



MINUTES of the **ORDINARY MEETING** of the **TOWN COUNCIL** held in the Council Chamber on **MONDAY 9 MARCH 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)

Councillor Robert Eggleston acted as Vice Chair for this meeting.

94. **OPEN FORUM**

Kirsty Lord addressed the Council in her capacity as a County Councillor on Item 10, Woodlands Meed. She noted that the Chair of Governors for Woodlands Meed, and Anne Jones MBE, County Councillor were also present. She noted that £20million had been committed in February 2020 towards the rebuild of the school. There was an issue with the access to the site, as access could not be through Birchwood Grove Road. Site access needed to be from the south, over Folders Meadow. Access would be temporary, while the

build was ongoing, and permanent access would still be from Birchwood Grove Road. The exact timelines were not yet determined. After the build, the access would be restored to its previous condition. This would allow for safer vehicular access during the build. She asked the Council to support this. It was important for many local families that the facilities were improved, and they had fought for the money to be allocated.

Anne Jones addressed the Council in her capacity as a County Councillor on Item 10, Woodlands Meed. The rebuild had been a 10 or 11 year battle. She was delighted that Burgess Hill Town Council were being consulted. There was a covenant in place to protect the land in perpetuity; however these were not always worth that much. Folders Meadow was the easiest access. Birchwood Grove School was willing and happy for this to be built. It was crucial that it happened.

A resident addressed the Council regarding accessibility at Wivelsfield Station. They had been campaigning since June 1999 regarding the 61 steps at the entrance to the station. Three years ago the government had announced funding towards station improvements. Network Rail had placed Wivelsfield 18th on their list of priorities. A further £20million had been announced a few weeks ago for accessibility. Wivelsfield was now number 1 on the list. It was the most inaccessible station on the British railways. The resident could not find out whether all of the money would come from government or if it would need additional input. He asked which council will be taking the lead on this. It needed someone from MSDC and someone from BHTC who would take it on.

In response to the resident, it was noted that the Place and Connectivity project would be addressing Wivelsfield Station, and that it was part of the Burgess Hill Growth Area. There was a steering group, for the Place and Connectivity project, on which Burgess Hill Town Council had a representative. They had last met a couple of weeks ago, and looked at a number of aspects. As part of the Access for All fund, Wivelsfield Station had been awarded £1million. The roll out of this would start later this year. MSDC and WSCC had money to spend on the project, awarded by central government and from Section 106 funding. Work should commence later this year to improve access, and make Wivelsfield a better gateway for that side of town. The resident was thanked for his work.

A resident addressed the Council and stated that the issue with Wivelsfield Station had been going on for many years, and had involved lots of determination and hard work. They had lived and breathed Woodlands Meed – this phase was to be welcomed, and should have been done years ago. They wanted to address the Beehive project. As a former member of the Theatre Club, they believed that this project needed to move forward with the whole of the Town Council behind it. The Theatre Club undertook intergenerational work, partaking in projects across the board, and this needed

encouraging. Burgess Hill was the only town in Mid Sussex that had had its community facility removed. The Martlets wasn't perfect, but they felt that what had happened was a crime. The Town Council should use whatever means they could to find the funding, as it desperately needed doing. Theatre was important and needed supporting. The resident also noted that the Town Council had started to move forward and re-engage the community. They noted that many years ago the Town Council had funded bulb planting around the town. There had been a lot of building done since, but having some spring flowers could give the community a lift. Could the Council look at funding this?

In response it was noted that there was around £15,000 in the minor works budget, which mentioned aesthetic improvements to the Town Centre. Robert Duggan would look at this with the Customer Services KAG.

95. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Andrew Barret-Miles, Joseph Foster and Anne Eves.

96. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Robert Eggleston declared an interest in respect of the report on Beehive, which would be discussed under Item 9 of the Agenda. Until now the Council had been implementing a previously approved project, from January 2019. When the planning application had come before District Planning he had declared an interest and didn't vote or take part in the discussion. Now the Beehive project may be moving onto a different phase. As a patron of the arts, he would cease to participate in votes on the project. In future he would be campaigning as an individual for this project. He would not do that as a chair or member of a group that may have influence. He would be stepping aside as Chair of the Cultural Quarter Committee.

97. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councillor Janice Henwood apologised for her previous remarks on the standard of the minute taking.

