

**TUNBRIDGE WELLS BOROUGH COUNCIL****RECORD OF DECISIONS**

(in terms of Access to Information Rule 18)

**CABINET****Thursday 25 March 2010**

**Present: Councillor Roy Bullock (Chairman)**  
**Councillors Paul Barrington-King, Len Horwood, Mrs Catherine Mayhew,**  
**Mrs Elizabeth Thomas and Frank Williams.**

**Officers in Attendance:** William Benson, Chief Executive; Lee Colyer, Head of Finance and Governance (S151 Officer); Deborah Dixon, Senior Planning Officer; Nick Green, Community Development Officer; Karin Grey, Environmental Protection Manager; Kat Hicks, Senior Overview and Scrutiny Officer; Estelle Hudson, Community Development and Partnerships Manager; John Kaye, Principal Conservation Officer; Jonathan MacDonald, Director of Regeneration and Sustainability; Louise Phillips, Planning Policy Team Leader; Gary Stevenson, Head of Environment and Street Scene; Samantha Timms, Senior Committee Administrator; and Keith Trowell, Senior Planning Lawyer, Legal Services.

**Other Members in Attendance:** Councillors Cunningham, Elliott and Ransley.

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

CAB200/09 No apologies for absence were received.

**DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

CAB201/09 In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, Part 5, Councillor Cunningham, although a visiting member, informed Cabinet that he had a personal interest in decision CAB206/09 because he was the Director of Mental Health Resource. Councillor Horwood declared a personal and prejudicial interest in decisions CAB206/09 and CAB208/09 because he was the Chairman of the Mental Health Resource Centre; he left the room for the discussion and voting on these items.

**NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS WISHING TO SPEAK**

CAB202/09 In accordance with Cabinet Procedure Rule 5.3 the following Councillors attended the meeting and spoke on the following items:

Councillor Cunningham – Decision number CAB206/09  
Councillor Elliott – Decision number CAB206/09  
Councillor Ransley – Decision number CAB211/09

**APPROVAL OF CABINET MINUTES DATED 3 MARCH 2010**

CAB203/09 The minutes of the Cabinet meeting dated 3 March 2010 were considered and confirmed as a correct record.

**QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**

CAB204/09 There were no questions submitted from members of the Council.

## QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

CAB205/09 There were no questions submitted from members of the public.

## CONSIDERATION OF REPORT FROM ENVIRONMENT, SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE AND EXTERNAL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE, MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

CAB206/09 The Senior Overview and Scrutiny Officer presented a report ([100325/CAB002](#)) notifying Cabinet of the recommendations made by the Environment, Safer and Stronger Communities Select Committee and external Overview and Scrutiny Committee at Maidstone Borough Council. Cabinet was informed that both Tunbridge Wells and Maidstone Borough Councils' scrutiny members had agreed to form a joint working group to review the provision of mental health services within the two boroughs.

It was noted that third sector mental health service provision across the boroughs was fragmented and complicated and the group spent a significant amount of time ascertaining the level of service provision and establishing which services were available for residents in the public, community and voluntary sectors. The group found that in both boroughs there were adequate resources for those with mental health issues, however, this was not always clearly publicised and it was felt that for those in distress, the time and effort required to identify available services was prohibitive as well as long waiting times at GPs for referral and treatment. It was agreed by the group that improved coordination between service providers from all sectors was needed.

Waiting times for counselling and other psychological therapies was a concern for the group, although they were encouraged by the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies programme. It was felt that in order to prevent mild to moderate mental health issues becoming more severe, this issue needed to be addressed urgently.

Cabinet was informed that a survey of GPs in Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells had reflected the concerns of the group, with only 18.75% of respondents agreeing that the current provision of mental health services was adequate.

As a result of the group's enquiries, emphasis was needed to:

- monitor access to psychological therapies and establish whether more funding needs to be directed at tackling mild to moderate mental illness to prevent deterioration of patients' mental health;
- improve access to information about voluntary, community, public and private mental health services for all sectors of the community; and
- encourage joined-up working between service providers to ensure seamless and complementary provision of services for the benefit of all residents experiencing mental health problems.

