



ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS TOWN FORUM

Minutes of Meeting dated Thursday 15 May 2008

1. Present:

Jenny Alexander (Rusthall Village Association), Jenny Blackburn (Rusthall Village Association), Daniel Bech (Telephone House Neighbours' Association), Grahame Bell (The Pantiles Traders' Association), John Cunningham (Royal Tunbridge Wells Civic Society), Betsey Dix (Calverley Park Crescent Freeholders' Association), Bruce Goodwin (Grovehill Road Residents' Association), John Higgs (Hanover & Rock Villa Residents' Association), George Lawson, (Inner London Road Residents' Association), Ian Naismith (Hanover and Rock Villa Residents' Association), Altan Omer (Benhall Mill Road Land Association), Kate Sergeant (Clarence Road Users' Association), Christopher Thomas (The Chairman of the Town Forum and The Goodwins No's 1 & 2 Residents' Company/Woodbury Close Residents' Association), Father Ed Tomlinson (St Barnabas Community), Gill Twells (Royal Tunbridge Wells Civic Society), Mary Wardrop (Hawkenbury Village Association), Philip Whitbourn (Beulah Road Residents' Association)

- Councillors: Robert Mayall (Sherwood), Mrs Catherine Mayhew (Park), John Miller (Culverden), James Scholes (Pantiles/St Mark's), Frank Williams (Sherwood) and Christopher Woodward (St John's).

Others in attendance: Parish Councillor Crookall (Goudhurst), Parish Councillor Peter Randall (Brenchley) and Samantha Timms (Town Forum Secretary).

2. Apologies:

Michael Doyle (Hawkenbury Village Association), John Goodfellow (Banner Farm Residents' Association), Michael Holman (Tunbridge Wells Twinning & Friendship Association), Michael Larsen (Friends of the Grove), Keith Perry (Benhall Mill Land Association), Simon Smith (Inner London Road Residents' Association), Alastair Tod (Royal Tunbridge Wells Civic Society) and David Webster (Clarence Road Users' Association).

- Councillors Robert Atwood (Rusthall), Peter Crawford (Broadwater), Roy Bullock (Leader of the Council).

(Christopher Thomas in the Chair for the duration of the meeting)

3. Membership Changes

Jenny Alexander, Rusthall Village Association has resigned from the Town Forum, as she was moving away from the area. The Town Forum thanked Jenny for her enthusiasm, hard work and dedication and wished her well for the future. The Chairman also made reference to her dedication to the community at large and her work at the Citizens' Advice Bureau.

4. Minutes of Last Meeting Dated 10 April 2008

The minutes were agreed, subject to the following amendments:

Amendment to minute 2 'Apologies'

Add John Goodfellow to the apologies list.

Amendment to minute 7 'Grot Spots Revisited', 4th paragraph, page 5

The wording 'the new signs were produced and approved' should be replaced with 'the *designs* had been produced and approved'.

- **Matters Arising:** None received.

5. Matters Arising/Actions Completed from the Meeting dated 10 April 2008

Action outstanding from 10 January 2008 Town Forum:

Action:

- 9.1 That Councillor Bullock reply to Christopher Thomas' letter/report regarding the role and performance of the Town Forum in 2006/07 and key residents' challenges to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council dated 14 December 2007. Christopher Thomas, emailed Councillor Bullock last week and still no reply had been received.

Actions outstanding from 10 April 2008 Town Forum:

Actions:

6.1

- 7.2 That Christopher Thomas write a letter to the Kent County Council's Chief Executive giving details of the Forum's concerns and lack of communications between the borough and the County. Cleared. Email sent to Councillor Manning requesting he forward email to the Chief Executive of KCC as our elected representative.

Actions Completed from 10 April 2008 meeting:

- 5.1 That any Town Forum member wishing to display the Town Forum's poster should liaise with Christopher Thomas or Daniel Bech.
- 6.1 That Councillor Mrs Mayhew inform Christopher Thomas whether or not the Parking Attendants can give 'on the spot' fines for litter dropping (chewing gum, cigarette butts etc). She would report back to July's meeting.

Since the Town Forum meeting, Councillor Mrs Mayhew had received the following replay:
"The Civil Enforcement Officers (CEO) (Parking Attendants) currently have powers in respect of litter dropping, fly tipping and graffiti, if they see someone doing one of those offences, then they have the powers to give them on the spot fines. It was also an offence not to give the CEO your name and address, if requested, in relation to an offence."

- 6.2 That Kate Sergeant invites Councillor Paul Barrington-King to the Environmental Issues Workshop taking place on 19 June 2008. Action completed. Attendance would depend upon Councillor Barrington-King being re-elected.
- 7.1 That Councillor Mrs Mayhew update the Town Forum at its next meeting with the progress of the Council's logo and Wiesbaden Twinning signage.