Inspector Peter Dommatt was standing down after two years in office. The Town Council wished to thank him for the work he had done and the contribution he had made in Burgess Hill.

Inspector Dommatt responded that he had first policed Burgess Hill in 1992, and had returned to finish his career. It was a pleasure and a privilege.

The Chair noted the onset of Covid 19 in the country. He was helping to organise the Annual Town Meeting, which may be at a time when government was advising against public gatherings. He was looking at the Agenda and also ways to stream or communicate it without people having to get together. The same applied for the work of the Council, and they were looking at steps to take. The meeting was due to take place on Tuesday 14 April, at Cyprus Hall.

98. **PRESENTATION FROM BURGESS HILL FOOTBALL CLUB: VINCE ALFIERI AND KEVIN NEWELL**

Vince Alfieri and Kevin Newell thanked the Council for allowing them to come and make a presentation. They wished to enlist the support of the Town Council in their endeavours to build a new stadium facility.

They had been told for 15 years that Leylands Park was scheduled for redevelopment, and that the Football Club would have to be moved; however nothing had happened so far.

The work they did for the community as a whole went much deeper than just football.

Vince Alfieri spoke about what they were doing for the youth. He noted that statistics showed that obesity and mental health were large issues with young people. The top two preventative measures for both of these were being in good physical health, with good diet and exercise, and having the time and freedom to play indoors and outdoors. He had built his football club off of this purpose, aiming to support positive wellbeing for all.

Kevin spoke on his vision for the Football Club – being a community club, and playing at a high level. Kevin and Vince joined forces, with a strategic framework built around 3 core values – firstly a proactive approach to welfare and wellbeing, secondly football development, and thirdly outreach into the community. In 2019 they were one of the biggest youth football clubs in Sussex. They could do more, but could not sustain any more growth. They were already using other local facilities, and had nowhere else to go.

The main challenge was facilities – they needed an environment that they could control and decent pitches.

Kevin noted that the redevelopment of Leylands Park had been adopted in the District and Neighbourhood plans, and contained a caveat that this could not be done until the football club was relocated; however nobody was finding an alternative suitable venue. He had done his own research, contacting a developer, a housing association and a sports development company, and had made a plan for a new stadium. The scheme would generate 40-50 affordable houses, and raise £4-5million to provide a new stadium for community, including an

Artificial Turf Pitch (ATP), which could be used by other clubs throughout the season. MSDC's Local Football Facility plan had been adopted in May 2019, and Burgess Hill Football Club were not even mentioned in the plan. The club were asking BHTC to support a dialogue with MSDC, and put their weight behind it.

Clarification was asked for on ATPs. Kevin explained that these were all-weather pitches, and could be used throughout the year. ATPs did not require the same level of maintenance and were not affected by the weather in the same way as grass pitches. The current pitch was not well maintained, and was unfit for play. They could also look at a multipurpose sports hall, which would open up an opportunity to bring in groups for young people with disabilities.

It was agreed that the Football Club would condense their presentation into a summary to be emailed to all councillors. They were also happy to answer any future questions.

It was noted that MSDC owned the freehold to Leylands Park, and the football club had been on 5 year leases, which were restrictive and meant that they could not get any grants as these would need a 10 year lease. The land they wished to move to was also owned by MSDC.

A resident asked how the plans would be affected by the Northern Arc development, and specifically the plans for a multipurpose sports facility.

The response was that they were not in competition – the Northern Arc development should be of assistance as it would enable access to Bedelands from the new link road behind Freeks Lane. It also made the development of Leylands Park a better prospect.

Regarding the multipurpose sports facility, Burgess Hill was currently so overloaded that trying to get any pitch was near impossible. The new facility would be overtaken by demand from other local groups. Having a specific dedicated complex for the Football Club would be better for the community, and would provide something to be proud of as a town. Looking at the Football Facility Development Plan, MSDC acknowledged the shortfall in sports pitches.

A Councillor noted that they were saddened at the lack of response from MSDC. As a District Councillor themselves, they would make it a higher priority. They asked whether the Football Club had attended an MSDC public meeting? This might prompt a response from the press and Cabinet.

Kevin responded that after their failed attempts at a dialogue with MSDC they had gone to the press, who had published their concerns about this. MSDC had responded that they didn't know about it.