Appended to the report was the Joint Mental Health Services Working Groups draft report for members' information.

The Joint Mental Health Services Working Group's recommendations to Cabinet were as follows:

1. That Cabinet consider and approve the working group's following recommendations in relation to mental health service provision in the Borough:

To Local Authorities

1. Local authorities embrace the Time to Change Campaign as a route to tackling the stigma attached to mental health disorders.

To Local Authorities and the Health Trusts

2. In the light of evidence that physical activity contributes to good mental health, local authorities and the health trusts should work together to provide exercise on prescription.

To Local Authorities, the Health Trusts and the Third Sector

3. Joined-up working between service providers should be encouraged to ensure seamless and complementary provision of services for the benefit of all members of the public experiencing mental health problems.
4. Patients should be supported in undertaking voluntary work as a precursor to returning to paid employment.

Cabinet acknowledged the Working Group's report and thanked them for their excellent work. Cabinet agreed with all the recommendations and stated that perhaps the Gateway could be used as a mental health hub and an aid to joining up the services that were represented within the Gateway. An internal meeting would also need to take place to identify the next steps; following on from that meeting a wider discussion would take place involving the Trust, PCT and Kent County Council.

The Senior Overview and Scrutiny Officer informed Cabinet that a Member Briefing would be held for Councillors, and a press release to the media and a report to all staff would be arranged to highlight the mental health issue.

**RESOLVED –**

- (1) That the Select Committee and external Overview and Scrutiny Committee be thanked for their report;
  - (2) That the four recommendations outlined above be approved;
  - (3) That an internal meeting take place with the Working Group, Portfolio Holder, Healthier Communities Coordinator and Maidstone Borough Council; and
  - (4) That a wider meeting be arranged with the Trust, PCT and Kent County Council on how to move this forward.
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**CABINET DECISIONS****DECISION NO. CAB207/09****NON-EXEMPT****PORTFOLIO:****FINANCE & GOVERNANCE****PORTFOLIO HOLDER:****Councillor Horwood****REPORT TITLE:****Consideration of the Forward Plan (100325/CAB001)****PRIORITIES:**

Confident – Developing the Government's 'localism' agenda.

**DECISION MADE:**

That the Forward Plan be approved, subject to the following amendments:

Hawkenbury Recreation Ground – changed date from 29 April to a date to be confirmed.

House Condition Survey – change of date from 29 April to 10 June 2010.

Portfolio Holder Action Plan – change of date from 29 April to 10 June.

**REASONS FOR DECISION:**

To comply with Access to Information Procedure Rule 14.

**Contact Officer: Samantha Timms, Senior Committee Administrator****Tel: 01892 554219 or e-mail: sam.timms@tunbridgewells.gov.uk****DECISION NO. CAB208/09****NON-EXEMPT****PORTFOLIO:****POLICIES AND PARTNERSHIPS****PORTFOLIO HOLDER:****Councillor Williams****REPORT TITLE:****Community Grants' Programme Applications 2010/11 (100325/CAB003)****PRIORITIES:**

The Community Grants' programme supports voluntary and community organisations providing services that contribute to all of the Council's corporate priorities – particularly on the themes of Confident and Healthy.

**DISCUSSION:**

Cabinet was informed that under the 2010/11 Community Grants' programme, voluntary and community organisations were invited to make applications within an eight week period ending 8 January 2010.

Applications had been received from 33 organisations, 9 of which had not applied previously under any revenue grants' scheme, and 10 of which would have previously applied under the Leisure revenue grants' scheme. A summary of all the applications was appended to the report, together with the amounts applied for and recommended amounts.

Cabinet was informed that the total budget allocated for revenue grants in 2010/11 was £403,090 and included a re-allocation from Leisure's Arts Development budget of £90,000.

It was noted that the Tunbridge Wells and District Citizens' Advice Bureaux had been allocated £199,000 for 2010/11 in accordance with the three year Service Level Agreement agreed last year, which covered the period April 2009 to March 2012.

