



MINUTES of the **ORDINARY MEETING** of the **TOWN COUNCIL** held in the Council Chamber on **Monday 27 January 2020**

Present: Roger Cartwright Town Mayor
Anne Eves Deputy Town Mayor

Graham Allen
Andrew Barrett-Miles
Emma Coe-Gunnell White*
Matthew Cornish
Peter Chapman
Robert Duggan
Robert Eggleston
Lee Gibbs*
Janice Henwood
Simon Hicks
Tofojjul Hussain
Joseph Foster
Sarah Lawrence
Sylvia Neumann
Max Nielsen*
Kathleen Willis

* *Denotes non-attendance.*

(19.00)

A minute of silence was held to mark Holocaust Memorial Day.

78. OPEN FORUM

A member of the public questioned why the town precept was increasing despite the council running a surplus in the last financial year, and currently being financially stable.

The response was that the council did have a surplus, but the budget broke even. It was only through good financial management that there was a surplus. Next year's budget plans needed to remember that a large sum included in last year's budget was for a project that didn't take place – bringing the Beehive forward to an earlier stage. This

artificially lowered the budget by around £76,000. Money which was put aside for that was returned to rate payers in this financial year, leading to a credit this financial year. The underlying increase was 2.75%.

This would be discussed further on the main agenda.

A second member of the public spoke on the precept. They understood the reasoning but were disappointed. The arts centre would cost money, not just happen. Why wasn't it accepted that it was needed. It couldn't be built without money.

The member of the public also spoke on Agenda Item 13, the McDonalds roundabout. They stated that an entrance from the rear of the car park, from Station Road, would be impossible to deal with. There wasn't a nice easy solution to the problem, but the council had to look at the residents in the area.

Councillor Eggleston responded that the Council were not proposing to delay aspirations on the Beehive but had foreground issues to deal with. The next budget would be looking at how to bring forward the beehive as quickly as possible.

Regarding Agenda Item 13, the proposal was not to have the entrance from Station Road. The suggestion was that the current entrance to the car park, off the roundabout, could accommodate two lanes.

The member of the public further questioned that, knowing how traffic builds up in busy periods, there was a limit to how many cars could get around the car park.

Councillor Eggleston responded that McDonalds were prepared to invest into their side. MSDC was being asked to use some of the Place and Connectivity money to create the second lane from the roundabout. This would increase the flow of traffic, and ease the traffic on the roundabout.

This would be further discussed in the main agenda.

A third member of the public spoke on Wivelsfield train station, which they felt hadn't been fully addressed. They stated that everyone should applaud the workers who worked through Christmas and horrible weather to keep the train track open and safe, and to open up the tunnel in time for the start of the school term. They asked that, on a broader scale, everyone should look at how weather in general was increasingly taking a toll on the roads, water system, drainage system and more. This wasn't noticed even 5 years ago. Many of the roads in Burgess Hill were resurfaced around two years ago – why were there issues again now. Roads should last at least ten years. The Town Council should query this standard of work with WSCC, and request a proper explanation of why, after two years or less, the roads were

falling to pieces.

Councillor Andrew Barret-Miles responded as a member of WSCC, stating that all roads that were redone 2 years ago, on a special grant from the government, were still intact. Potholes that were filled had reappeared as potholes. Ideally when repairing potholes, they would fully resurface the road, which lasted longer, but they had to be filled within a certain amount of time for safety reasons. To properly do all of the roads would cost a huge amount of money. There was an incentive for WSCC to do it, and the issue of the roads had been raised. It was necessary to do it otherwise the roads were not going to get any better. The roads had not been regularly resurfaced. The money which came from government did not do enough of the total road surface. WSCC should think about putting in another £50million in the next year. There would still be potholes, but WSCC was taking it very seriously. They did have to consider, did they put the safety and education of children before roads. WSCC had to compromise and do what was important.

79. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Emma Coe-Gunnell White and Max Nielsen.

80. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Andrew Barrett-Miles declared an interest in his role as a County Councillor, and in Agenda Item 12, the Draft Electric Vehicle Strategy, as he had scrutinised this.

81. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The First meeting of the Residents Forum had been held successfully. Councillor Kathleen Willis, Chair of the Community Engagement Key Area Group, raised a comment made from a member of the Forum regarding the activities and events run by the Town Council, which they always enjoyed, and which were organised well. They had stated that when they saw an event with the Burgess Hill Town Council logo, they were confident that it would be good.

82. COUNCIL MINUTES

The Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on Monday 25 November 2019 were **AGREED** and signed as a correct record.

83. PLANNING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Councillor Janice Henwood, Chair of the Planning Committee, advised that on Tuesday 28 January there would be a consultation on the Northern Arc at the Triangle.

