

Burgess Hill Town Council

MINUTES of the proceedings of the
BURGESS HILL ANNUAL TOWN MEETING
held on **TUESDAY 9 APRIL 2019** at 19.30 hours
at Cyprus Hall, Cyprus Road.

There were 117 attendees including the Town Mayor Chris Cherry, Town Councillors and members of the public.

1. **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

The Town Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting. The meeting would be broadcast live on Burgess Hill Radio 103.8fm.

2. **APOLOGIES**

An apology for absence was received from Andrew Barrett-Miles.

3. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on Wednesday 11 April 2018, having been previously circulated, were signed by the Town Mayor with the agreement of those present.

4. **REPORT ON THE WORK AND ACTIVITIES OF BURGESS HILL TOWN COUNCIL IN 2018/19**

The Town Mayor presented the Annual Report (attached at Appendix 1) on the work of the Town Council for the period 2018/2019.

The Town Mayor gave thanks to the officers and staff at Burgess Hill Town Council that have worked hard all year to make Burgess Hill a great place to live. Residents had turned out in their thousands to attend the many events throughout the past year.

The Town Mayor was invited to the Burgess Hill Marathon in May 2018 where there were over 500 finishers and the event was a triumph. The highlight in June was the Summer Festival which offered a wide variety of events for all ages. The Summer Fayre proved very popular with lots of families participating in the many activities on offer.

The Urban Beach proved to be a roaring success with both children and adults alike over the summer. In late August the Mid Sussex Bangladeshi Welfare Association held their Eid Festival. It was great to see so many people from the community come together to share in this important celebration. During the summer there were events targeted directly at young people including an Outdoor Cinema and a Zipline across St John's Park.

One of the best-attended events of the year was the Burgess Hill Bonfire Society Procession in September. This event raised a considerable amount of money for many charities. We also celebrated the 30th anniversary of the Town Twinning of Burgess Hill and Schmallingenberg. The Burgess Hill Christmas Lights Switch-on in November was another well-attended event as crowds packed into Church Walk to meet Paddington Bear.

Thousands of people came out to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the end of WW1 on 11 November. The Beacon Lighting Ceremony and Poppy Procession was a memory that would stay forever with the Town Mayor. She gave thanks to the sports clubs in the town as well as all of the volunteers in the town and special thanks went to the Burgess Hill District Lions, Rotary Club and Friends of the Green Circle Network.

The Town Centre Redevelopment would become more apparent over the coming months and the old familiar landscape would begin to change. Many residents would have seen Burgess Hill evolve, change and grow over the years. The Town Mayor had been given some advice from a neighbouring Mayor which stated that becoming a Mayor of a town was like being given a garden to look after. There would be times when it looked prettier, times when some parts grown and flourish and times when have bloomed and died off thus making room for something else to take its place. Our town keeps evolving and the picture continually changes. The people, the community groups and the businesses that have made the town unique were once newcomers. Over the coming months we will see newcomers and see new seeds planted and we will watch it grow. The community spirit will go from strength to strength in the coming year.

The Town Mayor introduced Councillor Richard Cherry to make a special announcement that was an addition to the published agenda, relating to the planned Community & Performance Centre. Plans for the new Centre had been presented and were on display at the back of the hall.

Councillor Richard Cherry, Chairman of the Naming Sub-Committee explained that the group had completed the first stage on the road to naming the new building. This stage consisted of inviting residents of Burgess Hill and school students to put forward names to go to a public vote which would launch at the end of the meeting. 33 names were submitted and 5 were now shortlisted based on set criteria. It was decided that names of individual people connected to the community in Burgess Hill or the performing arts in general would be excluded from the shortlist for the name of the overall venue and would instead be considered for rooms within the building.

The sub-committee was unanimous when deciding on the following names to be shortlisted:

Beehive - historically the name given to the tall conical shaped kilns which were on all of Burgess Hill's brickmaking sites. There is also a second historical connection with the early filmmaker Charles Bee-Mason who lived in Burgess Hill and produced two famous short films about bees, which were in the British Film Institute. He even changed his name to incorporate the word 'bee' in it.

Wyvern – a mythical creature that was locally produced in terra-cotta. Also a feature of on the shield of Alfred the Great whose hunting land is known to have extended throughout the Ditchling area and its surrounding countryside.

Brickworks - historically and within living memory, this epitomised the past economy of Burgess Hill and in many respects the town's original reason to be.

Hambrook - the name of the watercourse that runs from Burgess Hill to the River Adur.

