



ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS TOWN FORUM

Minutes of Meeting dated Thursday 24 May 2007

1. Present:

Daniel Bech (The Telephone House Neighbours Association), Lorna Blackmore (Soroptomists), Graham Bradley (Rock Villa & Hanover Rd Residents Association), Peter Connell (The Telephone House Neighbours Association), John Cunningham (RTW Civic Society), Betsey Dix (Calverley Park Crescent Freeholders' Association), Michael Doyle (Hawkenbury Village Association), Richard Gould (Calverley Park Crescent Freeholders Association), Michael Hicks (Inner London Road Residents Association), John Higgs (Rock Villa and Hanover Road Residents Association), Michael Larsen (Friends of the Grove), Angela Phillips (Soroptomists), Kate Sergeant (Clarence Road Users Association), Christopher Thomas (Vice-chairman – in the chair), Alastair Tod (RTW Civic Society), Father Ed Tomlinson (St Barnabas Parish), Gill Twells (RTW Civic Society), Philip Whitbourn (Beulah Road Residents Association), Mary Wardrop (Hawkenbury Village Association),

In attendance: Cllrs Bullock, Bulman, Crawford, Mrs Mayhew, Miller, Scholes, Wakefield.

Invited Guest: Nicholas Ide (Telephone House Neighbours' Association).

2. Apologies:

Jenny Blackburn (Rusthall Village Association), June Bridgeman (Soroptomists), John Goodfellow (Banner Farm Residents Association), Matt Goodwin (Chairman – Village Residents Association), Michael Holman (TW / Wiesbaden Twinning Association), George Lawson (Friends of the Commons), Keith Perry (Benhall Mill Road Land Association) David Webster (Clarence Road Users Association). – Samantha Timms (Secretarial Services)

Christopher Thomas, as Vice-chairman in the chair

3. Membership Changes – Kate Sergeant (Clarence Road Users Association)

4. Minutes of Last Meeting Dated 19 April 2007

The minutes were agreed, subject to the following amendments:

Amendment to minute 8 'Planning Committee' – first paragraph, lines 4/5. (proposed by Philip Whitbourn)
Remove 'Transport Development Framework'.

5. Matters Arising/Actions Completed from the Meeting dated 19 April 2007

Actions outstanding from 19 April 2007 Town Forum:

- Action 5.1 – Matt Goodwin agreed to contact Janet Naim regarding the job description for the Press Officer.
- Action 5.2 – Councillor Bullock informed the Town Forum that progress was being made with the Morrison site, however it was at a sensitive stage and he could not discuss it any further. Cllr Mayhew informed members that many council departments were working together to get a quality retail outlet on the site.
- Action 5.3 – Matt Goodwin stated that he had not yet met with the other Directors and that he would circulate the dates to the Town Forum as soon as possible.
- Action 6.2 – Cllr Bullock indicated that funding would not be available at present. Michael Doyle was extremely concerned over funding and requested this matter be discussed at a Town Forum Cabinet meeting. Michael Doyle requested that a strong representation be made by the Town Forum. Christopher Thomas did confirm that this matter would be raised at a forthcoming TF Cabinet meeting. Mr Doyle also provided a draft letter for the Town Forum to present to the Council.
- Action 9.1 – That David Webster prepare a short report on the most important issues arising from Sean Clark's presentation.

Actions:

- 5.1 Matt Goodwin to contact Janet Naim regarding the job description for the Press Officer.
- 5.2 Councillor Bullock to report back to the Town Forum on any progress being made on land ownership at the Station/Morrisons.
- 5.3 Matt Goodwin to circulate the dates of his meetings with the Directors to the Town Forum as soon as possible.
- 5.4 The item be discussed at the next Town Forum Cabinet meeting.
- 5.5 That David Webster prepare a short report on the most important issues arising from Sean Clark's presentation.

Actions Completed:

- Action 5.6 – Councillor Scholes invite a TWBC Officer to attend 24 May Town Forum meeting to discuss the Tour de France route and times.
- Action 5.5 – That Jenny Blackburn submits the Town Forum's views/amendments as above in writing to the Commons Conservators.
- Action 6.1 – Ensure that public consultation papers be brought to the Town Forum's notice well before the deadline for response.
- Action 8.1 – Cllr Bullock informed members that it was very unlikely for technical reasons that the Town Forum could get a seat on the Joint Transportation Board.

After the outstanding action points were discussed.

Michael Doyle commented that this was the second time without secretarial support. The Town Forum needed to be treated with respect by TWBC and not so shabbily. It was set up, in part, to compensate for the lack of town parish committee representation and therefore needed funding.

A question was asked to Daniel Bech as to whether Sean Clark had replied with reference to business rates being paid on empty buildings i.e Cinema Site.