Councillor Mrs Mayhew stated that the new Council's logo had been designed and would be launched at the Annual Council meeting taking place on Tuesday 20 May 2008. Which would then in turn enable the Twinning signs to progress.

The Town Forum was also informed that the entry signs into Tunbridge Wells would be re-vamped to have perhaps the potential of a removable section at the bottom of the signs so that 'celebration' signs could be added, for example '100th Year Celebration'.

- 7.3 That any Town Forum member that knows of a damaged verge to inform Councillor Mrs Mayhew in order that she can inform the County Portfolio Holder, Councillor Ferrin.
- 8.1 Should any member of the Town Forum wish to contribute ideas towards how the town should celebrate the Centenary to contact Michael Larsen direct.

- 8.2 Any member of the Town Forum wishing to join the Working Party to contact Michael Larsen direct.
- 8.3 Any member of the Town Forum who has any issues of concern that the Vision Committee/Working Party should be dealing with, to advise Michael Larsen accordingly.
- 9.1 John Higgs to forward view and comments to Christopher Thomas before 1 May and that Christopher submit those views/comments to the Environmental Health Officer before 1 May 2008.
- 9.2 Matt Goodwin to forward his questions relating to the Leader Blog to Christopher Thomas so that he could receive a response on Matt's behalf.
- 9.3 That all representatives from any association/member to provide details of activities that they had undertaken and/or want to promote to Daniel Bech in order for them to be included on the Town Forum's website so that all members could know what was happening.

6. Reports from Borough Councillors

None received.

7. Urban Parishing

The Town Forum was reminded that the Council's Corporate Services Select Committee was asked by the Cabinet to review the pros and cons of parishing the urban areas. As part of the review, a big debate with the Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum took place and following the debate; the Town Forum requested that they receive a presentation from an experienced Parish Councillor on the advantages and disadvantages of becoming a parish council.

Parish Councillors Tom Crookall, Goudhurst Parish Council Chairman and Peter Randall, Brenchley Parish Council and Tunbridge Wells Area Committee of Kent Association of Local Councils, attended on the invitation of Town Forum.

Parish Councillor Crookall stated that Parish Councils were in a position to initiate many beneficial projects such as new football pitches, playgrounds, village halls etc. Parish Councils also has an influence on planning applications being statutory consultees. However one of the main roles was to apply pressure to the Borough and County Councils in order to get the best outcomes for the parish. In pursuit of these objectives the electoral mandate added credibility.

Parish councils usually meet monthly but most operate on a committee basis with further committee meetings during each month for planning applications etc, all of which are open to the public. It helps to have active and enthusiastic members and good leadership is essential. When asked if the role of a Councillor could be undertaken by someone in full time employment, the response was that it could but that having a few retired members was helpful. The number of Councillors who would sit on the council would be determined at the outset depending on the population. Most Parish Councils are not party political.

Communication from parish councils vary but in addition to all meetings being open to the public and some "open meetings" the public is encouraged to attend, most parish councils communicate with their residents by parish and local magazines and websites.

It was agreed by all that Rusthall was an appropriate area to parish whereas Royal Tunbridge Wells (Town Centre area) was likely to be more difficult.

Christopher Thomas informed the Town Forum that Councillor Atwood had an interest in the idea of parishing Rusthall as a number of residents asked him about this during his election campaign.

The Town Forum thanked Parish Councillors Crookall and Randall for their attendance and informed briefing. Christopher Thomas asked that should any Town Forum member wish to ask more questions, to contact Tom and Peter direct.

Action:

7.1 Should any Forum member wish to ask Councillor Crookall and Randall any further question to contact them direct:

- tom.crookall@talk21.com
- peter@bombazine.wanadoo.co.uk

8. Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum Environment Workshop Preparation

Kate Sergeant introduced this item and stated that she and others were looking forward to the workshop that was taking place in June 2008. Kate went on to say that Sheila Wheeler, Chief Executive of the Council, would be in attendance and would be talking about the successes and the future relating to everything environmental. Steve Door, Environmentalist, would also be in attending.

Kate asked that everyone be involved and come up with ideas of what improvements need to be made to help our communities and to think of future initiatives that could be useful in the town areas. During the workshop the Town Forum would be asked to discuss those ideas and any new ones that arise. So PLEASE put your thinking hats on.

