



Note of Meeting – Wednesday 12 September 2007

“The Sale of the Manor of Rusthall”

between members of Kent County Council and the Commons Coordinating Group

Present

Kent County Councillor Alex King (KCC Deputy Leader)
Kent County Councillor John Davis (representing Culverden, Rusthall, Speldhurst & Bidborough)
Borough Councillor David Wakefield (Culverden)
Jennifer Blackburn (Friends of the Tunbridge Wells and Rusthall Commons)
Sally Balcon (Friends of the Tunbridge Wells and Rusthall Commons)
Philip Whitbourn (RTW Town Forum)
John Cunningham (RTW Civic Society)

Apologies for absence

Ian Marshall (Freehold Tenants), George Lawson (Inner London Residents Association), Roger Joye (RTW Civic Society)

Info

Commons Coordinating Group held its first meeting on 14 August 2007 (special meeting of the Civic Society's Executive Committee) which arose from the announcement (reported in The Courier 10.8.2007) that the Manor of Rusthall is to be put up for sale. <http://www.townforum.org.uk/planning/manorsalemeeting140807note.pdf>

Commons Coordinating Group's second meeting (23 August 2007) was chaired by Jenny Blackburn (Friends of the Tunbridge Wells and Rusthall Commons). <http://www.townforum.org.uk/planning/manorsalemeeting230807note.pdf>

Commons Coordinating Group's meeting with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (Leader, Cllr Roy Bullock) was held on Wednesday 5 September <http://www.townforum.org.uk/planning/manorsalemeeting050907note.pdf>

Purpose of the meeting

JB opened the meeting by explaining that its purpose was to share information, following the announcement that the Manor of Rusthall is to be put up for sale. In opening, JB made mention of the role of CB Richard Ellis in preparing particulars of sale, the three beneficiaries under the will, and the normal duty trustees had to obtain the highest price. She also mentioned the case of the Ashdown Forest, where East Sussex County Council had been involved in the purchase.

Alex King

AK opined that the case needed to be driven by TWBC, and he pointed out that public money was stretched. Nevertheless, if TWBC were to come up with a plan involving the County Council, then KCC would consider it. AK expressed moral support for the protection of common land. Also, he did not rule out the possibility of County Council lawyers helping to clarify legal points, although he thought it important the TWBC and KCC lawyers should talk to one another.

John Davies

JD also expressed moral support for the protection of common land. He was not entirely sure about the extent to which the County of Kent Act 1981 afforded this, but was mindful of registration, and made the point that there may not be a case for public money being spent, if the Commons are properly protected in any event.

Other parties

The Friends of the Commons, the RTW Town Forum and the Civic Society were all sharing some disquiet about the possibility of an outside body acquiring The Pantiles and The Commons with the object of exploiting them. However, at the time of the meeting, the precise extent of Manor Property, the marketing strategy and other relevant details were not known.