John Higgs asked if Gary Stevenson could clarify exactly what constitutes AN item and what the real cost of removal was as set against the cost of £25.

Actions:

- 5.6 Sean Clark to reply to Daniel Bech regarding reference to business rates being paid on empty buildings i.e. Cinema Site.
- 5.7 Gary Stevenson to clarify exactly what constitutes 'an' item and what the real cost of removal was as set against the cost of £25.

6. Report from Borough Councillors

Cllr Bullock informed members that a new Mayor had been elected. Cllr Barbara Cobbold was elected as the new Mayor. Cllr Rusbridge was elected as the new Deputy Mayor.

It was also confirmed that the three new Councillors were Cllr John Miller, Cllr Leslie Herriot and Cllr Barry Edwards.

The Town Forum congratulated all of the above. Christopher Thomas commented that it was pleasing to see Cllr Miller attending the Town Forum, but noted the lack of presence of Cllrs Herriot and Edwards.

Congratulations was given to Cllr Bullock for becoming Leader of the Council.

Cllr Bullock then gave details of a new initiative being undertaken to purchase a building in Grosvenor Road to be used as a "one stop shop" for assorted agencies to be present at. Agencies to include Housing, Highways, Environment.

Cllr Mayhew thought that later on it might involve the Police, Citizens Advice Bureau and Kent County Council. It was hoped that this would create a better interaction between the various departments and take pressure off the Town Hall from taking calls from the public whereby other departments should be.

Cllr Scholes stressed that he wanted to work closer with the Town Forum and wanted to work closely to create a safer and stronger community.

Cllr Bullock, acting as leader, confirmed that he had appointed the new cabinet.

The five Cabinet Members appointed were:

- Cllr Mrs Mayhew – Housing and Community Access
- Cllr Horwood – Corporate Services
- Cllr Scholes – Safer and Stronger Communities
- Cllr Mrs Thomas – Planning and Development
- Cllr Barrington King - Environment and Street Scene

www.townforum.org.uk/servicesstructure/twbc-councillors2007-2008.pdf

7. Tour de France Presentation

Nigel Bolton, Head of Leisure Services and Cllr Paul Barrington King gave an extremely informative presentation on the event and its history.

Nigel showed a very interesting film about the history of the Tour de France. He presented this mammoth spectacle very well and said that Kent should be proud to be able to cope with the largest free-to-view event in the world. Some countries have never had the event staged although they wanted the event.

Starting in London on the 6 July and arriving in Kent on the 8 July. Of worthy note it was advised that one could purchase a train ticket to cover the three days for £30, which would enable travel throughout Kent.

A big screen would show the whole event on the day in Dunorlan Park where parking would be provided.

As the route would be sealed off anyone who must travel should check times with him, as to when roads would be closed. A leaflet was also provided giving details of the route.

Cllr Barrington King, who it was clearly seen was a keen cyclist, then provided a most enthusiastic and informative talk about the grand drama that is the Tour de France. He said that many thanks go out to the “open hearted” French for letting the race start in London. Cllr Barrington King was very inspired by the bravery of the “leg shaven men in lycra” who will be thundering through Royal Tunbridge Wells.

The hour-long parade that precedes the cyclists would entertain the crowds and put towns and villages on the world wide map. The economy would gain a major boost from the event.

A tent in the town centre will supply free food and drink for the “great and the good”. Restaurants and Cafes would be encouraged to open early.

Two good places to gain a good view would be along St John’s road where there will be a feeding station and also Pembury Road where many would be able to stand along the long straight stretch.

Nigel Bolton was asked by Daniel Bech whether a banner advertising Tunbridge Wells Heritage Open Days could be displayed during Le Tour de France, 8 July 2007. Nigel Bolton confirmed that he would come back on this point.

Actions:

- 7.1 That Nigel Bolton confirm to Daniel Bech whether a banner advertising Tunbridge Wells Heritage Open Days - www.tunbridgewellsheritageopendays.org.uk or www.twhod.org.uk - could be displayed during Le Tour de France, 8 July 2007.

8. Reports from Committees

Planning Committee - Philip Whitbourn confirmed that the meeting to be held on the 28 June would be about the Local Development Framework and the Planning system in Tunbridge Wells. A workshop and Powerpoint presentation is organised and full attendance is requested.

www.townforum.org.uk/planning/tfplanningreport-tf240507.pdf

The committee also had in hand the response on the Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document.

Cllr Scholes confirmed that he would arrange for a Planning Officer to attend the meeting.

Actions:

- 8.1 That Cllr James Scholes invite a Planning Officer attend the Planning Committee workshop and presentation on 28 June.

Townscape and Streetscene Committee - Daniel Bech was to have a meeting with Mr Cottrill to discuss "Grot Spots". At the same time it was hoped that Daniel would congratulate Mr Cottrill for arranging the removal of graffiti, weeds and required re-painting of the Town Hall sign. It was understood that the steps would soon be made presentable.

