



ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS TOWN FORUM

Minutes of Meeting dated Thursday 29 January 2009

1. Present:

Daniel Bech (Telephone House Neighbours' Association), Jennifer Blackburn (Rusthall Village Association), Michael Doyle (Hawkenbury Village Association), John Goodfellow (Banner Farm Residents' Association), Matt Goodwin (Village Residents' Association), John Higgs (Hanover & Rock Villa Residents' Association), Michael Holman (Tunbridge Wells Twinning and Friendship Association), Ian Naismith (Hanover & Rock Villa Residents' Association), Altan Omer (Benhall Mill Road Land Association), Keith Perry (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), Alastair Tod (RTW Civic Society), Mary Wardrop (Hawkenbury Village Association) David Webster (Clarence Road Users' Association) and Philip Whitbourn (Beulah Road Residents' Association).
Councillors: Ronan Basu (Culverden), Peter Crawford (Broadwater), Mrs Catherine Mayhew (Park), John Miller (Culverden), Mrs Tracy Moore (St John's) and Chris Woodward (St John's).

Others in attendance: Sean Clark, Head of Finance and Governance; Samantha Timms.

2. Apologies:

George Carey (Tunbridge Wells Access Group), John Cunningham (RTW Civic Society), Betsey Dix (Calverley Park Crescent Freeholders' Association), Michael Larsen (Friends of The Grove), George Lawson (Inner London Road Residents' Association) and Councillor Williams.

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

3. Membership Changes

None received.

4. Minutes of Last Meeting Dated 27 November 2008

The minutes were agreed.

Matters Arising: None.

5. Action Outstanding from the Meeting dated 31 July 2008

ON GOING ACTION

- 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 Forum's website so that all members could know what was happening. This is particularly important so as to avoid duplication of activity and to show a single voice for Councillors to deal with.

- 10.1 That Christopher Thomas write a letter to the Clerk of the Common, Rodney Stone, to seek clarification on the Private Parking Contract.

Update - Christopher Thomas stated that he had researched the car parking contract and had been advised the income from this arrangement was put back into the Commons. If this income was not coming then the Commons precept would have been higher. Christopher therefore suggested that the Town Forum invite the Commons Conservators to attend a future meeting to explain what the Commons Conservators do and to make the Town Forum aware of their expenses and figures. The Town Forum agreed this action.

10.1.1 That Christopher Thomas invite the Commons Conservators to a future meeting of the Town Forum to make awareness of their work and expenses.

Actions Completed from 27 November 2008 meeting:

- 9.1 That a small working party be convened to study the plans and to draft observations on the scheme for the former petrol station on London Road.
- 9.2 That a working party be convened to consider the whole Fiveways area.
- 9.3 That Town Forum members inform of any suitable and available Park and Ride sites.
- 9.4 That any other Town Forum member having concerns about the inappropriate use of black tarmac by Kent Highway Services to replace pavements or elsewhere to contact John Goodfellow or the Town Forum.

6. Reports from Borough Councillors

Councillor Mrs Mayhew – Informed the Town Forum that there should be no reason that the Cinema Site would not go ahead. Discussions were still taking place with the Planning Department and applicants, together with discussions relating to the two alleged Rights of Way.

The Town Forum was informed that the public conveniences report which was submitted to Cabinet in December 2008 had been called-in by the Council's Scrutiny Committee and their recommendations and comments would be submitted to Cabinet on 5 February.

Parish Councils wished to have the rural conveniences remained open for a further year to allow more consultation to take place. Cabinet would make a decision on 5 February.

The matter relating to the closure of the Tourist Information Centre was also being discussed at Cabinet at their meeting on 5 February. The Scrutiny Committee had submitted a report together with recommendations to Cabinet. Cabinet would discuss those recommendations on 5 February.

Councillor Mrs Mayhew stated that a report has been submitted to Cabinet relating to the demolishing of Calverley Grounds bandstand. The report included the Civic Society's and the Town Forum's views. A decision would be made on 5 February.

Finally, Councillor Mrs Mayhew informed the Town Forum that she and the other two Park Ward Members would be holding Park Ward Councillor Surgeries for residents with issues to raise, concerns to address or just needing a bit of advice. The Surgeries would be held on the last Thursday of every month (except August and December) from 6.30pm until 7.30pm. Please spread the word through your associations.

Councillor Mrs Moore – Stated that Terry Hughes, Anti-Social behaviour Coordinator, had arranged a couple of activities for youth in St John's area, namely:

From Thursday 29 January 2009 – 6pm-8pm
The Borough Council's Street Cruiser would be parked up at St Matthew's School (for children from Southborough / High Brooms / St John's, primarily). Kent County Council Youth Workers (including Elaine Lawrence from BLISS), PCSOs and the St John's ward PC will be in attendance.

