and important to strengthen the text in this regard.)
8. A number of representations referred to the importance of the green network. References to this have been enhanced, including the importance of trees and green spaces to the town.

# Agenda Item 7

9. There were a number of comments related to key junctions that have resulted in further guidance in the document. These relate particularly to Carrs Corner, Church Road and the St John's approach.
10. Further commentary and clarification have been added in relation to the development framework and the key development sites in the town and figure 5.4. (This now also cross references to the Site Allocations Development Plan Document.)
11. Section 7 regarding Delivery and Implementation has been redrafted and expanded.

Items 6, 8 and 9 from the above list were particularly prominent matters at the drop-in session.

11 Feb 16

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Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum

## **Tourism and Leisure Working Group**

Progress Report for Town Forum Meeting 24 March 2016

1. The Group met with Councillor Jane March and Hilary Smith Economic Development Manager to discuss the way forward for working together. We agreed to continue to liaise on an informal basis and to work together on individual projects when possible. Although the Council has a Vision in the Destination Management Strategy for Tourism it does not have a designated Budget. Any Projects in that area therefore have to be funded on an ad hoc opportunistic basis.
2. Royal Tunbridge Wells Together has appointed the Admin person and is in the process of selecting the Town Centre Manager. The Manager role will be to promote the town, encourage businesses to join the group and be instrumental in setting up initiatives, such as festivals. This will inevitably help increase the number of visitors and increase the Leisure opportunities in the town for all. The manager will not have a specific role relating to Tourism.
3. We thank you, all the members, who responded to our request to fill in the Questionnaire on Visit Tunbridge Wells. We are collecting more responses and will be reporting at the next Forum meeting.
4. The Leisure Cycle Path mentioned in the previous Report from Penshurst to Tunbridge Wells has been included in the Cycling Strategy.
5. The Group was asked by the Friends of Calverley Grounds to help them clarify with the Council the policy of usage of the Grounds by Traditional Fairs. Although they do not require licencing the Council is clear that Calverley Grounds is not suitable for Traditional Fairs.

Dorothea Holman

Chair of the Working Group

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**Report to the Town Forum on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2016 from the Transport Working Group**

**Members:** Jane Fenwick, Peter Perry, David Wakefield, Stephen Bowser, Katharina Mahler-Bech, Pat Wilson, Lorna Blackmore, Sally Balcon and Adrian Berendt.

The TWG met on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2016. Other meetings, decisions and actions are as follows:

1. **JTB on 15<sup>th</sup> February was attended.** Progress was noted on the funding and design of a pedestrian refuge on Crescent Road and pedestrian crossings at Major Yorks Road and Langton Road. The TWG will request early input into these projects, and for the re-signing of approaches to Carrs Corner roundabout. The TWG also requested that the JTB discuss in full the A26/A264 Study at its next meeting.
2. **Congestion:** The TWG will be working with Cllr David Scott and others in taking forward ideas for reducing congestion within Tunbridge Wells. It welcomes the focus on improving the safe and quick movement of people up and down the 'spine' of Tunbridge Wells town centre. A list of key congestion issues has been produced as guidance for future actions.
3. **Cycling Strategy:** The TWG will provide a representative to attend the Cycling Forum. A meeting is planned to co-ordinate and progress with BUG, TWG and Mark Booker (who developed the Town Forum's Green Network) for the use of back alleys and shortcuts for cyclists within the town.
4. **Public Transport Forum** was attended on 9<sup>th</sup> March. News that the Compaid charity is to run a shuttle bus service between Knights Wood and High Brooms Railway station between 6-8 am and 6-8pm on a flat rate £1 fare, was welcomed.
5. **Gatwick Aircraft noise:** The TWG has requested that John McCullough, Principal Environmental Health Officer at TWBC, be invited to the Town Forum to report on his assessment of the Independent Arrivals Review Team report on aircraft noise from planes landing at Gatwick and advice of any subsequent actions planned by TWBC.\*
6. The TWG will meet next on 20<sup>th</sup> April

\* TWBC has advised that it is awaiting the formal response being made by Gatwick Airport to the Independent Arrivals Review Team report; Gatwick's response is expected by the end of the month. It is therefore anticipated that TWBC will be in a position to report to the Town Forum at its 19 May meeting on what impact the Arrivals Review report (and Gatwick's response) will have on the Borough Council's formal position.