Cabinet noted that all applications had been considered by the Community Grants' Assessment Panel on 23 February 2010. The officer stated that the total amount requested by applicants was £373,286; this figure excluded the grant already agreed for the Citizens' Advice Bureaux.

The amount allocated to round one of the grants was £191,590 and the Assessment Panel had recommended the amounts indicated within the appendix, totalling £191,590. This left a total of £12,500 for the second application round in autumn 2010.

It was noted that although the current economic circumstances were placing pressure on budgets, the Council was continuing to grant significant amounts to voluntary and community organisations.

Members after giving due consideration agreed to grant the organisations the amounts indicated below.

**DECISION MADE:**

1. That the applications for grants be approved for the amounts indicated below:

TW Citizens' Advice Bureaux (SLA agreement) - £199,000 (year 2)  
 Trinity Theatre - £88,000  
 Tunbridge Wells Age Concern - £18,000  
 Number One Community Trust - £14,500  
 Voluntary Action within Kent - £7,500  
 TW Volunteer Centre - £11,250  
 Local MENCAP - £3,000  
 Shopmobility TW - £17,000  
 West Kent Mediation - £5,400  
 Rusthall Community & Youth Project - £5,400  
 Cranbrook Museum - £4,000

Civic Society - £1,800  
 Bridge Trust - £4,000  
 VSU Youth in Action - £6,800  
 TW International Music Festival - £1,000  
 Relate (West & Mid-Kent) - £1,000  
 TW International Young Artists' Competition -  
 £2,000  
 Bangladeshi Welfare Association - £940

2. That the applications for grants be refused as listed below:

COMPAID  
 West Kent YMCA  
 BTCV  
 Local & Live Music Festival  
 Hi Kent  
 Carers FIRST  
 TW & Langton Athletics Club  
 Pickering Cancer Drop-In Centre  
 Play Place Innov8 CIC  
 The Prince's Trust  
 TW Mental Health Resource  
 TW Badminton League  
 TW Juggling Club

3. That the grant applications for the organisations listed below be refused and that they re-apply in round two:

TW Community Studios  
 Family Matters  
 121 Youth Befriending

**REASONS FOR DECISION:**

To assist voluntary and community organisations with projects that help to achieve the Borough Council's corporate priorities and contribute to the borough Sustainable Community Plan and other key strategies.

**Contact Officer: Nick Green, Community Development Officer**

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**DECISION NO. CAB209/09**

**NON-EXEMPT**

**PORTFOLIO:**

**PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**PORTFOLIO HOLDER:**

**Councillor Mrs Thomas**

**REPORT TITLE:**

**Residential Parking Standards for Proposed New Developments (100325/CAB004)**

**PRIORITIES:**

The saved policies in the Local Plan provide the planning policies against which applications for development in the Borough are assessed. These saved policies make provision both for appropriate change in the Borough to meet the needs of its communities and for the conservation of its environment and heritage.

The report supports a number of Council priorities, including: "Prosperous", "Green" and "Healthy".

**DISCUSSION:**

The officer informed Cabinet of the background to the saved policies in the Tunbridge Wells Borough Local Plan 2006 relating to residential parking, Policies TP5 and TP6. It was noted that the use of maximum parking standards for residential development in SPG4 was based on national planning policy set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note 3: Housing (PPG3) and in Planning Policy Guidance Note 13: Transport (PPG13).

The saved policies within the Kent and Medway Structure Plan had expired in July 2009 and consequently, SPG4 ceased to carry any weight. Since the adoption of the Tunbridge Wells Borough Local Plan in May 2006, the publication of Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing (PPS3) and the demise of the Structure Plan, the use of maximum parking standards for new residential development could no longer be considered appropriate in every development situation.

Approval was sought from Cabinet to put in place interim guidance based on that prepared by Kent County Council until such time as the position could be comprehensively reviewed through the preparation of the Development Control Policies Development Plan Document (DPD).

