



ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS TOWN FORUM

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 24th February 2011 at 6:30pm in the Town Hall

Attendees

Katharina Mahler-Bech; Cllr Catherine Mayhew; Cllr Peter Bulman; Mary Wardrop; Janina Bas Pendry; June Bridgeman; Anne Stobo; Anne Forster; Dorothea Holman; Michael Holman; Chris Thomas; Peter Perry; Betsy Dix; Altan Omer; Matt Goodwin; Jane Fenwick; Cllr Peter Crawford (who chaired the meeting); Lorna Blackmore; Cllr Brian Ransley; Michael Doyle; John Cunningham; Chris Morris; Philip Whitbourn; George Lawson; David Wakefield; Kate Sergeant; John Goodfellow; Alan Bullion and Robert Hardy from TWBC who took these notes.
There were a number of observers present whose names were not recorded, plus Mary Harris from the Kent & Sussex Courier.

Apologies

John Forster, Maggie Fraser and the following Cllrs – Jukes, Scholes, Stanyer, Mrs Moore, Basu, Poile, Chapelard, Neve and Price.

The order of the printed agenda was altered with the agreement of the meeting to take the presentation from Mr Paul Taylor (TWBC's Director of Change & Communities) with regard to the Assembly Hall Theatre as the first item and then to take as the second item the discussion of the draft constitution.

Item 1 Assembly Hall Theatre

Mr Taylor's presentation is available from the Town Forum website. He was thanked for an interesting and informative presentation and in the short discussion which followed the following points were made or questions asked -

- A copy of the figures for attendances (and the percentage capacity) at shows for the 3 years to March 2010 was requested (it will be attached to these notes when they are circulated and posted on the Town Forum website).
- The comparative figures for additional spend on site between London theatres and the AHT were £53 and £7.
- The majority of shows are booked for one night only
- What more could be done to improve the flexibility of the use of the current space? Mr Taylor expressed a personal view that the current 'footprint' of the building was an insurmountable obstacle to greater flexibility.
- Mr Taylor referred to the Shellard Formula developed by the University of Sheffield to estimate the local economic benefit of a theatre. Questions were asked about the basis of the formula and more information can be found at <http://www.audiencesuk.org/data-and-resources/jargonbuster/E/economic-impact?page=1>
- It was suggested that AHT could become a successful conference venue
- Mr Taylor was asked if the outsourcing of the management of AHT had been considered and he confirmed that it had and was kept under regular review as an option for the future.

Item 2 Draft Constitution

Matt Goodwin, as chairman of the Working Group which had drawn up the constitution, introduced the discussion and copies of his summary note were available in hard copy to attendees and a further copy is attached to these notes (Appendix 1)

At the same time all attendees were supplied with a further hard copy of a note containing changes to the draft constitution proposed by John Goodfellow and circulated by email in advance of the meeting.

The discussion proceeded section by section through the draft circulated with the agenda allowing a wide range of comments to be aired and a consensus view taken of proposals. The proposed changes are included in the attached re-draft of the constitution (Appendix 2)

It was separately propose and agreed that once the constitution is adopted, officer holders should be allowed to serve for 18 months - until the AGM proposed for October 2012.

It was agreed that the draft constitution should be adopted, subject to the changes agreed at the meeting. This was formally proposed by Michael Doyle, seconded by Philip Whitbourn and supported by a show of hands with no votes against.

In the course of the discussion, members were reminded that the Forum was formed to provide a voice for the unparished areas and in the absence of a Town Council for Royal Tunbridge Wells. In the light of the establishment of an urban parish for Rusthall, it was suggested and agreed that the Forum should work with local newspapers to seek the views of local people on whether they wanted to revisit the urban parishes/Town Council option or were happy to continue to be represented through the Forum.