From Wednesday 26 February 2009 – 5pm-7pm
Charlton Athletic Football Sessions (not coaching sessions, as such), would be held at St Matthew's School football field, Brokes Way.

5-6pm - 8-13 year olds
6-7pm - 14-19 year olds

There would be no need to book and for any further information, contact Dan (West Kent Co-ordinator) on 07904 965816.

Councillor Woodward – Informed the Town Forum that a meeting had taken place with retailer representatives and local Councillors regarding Silverdale Road and the concern over its appearance, and agreed that something needed to be done to tidy up the area.

The Town Forum noted that Kent Highway Services was being approached relating to the parking along St John's Road, in front of Sainsbury's and making that stretch of road safer for pedestrians and road users alike. The Town Forum would be kept informed of any development.

Councillor Crawford – The Town Forum noted that the Access Group had their meeting on Monday 26 February; some interesting issues were raised, including a letter received from Gregg Clark, MP.

Councillor Crawford stated that the Broadwater Committee met frequently to discuss various issues relating to the area; activity was now taking place.

7. Champions and Terms of Reference for the Town Forum

The Town Forum was informed that the Town Forum Champions had held their first meeting on 22 January 2009. The meeting was encouraging and discussion took place on a number of topics, namely: the potential sale of the Town Hall, future of the Tourist Information Centre and 'Are We West Kent or Mid Kent'?

Amongst their discussions, it was agreed that meetings would take place on a monthly basis, apart from May, August and December. The Champions Terms of Reference were also agreed at that meeting – Appendix A to these minutes.

The Town Forum agreed the Champion's Terms of Reference but asked that confirmation be sought as to name of the Faith/Social Issues Champion.

Action

7.1 That the Faith/Social Issues Champion be confirmed.

8. Reports from the Vision Committee and Working Groups

Various Planning Matters – Philip Whitbourn updated the Town Forum on their recent meeting.

Master Plan for Tunbridge Wells – Philip Whitbourn, Daniel Bech and Civic Society had met with Robert Cottrill and Jim Kehoe on 3 December. One of the main points discussed was the forthcoming Master Plan, which would be in the form of a Town Centre Action Area Plan within the Council's emerging Local Development Framework. Philip went on to say that an event might be arranged in April 2009 whereby stakeholders could make ten minute presentations indicating their aspirations for such a plan.

Town Centre Walk – In preparation, should any members wish to join in a walk through the central spine of the town from, Tesco in Grosvenor Road to the Pantiles via Mount Pleasant and the High Street, to contact Philip direct. It was hoped that the walk would take place on Sunday 15 February, following which a presentation would be given to the Town Forum at their March meeting.

Strategy for the Pantiles – The Town Forum noted that a holding letter was sent to Jeremy Aldous, Targetfollow, to meet their request for responses to the Strategy by 23 December 2008. The letter had made it clear that there had not been an opportunity for full discussion within the Town Forum, following the meeting on 3 December and concern was expressed at the references to “enabling development” and a “mixed use scheme” on the Fairground Site.

Former Broadwater Service Station, London Road – The Town Forum noted that Jennifer Blackburn and Philip had inspected the planning application which was reported at the last Town Forum meeting and a letter was sent to the Head of Planning Services expressing serious anxiety about the proposals. Reasons were outlined in Philip's report.

Daniel Bech drew to the Town Forum's attention information relating to Councillors leaving the room when certain planning matters (Pembury Hospital, Cinema Site) had been presented to the Town Forum and other such meetings.

– Full details of the wording are attached as appendix B to these minutes.

Vision and Arts Committee – No matters arising.

Green Issues – No matters arising.

Transport Matters – No matters arising.

Action

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| 8.1 | Should any member of the Town Forum wish to join the walk along the spine of the town on 15 February 2009 to contact Philip Whitbourn direct. |
| 8.2 | That the correspondence received from Andrew Taylor, Development Control Manager, be circulated to all Borough Councillors. |

9. Budget and Special Expenses

Town Forum members had previously agreed that Sean Clark, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council's Head of Finance and Governance, should attend the January's meeting to provide a presentation on the Council's budget and special expenses.

Sean's presentation outlined the budget gaps for 2007/08, 2008/09 and 2009/10 and the possible savings, together with further budget pressures, such as: Members' Allowances, Private Accredited Letting Scheme, 100th Anniversary of Royal prefix and public conveniences. The Town Forum also noted the reserve position as at 31 March 2008.

