



MINUTES of the **ORDINARY MEETING** of the **TOWN COUNCIL** held in the Council Chamber on **MONDAY 11 MARCH 2019**.

Present:

Chris Cherry	Town Mayor
Colin Holden	Deputy Town Mayor
Wendy Agate	
Andrew Barrett-Miles	
Cherry Catharine	
Richard Cherry	
Claire Fussell	
Steve Hansford	
Diane Heckels	
Janice Henwood	
Anne Jones MBE	
Jacqui Landriani*	
John Merrill*	
Pru Moore	
Kirsty Page	
Chris Thomas-Atkin	
Mandy Thomas-Atkin	
Julian Thorpe	

* *Denotes non-attendance.*

(19.00)

363. OPEN FORUM

There were several members of the public present.

A resident had addressed the Council in November regarding events in the town centre to support local traders and the current state of the Town Centre Partnership. The resident was told that footfall was up however since this meeting, the Book Den and Market Place Shopping Centre had reported that footfall was down. During a meeting with local traders last week, the Council had expressed interest in reviving the Town Centre Partnership and spending the money. The resident asked for an update on the situation.

Pru Moore said that the question asked at the Council meeting in November was regarding the whereabouts of the Town Centre Partnership money, and that she had informed the resident that the money was in a holding account as agreed by the partnership. It was agreed that the money would be used and the partnership would resume when the demolition works started in the town centre, to put on additional events in order to support the local traders.

There were other events taking place in the town centre and this included the sand pit which had increased footfall to the lower end of Church Walk, despite receiving negative publicity. Councillors had visited local traders and the vast majority of shopkeepers were doing ok and were very excited about the forthcoming redevelopment. The new Iceland store was doing very well and people were now parking in Cyprus Road Car Park to visit the shop which may have impacted the footfall at Market Place. There were only two empty units in Church Walk, compared to three years ago when most shops were vacant. The Council reassured traders that they were on their side and wanted to send out a positive message and support them.

Janice Henwood asked whether New River Retail would be contributing to the Town Centre Partnership fund. Originally there were contributions from Market Place, Martlets and the Town Council. Pru Moore explained that New River Retail, Market Place and the Town Council were the three partners and that funding had also been contributed from the Mary Portas Scheme. The Partnership decided to ring-fence the money and they would decide when to use it. As a Town Council we were driven by the other two partners.

A resident asked the Council why the residents' concerns about the delays relating to the town centre redevelopment were always seen as negativity. Residents had been invited to speak to the Mid Sussex Times reporter at Burgess Hill Radio regarding the concerns about the 18 month delay and the lack of information provided. This was being construed as negativity however it was concern. There were many people in Burgess Hill that were concerned about the delays. Last year at the Annual Meeting, residents raised concerns but were accused of being negative and talking the town down.

Pru Moore stated that a lot of progress had been made over the last year. Construction of the new Lidl store and the new library were almost complete, despite people saying this would never happen. As soon as Lidl have moved to the new site, work could begin on the town centre redevelopment. It was time constrained and it was unfortunate that works on the Lidl site were delayed by six months. New River Retail had invested vast amounts of money into Burgess Hill and was committed to the town. It was impossible to give specific dates as nothing could be guaranteed. It was important to stay positive.

A resident asked why the Council was not giving a direct answer to questions during the open forum. Concern from residents should not be construed as talking the town down. Pru Moore explained that expressing concern was one thing, but the continuous pumping out of negativity and not accepting reasonable answers or explanations was not helpful.

The Town Council had been criticised for not providing redevelopment timescale information to residents however the Council was not in the position to do this as things change and it would be unhelpful to issue inaccurate information.

364. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence had been received from Jacqui Landriani.

365. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

366. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

As this was the last Council Meeting prior to the local elections, the Town Mayor thanked all members of the Council for their hard work over the last four years.

CEO Steve Cridland also took the opportunity to thank members of the Council on behalf of the Town Council staff and wished them all the best for the future.

367. WOODLANDS MEED UPDATE

Marion Wilcock and Adam Rowland thanked the Council for inviting them to give an update on Woodlands Meed School.

There were currently 160 pupils at the school site which was purpose built and was able to cater for pupils with a range of complex special needs. There were currently 100 pupils at the college site which was a pre-fabricated building which was never designed to meet the complex special needs of pupils and it was a real challenge to meet their needs presently.

Woodlands Meed had formed a connection with other special schools and was working in partnership locally to share best practice. Other schools could apply for support and training from Woodlands Meed as part of the Meeds SEND Alliance. Woodlands Meed had a great PTA which was helping to promote the school within the local community.

It was important that pupils received the best education, felt supported and that they were looking at their future careers and pathways into employment. In West Sussex only 2% of people with special educational needs were employed, but up to 60% of those people wanted to work. The school was looking to open a pop-up shop in the Martlets in June as a platform for their enterprise work and to showcase what people with special educational needs were capable of achieving.

The School Site was purpose-built which means that any pupil can access any classroom and be engaged in any part of the curriculum. Classrooms had adjustable workspaces and a ceiling track hoist system. The college site did not have these facilities and this was why a new site was required. £19 million was being spent by West Sussex County Council on out of county placements because there were not the facilities for the provision within West Sussex to cater for these pupils. After three years of campaigning, it had now been confirmed that West Sussex County Council would support the development of the college site.