Some ideas for thought:

- More local food markets, shops etc, wider provision of allotments and market gardens; perhaps new housing to include allotment spaces.
- Micro generation of renewable energy, wind and solar. Renewable energy installation and home insulation, grants and practical help; perhaps easier planning permission for renewable energy installations.
- Car sharing schemes, hire by the hour. Improved public transport.
- Re-use of re-useable resources, facilities to exchange items, a 'free cycle' depot. Doorstep recycling collections – individual or street.

Kate urged members to talk with their community to discuss what issues might help and what might be possible to develop in the local areas. In concluding she asked everyone to attend on Thursday 19.06.

Action:

8.1 Forum Members to think about ways to improve the environment ready for the Environment Workshop on 19 June 2008.

9. Reports from Committees and Working Groups

Transport Matters – John Goodfellow, although having sent his apologies, did submit a report relating to Transportation, this report was for noting and covered the following issues:

The Chairman of the Town Forum presented its discussion paper “GETTING AROUND TUNBRIDGE WELLS” to the KCC/TWBC Joint Transportation Board (JTB) meeting in April 2007. The JTB duly accepted the paper and asked the KCC Transportation officers to report on it. Councillor Ransley had at the preceding January 2007 JTB meeting presented his “Revised Transport Strategy for Tunbridge Wells” proposing various highway improvements to deal with congestion but also advocating minimal support for public transport and the termination of planning protection for the railway track from Tunbridge Wells to Eridge.

At a recent meeting of the Board, a response was received to Councillor Ransley’s report and that his comments would be considered in the course of a full review of the current Transport Strategy for the town as part of the Local Development Framework process that was to be undertaken by Tunbridge Wells in conjunction with Kent County.”

At that same Board meeting, it was agreed the Town Forum's "GETTING AROUND TUNBRIDGE WELLS REPORT" would be similarly considered in the course of the review as well as the town's permit parking zones which would include the extension of the area of town covered by the zones. There would also be a systematic review of all speed limits in Tunbridge Wells that would start this year and run for two years.

A Public Transport Strategy was also required for the towns of Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells, considered together as a designated Regional Transport Hub in the South East Plan. An initial study was already underway to progress an enhanced public transport system for RTW & Tonbridge to address local congestion, accessibility and air quality issues. This would include consideration of the contribution that could be made by Park & Ride.

Mr Goodfellow highlighted in his paper that a detailed study titled Wealden Link was available and could be viewed via the following website: www.wealdenlink.org.uk. It would explain the great benefit to Tunbridge Wells and the whole region of the restoration of the railway from Tunbridge Wells to Lewes, with its Park & Rail potential for RTW.

A draft report on the Public Transport Strategy would be due for public comment June/Aug 2008.

Various Planning Matters – Philip Whitbourn informed the Town Forum that a meeting took place with Alan Legg, Principle Design and Heritage Officer, Ms Dixon, Planning Officer, Daniel Bech and himself on Tuesday 22 April 2008.

The purpose of the meeting had arisen from a suggestion made by the Director of Planning and Development at one of the meetings between Planning and the Town Forum. Daniel stated that the Town Forum thought it desirable to try to work with the Council as the Local Development Framework process progressed, rather than reacting to a set of documents at a late stage.

Councillor Scholes asked Philip whether or not a definitive answer was given at that meeting regarding consultation and working together regarding Urban Strategy – Philip did not seem to think that an answer was given. Councillor Scholes informed the Town Forum that he would speak with the Director of Planning and Development to ensure that the Town Forum was consulted upon relating to such matters.

The Town Forum noted that various issues had been discussed, namely: Windfall sites and empty homes, car park sites, Urban Capacity Study 2001, Urban Characterisation Exercise, Limit of built development, Local Plan, Affordable Housing, care homes, related open spaces and Potential Sites.

Action:

- 9.1 That Councillor Scholes speak with the Director of Planning and Development to ensure that the Town Forum would be consulted with regarding planning matters, in particular the Urban Strategy.

10. Any Other Business

Members providing details of activities:

Civic Society – John Cunningham updated the Town Forum with the activities. He stated that they had had the usual programme of meetings and that nothing 'major' was in the pipeline; although they were in the process of promoting the idea of a Panorama view to look over the town in relation to the Centenary, however, the design, location and price was still undecided.

A Historical Atlas had been generated and had been sent to the Queen; a reply had been received stating that the Atlas was now being held in the Royal Library.

Christopher Thomas asked whether or not the Civic Society was involved with Targetfollow.

John stated that there was a meeting planned but no date had been confirmed; he would report back at the next meeting.

Love Where We Live Campaign – Christopher Thomas informed the Town Forum that the Council would shortly start embarking on a 'Love Where We Live Campaign' – a campaign to celebrate community pride, embrace it and to grow it so that those who live in Tunbridge Wells now and in the future could benefit.