RESOLVED that:

Councillor Robert Eggleston proposed the following motion, which was seconded by Councillor Matthew Cornish:

“Burgess Hill Town Council supports the aspirations of Burgess Hill Football Club to build a state of the art sports academy near to its current ground, developer led with a view to creating social housing in that area, and that Burgess Hill Town Councillors who are also District Councillors will use all reasonable efforts to progress this through District Council, subject to the Town Council receiving further details from Burgess Hill Football Club in relation to their plans for the development of this area, to be agreed at a further meeting.”

The motion was passed unanimously.

99. **COUNCIL MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on Monday 27 January 2020 were **AGREED** and signed as a correct record.

The order of business was changed to consider Agenda Item 10 next.

100. **ACCESS ACROSS FOLDERS MEADOW PLAYING FIELD**

Funding had been approved to build a £20million complex at Woodlands Meed College. WSCC had approached the Town Council seeking permission for building vehicles to cross Folders Meadow Playing field to gain access to the site, as set out in Agenda Item 10 dated 9 March 2020.

Councillors Janice Henwood and Peter Chapman had visited the site and looked at the access and Folders Meadow. They felt that the only possible access would be through Folders Meadow.

The Chair of Governors from Woodlands Meed addressed the Council. They now had the suitability report produced by WSCC, which showed that they could not continue to occupy the current buildings for any longer than absolutely necessary. Access from Folders Meadow was the ‘least worst’ option. It would cause less disruption to residents, nearby schools, and pupils of Woodlands Meed. It would be a 14-18 month construction period, using a temporary construction road. Once this road was removed the changes would be minimal. She noted the restrictive covenant, and that no-one asking for this to be released, just to be waived for 18 months to allow for the school to be constructed. There was a full pre-application for this, and it was supported in principle by District Plan policy DP25 and the Neighbourhood Plan Policy NP3. They were not expecting issues on planning from MSDC. They asked for the project to be looked at from a positive point of view,

there was the possibility for a legacy. Some trees may have to be removed, but there could be a commitment for the wood to be used for community use. The bottom of the school was very wet, muddy, and overgrown. Opening up this area could give opportunity to make a proper habitat which could be used for nature studies for Woodlands Meed and Birchwood Grove. She requested that the Town Council agree the proposal. The Governors had a lot of information and documents, and could assure of all of their support.

It was commented that Woodlands Meed seemed to be coming to the end of a long journey to find a solution. The Council were very impressed by what they do.

It was noted that the land belonged to the governing body of Woodlands Meed school.

There was a question of whether the access would need to go through residential land on Folder's Keep, however the Chair of Governors believed the access would just go through their own land.

RESOLVED that:

The following was proposed by Councillor Robert Eggleston and seconded by Councillor Peter Chapman.

"Burgess Hill Town Council approved the proposal to give access to the construction site for Woodlands Meed College through Folders Meadow Playing Field and request that Fields in Trust gave its prompt consent.

101. **PLANNING COMMITTEE MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meetings of the Planning Committee held on Monday 3 February 2020 and Monday 24 February 2020 were **AGREED**.

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

RESOLVED that:

Councillor Robert Duggan proposed the following amendment, which Councillor Robert Eggleston seconded:

- (i) "Seek more detail and to be continually consulted on the Place and Connectivity project as it develops and in particular the matters highlighted in the notes;
- (ii) Urge MSDC to continue to work closely with WSCC on finding solutions to existing traffic congestion problems in Burgess Hill and further measures to reduce the impact of the Northern Arc development;

- (iii) Welcome MSDC's and WSCC's efforts to encourage a modal shift from car use to cycling, walking and travel by bus, and we will follow with interest their exploration of novel solutions such as bus gates."

The Notes of the meeting of the Customer Services Key Area Group held on Tuesday 18 February 2020 were **AGREED**.

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

Chair of the Strategic Development KAG, Roger Cartwright summarised the topics covered in the meeting.

The first major item was the Beehive development. This was the first time all of the information had been put into the public domain. The recommendation was that there should be a 10 week open and transparent consultation, following which the policy formed from this consultation would be put to town. This would be 4 week vote, and the Council would ensure it was robust and secure.