The meeting closed at 8:35pm

Appendix 1 to the notes of the 24 February 2011 meeting of the RTW Town Forum

Summary of Working Group Proposals

- that the purpose of the town forum should be made totally explicit - we propose that the clear and overriding purpose of the Forum is to ensure that the views of residents in the unparished area are conveyed to TWBC and Borough Councillors.
- that the role of the Chair is too large for any one individual without more comprehensive and formal support and we therefore propose a management committee of three with the right to co-opt a further three, non voting, members.
- that the status quo of the current membership should be maintained and therefore that all members at October 2010 should continue as members.
- that nevertheless it is very clear that the principal purpose of the Forum is to enfranchise residents of the unparished area and therefore that any voluntary or not for profit organisations wishing to become members after October 2010 should clearly demonstrate either majority membership by unparished area residents or that their objective is to work in the interests of residents of the unparished area.
- that one vote per member organisation should be formalised and that there should be a single named representative per member organisation; we additionally propose some detailed formalisation of the election process.
- that a draft constitution encapsulating all of these various recommendations should be circulated prior to the January 2011 meeting and should be debated at the February 2011 meeting.

Furthermore the working group also propose that:

1. the minutes from the October 2010 meeting should be amended to read "it is acknowledged that the October 2010 election was an unsatisfactory process but the shortcomings have been addressed in the proposed constitution which is to be considered at the February 2011 meeting".
2. the various letters and e-mails that have been received by the stood down Chair and the secretary of the Forum raising concerns about the election process should be considered to have been addressed in the proposed constitution and that no further reply should be made.
3. an election for Chair and two Deputy Chairs be held in March 2011.

Proposed Constitution of the Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum

Name

Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum

Town Forum's office

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, Town Hall, Royal Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN1 1RS

1. Purpose of the Town Forum

To enable residents of the unparished area of the Borough of Tunbridge Wells (the Town) to play an active role in localism and shaping the future of the Town, ensuring that their views on Town matters are forcefully conveyed to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) and to Borough Councillors for the unparished areas.

Forum members will normally endeavour to achieve this by:

- assessing issues within, or affecting, the unparished area of Royal Tunbridge Wells, and working with other agencies as appropriate to initiate and develop both strategic and operational proposals and recommendations for consideration by, and response from, TWBC, Kent County Council or any other relevant bodies;
- reviewing and responding to consultative documents and proposals from TWBC, or from any other body, that will or may affect the unparished area;
- contributing to the development and implementation of the Sustainable Community Plan as it relates to residents in Royal Tunbridge Wells and working with and informing the Local Strategic Partnership;
- encouraging the establishment of new residents associations in the unparished area;
- encouraging member organisations to contribute their own views additionally outside the Forum process to relevant consultation processes; and by
- working for the benefit of the residents of the unparished area in any way that it sees fit.

Support from Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

Where necessary, the Town Forum's proposals and recommendations will be submitted by the Chairman to representative(s) of TWBC, KCC or any other body on behalf of the Forum. In such cases Councillor Members will be responsible for ensuring that the Town Forum is kept informed both of progress and of opportunities to attend Council and/or other relevant meetings.

2. Membership of the Town Forum

Core membership of the Forum will comprise:

- councillors representing constituents in the unparished area of the Borough of Tunbridge Wells;
- Residents' Associations in the unparished area of the Borough of Tunbridge Wells;
- other voluntary or not for profit organisations representing residents' interests which are open to residents of the unparished area but subject to the following conditions:

Any voluntary or not for profit organisation that is able to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Chair either that the majority of its membership comprises residents of the unparished area or that one of its main purposes is to work in the interests of residents of the Town may apply to become a member of the Forum.

Alternatively, the Town Forum may, by majority vote, allow organisations which cannot satisfy these criteria to become members of the Town Forum under whatever conditions may be considered by the Forum to be desirable.

Residents' associations or other organisations wishing to be considered for membership should apply in the first place to the Town Forum Chair or Secretary. Applications must include a statement giving reasons for wishing to join and a statement of the aims and objectives of the organisation, together with an indication of the size and residence status of their membership.