Burgess Hill Centre - although this is a utilitarian name it does have the simple benefit of 'doing what it says on the tin' and clearly relates to the town.

Councillor Richard Cherry explained that there would be voting slips available at the end of the meeting. Residents would also be able to vote online or in the Help Point. A press release would be issued regarding the voting process.

The Town Mayor thanked Councillor Richard Cherry and then took questions from the audience.

A resident asked whether New River Retail were invited to give a presentation at the meeting. Councillor Pru Moore explained that it would have been great to have New River Retail however they were not prepared to attend any public meetings until legalese was finalised. The relocation of Lidl was delayed by six months but it would move in July to allow for demolition works to start in the town. It was understandable that residents were frustrated but it was important to bear in mind that the high street in general was in crisis. New River Retail was committed to Burgess Hill and had invested a lot of money in the scheme. Modern Town Centres required a range of facilities and not just shops. New River Retail was invited to the Annual Town Meeting but they declined.

Councillor Janice Henwood asked what the Town Council was going to do to make sure that New River Retail fulfils their obligation to build an appropriate library to the specified qualifications initially received when the proposal came forward. Councillor Pru Moore explained that there was a lot of misunderstanding regarding the library. It would not be half of the footprint, it would be the same size as the current library as it would be over two floors. There would be full disabled access. New River would be delivering exactly what they were going to deliver in the second library they were going to build.

The inside of the temporary library was not originally built to the specifications required of the permanent library. New River Retail announced that they were in talks with Hollywood Bowl. Residents had expressed a lot of interest in a bowling alley in the town. The Hollywood Bowl would need to be on a lower floor and would only fit on the original site of the permanent library. This means that adjustments would be made to the inside of the temporary library to make this permanent and to the standard required by the Library Service. Burgess Hill was lucky to be receiving a brand new state of the art library alongside the redevelopment.

A resident asked whether a Changing Places Toilet would be included in the new library. Councillor Pru Moore explained that a request was sent to the Library Service to include one of these toilet facilities however they did not agree to it because the Library Service does not provide toilets. It was a desire and the Town Council pushed for it to happen but the County Council were not prepared to service this type of facility.

A resident asked whether the Council was pre-empting that the new library would need to submit a planning application for a permanent change of use, as the temporary change of use was only valid until next March. Councillor Pru Moore explained that the site had temporary permission for a library and once legalese was finalised New River Retail would then apply to make this permanent through the normal planning process. It was unlikely there would be a valid planning reason for refusal.

The resident felt there were conditions put on the temporary change of use and they should not change. An application would have to be submitted and residents would be able to comment on this. Councillor Pru Moore reiterated that the application would only be refused should there be a valid planning reason for it. Pru Moore thanked West Sussex County Council for allowing Burgess Hill to keep the library and thanked New River Retail for providing this brand new facility in the town.

A resident addressed the Police Officers that were present at the meeting and thanked them for that they did for the town despite the financial constraints. The resident went on to discuss the recent improvements to Bedelands Nature Reserve and asked whether the whole £90,000 allocated to the site had been spent. One of the footpaths on the north east corner leading down near the railway line was still in need of some work as it was a health hazard.

The resident was also concerned about the amount of dog fouling on the playing fields which was unacceptable. It was suggested that the Council could pay staff to patrol this area on weekends to monitor the problem. Dog walkers were only limited to six dogs which resulted in large packs of dogs walked at the site and elderly residents found this menacing. The Council had acquired the land to the west of Bedelands which was a wonderful opportunity to open out the facilities and the resident asked that something be done to ensure that this area was be protected from development.

Councillor Pru Moore confirmed that 11 hectares of land was acquired and allocated to Bedelands. Homes England had taken over the Northern Arc

development and had to negotiate with the District Council on how much green space would be given back to the town. Dominic Moore was thanked for his involvement. The land will be designated as a Nature Reserve which means that it could not be touched. It would be unfair to pay staff to monitor the dog fouling at just one football pitch when there are lots of other sports grounds in the town. There was a law that stated only six dogs were allowed otherwise it would be dangerous. It was suggested that a team of volunteers help to clean up these sites. Details about the unsafe path at Bedelands should be given to the Council at the end of the meeting so this could be investigated. It was confirmed that the full £90,000 was spent on the site.

A resident asked whether more dog poo bins could be provided in the town as there were not enough and this was causing a lot of frustration to responsible dog owners. Councillor Pru Moore explained that this was a District Council issue and that the bins were positioned in specific areas of the town to allow workers to get the van within a certain distance of the bin locations. More bins would be requested as Burges Hill grows larger.