The guidance note, "Kent Design Guide Review: Interim Guidance Note 3: Residential Parking, November 2008" (IGN3), prepared by Kent County Council attempts to deal with dissatisfaction identified amongst residents of recently completed developments that had been highlighted by the results of surveys carried out by Kent County Council. IGN3 had been the subject of consultation, including house builders active within the Borough and the House Builders' Federation. IGN3 was approved by Kent County Council in May 2009.

Included within the Cabinet report was a table taken from IGN3 which provided a guide for residential parking, divided into four district locations. It was noted that the proposed standards would not constitute planning policy, but could be used as a material consideration, together with national and regional policy, when considering proposals for residential development until a new parking policy was adopted within the Development Control Policies DPD.

The officer stated there would be no change in parking standards for the area covered by the town centre of Royal Tunbridge Wells, Central Access Zone (Residential); for the rest of the Borough, there would be some changes but these were not considered to be fundamental policy changes.

The introduction of minimum parking standards for areas outside the town centre area of Royal Tunbridge Wells would allow for a degree of flexibility if this was considered appropriate and would be limited to the maximum level judged to be necessary for each individual development proposal.

Members after due consideration agreed with the proposals but asked that investigations take place regarding residents' parking permits.

**DECISION MADE:**

1. That the proposed parking standards set out in the report be approved for informal consultation with key stakeholders;
2. That following consultation, delegated authority be given to the portfolio holder for Planning and Economic Development to approve the standards to be used as a material consideration together with National and Regional Policy when considering proposals for residential development until a new parking policy is adopted within the Development Control Policies DPD;
3. That delegated authority be given to the Head of Planning Services in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economic Development to make any amendments necessary to finalise the standards for publication following consultation; and
4. That further investigations take place regarding residents' parking permits.

**REASONS FOR DECISION:**

To allow planning officers to use the principles for residential parking standards as set out in the report as a material consideration when considering proposals for residential development until a new parking policy is adopted within the Development Control Policies DPD. This will allow for a degree of certainty, while also allowing for planning decisions to be made that reflect local circumstances.

**Contact Officer: Deborah Dixon, Senior Planning Officer**  
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DECISION NO. CAB210/09

NON-EXEMPT

PORTFOLIO:

PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

PORTFOLIO HOLDER:

Councillor Mrs Thomas

REPORT TITLE:

Heritage Partnership (100325/CAB005)

PRIORITIES:

Prosperous: The borough more generally will have enhanced its natural and built assets while planning for, and accommodating, future growth.

Green: The historic built environment that provides a powerful sense of identity will be maintained in good order and enhanced through high quality redevelopment of existing poorly-built assets set within an immaculate and distinctive public domain.

Confident: A thriving community pride culture will have developed with high levels of volunteering and public involvement.

DISCUSSION:

The report reviewed the Heritage Partnership Grants' Strategy and the capacity of Planning Services to operate the scheme in the same way following the recent reduction in heritage staffing and other priorities such as the urban design aspects of the Local Development Framework.

Members were informed that joined to this were further community pressures, plus raised expectations for more 'heritage' work prompted by changes to the General Permitted Development Order which had relaxed planning controls, and prompted concerns on the degree of change. It was noted that to accommodate this, and to recognise the capacity issue, it was proposed to halt any applications or projects that were related to individual private/commercial schemes or residential properties.

The exceptions to this would be where there was a significant demonstrable community benefit or the building was identified through Conservation Area Appraisal or as a 'grot spot'. It was considered that taking a more strategic approach was justified within the available capacity and skills, and that time spent on developing stronger partnership working and on projects with wider community benefit, would be a more effective way of working.

It was noted by Cabinet that the report had stated that no consultation had been carried out; this was in fact incorrect as considerable consultation had taken place.

**DECISION MADE:**

1. That the target criteria for Heritage Partnership Projects be retained, but that commercial and private residential properties be omitted; and
2. That parish councils and amenity groups be consulted on the changes and informed of the Heritage Partnership.