Representatives of Town Forum member organisations

Member organisations must nominate ONE named representative who is entitled to attend the Town Forum and speak on their behalf. A second named representative who is authorised to deputise in all matters for the first named representative may be nominated.

The Town Forum may co-opt individuals with particular knowledge, skills, expertise and/or interest or may invite individuals and/or organisations to attend particular meetings where appropriate to the agenda. In addition, officers of TWBC and other bodies may be asked to present material, give guidance or to respond to enquiries from the Town Forum. Neither co-optees nor invitees shall have voting rights.

The Town Forum shall be open, transparent, apolitical and accountable; it shall ensure that all interests have a voice where necessary and that hard to reach groups are appropriately represented and engaged.

Observers

On occasions other members of the organisations represented on the Town Forum may wish to attend and they are welcome to do so but must first register their presence with the Town Forum Secretary. They have no right to vote but may, at the discretion of the Chair, speak and ask a specific question.

3. Voting entitlement

Member Organisations

At General or Extraordinary General Meetings (EGM) each attending member organisation and Borough Councillor shall be entitled to a single vote.

In order to secure entitlement to a vote at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) for executive positions or on membership proposals which have been brought to the Forum at a General or Extraordinary General Meeting it is an absolute requirement that one or other named representative of the member organisation should have attended a combined total of at least four meetings in the previous twelve months. The minutes of the Forum's meetings will be taken as conclusive evidence of this attendance.

Councillor members

Councillor members are each entitled to a single vote at both General and Extraordinary General Meetings but to be eligible to vote at the AGM they must have attended at least four meetings in the previous twelve months. The minutes of the Forum's meetings will be taken as conclusive evidence of this attendance.

4. Role and reporting responsibilities of Town Forum Members

Representatives of Town Forum member associations are expected to:

- represent the views of their ward/association or membership organisation and to report back to them any developments and initiatives of the Town Forum; and
- identify ways in which their members can contribute to the work of the Town Forum.

In order to ensure compliance with the above reporting responsibilities representatives of Forum members shall:

- provide a statement of the aims of their member organisations and re-confirm annually;
- demonstrate communication between themselves and the members of their organisations – this may be by copies of newsletters, or of meeting minutes, or any other mechanism appropriate to each member organisation; and
- submit to the Town Forum Secretary a copy of the Annual General Meeting minutes, or similar, at which the named Forum representative(s) was/were authorised to attend the Forum on behalf of the membership organisation.

A list of member organisations, representatives and officers of the Town Forum and its sub-groups is available from the secretary and is published on the Town Forum's website, www.townforum.org.uk.

5. Management of the Town Forum.

The Town Forum shall be administered by a Management Committee of three officers elected at the AGM. The Officers of the Management Committee shall be:

- the Chair, who must be a named representative of a member residents' association; and
- two Deputy Chairs, at least one of whom must be a named representative from a member residents' association.

The Chair and both Deputy Chairs shall be elected annually and will only be eligible to serve a maximum of two terms in any one office unless a majority of eligible voting Forum members agree to allow a further term of office. It is not intended that a Deputy Chair will automatically become Chair.

The Management Committee may co-opt onto the Committee (for up to one year in an advisory and non-voting capacity) up to three other members of the Town Forum whom it considers will help to fulfil the aims of, or have some valuable expertise to contribute to, the Town Forum.

The Management Committee shall meet at least four times a year and at least three members, including the Chair and one deputy must be present in order that a Management Committee meeting may take place. Voting at Management Committee meetings shall be by a show of hands, and if there is a tied vote then the Chair shall have a second vote.

The Management Committee shall have the power, by majority vote, to recommend the removal of any member of the Committee for good and proper reason. The reasons for the removal shall be given to Town Forum members at the next available Town Forum meeting.

