



ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS TOWN FORUM

Minutes of Meeting, Thursday 20 July 2006

1. Present:

Jenny Alexander (Rusthall Village Association), Daniel Bech (Telephone House Neighbours' Association), Jenny Blackburn (Rusthall Village Association), June Bridgeman (Soroptimist International of Tunbridge Wells and District), John Cunningham (Royal Tunbridge Wells Civic Society), Betsey Dix (Calverley Park Crescent Freeholders' Association), Michael Doyle (Hawkenbury Village Association), Karen Fisher (Grove Hill Road Residents' Association), John Goodfellow (Banner Farm Residents' Association), Bruce Goodwin (Grove Hill Road Residents' Association), Matt Goodwin (Chairman of the Town Forum/Tunbridge Wells Village Residents' Association), Michael Hicks (Inner London Road Residents' Association), John Higgs (Hanover and Rock Villa Road Residents' Association), Simon Joyce (Calverley Park Crescent Freeholders' Association), Michael Larsen (Friends of the Grove Residents' Association), Caroline McCann (Beulah Road Residents' Association), Ian Naismith (Hanover and Rock Villa Residents' Association), Altan Omer (Benhall Mill Road Land Association), P Scott (Telephone House Neighbours' Association), Fred Sirman (Warwick Park Area Residents' Association), Angela Swain (Culverden Square Residents' Association), Chris Thomas (The Goodwins No.1/No.2 Residents' Companies), Gill Twells (Royal Tunbridge Wells Civic Society), Christopher Weller (Calverley Park Association), David Webster (Clarence Road Users' Association) - Cllr Leonard Price (Culverden), Cllr James Scholes (Park)

2. In Attendance:

Cllr Roy Bullock (TWBC Cabinet), Behdad Haratbar (Head of Highways and Planning, Kent County Council), Wendy Newton-May (Senior Committee Administrator, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council).

3. Apologies:

Richard Gould (Calverley Park Crescent), George Lawson (Friends of the Commons), Keith Perry (Bennall Mill Road Land Association), Grace Thomsett-Hill (Clarence Road Users' Association), Roger Walsh (Upper Stone Street Residents' Association), Mary Wardrop (Hawkenbury Village Association) - Cllr Adrian Ekins-Daukes (Culverden), Cllr Mrs Catherine Mayhew (Park), Cllr David Wakefield (Culverden), Cllr Frank Williams (Sherwood).

4. HIGHLIGHTS FROM THIS MEETING

Behdad Haratbar, Head of Transport and Planning from Kent County Council (KCC) addressed the Town Forum, providing an overview of KCC responsibilities and advising of contact points and agreeing to establish an ongoing liaison with the Town Forum. Matt Goodwin to fix a meeting with Mr Haratbar.

The Town Forum agreed to appoint a single Press Contact to handle all the media on behalf of the Town Forum; one or more candidates for the role would be proposed at the next meeting.

The Town Forum submitted formal comments to TWBC in respect of the Community Plan including a number of specific issues, particularly in respect of the environment, on which TWBC could and should take the initiative.

5. Minutes of Last Meeting Dated 22 June 2006

The minutes were agreed.

6. Matters arising from the Meeting dated 22 June 2006

The following action identified in the minutes would be carried forward as a future item:

- Jenny Blackburn to formally notify the authorities about disturbances and rubbish on the Common and to ask whether the Alcohol Free Zone might be extended.

Councillor Scholes advised that he had received many comments of support for the museum and library redevelopment. It was noted that there was still time for any further comments to be submitted.

Matt Goodwin reported that representations had been submitted to the TWBC Licensing Committee in respect of the application by SpaFest for three days of activities on the Lower Cricket Ground; a copy of the representations were included with the Agenda and were available on the Town Forum's website.

Dr Daniel Bech advised that formal comments had been submitted on behalf of the Town Forum to TWBC on the Tunbridge Wells Borough Community plan; the comments could be seen on the Town Forum's website.

June Bridgeman informed the Town Forum that she had contacted the relevant Local Government departments to find out further information regarding local government reorganisation. She had just been advised that there were no plans to force local authorities to move towards a unitary system. However, suggestions for ways of improving the current two-tier system were invited and June requested that any comments on this issue be put in writing to her and she would respond on the Town Forum's behalf.