**REASONS FOR DECISION:**

To provide the most effective design and heritage service within the resources and capacity available, while meeting corporate objectives of preserving and enhancing and also to develop a stronger focus on local community and partnership.

**Contact Officer: Alan Legg, Principal Design & Heritage Officer**  
**Tel: 01892 516121, ext 2080 or e-mail: alan.legg@tunbridgewells.gov.uk**

**DECISION NO. CAB211/09****NON-EXEMPT****PORTFOLIO:****ENVIRONMENT AND STREET SCENE****PORTFOLIO HOLDER:****Councillor Barrington-King****REPORT TITLE:****Air Quality Action Plan ([100324/CAB006](#))****PRIORITIES:**

**Prosperous:** Improving local air quality focuses on sustainable travel with an emphasis on an improved transport infrastructure and public transport, enabling equal opportunities of access to services.

**Green:** By improving local air quality the local environment is improved providing a 'pleasant place' for the local community. The link between air quality and climate change management and improvement has also been recognised.

**Healthy:** Good local air quality helps to provide a healthier environment.

**Confident:** No specific targets.  
 The aim is to continue to deliver high quality services to customers and improve customer satisfaction and work with the community to improve local air quality.

**DISCUSSION:**

Cabinet was informed that the Council was under a duty to produce an Action Plan to address the level of vehicle emission related air pollution in the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) covering the A26 from Southborough to Tunbridge Wells. It was predicted that air quality in the AQMA would not meet the annual mean national air quality standard for nitrogen dioxide of 40ug/m<sup>3</sup>

It was noted that the draft action plan was produced in collaboration with Kent County Council as the highways and transportation authority, and with local stakeholders. The draft action plan was approved for consultation by Cabinet and subsequently went out for public consultation.

Officers advised the Cabinet of the comments made by the Environment, Safer and Stronger Communities Select Committee at its meeting in November 2009 and these were identified for members' information. It was noted that there were three recommendations made by the Select Committee on the Air Quality Action Plan; these were outlined within the report.

The Action Plan provided a background to air quality management within the Borough and set out how the Council would use its existing powers and work together with other organisations in pursuit of meeting the annual mean air quality objective for nitrogen dioxide.

The report outlined the measures proposed as part of the Kent County Council Local Transport Plan, LTP2; existing measures already been undertaken; those that required further work and research; and general measures to improve air quality throughout the Borough.

Cabinet noted the Council was continuing with its local air quality management duties and the proposed Action Plan contained objectives for reviewing specified areas of work within a set time frame, which included a review/progress in target setting for the Action Plan.

Visiting member, Councillor Ransley, asked officers why the action plan had not included any comments made by the Select Committee's report titled 'Streets Ahead'. In response, officers stated that Air Quality Action planned incorporated existing proposals from the current Tunbridge Wells Transport Strategy and Kent's Local Transport Plan. In view of the fact that Streets Ahead has not been adopted as policy, it would be premature to include items from it at this stage. It was explained that that the Transport Strategy is in the process of being refreshed and that as part of that process all comments, views and suggestions received from residents' groups, individuals, Select Committees and the Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum would be taken into consideration.

The Air Quality Action Plan is closely linked to the Transport Strategy and can be updated as and when necessary to reflect any new initiatives that flow from the new Transport Strategy in due course.

Councillor Ransley acknowledged that the Air Quality Action Plan had been considered the Environment, Safer and Strong Communities Select Committee but he stated that Local Economy & Housing Select Committee should have been included with the consultation. Appended to these minutes are Councillor Ransley comments.

Councillor Mrs Thomas suggested that school children use the trains into Royal Tunbridge Wells and walk to school from the station; this would help with the emissions. She also suggested that perhaps by staggering school start times traffic congestion could be reduced. It was agreed that Councillor Barrington-King speak with Kent County Council to ascertain whether these suggestions would be possible.

Councillor Williams asked why a temporary real time air quality monitoring station was being installed in Pembury Road for only 1 year. In response, the officer stated there were mainly two reasons, funding was initially only available for 1 year and secondly, initially it would only take a year to conduct the necessary survey to assess levels in that particular area.