A resident asked whether anything could be done to ease the traffic on the McDonalds roundabout and whether a new entrance via Station Road could be considered. The resident also raised concerns of the quality of the workmanship by Virgin Media contractors as many footpaths in the town had been left in a bad state.

Councillor Pru Moore asked CEO Steve Cridland to look into the issue with Virgin Media and if the work was below standard then it should have been stopped. McDonalds roundabout was an increasing concern. A meeting had taken place with the restaurant owner and the Council. The owner had agreed to take steps to ease the traffic problem by speeding up the order process with staff on the drive-thru using mobile ordering devices. The District Council did not want to give up part of the car park adjacent to the restaurant. There was also concern that if yellow markings were painted on the roundabout this could not be enforced properly. It was unlikely that traffic would be re-routed on Station Road due to the nearby school. Future meetings to discuss this issue were due to take place.

If other residents were unhappy with the work carried out by Virgin Media then they should send images and location information to the Town Council via email so that a meeting with the company could be arranged and the problems be investigated.

The Town Mayor introduced Ken Glendenning who would give a presentation on the Northern Arc. Further questions could be asked after the presentation.

5. REPORT ON THE NORTHERN ARC – KEN GLENDENNING

Ken Glendenning introduced himself and thanked the Town Council for inviting him to attend the meeting. Homes England was a Government Agency that was all about delivering homes on behalf of the Government. 3500 homes would be delivered as part of this project.

One of the first commitments given to the Council at the start of the project was that they would undertake a Planning Compliance Scheme so it would be fully aligned with the local Planning Policy. It would deliver the range of expected infrastructure including 2 primary schools and one secondary school in phase one, neighbourhood centres, the key central infrastructure spine, community & leisure spaces and open space areas as well as employment opportunities.

Homes England acquired the land in 2018 in one transaction. This was the largest transaction ever completed by the agency. It was the largest investment in a project of this scale in England. Since then, the agency had worked with the residents and the Council to deliver the masterplan which was adopted in September 2018. The number of homes on the site had increased from 3000 to 3500 which was in line with local Planning Policy. A huge amount of work had been done on the studies and looking at where the investment was required. A planning application was submitted in December. This put the next level of detail onto the scheme and would allow for reserved matter applications to follow. An Infrastructure Delivery Plan had been agreed. This included details about proposed upgrades to and installation of new roads and utilities. The masterplan was the framework for the planning application that had been submitted.

The Northern Arc was a complex project. There would be a series of upfront challenges to be overcome and upfront expenditure. 66% of the overall cost of the scheme would only deliver around 30% of the homes. Over the next few years the roads would be put in alongside installation of bridgeworks, sewer upgrades, an increase in substations and social infrastructure. Homes England had committed to funding and delivering two new primary schools and the first of those schools was expected to open by 2025. The secondary school was part of Phase 1. There would be health provision and the agency was in discussions with the CCG to see where they could come in. The site divided itself naturally into phasing due to the current road layout. There will be a new roundabout added on the A2300.

Homes England was currently procuring contractors to deliver infrastructure to open up the site for Phase 1A – Freeks Farm. Countryside Properties had been contracted to bring forward 460 over the next 3 years at this site and a reserved matters planning application would be submitted over the next two months for this site. 39% of the homes would be affordable. Countryside Properties was working through the scheme that would be consulted on before the plans were submitted. A minimum of 8 homes would be built each month. The northern part of Freeks Farm connected into the northern part of the town and so there would be an agreement put in place to restrict construction traffic off this site. The new link road connecting the north of Freeks Farm would open up 800 homes and ease pressure on Maple Drive.

Ken Glendenning took questions from the audience.

A resident asked how Homes England would ensure the development benefitted the town centre, as the major link roads to the site would lead traffic out of town rather than in. The resident also raised concerns over the

prospective traffic increase at Wivelsfield Station. Ken Glendenning explained that the Northern Arc had to be a connected part of the town and that by building on the other developments in the town and the increase in employment, many people would want to remain in Burgess Hill. High speed internet would be installed as part of the scheme and Homes England would contribute to improvement works at Wivelsfield Station which could include a multi-storey car park.

Councillor Pru Moore explained that Wivelsfield Station was not fit for purpose and was not accessible. Network Rail owned the south side of the Station and was aware that it needed additional car parking and a lift to the platforms. Intense talks to discuss this matter with Network Rail and the District Council were ongoing.