DISCUSSION ON THE BEEHIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

There was a suggestion that the Council defer these recommendations. The Council should be realistic and realise that only three present councillors had historic knowledge of the Beehive development. They would not wish to consult the public until the Town Councillors were familiar with the project and background. The recommendations should be deferred until any Town Councillors who wished to visit the RBL building had the opportunity; until the Beehive received charity status; until all Councillors had an opportunity to see the architectural plans, and, the changes from the previous plans, and until Councillors had a full explanation of the financial impact. This was an important issue the full Town Council should consider.

It was commented that the recent update on the Town Centre development from NewRiver REIT had made the public angrier. It was suggested that a consultation at this time could be an uphill battle.

It was commented that there was a need to be confident as a group of Councillors in terms of making recommendations to the general public, as this would be a big issue for the next few years.

It was commented that the costs of a full referendum would be extortionate. Was there another way of getting proper democratic accountability?

It was suggested that, while in principle a central area like this was needed for the arts, there were too many 'if's and speculative figures.

A resident addressed the council. They agreed with the concerns of the Councillors. It was premature to talk about going to consultation while there were concerns over the venue being too small. Planning approval was only given for a capacity 257, fitting 321 might be considered a material change and need a new planning application. The all-standing event capacity may also need new application.

In response to these comments, it was stated that the plans for the Beehive were in the public domain, and all Councillors were able to see them. As this was the biggest Council project currently, the Councillors should look at them. An independent report by DCA commissioned by the previous administration in 2016 had been circulated to Councillors. This report would also be put in the public domain. There was a motion passed in 2019 to approve and move forward with its conclusions for a 250 seat venue. The costs had come to Council in January 2019, where it had been passed unanimously. The previous administration had considered the RBL as a venue, and it was agreed unanimously that it could not be used.

Regarding the design, it had been designed for a capacity of 321, which was the upper limit, restricted by the number of WCs. The seating capacity did not change the standing capacity. It was unlikely it would be considered a material change.

A date had not been set for a consultation to start. There would be a financial presentation to Councillors later in the month, and this would also be made to the Residents Forum.

The Business Plan had been prepared by Nick Dodd, director of the Brighton Dome, and another independent person would review the figures. This would be a best estimate based on other venues of this type. The independently produced DCA report set out the capacity compared to aspirations from 2016 for a larger venue. It was clear in the report why it should be 250. They were stretching this to 321 which matched Chequer Mead in East Grinstead.

It was commented that things had changed since the inception of the plans. This was a new Council which may not know anything about the history and the process. The fundraisers had not raised sufficient funds. The price had also gone up. The previous vote was not transparent. To approach in a professional way, it was suggested the Council should hold a referendum in May 2021, when combining it with County Council elections would mean it would cost around £10,000. It was suggested that there should not be a timeline on agreeing the recommendations, it should be deferred until all Councillors had an opportunity to view all plans, papers, and financial commitments.

Concerns were raised over not putting a timeline on deferring the recommendations. Having a date meant that Councillors would know when they needed to complete their research. The longer it was delayed, the more the cost would go up.

It was noted that the Liberal Democrats had committed at the elections in May 2019 to go ahead with the scheme. Councillors had had the opportunity to view the plans. There was no reason for a significant delay.

The question was raised that if Councillor Robert Eggleston would be

campaigning for the venue, what would the Council's position be? If the aim was to get people to approve the plans, who would give the balanced picture?

Councillor Robert Eggleston responded that he would be stepping aside as Chair of the Cultural Quarter Committee. He would be an advocate for the Beehive, but any other member of the Town Council could take a cautious approach. He would be excused from the decision making process, and would be speaking as a private individual, not on behalf of the Town Council. The Town Council would decide how to objectively put the issue to the public.

It was commented that the issue was twofold. Firstly there was the product – the centre itself. Through public consultation the product would be refined. Secondly – it would cost money. Currently there was no money except what the Town Council could produce. It was suggested that the Town Council should be able to present it objectively, and shouldn't split and campaign on one side or the other. It should be objective, using the facts provided by the officers.

It was questioned how long the process of re-applying for charitable status would last?

It was answered that the Charity Commission timeline was 3 months. They were in the process of re-applying, with revised purpose clauses.

RESOLVED that:

An amendment was proposed by Councillor Janice Henwood, and seconded by Councillor Kathy Willis, as follows:

“Approve recommendations subject to, in the period from now until 30 April 2020, members be appraised of the Beehive proposals, including the design, financial arrangements and the condition of the RBL building.”