£20 million would be provided over the next three financial years. The funding would need to cover surveying, planning, design, demolition and reinstatement of the car parking and old buildings. Woodlands Meed had already arranged for ground surveys to be done at the site during the summer holidays. Facilities to be included in the plans had been agreed with Council officers alongside strict guidelines from the Department for Education. The pupils and staff had been working on concept design. The school aimed to open the new building in September 2021.

Janice Henwood asked whether there would be sufficient capacity at the new college site for the growing need for special education. Marion Wilcock explained that this was finite because Woodlands Meed was constrained by the site. There was a growing need however the school was trying to spread expertise in order to support other schools as part of its strategy.

Anne Jones asked whether the facilities at Woodlands Meed would be made open and available during the school holiday periods. Adam Rowland explained that the facilities were always open however there were no active clubs currently. It would be possible to link up with local charities that may be able to use the facilities and provide extra-curricular activities in the future.

The Town Mayor thanked Marion Wilcock and Adam Rowland for their informative presentation.

368. **COUNCIL MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Meeting of Council held on Monday 28 January

2019 were **AGREED** and signed as a correct record.

Janice Henwood raised concerns regarding the AGM in April, as the minutes referred to it as 'not a political event' however, decisions and recommendations that had been made by the Council throughout the previous year would be discussed. It was also questioned whether the timing of the meeting was appropriate.

CEO Steve Cridland explained that this was not an Annual General Meeting, nor was it a Town Council meeting. This was a town meeting and therefore would not be a political event. There would be a factual Annual Town Report at the meeting as usual and no political statement would be made. The Annual Town Meeting had taken place during purdah in previous years and this would not affect anything.

369. **PLANNING COMMITTEE MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meetings of the Planning Committee held on Monday 11 February 2019 and Monday 4 March 2019 were **AGREED**.

370. **CUSTOMER SERVICES KEY AREA GROUP: NOTES OF MEETING**

The Notes of the meeting of the Customer Services KAG meeting held on Thursday 28 February 2019 were **NOTED**.

371. **THE BIG MENTAL HEALTH POP UP**

Sussex Oakleaf would like to take over an empty shop front in the town centre and create a 'pop up' public space filled with art, information, activities and inspirational stories of mental health recovery. They were looking to raise £2,500. It was recommended that the Town Council grant £250 to support the project.

Steve Hansford proposed that the Town Council grant £500. This motion was seconded by Cherry Catharine and supported by all present.

RESOLVED that:

£500 be granted to Sussex Oakleaf to support their Mental Health pop up shop.

372. **COMMUNITY CENTRE UPDATE**

Final plans had been submitted for approval by the Council prior to the submission of a planning application. The plans satisfied the needs of potential users and the budget and had been approved by the Steering Committee. A link to enable Council to view the plans online was set out in Agenda Item 10 dated 11 March 2019.

Andrew Barrett-Miles explained that a full Changing Places Toilet could not be accommodated in the final plans due to lack of space however a smaller advanced disabled toilet would be included on the second floor and this would feature a hoist and a wide entrance. The building may not be open every day of the week and so it was unclear as to whether it met the absolute requirements for a Changing Places Toilet.

The plans would now be submitted for pre planning approval with Mid Sussex District Council with the view to submit the full application within a month. The plans would be made available for public consultation. A meeting was held with residents of Cyprus Road and the Cyprus Hall Association. A display of the plans would be set up in the Help Point.

Paddy Hunter Murphy, the fundraiser appointed by the Council, had submitted his feasibility report. Sufficient funds could be raised over a period of up to two years. A charity would need to be set up as the fundraising agent and potentially a further charity would be set up to manage the building. The cost to cover the Private Phase would be £69,425. Initial advice on VAT and had been received and further advice would now be taken.

It was suggested that an easy-read version of the plans be made available at the public consultation for residents with learning difficulties and that the plans be displayed in Market Place Shopping Centre. Pru Moore explained that the display could be erected in a range of locations around town during the consultation period, once the full application was submitted.

Mandy Thomas-Atkin asked for clarification on the VAT issue and asked whether money was available to fund this. Chris Thomas-Atkin explained that money was available for this and it was crucial that the right advice be taken.

RESOLVED that:

- A. the plans and cost estimate of £5,498,171 to construct a flexible community space on the site of the Royal British Legion building in Cyprus road be approved and a planning application be formally submitted.
- B. the plans and costings be made available to the public to inspect and comment upon for a period of 30 days.
- C. the feasibility study submitted by Paddy Hunter Murphy be accepted and noted and that he be appointed at a cost of £69,425 to cover the costs of the Private Phase of the fundraising effort.
- D. further advice be taken on VAT issues and the forming of one,

possibly two charities, to raise funds and manage the building and that dependent on the advice a suitable entity/ies be established.

373. REPLACEMENT OF TABLES

A local company had quoted £5,713.88 for the replacement of the tables in the council chamber. The new tables would feature laminate tops rather than solid oak which would be more appropriate for lifting and moving when the room was hired out.

RESOLVED that:

- A. the tables in the council chamber be replaced at a cost of £5,713.88 and be funded from savings made on the current budget and income from hiring out the chamber.
- B. the existing tables be disposed of by selling them, donating them to a charity or dumping them at a cost not to exceed £600.

374. DIARY DATES

Council received a schedule of forthcoming events as set out in Agenda Item 12 dated 11 March 2019.

RESOLVED that:

the contents of the report be noted.

375. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

No matters were raised or discussed.

376. Meeting terminated at 20.10 hours.