Vision Committee - Michael Larsen was pleased to announce that he had found a Peuplade in the town on www.thetunbridgewells.com. It is organised by Sue Becwith.

Michael also raised the issue of continued funding of the Tunbridge Wells Homeopathic Hospital by West Kent P.C.T. Any interested party who wishes to make comment should contact Michael direct, unless they wish to make contact direct themselves.

Housing Committee - Mary Wardrop spoke for the committee and mentioned that there were many overlaps between this committee and others on the Town Forum.

Mary confirmed that input for the Affordable Housing SPD would be given to the Planning Committee in time for response. Christopher Thomas confirmed this action was being undertaken.

Mary put forward the recommendation of the committee that a wider view of housing be taken from outlying areas such as Sherwood and Showfields. It was a desire of the committee to liaise with as many community leaders as possible. It also wanted to ensure that a wide cross-section of the community be consulted so that the Town Forum could be seen to be truly representative.

Mary Wardrop wished to make it known that the committee valued the assistance of Cllr Mayhew and would like to thank her for the support and knowledge she has given to date.

The Committee also requested that they be able to use the 27 September 2007 for presentations/talks. There would be two speakers.

9. Any Other Business / Members' Reports

Communities and Local Government Press Release - The Chairman elected to pass over this item to ensure no overrun. The Chairman confirmed to Cllr Miller that he would be able to bring this matter up at a later meeting.

www.townforum.org.uk/press/cllrcodeconduct030507.pdf

Land opposite 8 York Road Tunbridge Wells - This action had been completed by the inclusion of documents with the agenda for the meeting.

www.townforum.org.uk/membersreports/thna-report100507-rtwtf240507.pdf

Around the Clock survey of Users' views about improving Five Ways - Angela Philips of the Sorptomists, who was speaking on behalf of June Bridgeman, gave a short summary of the contents of the paper.

www.townforum.org.uk/focusgroup/fiveways-aroundtheclock-survey-views-may2007.pdf

It was advised that many ideas could be easily implemented such as enlarging the café area, which is being maintained very well by the current owners. It was advised that if this were to happen then a certificate would be needed from the Highways Department.

Special attention should be given to the area immediately under and around the clock.

Angela confirmed that the survey had been distributed and was well received. Spare copies of this document, which is well worth reading, are available from the Sorptomists.

Cllr Bullman asked how far the millennium taxi rank had progressed. He also expressed his interest in a more pedestrian orientated town centre.

Cllr Bullock acknowledged receipt of a letter from Mr Higgs sent on behalf of the Town Forum and confirmed that he had made enquiries about the taxi rank. This was ongoing and Mr Fogul, who represents the taxi drivers, is trying to find a compromise with the Council to make the rank work.

St Barnabas Community - Father Tomlinson from St Barnabas Parish told the Town Forum that much work was being done to rebuild a community centre and start a pre-school group. However, this costs money and that they were always looking to raise monies. Previously 70% of the children at St Barnabas had no pre-school education. Following the arrival of a new Headmistress the school had been turned around and now had a waiting list of new pupils. Mr Higgs suggested that he contact Mr Gutvinder Sandes of the N.W Kent Racial Equality Council who has raised £34,000 for an event in the Calverley Grounds. He should be able to give Father Tomlinson some guidance on how to raise monies.

www.townforum.org.uk/membersreports/barnabas-townplanningreport240507.pdf

Cllr Bullock congratulated Father Tomlinson and the Headmistress for the sterling work they had achieved at St Barnabas pre-school.

Cllr Bullock made it quite clear that if anyone was negative about St Barnabas the Town Forum should be positive and should tell others to be positive and visit the venue so as to be proved wrong.

Planning White Paper - Nicholas Ide recommended that Town Forum members read the planning white paper giving particular reference to the relaxation on planning permissions of minor extensions and alterations. He also stressed they should read the area covering major developments, which raises the potential to have these developments in your area with little public consultation.

www.townforum.org.uk/consultation/planning-whitepaper_consultation210507-170807.pdf

The Town Forum would like to thank John Higgs for taking the minutes at such short notice and would ask for patience should aspects of these minutes need amending.

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

- Thursday 28 June 2007 at 7.30pm – Planning Committee Education Workshop relating to the processes of the Local Development Framework.
- Thursday 26 July at 7.30pm – Robert Cottrill, Director of Planning Development in attendance
- Thursday 27 September at 7.30pm – Housing Committee presentation/talks. Two guest speakers
- Thursday 25 October at 7.30pm
- Thursday 29 November at 7.30pm

26 July 2007 Town Forum - Any reports/short papers to be e-mailed/posted to Samantha Timms no later than 10am on Thursday 12 July 2007.