Councillor Anne Jones raised concerns over the quality of the housing and stressed the importance of good quality affordable homes for key workers in the local area. Ken Glendenning explained that design was at the heart of the development. There were high expectations from the developers which flowed from the planning proposals agreed with the Council. Countryside Properties build all homes to the same standard and all homes would be built like-for-like.

A resident asked whether existing local schools and facilities would be relocated as part of the scheme or if the schools included would be new, as it was rumoured that St Wilfrid's Primary School would be relocating to the Northern Arcs site. Pru Moore explained that all three of the schools would be totally new and unattached. St Pauls Catholic School would like to consolidate its junior school at the site but this was a separate issue.

A resident asked when the new schools were due to open as their son would need to attend a school in Haywards Heath because there were no places available in Burgess Hill. Councillor Pru Moore explained that Burgess Hill Academy did have places. The resident explained that West Sussex County Council had sent a letter stating that their son would need to attend Oak Hall in Haywards Heath because there were no places at Burgess Hill Academy and explained that other students at Southway Junior School were in the same position.

Councillor Pru Moore had recently met with the head teacher at Burgess Hill Academy who confirmed that the school had not reached capacity. Pru Moore asked the resident to provide a copy of the letter for evidence so that she could argue this point with West Sussex County Council and ask why conflicting information was being provided.

A resident asked whether the new secondary school would be funded by Homes England as this was not clear from presentation. West Sussex County Council did not feel that there was a need for a new secondary school. Phase 1 was supposed to be completed by 2025 and the secondary school was part of this phase. The resident asked whether finances were available to deliver this. Ken Glendenning explained that the infrastructure going in would release the site where the secondary school would be located. Homes England was committed to completing the road from Isaacs Lane by May 2021 in order for

this to happen. The secondary school would open in September 2021. Funding for the secondary school would be derived from Section 106 contributions. West Sussex County Council had agreed to deliver the secondary school in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan. Councillor Anne Jones explained that there was a commitment from the County Council and that she would follow this up with them.

A resident asked how Homes England could assure members of the public that affordable homes would be delivered as part of the project. Ken Glendenning explained that it was the responsibility of Homes England to ensure that the affordable homes were delivered. There was a development agreement with the contractors and this would be supervised by the agency. The homes will be delivered at a certain pace and to a certain design quality. There were various review points throughout the contract. The Planning Authority was also responsible as the officers should ensure that developers keep to the conditions.

A resident asked whether the Northern Arc development would be a pilot for similar developments across the UK as it was the biggest of its kind. The new homes could demonstrate the use of smart technology, energy and infrastructure, and show how this could be linked with high quality fibre communications. Ken Glendenning agreed with the resident and explained that this project would be a demonstration for other development and that the homes would be made as sustainable as possible.

A resident asked whether there would be any social housing included in the development and what provision had been made for water supply. Ken Glendenning explained that no social housing would be included. 30% affordable homes would be delivered with 70% shared ownership. *[This has since been clarified with Mr Glendinning who has confirmed that of the 30% affordable housing 75% will be social or affordable rent with the remainder being intermediate. The scheme will be DP31 Compliant].* Homes England was working with the water utility companies. There was a huge amount of water discovered on the site. Discussions were taking place to ensure that the right level of water supply was included.

A resident raised concerns over a proposed new entrance for McDonalds off Station Road because of the affect this would have on the nearby school. When McDonalds was first agreed at planning they promised that it would not infringe on Station Road and a hedge was installed to block out noise and smells however this had been cut back. There was also a refuse collection order on the site. Councillor Pru Moore explained that Mid Sussex District Council was responsible for the hedge and that she would investigate why it had been cut back.

A resident stated that Wivelsfield Station was the most inaccessible station on the rail network with 62 steps to reach the platforms. The government had given £30 million for accessibility upgrades to stations however Wivelsfield was not included in this scheme. The resident asked whether Homes England would be contributing funds for improvement works at this station. Ken Glendenning explained that Homes England were in discussions with the

Council regarding a proposal to improve accessibility at the station. Councillor Pru Moore explained that Network Rail had overall control of the station.

A resident asked whether a designated cycle lane had been included as part of the scheme. Ken Glendenning confirmed that cycle ways that connect into the town centre and along the green circle were included in the masterplan for the site, alongside segregated areas for pedestrians. The resident also asked whether solar panels would be installed on the new homes. Ken Glendenning explained that solar panels were not being considered at this stage however the new homes would be thermally efficient in order to futureproof the scheme. If the homes were well made and efficient then they would use less energy.

The Town Mayor closed the meeting and asked residents to email any further questions to the Councillors.

The meeting ended at 21.00 hours.