



Thursday 25 October 2012

Attended: Sally Balcon, David Barnett (sub), Cllr Ronen Basu, Lorna Blackmore, Stephen Bowser (sub), June Bridgeman, John Cunningham, Betsey Dix, Michael Doyle, Jane Fenwick, John Forster, Maggie Fraser, Dorothea Holman, Michael Holman, Sue Kaner, George Lawson, Katharina Mahler-Bech, Cllr Mrs Mayhew, David Morris, Marguerita Morton, Altan Omer, Peter Perry, Cllr Len Price, Kate Sergeant, Anne Stobo, David Wakefield (Chairman), Mary Wardrop, Margaret Watts, David Webster and Philip Whitbourn (sub)

TWBC officers present: Jane Clarke (Local Democracy Officer) and Mike McGeary (Democratic Services Officer)

72. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were reported from: Helen Featherstone, Léonie Harrington, Jim Kedge, Angela Phillips, Chris Wigley and Councillors Backhouse, Bulman, Derrick, Poile, Scott and Williams.

73. DECLARATIONS OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The following declarations of substitute attendance were made: Stephen Bowser for Jenina Pendry; David Barnett for J Paul Lambert; and Philip Whitbourn for Chris Morris.

74. MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

Margaret Watts was welcomed to her first meeting of the Town Forum, following her recent appointment as a replacement representative for the Citizens' Advice Bureau.

75. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Democratic Services Officer advised that, following representations from Christopher Thomas, the following correction was proposed to minute 57 of the notes for the 27 September meeting:

Instead of "Christopher Thomas had withdrawn the Woodbury Close Residents' Association from membership" amend to "Christopher Thomas had submitted the withdrawal of the Woodbury Close Residents' Association, following a decision made by the directors of that group".

RESOLVED – That, with the above amendment, the minutes of the meeting held on 27 September 2012 be agreed.

76. ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

27 September 2012

60 Localisation of council tax support

DW The Chairman and Cllr Bob Backhouse to prepare a response to TWBC's consultation on this issue, taking account of the views expressed at the meeting.
The Chairman confirmed that he and Cllr Bob Backhouse had met and prepared a response to the consultation on this topic; he read out some of the key concerns set out in the letter which had been prepared. The Democratic Services Officer advised that this had been submitted to TWBC, adding that a copy of the response had also been posted on the Town Forum website by Katharina Mahler-Bech.

63 Preparations for the AGM

MM Mike McGeary to contact all Town Forum members, to set out the procedure and deadline for nominations to become Chairman and Deputy Chairmen of the Forum.

The Democratic Services Officer confirmed that this had been carried out.

65(h) The cinema site

MM Mike McGeary would investigate and report back (on the cinema site progress).

The Democratic Services Officer advised that he had spoken to the Director of Regeneration and Sustainability, who advised that, while discussions were still being held with the developer/owner of the site, there were no firm plans on progress to report.

65(c) Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Tunbridge Wells as a cultural centre

Michael Holman enquired about progress with this work, particularly whether the above Committee, chaired by Cllr Mrs Catherine Mayhew, had arranged for key officers from Canterbury City Council to speak at her next meeting. He reminded Forum members that it was only when Canterbury had appointed an officer to address the lack of co-ordination in cultural matters that significant achievements had been made. Over a period of 10 years, however, more than £30m of Heritage Lottery Fund money had been raised, enabling the Marlowe Theatre to be re-built and the Museum to be completely renovated.

Cllr Mrs Mayhew advised that she would be seeking the approval of her Committee members at their 31 October meeting to invite Canterbury officers, adding that she was keen to see TWBC establish its cultural vision. The Chairman of the Town Forum reiterated the willingness of the Forum to engage fully in the establishment of a Cultural Strategy for the Borough, adding that TWBC might like to consider appointing a 'culture champion' as part of the next stage.

Stephen Bowser enquired why Canterbury was seen as the model to emulate. Cllr Mrs Mayhew advised that it was not TWBC's intention to copy what Canterbury had done and added that the vision which was right for Tunbridge Wells might be quite different; what was important, she stressed, was that political support for that cultural vision must be built up and firmly established.

65(e) Museum lift

Anne Stobo enquired about progress with the provision of a lift in the Museum. The Chairman reiterated his belief that contracts would be signed shortly, with implementation before the year-end. June Bridgeman added that she understood that, once the lift had been installed, the Library would reinstate space for the posting of public notices. The Chairman confirmed that he was continuing to monitor this issue, through discussion with the Library Manager.

77. WORKING GROUPS

At this juncture, the Chairman asked the membership to break up into the Town Forum's newly-established working groups, with each member encouraged to become actively involved in at least one such group.

To help each working group, a list of TWBC consultation issues had been prepared which it was hoped would provide the basis of each group's work programme over the coming six month period.

After each working group had had the opportunity to discuss its possible work programme, the Chairman of each (or the co-ordinator for the evening) reported back as follows:

Finance and Other Issues Working Group (Chairman: David Wakefield) – would examine TWBC's (a) draft Strategic Plan and (b) Budget, with the intention of reporting back on recommended responses to each at the full Town Forum meeting on 10 January.

Planning and Development Strategy Working Group (Chairman: Michael Doyle) – planned to attend the Cabinet Advisory Board and subsequent Cabinet meetings when the issues of (a) the Local Plan and (b) the Community Infrastructure Levy were being discussed, in order to prepare a consultation response in January.

Leisure, Culture and Tourism Working Group (Chairman: June Bridgeman) – planned to meet on 6 November and , before then, undertake discussions with relevant officers and Cabinet portfolio-holders, in order to gain a full understanding of the background issues.

Traffic Strategy Working Group (Co-ordinator for the evening: Jane Fenwick) – recognised that the first task was to respond to the draft Transport Strategy consultation expected in December and the existing 'Getting Round Tunbridge Wells' report and the Town Plan Panel report could be starting points for this. The group itemised key issues affecting the town, including: co-ordination of roadworks; traffic speed concerns; staggering school times; the ineffectiveness of the Joint Transportation Board; long term strategic thinking; sponsored roundabouts; etc. The intention was to meet to 'scope' the work, within the following two weeks.

Water in the Wells Working Group (Chairman: Michael Holman) – a well-established and already active working group, Michael Holman remarked how the activities of all of the working groups overlapped. This working group was at the stage of identifying the main areas in the town which lent themselves best to a water feature installation. Discussions were continuing with TWBC officers as well as with others, in order to establish the right structure for fund-raising and ensuring continuing maintenance costs were also covered. The next meeting, Michael added, would take place on 1 November.

The Democratic Services Officer undertook to contact those Town Forum members unable to attend the meeting, to invite others to join in the work of each group.

78. DATE OF NEXT MEETING: Thursday 10 January 2013, at 6.30pm.

The meeting concluded at 8.10pm.