The Minutes of the meetings of the Planning Committee held on Monday 2 December 2019, 23 December 2019 and 13 January 2020 were **AGREED**.

84. **CUSTOMER SERVICES KEY AREA GROUP NOTES OF MEETING**

Councillor Robert Duggan, Chair of the Customer Services Key Area Group, raised several points to note. Firstly, the Pentanque project was progressing – the tenders were in, and the details were being finalised. Secondly, regarding the Place and Connectivity project, there would be an officer’s meeting later this month to communicate with MSDC officers, and there would be a workshop for Councillors and the Residents Forum.

Comments had been made on the proposed installation of artwork on the Wivelsfield railway bridge, flooding on the bumpy bridge, survey of horse owners on A2300. Regarding the Chanctonbury allotments, there had been a survey done of possible encroachment, and a letter written to Network Rail. Cyprus hall had asked the Council to approve installation of an additional CCTV camera.

It was asked whether the Council were proposing any other amenity improvements as an alternative to the artwork on the bridge.

It was answered that this would be discussed at the Members Steering Group on Thursday 30 January. There was a significant sum of money available which should deliver significant connectivity benefits, including improvements to the stations and public transport. It was important to link the Northern Arc with the rest of the town.

The Notes of the meeting of the Customer Services Key Area Group held on Thursday 9 January 2020 were **AGREED**.

85. **STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT KEY AREA GROUP NOTES OF MEETING**

Councillor Roger Cartwright, Chair of the Strategic Development Key Area group, noted that the meeting had discussed an update on the Cultural Quarter, and on an offer from MSDC that the Town Council acquire land off Greenlands Close giving access to Batchelors Farm in return for a commuted sum of circa £81,300, which had been accepted.

It was asked when there would next be a meeting regarding the Cultural Quarter. It was answered that this would be scheduled as soon as possible now that the planning permission for the Beehive had been approved. The application to the Charity Commission had been submitted, and it was expected that this would be approved in the next month or so.

The Notes of the meeting of the Strategic Development Key Area Group held on Tuesday 14 January 2020 were **AGREED**.

86. **FINANCE KEY AREA GROUP NOTES OF MEETING**

Councillor Simon Hicks, Chair of the Finance Key Area Group, noted that they had considered the budget outcome for the year to date and the precept recommendation for next year's budget. This was a 2.75% net increase.

Councillor Andrew Barret-Miles spoke on this item, adding that his comments also applied to Item 10 on the Agenda. He was not in a position to support the budget. He had had his first real look at it last week, and it didn't look like the first budget from November. At first glance it appeared to be a pragmatic attempt to balance commitments made during the recent elections and aspirational ideas, and ensuring adequate funds for the Beehive. However, with a closer look, it seemed that the budget didn't do that. It used smoke and mirrors to pull the wool over the eyes of the public over the increase of precept to fund the Beehive. It was unrealistic. In the past, the Burgess Hill public had refused a precept increase to fund the Beehive. The real increase had come about because the administration had decided to significantly increase elements of the precept. There was an increase of 180% towards grants, and a further 140% increase for civic events around town. Without these two items, the precept would decrease from 12% to around 8%. He questioned the provision for the Beehive. The loan needed to be drawn down by the end of August 2020. The Beehive would cost £123,000 per annum, which was not budgeted for this year in the base budget. Only £70,000 had been budgeted so far, which was £53,000 short. This would require, if nothing else was done, a precept increase of 7% in 2021/22. This had not been considered. The figure of the £3million loan could be a lot higher. The fundraiser had indicated a likely fundraising amount of approximately £1million, and the Council needed to raise at least £2million. This gave a potential gap in funding of about £1-1.5million. If the Council needed to borrow further, this would require a 4-6.5% increase of precept. The Council could adjust the budget when they knew what they wanted, however this would require removing all of the good things they were putting in this year. If the Council were going ahead with the Beehive, they had not sensibly budgeted and planned for this.

Councillor Simon Hicks responded that the Council had not yet decided when they would be able to afford the Beehive as there was a lot to still be decided. There were uncertainties with fundraising. To go back to the public to increase council tax would be unwise and they didn't want to repeat issues from the previous administration. Spending money on grants and improving the town centre was a one-off commitment. The Council knew there were issues from the redevelopment, and needed to finance some activity in the Town Centre to encourage people to come in. They were increasing spend

by £10-11,000 from the previous administration.

Councillor Robert Eggleston stated that the way the previous administration intended funding the Beehive didn't work. There was no provision for working capital – even if the money was raised to build it, it would have gone bust, or would have needed to be subsidised, and there was no provision for that. The application had just been granted planning permission, and there was a deadline of September to draw down the loan. He noted that the Responsible Finance Officer would be very reluctant to draw down the loan if the Council could not demonstrate that the funding was in place. In the next financial year the Council would have to take a long hard look at how to bring project to fruition. He had asked the Cultural Quarter when they would like the building work to start, and the response was 2021. If that meant they would have to find another way of funding it, and have a conversation with the residents of Burgess Hill, they would do that. They would not do what the last council did – assume the support was there and charge the residents, and then have to pay it back.