Special Expenses was also explained to the Town Forum. Sean stated that Tunbridge Wells had appointed a secondee from Kent County Council to provide a detailed report that would cover: legislation, alternatives, issues and solutions. The report had raised numerous issues; these were currently being worked upon.

The Town Forum was asked whether they would like to establish a small working party to consider options and the Council's budget for the next draft budget in December 2009. The Town Forum agreed to this and thought that it would be a good idea to get a clearer understanding of what was involved with the budget process. In concluding, Sean gave an example of costings relating to Rusthall Parish Council should one be established.

The Town Forum thanked Sean for his attendance, his presentation and answering questions. The presentation is appended (appendix C) to these minutes for the Town Forum's information.

<p>Action</p>

<p>9.1 That a small working party be established to consider options, the Council's budget etc.</p>

10. Any other business – None.

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

- 26 February 2009 at 7.30pm Cycle Ways Presentation (Cllr Mrs Moore)
- 26 March 2009 at 7.30pm Town Centre Presentation (Philip Whitbourn)
- 30 April 2009 at 7.30pm
- NO May
- 25 June 2009 at 7.30pm
- 30 July 2009 at 7.30pm
- NO August
- 24 September 2009 at 7.30pm
- 29 October 2009 at 7.30pm
- 26 November 2009 at 7.30pm
- 17 December 2009 at 7.30pm - provisional

26 February 2009 is the next full Town Forum - Any reports/short papers to be emailed/posted to Samantha Timms by no later than 10am on Monday 9 February 2009.

12. The meeting closed at: 9.15pm

(NOTE: Councillor Woodward left the meeting during the end of the discussion on minute 9, 9.06pm.)

APPENDIX A**RTW TOWN FORUM CHAMPIONS
Terms of Reference****Role of a Champion is to:**

Act as a focus and as a conduit for raising and responding to questions and concerns related to the Champion's subject area within the unparished areas of Tunbridge Wells including working with Councillors and Officers to promote residents' best interests.

Provide accountability and avoid potential conflicts of interest.

Join a Champion's Sub-Committee which will meet at 6pm before Town Forum meetings and to provide short reports when necessary to TF meetings.

To contribute to a separate page for each Champion on the Town Forum website (www.townforum.org.uk).

Convene working groups where relevant/necessary and co-opt fellow Town Forum members onto such groups.

The Town Forum Chairman may nominate and propose the removal of any Champion.

Guidance for Champions:

It is understood that where a Champion is involved in another organisation, then the activities of that organisation will remain the Champion's main concern. However, if the Champion knows that identical activities are being done by both organisations then he/she may report to both organisations so as to avoid duplication.

Where a Champion's sphere of activity overlaps with that of another Champion, then dialogue and cooperation take place between the two Champions.

List of current Champions:

Art / Culture	Michael Larsen
Community / Parks & Leisure	Daniel Bech
Environmental Issues	Kate Sergeant
Faith / Social Issues	Father Ed Tomlinson (?)
Health / Transport	John Goodfellow
Heritage	Alastair Tod
Planning	Philip Whitbourn
Urban Parishing	Jennifer Blackburn

APPENDIX B

From: Andrew Taylor
Sent: Thursday, January 29, 2009 3:57 PM
Subject:

All councillors able to listen to presentations / involved in discussions until any plans are submitted for planning permission

Dear Dr Bech

I assume that you are referring to the following paragraph from the conservators minutes?

“Cllr Scholes informed the meeting that, due to conflicts of interest, he will not be sitting on the Western Area Planning Committee when Targetfollow applies for planning permission, and will be obtaining written legal opinion over his position. All Councillors intend to obtain the advice of the Monitoring Officer. Cllrs Edwards, Cobbold and Mayhew intend to sit on the planning committee, and Cllr Mayhew is seeking additional advice to clarify her position as quickly as possible, due to her conflicting interests. All councillors, though, are able to listen to presentations and be involved in discussions until any plans are submitted for planning permission.”

It is true that Councillors can attend presentations and ask questions at any time during either pre-application discussions or after an application has been submitted. They may also choose to do this through any planning application determination and before the committee. However, if they adopt a particular view prior to the committee meeting then they should not form part of the committee and make a declaration to that effect.

Councillors who form part of the committee should not have voiced an opinion on an application (even at pre-application stage) and then still sit on the committee. The giving of an opinion can often occur during discussions so it may be advisable for councillors not to speak. However, it may be possible to attend a public meeting and listen or ask questions of clarification (much as with a Planning Forum). Guidance is available to councillors on this point and as the minutes state advice can be requested from the Monitoring Officer if the councillor is in any doubt.

Andrew Taylor
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