**Appendix 6**

**Burgess Hill Town Council**

**Ordinary Meeting 27th January 2020**

**Agenda Item 15 – Bridge the Gap Update**

On 2nd July 2019, the Strategic KAG agreed to a Bridge-the-Gap programme to support the town centre economy during 24 – 30 months of change (assuming that the NRR redevelopment proceeds). At that meeting a ‘Dare to Dream’ list of possible activities was presented which had been generated by staff and councillors.

A meeting with town centre traders was held on 13th September 2019 which generated further ideas, and these have helped to inform and clarify some of the Dare to Dream items. A framework for Bridge the Gap was approved at Strategic Finance KAG on Friday 8th November 2019.

On 9th January 2020, Cllr Joseph Foster, Steve Cridland, Liz Clark (Project Manager with responsibility for Bridge the Gap) and I met to create an outline of Bridge the Gap activities that could be readily implemented and identify areas/events for further research.

We were all conscious of the need to deliver events throughout the year and commence the programme in Q1. Some would build on activities in the Council calendar (e.g Summer Sandpit), but others would be new events (potentially repeatable after Bridge the Gap comes to an end).

When the full programme is published we will then work with traders and other organisations in the town to see how they can contribute or gain benefit from the Bridge the Gap programme.

The 2020/21 budget proposals includes a sum of £30k for Bridge the Gap which is expected to be spent over 2 years. A further £40k has been set aside to support the Trading Spaces project (see below).

**Trading Spaces and Outdoor Market**

1. **‘Trading Spaces’** – an indoor space of between 1500 – 3000 sq. ft. to be used for smaller traders and/or providers of services. The space would be flexible to allow for anchor tenants (say an incubator start-up which could not sustain payment on a larger retail unit, ‘flexi-tenants’ (e.g. independent baker/deli/green grocer/eco friendly products/craft etc) who may not be able to take space 5/6 days a week), ad-hoc stall holders (a varied list of community stall holders or one-off renters).

The ground floor would then need to be adaptable enough so that in the ‘high season’ we could use the space for street food stall holders and evening activities.

The first floor would be office space for co-workers, providers of professional services and maybe to create a community meeting room.

Potential units have been identified in the Martlets Shopping Centre. A meeting has been held with NRR and discussions will continue with them. The plans of the identified unit will be sent to the Town Council for further study.

1. **‘Outdoor Market’** – Burgess Hill had a thriving open market until the mid-1990s. There may be a demand for it in the town (though the nature of a market will need to reflect current taste and demand). A monthly maket potentially situated at the lower end of Church Walk (see below re Place and Connectivity).

Contact has been made with the National Market Traders Federation (NMTF) with a meeting hopefully scheduled for March/April.

Cllrs Anne Eves and Matthew Cornish have also visited Hassocks and Lewes markets as part of the scoping exercise and will be key members of the development of this project. Much work is still required to identify feasibility.

**PLACE AND CONNECTIVITY**

A part of MSDC’s place and connectivity plans there is a proposal to open up the bottom of Church Walk by relocating the stone garden. Design proposals are being developed and the Town Council will be consulted on these plans, probably in the Spring.

I have been in communication with the officers at MSDC encouraging them to bring forward this improvement to coincide with the redevelopment of the Martlets Shopping Centre by NRR.

**Ping Pong Parlour**

At a recent meeting with NRR we asked them to consider granting the Town Council a licence to manage the Ping Pong Parlour so that the facility could be open for longer.

**Bridge the Gap event programme**

**Art Exhibition – MARCH 2020**

It is proposed that we take space in a vacant retail unit for a minimum 10-day period to stage a Burgess Hill Artists exhibition. NRR has provisionally agreed to provide a unit for the exhibition (at no cost) and I have a meeting planned with Burgess Hill Artists on 29th January 2020 to scope out this event further.

Expected cost to Bridge the Gap – Nil

**Food & Drink Guide – MARCH/APRIL 2020**

Burgess Hill’s hospitality sector (restaurants, cafes and bars etc.) is largely independently owned. We were conscious that spending in this sector is largely discretionary and that the town does not have a clearly identified ‘restaurant quarter’ (compared say to the Broadway in Haywards Heath). We, therefore, considered how we might promote the town’s hospitality sector thereby improving their trade, as well as promoting the town as a good place to go to eat out.

Adapting the Dare to Dream loyalty card idea (the cost of which has not be quantified and the logistics of which are undeveloped) we proposed a printed guide featuring the 72 establishments across the town. Officers, Cllr Foster and I have now visited each of these businesses and offered them space in the guide at no cost. In return we have asked them to consider putting an offer voucher in the guide to attract customers.

20,000 guides would be delivered/distributed to residents and to key points in the area.

Expected cost to Bridge the Gap - £3k – £5k.

**Climbing Wall – APRIL (Thursday 9th)**

The Climbing wall day will be returning to Church Walk. The Wall plus a Strike the Light game is funded by Burgess Hill Lions Club but we can use Bridge the Gap to add a further activity.

In addition this event will provide the Town Council with an opportunity to promote the food and drink guide, other events in the town, and provide an information service using the Town Council gazebo.

Advance promotion of the event with nearby cafes.

Expected cost to Bridge the Gap - £375

**VE Day Celebrations – MAY (Friday 8th – Sunday 9th May)**

Not part of the Bridge the Gap initiative but the Town Council will be fully supporting the suggested programme of events put together by SSAFA (the Armed Forces Charity) – see App 3 Community Engagement KAG of 19th June 2019.

Some of the events do have a town centre focus and we can add the Bridge the Gap promotion effort to maximise involvement.

Expected cost to Bridge the Gap – nil (funded out of a separate budget heading).

**French Market –JUNE (12th June)**

Not part of the Bridge the Gap Initiative. It is a regular event in Burgess Hill and this year takes place at the end of the Summer Festival.

Like the VE Day Celebrations we can add the Bridge the Gap promotion effort to maximise involvement.

Expected cost to Bridge the Gap – nil

**Summer Sand pit – JULY/AUGUST**

The summer sandpit is an established feature in the town centre.

Consideration is being given to expanding this summer activity by adding in other mid-week activities which may include puppet shows, circus skills, other entertainment (some potentially in the Little Theatre if available).

No funding has been allocated yet as additional events have not been arranged.

**Food Festival – LATE Q2/EARLY Q3**

This event requires scoping. In concept we are looking at approaching not only our existing food/drink sector in Burgess Hill but also other street food sellers and sellers of specialist food products. We are considering adding an information/educational angle to the festival and potentially having a cooking experience with a local celebrity chef.

No funding has been considered and this event is still at design stage

**Christmas Event & Light Switch on – NOVEMBER (Saturday 21st November)**

A regular feature of the Burgess Hill calendar. Bridge the Gap funding should be able to assist with this day where we may need to pay small fees to obtain the services of musicians or other entertainers. There is also a proposal to repeat the shop window advent calendar.

No funding allocated yet.

**Wellbeing and Mental Health Day – Q4 (Probably January 2021)**

This event requires scoping, In concept it would consist of information stalls, health seminars, activities (such as yoga, pilates). We have a number of businesses in the town centre that provide services allied to medicine and health which could be approached to participate.

No funding allocated yet.

**Robert Eggleston (Cllr)**