There were key foreground issues in the town. It would be negligent of the Town Council not to do as much as they could to sustain the Town Centre and help Town Centre businesses. He had campaigned on supporting the Town Centre, and he would do that. They were not going to run a scorched earth policy where everything else was stripped bare to in order to fund the Beehive.

Councillor Peter Chapman agreed with Councillor Robert Eggleston about not having a scorched earth policy, as some people in the town did not want the Beehive. They would expect money to be spent on other things, including the Town Centre, and events. If the Town Council didn't do that, they would get criticised.

Councillor Joe Foster stated that the town was not expecting all other activities to stop due to the Beehive. The Town Council should support the Town Centre through a difficult period. The grants budget was exhausted in the last Community Engagement Key Area Group, and grants had to be halved. This was a one-off increase to put a reserve in that budget, and to see where they were at the end of the year. There was a clear demand to improve the inclusivity of the Town Centre. The Changing Places toilet in the library was great, but was only available during the day. The Town should be welcoming to everyone. The Council were committed to improving sustainability and biodiversity. There was a one-off grants fund to see what could be done to improve the local environment, given the Council's policy on the Climate Emergency. Regarding events, there was a one-off item for the commemoration of VE Day 75, which was a nationwide event, and all Councils were encouraged to run a programme of events. This had been agreed in the Community Engagement Key Area Group meeting in June. These were all things people had said they wanted. It was ambitious because the Council should be moving forward.

Councillor Janice Henwood noted that not all councillors agreed at the Community Engagement Key Area Group meeting to spend money on fireworks for VE Day.

Councillor Mathew Cornish stated that there was no debate about it being a climate emergency. Every council had recognised that there was a growing issue, and therefore the grants were important. The people of Burgess Hill loved the events and activities. Burgess Hill was about to receive new houses which required the town to give the residents what they needed. The Council had to invest in the town centre, and in activities.

Councillor Andrew Barrett-Miles responded, questioning the claim that the grants fund was struggling for money. They had started off with £16,000 available, and only £10,000 was spent. He was not advocating a scorched earth policy, just something more balanced. He accepted that they had to honour their manifesto, but the budget was not balanced enough. He responded that the previous administration had considered working capital for the Beehive. What was more important was how it was funded. There should be more forward thinking, and more balance in where the money was allocated.

Councillor Kathleen Willis wished to clarify that there was £6,000 spent at the first grant meeting, and £10,000 at the second, therefore it was all spent.

Councillor Andrew Barrett-Miles stated that this was not shown in the figures given, which were in the public domain.

It was requested that this be passed to the CEO Steve Cridland to check.

A member of the public spoke on this item, noting that they had voted against the council tax increase to fund the Beehive. The public would not be happy to be asked to foot the bill, when there was no contribution from NewRiver REIT.

The Notes of the meeting of the Finance Key Area Group held on Monday 20 January 2020 were **AGREED**.

87. RECOMMENDATION FROM THE FINANCE KEY AREA GROUP MEETING –REVENUE BUDGET AND PRECEPT 2020/21

Council considered a recommendation from the Finance Key Area Group, following their meeting on 20 January 2020, as set out in Agenda Item 10 dated 27 January 2020.

RESOLVED THAT:

A) Council approved the 2020/21 Revenue Budget and set the Precept at £919,228, and

B) Informed Mid Sussex District accordingly.

This was proposed by Councillor Robert Eggleston and seconded by Councillor Simon Hicks.

Councillor Anne Eves arrived during this item.

88. MOTION TO COUNCIL: ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING POINT

Councillor Anne Eves put forward a motion regarding the draft electric vehicle charging strategy, as set out in Agenda Item 11 dated 27 January 2020. The Motion was seconded by Councillor Robert Duggan.

It was noted that, when asked about the draft strategy, a WSCC Officer had replied that nowhere was it stated that there would be no charging points in Burgess Hill. This was not the complete map; it showed modelling of likely demand for Electric Vehicle chargers and identified areas of high priority. Burgess Hill was not an area of high priority.

Councillor Andrew Barret Miles clarified that the strategy was initially focusing on places where there was currently no way of charging vehicles. Burgess Hill residents mainly had the ability to charge vehicles at home. Burgess Hill did appear to be left off the initial phase, however if there was an opportunity for them to be put in Burgess Hill this would be done.

Councillor Robert Duggan proposed a change to the wording of the motion, which Councillor Mathew Cornish seconded. It was agreed to change the wording to the following:

‘Having read the WSCC draft strategy for electric vehicles, issued in December 2019, Burgess Hill Town Council asks for better clarity in the plan on the proposed geographical distribution of EV charging points, particularly on the provision in Burgess Hill.’