Cabinet was informed that the air quality monitoring station in St John's Road Tunbridge Wells had not recorded any exceedances of the 200  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  hourly mean objective for nitrogen dioxide.

In view of vehicle emissions being the reason for the Air Quality Management Area, Councillor Barrington-King suggested he write a letter to Central Government to seek reassurances that Government would be pursuing policies that would lead to a reduction in emissions at source.

**DECISION MADE:**

1. That the Action Plan proposals set out within the report be approved and adopted as the basis of the Council's Local Air Quality Management work; and
2. That a progress report be made in March 2011.

**REASONS FOR DECISION:**

To formally approve the Air Quality Action Plan and ensure that the Council continues to fulfil its statutory obligations under the Environment Act 1995 part IV, local air quality management duties in pursuit of the annual mean air quality objective for nitrogen dioxide.

**NOTE: The Chairman, Councillor Bullock, left the meeting during this item (11.15am); the Vice-Chairman, Councillor Mrs Mayhew, took the chair for the remainder of the agenda.**

**Contact Officer: Karin Grey, Environmental Protection Manager  
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**DECISION NO. CAB213/09**

**NON-EXEMPT**

**PORTFOLIO:**

**FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE**

**PORTFOLIO HOLDER:**

**Councillor Horwood**

**REPORT TITLE:**

**Basket of Economic Indicators for Tunbridge Wells Borough Council – January 2010 (100325/CAB007)**

**PRIORITIES:**

The monitoring of these economic indicators will help the evaluation of strategic risk across all services and therefore supports all corporate priorities and commitments.

**DISCUSSION:**

The Corporate Policy and Improvement Officer submitted a report updating members on the economic performance of the Borough. The report covered the latest data available and aimed to help members evaluate and mitigate strategic risks.

A selection of performance indicators, known to be sensitive to economic conditions, had been put together, including a number that were new.

The report advised members that the current economic conditions were still affecting certain areas of performance, which were subject to close monitoring by officers and members. Members were encouraged to see some improvement in economic conditions across the majority of the areas being monitored. It was noted however that although unemployment had increased slightly in January 2010, this was seen across all districts in Kent; Tunbridge Wells had seen the lowest unemployment rate of all the districts in Kent consistently for four months now.

**DECISION MADE:**

1. That the report shown in Appendix A be noted;
2. That the map in Appendix B showing the vacant retail premises in Tunbridge Wells town centre be noted; and
3. That the reporting of economic indicators revert to normal quarterly performance reporting cycle following the final reporting at the June 2010 Cabinet meeting.

**REASONS FOR DECISION:**

In response to previous Cabinet recommendations.

**Contact Officer: Jo Davies, Corporate Policy and Improvement Officer**  
**Tel: 01892 526121 or e-mail: jo.davies@tunbridgewells.gov.uk**

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(NOTES:

- (1) Councillor Cunningham left the meeting after the discussion and voting on decision CAB208/09 (10.55am). The Chairman, Councillor Bullock, left the meeting during decision CAB211/09 (11.15am); the Vice-Chairman, Councillor Mrs Mayhew, took the chair for the remainder of the agenda; and
- (2) The meeting closed at 11.45am).

**STATEMENT BY COUNCILLOR BRIAN RANSLEY**  
**IN RESPECT OF ITEM 11**  
**AIR QUALITY ACTION PLAN (100325/CAB006)**

*At the start I referred to my known transport engineering but that I had no prejudicial interest. I also stated that I had only recently become aware of this report's progress to Cabinet but that I discussed the reopening of this debate with the Chairman of the Environment and Safer and Stronger Communities Select Committee, Cllr Waldock, and he had raised no objections.*

Referring to the report before you;

I wonder just what is intended by this document. A statutory situation has arisen but is this response a "tick-box" exercise or a genuine attempt at a solution. I will assume the latter.