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### Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum

#### Planning and Development Working Group

#### Response to TWBC Consultation on the proposed modifications to the Submission Draft Site Allocations Development Plan Document

##### Overview

The Planning and Development Working Group of the Royal Tunbridge Well Town Forum welcomes the opportunity to comment on the proposed modifications to the Submission Draft Site Allocations DPD (SADPD) following the Public Examination of the draft during November and December 2015. Where we do not comment specifically on a proposed modification it may be taken that we have no objection to that proposal.

References in comments below are to chapters and numbered paragraphs of the SADPD.

##### Chapter 1

###### *1.46-1.50*

We strongly support the greater emphasis on effective monitoring in relation to key infrastructure provision, including roads, health, recreational provision and schools, as set out in Table 3.

##### Chapter 3

###### *3.10*

We strongly support the strengthening of provisions to take further account of potential impact on the Air Quality Management Areas in assessing proposed development.

###### *3.11*

We draw attention to the fact that the review of Rural Fringe sites has in fact taken place without demonstrating any need to consider adjustments to the Green Belt.

###### *3.16-3.17 and Policy AL/RTW1*

We strongly support the clarification and strengthening of this Policy, notably its emphasis on promoting local distinctiveness, accessibility connections and linkages and improved quality of the Public Realm and townscapes and that the UDF SPD should be a material consideration in determining planning applications and the implementation of transport schemes and Public Realm works.

###### *3.18 and Table 6*

We consider that *the proposed deletion of Policy AL/RTW24 Grove Hill Road* represents a significant lost opportunity and we advocate that it be reconsidered at the time of the

forthcoming Local Plan review as most of the site presents potentially extremely useful opportunities for mixed use development including some residential.

### 3.34

We query the soundness of the proposed deletion of the Eridge Road Area of Change and its replacement by two separate ordinary allocations for the reasons set out in our comments below on proposed site allocations RTW4 (a) and RTW4(b).

### 3.35-3.38 and Area of Change Policies

We strongly support the additional emphasis on the Council championing a master planning approach in relation to the proposed Areas of Change, but query whether this accords with the specific Area of Change policies actually set out, where the lead role is still apparently allocated to prospective developers. We believe that the primary responsibility for development of master plans should rest with the planning authority to ensure that the longer term interests of the town are secured. We are not confident this would be so in the case of developer-led master planning and the dangers are already apparent in the proposed sub-division of Area of Change RTW4. We therefore support the inclusion of additional provisions in relation to the proposed Areas of Change which seek to ensure that any part proposals should not compromise a comprehensive redevelopment of the particular Area of Change or sub-area Area of Change. We will closely monitor the effectiveness of these provisions.

We have reservations concerning the reference to specific transport improvements, such as the Church Road/A26 Junction which appear in relation to several of the Areas of Change. These over-specific references might have the effect of limiting the scope for contributions to improvement needs which prove appropriate and relevant at the time of any actual redevelopment in an Area of Change.

***In paragraph 3.38***, while it may be satisfactory to treat as windfalls supplementary residential units which arise in an Area of Change in the context of the existing Local Plan, the implications from the 2015 SHMA suggest that it may become necessary to make a more systematic assessment of their residential potential as part of the Local Plan review process.

***In relation to Policy RTW2(a)*** there still appears to be slight confusion in distinguishing the Civic Complex area from the remainder of the Area of Change, with some detail supposedly applicable to the whole area being in fact only related to the former, such as the requirement that “*retail uses should be provided on the ground floor to ensure active frontages*”. This may be inappropriate and unachievable on other parts of the Area of Change. In view of the rapid evolution in the retailing world, we also consider the maintenance of a specific reference to a Department Store in the Area of Change to be inappropriate.

***In relation to Policy RTW2(b)*** we strongly support the requirement to ensure an active retail frontage on the Mount Pleasant frontage.

***In relation to Policy RTW3*** we consider the failure to stipulate improved pedestrian access to Mount Pleasant and the railway station to be a lost opportunity and would advocate that this be reconsidered at the time of the Local Plan review.

***In relation to Policy RTW4(a) and (b)*** we do not support the division of the former area RTW4 into two sub-areas, notwithstanding the introduction of a provision requiring that any development proposal in one sub-area should not compromise the wider aims and development proposals in the adjoining sub-area. In the absence of a TWBC-led master-plan for the whole area, we are concerned that it would prove difficult to ensure practical application of this provision.

### *3.41-3.43 Housing Development*

***In relation to policies AL/RTW6/8/10/11/13 and AL/GB1/3*** we strongly support the inclusion of a provision requiring connection to the sewerage system *at the nearest point of adequate capacity*. The obtaining of satisfactory assurances as to the feasibility of such connections should be required from the relevant service provider before any other pre-application matters are discussed by prospective developers with TWBC and we should welcome a further amendment of the draft provision to state this.