It was noted that this was not a deployment map of locations for charging points, but a model for where there was most need for publicly funded charging points. WSCC had stated that they were looking for a geographical spread. There would be more demand in areas where there were lots of flats. There was a form up on the WSCC website where locations could be suggested, which would be referred to in the next phase of the process. The Council could encourage people to take part in this via social media etc.

Filling gaps in rural areas should be considered.

It was stated that electricity for electric cars had to be produced from somewhere.

It was noted that the Place and Connectivity project included 6 chargers in Burgess Hill, this would include two at Cyprus road, two at Wivelsfield Station and two at the Triangle Leisure Centre.

Councillor Anne Eves knew of at least two residents in the town who did not have somewhere to charge their cars at home, and currently charged them at their workplace. It should be considered that a lot of people who would be using the chargers would be visitors who did not live in the town.

A member of the public stated that while electric vehicle charging points were currently needed, the future would be hydrogen cars.

RESOLVED THAT:

The amended motion was agreed as follows:

Having read the WSCC draft strategy for electric vehicles, issued in December 2019, Burgess Hill Town Council asks for better clarity in the plan on the proposed geographical distribution of EV charging points, particularly on the provision in Burgess Hill.

89. CLOSURE OF CHURCHYARD: ST EDWARD THE CONFESSOR

As set out in Agenda Item 12 dated 27 January 2020, the Churchyard of St Edward the Confessor had been declared closed by the diocese. A letter had been received from the Churchwarden and Lay Chair of the Parochial Church Council which requested that the Town Council take over the maintenance of the Churchyard.

RESOLVED THAT:

1. The Council noted that the churchyard of St Edward the Confessor had been formally closed for burials by the Diocese.
2. That in terms of section 215 of the Local Government Act (1972) the Town Council requested the District Council to take over the maintenance of this churchyard and that the church be informed accordingly.

Councillor Robert Eggleston proposed and Councillor Joe Foster seconded.

90. MCDONALDS ROUNDABOUT

Councillor Robert Eggleston provided a written update on discussions held with the owner of the local McDonalds restaurant regarding the roundabout.

It was reiterated that there was no intention of an entry point on Station Road.

It was stated that the same proposal had been made a year and a half ago and MSDC was the problem at that time.

A member of the public spoke on this item, stating that they frequently crossed that entrance on the school run, and it would be wise to put in a pedestrian crossing. They had witnessed a near accident at the crossing recently. Consideration should be given to the safety of the roundabout as motorists and pedestrians needed unfettered vision.

It was recognised that this was not only a traffic issue but also a pedestrian hazard.

RESOLVED THAT:

The report was noted.

91. DRAFT ROTA OF MEETINGS FOR 2020-2021

The Draft Rota of Meetings for 2020-2021 was considered.

RESOLVED THAT:

The Draft Rota of Meetings for 2020-2021 was approved.

92. UPDATE ON BRIDGE THE GAP

Councillor Robert Eggleston provided a written update on Bridge the Gap.

It was suggested that each suggestion in the written update be scrutinised. Questions were raised on the Trading Places and Outdoor Market plan, firstly over where would be the staff to look after this, and what would be the costing of the staff. Secondly there were already two emporiums in the town which could be considered indoor markets. It was answered that there was funding in the budget for staff.

It was suggested that this be referred to the next Strategic Development Key Area Group meeting, which would give more time to review and discuss the update.

It was questioned whether, given the size of the proposal, there would be enough time in a Strategic Development Key Area Group meeting, or did it deserve an extraordinary meeting. It should be discussed properly. It was answered that it would depend what else was on the Agenda, and that this was what the Strategic Development Key Area Group was for.

It would be discussed at a series of meetings throughout the year, and was not a one and done exercise. These were all ideas – some may change, some may be scrapped.

Councillor Robert Eggleston clarified that this was an outline of activities that could be readily implemented. The Council had agreed on Bridge the Gap, and now had an outline programme based on Dare to Dream. This was something that the Council could work from. The Council should focus their energies on building a programme that members and officers could deliver.

It was noted that any project would need to be value for money.

RESOLVED THAT:

The Report was noted. It would be discussed at the next strategic KAG.

92. **DIARY DATES**

Council received a schedule of forthcoming events as set out in Agenda Item 16 dated 27 January 2020.

It was noted that on 6 February 'With you in mind' was taking place, and on 15 February the Burgess Hill Repair Café was opening.

It was noted that the sustainability group had decided that agendas and papers would in future only be available by request for both councillors and members of the public.

RESOLVED that:

The contents of the report was noted.

93. Meeting terminated at 20.25 hours.