Poor air quality along the A26 is not something new; we have been aware of it for a number of years, hence the installation of the air quality monitoring station by the Boys' Grammar school in June 2005. We are also aware of the particular gas causing concern, nitrogen dioxide, N<sub>2</sub>O<sub>4</sub>, a poisonous green/yellow gas emitted by vehicle exhausts in small quantities. In normal circumstances this and other gases are dispersed quickly by air movement, i.e. a wind of 10KPH or more. The machine samples the air in the immediate vicinity but a few metres either side it may not give the same reading, especially in anything but calm winds. Unfortunately this report gives no indication of the times, dates or weather conditions. However we know the main cause – stationary traffic – and the main time of day – school mornings, and to a lesser extent, 5-6pm on weekdays.

Although the Executive Summary states that work is continuing towards improving the local air quality this doesn't mean that anything effective is being carried out. I also note that the author of this document has linked corporate priorities to proposed solutions – how "prosperous" can be linked with to improved local air quality and equal opportunities defeats me – but I'll come back to the philosophy behind this report in a minute.

I note that the report was submitted to the Environment and Safer & Stronger Communities Select Committee, although, as the problem is essentially a road traffic matter perhaps it should have been submitted additionally to the Local Economy & Housing Select Committee, which is the reason for my appearance here today. Nevertheless we should take note of the recommendations in relation to low emissions; these are valid but in fact it isn't individual buses (*I drew attention to the poor spelling "busses" here*), that are the main offenders. I know that some of these vehicles are "bone-shakers" but they are (presumably) legal. Where buses work is in moving large numbers of people to the same place, i.e. schools, which we should support, or in local short-distance travel, especially within towns and where there are relatively large numbers of people without access to private transport. Where buses don't work is the medium- distance routes where we see them wandering around virtually empty of fare-paying passengers through much of the day. In short many of these services run on a virtual economic knife-edge and if we start imposing rules on the companies to force them to use only modern vehicles we could cause another serious problem.

Taking the points of the action plan:

1. The VISUM project is software related to traffic movement and projections. It has no obvious relevance to air quality.
2. "Quality Bus Partnership" emphasises bus-priority measures in return for transport investment; unfortunately bus priority schemes inevitably lead to longer traffic queues and consequent poor air quality.

3. "TWBC are enforcing local parking restrictions – This should be automatic but the officers can't be there all the time and one vehicle unloading on Mount Ephraim can cause mile and a half tail-back.
4. Cycling; off and on-road cycle schemes are also valid but this could be expensive and will have little noticeable effect on traffic volumes.
5. "Car-clubs"; I will predict that the number of people still involved in one of these schemes after two weeks will be counted on one hand.
6. A "robust" standard of data? – None visible in this report!
7. Enforcement of industrial control and nuisance legislation; irrelevant; there are no industrial operations anywhere near – it's traffic congestion!
8. Other popular "group" actions, including "working with" TWBC departments, KCC, Kent Police, Peer Review Groups, Monitoring Network Groups – what for? – To see if anyone can come up with any better ideas? - A complete waste of officer resources; we know what the problem is.

We also know how the problem can be dealt with. I asked Mr. Stevenson why the proposals in "Streets Ahead" were ignored. These, just to remind you all, involve the freeing up of our road space, particularly along the A26, by replacing bus lanes with left- and right-turning lanes, reduced parking at Mount Ephraim, one-way outwards only at Culverden Down and, fundamentally, changing school start times to 8AM. I was told it "wasn't policy".

And here we have come to the crux of the matter – this report seems to have been compiled to tell you what they think you want to hear rather than telling it as it is. Rather than change the policies change the science! The result; it won't work! It isn't as if Cllr Barrington-King didn't know what was coming; in the summer of 2008 I drew attention to a TWBC press release in which it was stated that the problem of poor air quality would be addressed by "improving bus lanes"! This report perpetuates the same woolly thinking; Cllr Barrington-King, you should have drawn a red line through this report as it isn't fit for purpose. I strongly recommend that members of Cabinet should decisively reject it.

**Brian C. Ransley**

**Member, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, Capel Ward**

**March 25<sup>th</sup> 2010**