***In relation to Policy AL/RTW6***, we believe that, within the overall context of achieving a sustainable housing policy for the town, the primary need at this particular location is for residential over other uses. In order to promote this, the proposed additional uses should either not be authorised, or should be stated to be supplementary or ancillary only, especially in view of the extant planning consent for residential units at this location which we should like to see pursued.

## **Chapter 4**

### *4.10*

We strongly support the addition of a reference to the impact of footnote 9 to paragraph 14 of the NPPF in relation to development in the Green Belt and AONB surrounding the town.

### *4.18*

In relation to Policy AL/GB2 We strongly support the additional safeguards in relation to Ancient Woodland and the designated Town Green at Knight's Wood.

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### ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS TOWN FORUM

#### WATER IN THE WELLS WORKING GROUP

##### Progress report for Town Forum Meeting 24 March 2016

#### 1. GENERAL:

(a) Proposals for art in the public realm are slowly moving forward through the complex planning system. Once Water in the Wells has had an input to the initial guide for these public art proposals, we will bring the outline schedule of opportunities and potential sites to a meeting of the Town Forum for wider consideration.

(b) On 21 March the large 'Urban Design Framework SPD' came to the Cabinet Advisory Board. It is my understanding that any formally agreed 'Strategy for Art in the Public Realm SPD' will eventually form part of this major, overarching planning document. The document contains outline plans and designs for the re-formation of a wide variety of key locations in our unparished area. Many of these are potential sites for water features. The Water in the Wells Working Group will endeavour to keep water-themed public art firmly on the agenda of those tasked with transforming vision into reality.

#### 2. SPECIFIC SITES:

##### a) Fiveways Millennium Clock

At our last Working Group Meeting we considered three outline designs, prepared by Tim Marshall of Marshall, Carley Architects Ltd, for a water feature incorporating and enhancing the Millennium Clock. After further consultation with Tim, we intend to enter into discussion with 'Royal Tunbridge Wells Together' and businesses located on or near Fiveways to work out a plan of action.

##### b) Union House

We have had a further very positive meeting with representatives of Dandara. Their design team clearly recognise the importance for the overall development of an eye-catching, strategically placed, interactive water feature. They are currently commissioning artists to produce designs for further consideration. Dandara continues to be interested in having short, water-themed texts inscribed on the stonework, both for the Union House water feature and the planned feature at their Knights Wood development. In advance of any wider public appeal for suitable texts, **Water in the Wells would be happy to receive suggestions. Please send to my e-mail below.**

##### c) Calverley Grounds

The water-themed children's play space has now been formally named 'Calverley Adventure Grounds'. Fundraising activities are well under way and an application has been made to the Charity Commission for status as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). The Friends are planning a business launch in Royal Victoria Place on 21 March and a public launch on the bowling green on Good Friday between 2 and 4pm.

**d) Dairy Crest, St John's Road**

Following the granting of planning permission, the developer Ashill Land has entered into a purchase agreement with McCarthy and Stone a large firm specialising in accommodation for older persons. Early discussion indicates that McCarthy and Stone are reviewing the planning permission to fit their specific accommodation profile. In the course of my discussion with the firm's representatives at a consultation on 17 March, I was given to believe that they are fully committed not only to providing the agreed water feature within the development, but also to supporting the refurbishment of the water feature in St John's Recreation Ground.

**e) Knights Wood**

Work on the water feature in the Town Square by the planned school is shortly to begin. It is anticipated that the feature will be completed by the beginning of the school year in September. (For a detailed diagram of the water feature, visit the TWBC website charting planning applications – 15/510502.)

**f) Royal Wells Park**

Work on the upper section of the water feature is now under way. The cascade and water wall continues to feature prominently in the current sales brochure.

**g) Grosvenor and Hilbert Park**

The HLF project is nearing completion. I quote from the Friends' Spring 2016 Newsletter: 'The pump systems have been successfully working for some weeks now and the flow of water through the Grottoes is running freely and creating quite an audible feature.' Although the wetlands may not be quite finished in time, a grand re-opening 'Funday' is planned for 2 May.

**h) Pantiles Chalybeate Spring**

The water is flowing – not strongly, but flowing - and as tangy and iron-rich as ever. I hope this augurs well for the Dipping Season shortly to commence.

*(Michael Holman Chairman, Water in the Wells Working Group  
michaeldekholman@gmail.com)*