Councillor Robert Eggleston left the room for the duration of the vote.

A recorded vote was requested, results as follows:

In Favour:

Roger Cartwright
Graham Allen
Matthew Cornish
Robert Duggan
Lee Gibbs
Janice Henwood
Simon Hicks
Tofojjul Hussain

Sarah Lawrence
Sylvia Neumann
Max Nielsen
Kathleen Willis

Against:

Peter Chapman

The Amendment was passed.

DISCUSSION ON BRIDGE THE GAP

The second part of the Strategic Development KAG meeting covered the Bridge the Gap initiative. A discussion of its recommendations ensued.

It was suggested that there be a limit on how much could be spent on a project before it had to go to all Councillors. The suggestion was that any expenditure over £2,500 should be called in for Councillors to respond to within 5 working days.

The CEO Steve Cridland responded that if the Councillors decided to set a limit, they should understand that it would delay the process.

It was noted that the KAG and Council meeting cycle was slower than the speed that Officers react. The process had been tried and tested over the years. Sometimes a business as usual decision took place at a faster pace than the KAG and Committee cycle. Historically the Councillors set the strategy which the Officers implemented. The Officers would implement the £30,000 for Bridge the Gap.

If a limit was set, it could be referred to Councillors in the same way as MSDC do to validate the decision. This could be 5 Councillors drawn from all parties, and would be decided on the basis of a majority. They would need to intervene at a point when the decision was pending. Council was a slow process. To go through the full process took 2 months. A Committee of 5 could allow it to move quicker.

It was noted that this should not mean scrutinising business as usual, or suggesting changes whilst an Officer is implementing something. This would be disruptive of time and the Officers' ability to do their job. It should cover new initiatives, and overall concepts.

The Food and Drink guide was discussed, and it was proposed that it be approved but be capped at a cost of £1600 plus VAT. This would include a printed guide, and subject to the motion detailed in Agenda Item 11 passing, a digital version would also be produced.

RESOLVED that:

An additional recommendation be added as follows:

Approve the Food and Drink guide and cap the cost at £1600 plus VAT.

The recommendations were approved.

It was further noted that the Strategic Development KAG had agreed to set up a Transport Working Group. The Residents Forum was to give a problem statement on transport in the town. This working group would also look at the Place and Connectivity project.

The Notes of the meeting of the Strategic Development Key Area Group held on Wednesday 19 February 2020 were **AGREED**.

104. **MOTION – UPGRADE DIGITAL SIGNAGE IN BHTC HELP POINT TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATIONS OUT OF HOURS AND SUPPORT DIGITAL MEDIA**

A motion was raised to upgrade digital signage in BHTC Help Point to improve communications out of hours and support digital media, as set out in Agenda Item 11 dated 9 March 2020.

It was noted that there had been a communication from Virgin Media on how helpful the Help Point were and on the good work they did.

There was a question on whether the Town Council had the Officer capacity to run these screens. The CEO will discuss it with Officers.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) The Council purchase and install LCD screens in the Help Point window and, if possible, two other town centre points of presence in the town to display relevant council messages, council publications, public service information and messages to support the Council's projects and programmes (for example Bridge the Gap, Summer Festival and other events);
- (ii) invest in 'flip book' software to assist in the creation of online content;
- (iii) ensure that the council's printed media is loaded onto 'flip book' where appropriate; and
- (iv) ensure that the online content is appropriately promoted on social media to maximise reach in Burgess Hill and surrounding areas.

The Motion was proposed by Councillor Simon Hicks and seconded by Councillor Graham Allen.

The Motion was approved.

A resident addressed the Council regarding wind in the high street. Church Walk was usually windy. If tall buildings were built the pressure would build up. There would be no footfall if people couldn't walk down the road. They also stated that the houses in the Northern Arc were being built fitted with gas, which would soon be redundant.

In response it was noted that the town centre redevelopment application was now with MSDC. The resident was invited to come to a Saturday surgery with the Councillors at the Help Point to discuss this.

104. **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

In view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it was proposed that, in the public interest, the public and press be temporarily excluded and they were requested to withdraw from the meeting.

105. **DIARY DATES**

Council received a schedule of forthcoming events as set out in Agenda Item 12 dated 9 March 2020.

RESOLVED that:

The contents of the report were noted.

Meeting ended: 21.20