7. TWBC Update

Councillor Bullock reported on the following items:

- TWBC New Directors – had now been appointed and would be starting on 11 September 2006.
- TWBC New Heads of Service – had been appointed and would be commencing employment as follows:
 - Head of Community and Corporate Planning - Nazeya Hussain on 14 August
 - Head of Financial and Property Services - Sean Clark on 18 September
 - Head of Planning Services - Jim Kehoe on 16 October
- Linda Mortley, Community Safety Officer - would be leaving her post at the Council on 18 August 2006.
- Alcohol Control Zone – The Safe Town Partnership had met with the police regarding the Zone and, although some displacement had occurred, more dispersion seemed evident. The impact around the clock area was very satisfactory. A review would take place in the next six months and the Alcohol Control Zone may be expanded.
- Pub Watch/Safe Town Partnership and the Retailers Scheme had the power to exclude individuals in retail areas, as well as pubs, where there was a strong possibility of them committing a crime. Eighteen people had been excluded in the town, whilst eleven had been excluded from pubs. It was anticipated that the Safe Town Partnership would extend to incorporate the Knights Park area.

Councillor Scholes advised that a new contract had been awarded for the operation of the Borough's Leisure Centres.

ACTION:

A revised TWBC Management Structure chart showing the new staffing changes to be circulated to all members of the Town Forum.

8. Presentation on Highways/Transport Issues – Behdad Haratbar, Head of Highways and Planning, KCC

Behdad Haratbar provided the Town Forum with a detailed overview of his department's responsibilities and clarified the structure of the different teams. He advised that the Contact Centre (tel: 084580 247 0800) was responsible for taking the day to day reporting calls and it provided a link to the Liaison Officers. It was noted that Kate Brown was the Liaison Officer for the Tunbridge Wells area. Mr Haratbar assured the Town Forum that the Centre was staffed by KCC employees who were all fully trained. It was suggested that the Town Forum appoint a Champion for highways issues and that arrangements be made for regular liaison with KCC to ensure that Town issues were visible. Matt Goodwin would meet with Mr Haratbar to discuss this further and volunteers to this role would be sought at the next meeting.

Concern was expressed regarding some utility companies who left roads and pavements in an unacceptable condition. Mr Haratbar advised that there was a standard that these companies must adhere to; however, his department did not have sufficient resources to inspect all of these instances. It was suggested that Town Forum members be given the criteria for contractors who dug up the roads so that they can report if any company does not repair them to an acceptable standard.

ACTIONS:

- Mr Haratbar to email his presentation slides to Mike McGahey, who would forward this on to the members of the Town Forum.
- Highway Champion to be appointed and communicate with the Highways Liaison Officer on a regular basis.
- Mr Haratbar to provide contractors' criteria to Mike McGahey by e-mail.

9. RTW Town Forum's Response to SpaFest

Although the Town Forum had welcomed the SpaFest events as an initiative, many residents from the area, and some of the statutory services, had been opposed to the proposals. The Town Forum itself had submitted representations, in respect particularly of safety and nuisance issues, for the events planned for the Lower Cricket Ground and these were available on the Town Forum's website. There was considerable concern that both Spafest and the media were misrepresenting the reasons for the failure of the events to go ahead as planned and, in part for these reasons, it was agreed that the Town Forum should appoint a Press Contact to deal with the media and assist in ensuring that Town Forum should be seen as a positive voice for the residents of Tunbridge Wells.

It was also agreed that both TWBC and the Commons Conservators should be pressed to develop an Open Spaces Policy so that clear guidance could be available to would be events' organisers and to ensure that this disorganised situation should not recur in the future. Matt Goodwin to contact Steve Budden at the Commons Conservators to arrange better correspondence between them and the Town Forum and to cross copy agendas and minutes.

ACTIONS:

- TWBC to be pressed to develop formal Open Spaces Policy and to put a draft to the Town Forum for comment.
- Matt Goodwin to contact Steve Budden.

10. Feedback Reports

No feedback reports were given.

11. Short Announcements

Councillor Price advised that consultation was due to take place regarding the TWBC Hackney Carriage and Taxi Policy.

Matt Goodwin informed the Town Forum that he had met with Sheila Wheeler, TWBC Chief Executive, and she had been very supportive of the Town Forum's work and had agreed to supply resources to clerk future meetings of the Town Forum, as well as provide accommodation. A more detailed report will be provided at the next meeting

12. Dates of Future Meetings:

Thursday 24 August 2006
Thursday 28 September 2006
Thursday 26 October 2006
Thursday 23 November 2006
Thursday 21 December 2006