6. Duties of the Officers

The duties of the Chair shall be to:

- chair meetings of the Management Committee and the Town Forum;
- represent the Town Forum at functions/meetings to which the Town Forum has been invited;
- act as the spokesperson of the Town Forum ensuring that the majority view, or range of views, are made clear and explicit, also in relations with the press and other media; and
- coordinate the output of the Town Forum as necessary.

The duties of the two Deputy Chairs will be to:

- assist the Chair in his/her duties and to stand in for the Chair as necessary;
- facilitate agreement on any follow up required and undertake necessary actions; this might include communications, proposals to other bodies, preparing bids for funding, training requirements, and other practical activities;
- deputise as required by the Chair as spokesperson for the Town Forum.

In addition, where one is not provided for this purpose by TWBC, the Chair of the Forum will appoint a Secretary who will not be a part of the Management Committee. The duties of the Secretary shall be to:

- keep a list of member organisations, their two nominated representatives and their attendance record;
- prepare, in consultation with the Chair, the agenda for meetings of the Committee and the Forum;
- take and keep minutes of all meetings;
- collect and circulate relevant information within the Forum;
- provide relevant information for uploading to the Town Forum website; and
- facilitate communication with relevant TWBC officers.

7. Meetings of the Town Forum

Annual General Meeting

The Forum shall hold an Annual General Meeting (AGM), normally in October.

All member organisations shall be given at least fourteen days notice of the AGM and shall be entitled to attend and vote in accordance with the section in the Constitution above entitled **Voting entitlement**. Notice of AGM and EGM will include notice of motions and will be provided either in writing or electronically according to the preferred means of the individual representative.

The business of the AGM shall include:

- receiving a report from the Chair on the Town Forum's activities over the year;
- electing a Management Committee; and
- considering any other matters including normal agenda items as may be required.

At least one third of nominated representatives who satisfy the voting entitlement requirements must be present for the Annual General Meeting, or any other General or Extraordinary General Meeting, to take place.

Election process

Election of the management committee at the AGM shall be by secret ballot; the elections shall be chaired by a member of the Management Committee who is not standing for an executive position. If no such person is available, then by majority vote of eligible voting representatives an Election Chair will be agreed from among Town Forum members. In the event of a tied vote the Election Chair shall have the casting vote.

Nominations for the Chair and Deputy Chair positions must be submitted to the Secretary at least two weeks before the AGM and must be accompanied by a short statement setting out what they want to achieve during their period of office. The statement will be circulated to Forum members prior to the AGM along with the agenda.

Candidates for the officer posts will be announced at the AGM and shall be formally proposed and seconded at the AGM by representatives entitled to vote in the election. Each candidate will be asked to present a short overview of their objectives for their putative term of office.

General Meetings

There shall be nine general meetings, excluding the AGM, each year; all members shall be entitled to attend and vote in accordance with the section in the Constitution above entitled **Voting entitlement**.

Extraordinary General Meeting

An Extraordinary General Meeting may be called by the Management Committee or by a minimum of fifteen Forum member organisations to discuss an urgent matter. The Secretary shall give all member organisations fourteen days notice of any Extraordinary General Meeting together with notice of the business to be discussed. All members shall be entitled to attend and vote in accordance with the section in the Constitution above entitled **Voting entitlement**.

8. Servicing of the Town Forum

TWBC shall provide administrative support and make facilities available to the Town Forum for meetings.

9. Publicity

Dates, agendas and minutes of meetings shall be posted on the Town Forum website

10. Timing and Location of Town Forum Meetings

The Town Forum will endeavour to ensure that meetings are held at a convenient time and in a place easily accessible for its members.

11. Changes to the Constitution.

Changes to this Constitution can only be made at an AGM or EGM and must be agreed by at least two-thirds of those eligible representatives present.

12. Dissolution.

The Forum may be wound up at any time if agreed by two-thirds of those eligible representatives present and voting at any AGM or EGM.