The campaign would be launched with a big clean up across the borough, commencing at 2pm on Friday 6 June (venue yet to be confirmed). The Council would like to encourage residents of the borough to clean up areas where they live or where they feel need it.

A photo opportunity of the big clean up for media to attend was intended.

A webpage for people to go to would be available so that equipment and forms could be sent.

<http://www.twbc-apps.co.uk/lovewherewelive/index.htm>

Zone C Residents' Parking – Daniel Bech informed the Town Forum that the Zone C Residents' Parking Zone was being reviewed and the new Order would be advertised on Friday 30 May 2008.

St John's Church 150th Birthday – Daniel Bech stated that St John's Church would be 150 year old and an exhibition would be taking place on 18 May 2008.

Tourist Information Centre, The Pantiles – Grahame Bell expressed concern over the closure of the TIC Centre in the Pantiles. Firstly, the TIC would now be closed on Sundays and Bank Holidays, the most busy times of the week and secondly, the transfer of the Centre to the Gateway Centre at Five Ways. This, he felt, would damage the tourism in the town and visitors to the Pantiles would decrease.

Discussion was held upon the merits of the TIC. There were a variety of opinions, one of which was put forward by Father Ed Tomlinson whereby he suggested that we should have more touch screen Information Points around town, thus joining the town together.

Councillor Scholes assured the Town Forum that visitors to the town would not decrease and would not suffer as an affect of the transfer and closure on Sundays and Bank Holidays.

Councillor Mrs Mayhew stated that no final decision had been made. Christopher Thomas suggested that perhaps having three members of staff all week could be reduced to two while having a touch screen Information Point for self-service. This would, in effect, save money and thus give potential to keep the TIC open a further day.

Information Drums – Daniel Bech asked whether or not the Information Drums would be updated, as the map inside was completely out of date. Councillor Scholes stated that he would find this out and report back to the next meeting.

Direct train to Gatwick – Jenny Blackburn stated that the direct train from Tunbridge Wells to Gatwick was being cancelled. The Town Forum was in unanimous agreement that this would be missed service – advertisement of the service would probably have saved it as more people would have known of its existence. It was agreed that Christopher Thomas would submit a letter of objection to Southern Railways and he would copy this to the Courier and Kent Messenger.

Closure of Crescent Road Toilets – The Town Forum raised concern over the possible closure of the Crescent Road Toilets. Councillor Scholes informed them that the Council was gathering information at present and no decision had yet been made with regard to the closure of the toilets.

Network Rail – Christopher Thomas informed the Town Forum that he had received a response from Network Rail regarding the old Cinema Site and renovation of the railway station. He agreed to send Samantha Timms a scanned copy of the letter to enable circulation to all Town Forum members.

Actions:

- 10.1 That Christopher Thomas submits a letter of objection to Southern Railways and that he contacts the Courier and Kent Messenger regarding the closure of the Gatwick train service. Completed
- 10.2 That Councillor Scholes reports back with regards to the updating of the Information Drums.
- 10.3 That Christopher Thomas emails Samantha Timms a scanned copy of the Network Rail letter to enable distribution to all Forum Members. Completed.

11. Dates of next meetings of the Town Forum – The Town Forum agreed to the following:

- Thursday 19 June 2008 at 7.30pm – Environmental Issues Workshop
- in attendance, Sheila Wheeler, TWBC Chief Executive
- Thursday 31 July 2008 at 7.30pm
- Thursday 25 September 2008 at 7.30pm
- Thursday 30 October 2008 at 7.30pm – NHS Trust in attendance, Linda Summerfield
- Thursday 27 November 2008 at 7.30pm – Ailsa Paton of Town & Country Housing Association
- to give a talk on Domestic Abuse. (timing TBA)
- Thursday 18 December 2008 at 7.30pm
(3rd week in December due to last week being Christmas day)

Any reports/short papers to be emailed/posted to Samantha Timms by no later than 10am on Monday 14 July 2008 for Town Forum 31 July 2008

12. The meeting closed at: 9.35pm**NOTE:**

Father Ed Tomlinson, St Barnabas, arrived at the meeting during minute 7 (7.45pm).
Parish Councillors Crookall and Randall both left the meeting after consideration of minute 7 (8.09pm).
Councillor Scholes arrived at the meeting during minute 8 (8.20pm).
Councillor Williams arrived at the meeting during minute 9 (8.25pm).
Councillors Mayall and Miller both arrived at the meeting during minute 9 (8.45pm).
Councillors Mrs Mayhew and Woodward also arrived at the meeting during minute 9 (8.48pm).
(Councillors arrived late due to there being a Conservative meeting on the same evening.)