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Wednesday 8 April 2020

To: **MEMBERS OF BURGESS HILL TOWN COUNCIL**

An **EXTRAORDINARY MEETING** of the Council will be held **ONLINE** on **THURSDAY 16 APRIL 2020** at **18.00 hours**, when your attendance is required.

Cllr Roger Cartwright
Mayor

****PLEASE NOTE THE START TIME OF THE MEETING****

FILMING, RECORDING OF COUNCIL MEETINGS AND USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Following government advice on social distancing, essential Council Meetings will be held virtually during the Covid-19 period. All papers will be published on our website as usual. Members of the public can attend the meeting by using the Skype link that will be placed on the town council's website and social media shortly before the meeting takes place.

The use of social media is permitted but members of the public are requested to switch their mobile devices to silent for the duration of the meeting.

AGENDA

1. OPEN FORUM

Members of the public are invited to put questions or to draw relevant matters to the Council's attention. Each member of the public is allowed to speak once only in respect of a business item on the agenda (during the Open Forum) and shall not speak for more than three minutes at the discretion of the Chairman.

If it appears that the number of speakers is likely to unreasonably delay the disposal of business items on the agenda the Chairman may direct that a member of the public submits a question or comment in writing which shall be answered in due course.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In respect of any matter on the agenda.

4. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

5. COUNCIL MINUTES

To consider the Minutes of the Meeting of Council held on Monday 4 March 2020 (copy herewith).

6. PLANNING COMMITTEE MINUTES

To consider the Minutes of the meetings of the Planning Committee held Monday 16 March 2020 and Monday 6 April 2020 (minutes previously circulated)

We have considered 41 applications for planning permission under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Our decisions and recommendations within our terms of reference are set out in the Minutes.

Janice Henwood
Chairman

7. COVID -19

The Town Council has taken numerous actions to support the local community and community groups during this period of uncertainty. An emergency fund of £10,000 has been agreed by a majority of Councillors to be used to assist the community where needed but most probably by providing assistance to community groups. Some concerns and questions have been raised which are addressed as follows:

1. Discussions have been held with the Foodbank to see how best they may be assisted as they are experiencing increased demand. In addition, their usual premises (Spire Café) have been closed so the Town Council assisted them to find a new temporary distribution point at the foyer of the Salvation Army Hall.

Following discussions between Cllr Eggleston and New River REIT the old William Hill Interiors unit in the Martlets has been offered to the Foodbank as temporary accommodation but another unit could be made available if it was more suitable.

Any contract required will be between the Foodbank and New River REIT but it is understood that the contract will be on a rolling month to month basis at no cost during the crisis period. There is no obligation to the Council.

Cllr Eggleston has managed to source freezers for the Foodbank at no cost. Local frozen food supplier Consort Foods has indicated that they are willing to supply frozen food but this is a matter for the Foodbank to consider and discuss further. Again there is no contractual obligation to the Council.

2. Burgess Hill Emergency Committee - bringing together the County, District and Town Councils with the voluntary sector who are providing services local, aiming to:
 - share information
 - keep up to date with what we are all doing
 - avoid duplication
 - identify any gaps and needs
 - support each other where needed.

Invited groups are Neighbourly Care, Foodbank, Age UK, Turning Tides, Burgess Hill District Lions Club, Mid Sussex Voluntary Action, West Sussex County Council, Mid Sussex District Council, Citizens Advice and Sussex Police.

3. As mentioned above the Council has agreed an emergency fund of £10k. Concern has been raised about how these funds might be spent.

As with any budget item approved by the Council the CEO and his staff spend the money. This is in terms of Standing Orders. To date the system has worked well and it is unclear as to what concerns might be. There is a danger that micro management by Councillors could inhibit any urgent expenditure as a meeting would need to be called with the legal requirements for such a meeting. The role of officers becomes grey.

To date spending has been on the development of a leaflet and the distribution thereof.

4. The Town Council is currently doing the following:

Information

- Liaising with the key local voluntary groups & agencies to find out what they are offering & notifying residents by:

- Setting up a covid-19 page on our website providing information about authorised sources of support.
- Producing a poster with this information – which is now up on our noticeboards and Help Point window.
- Producing a leaflet with this information – now printed and awaiting delivery to all households by Royal Mail w/c 13 April.
- Producing an electronic poster with local Covid-19 support contacts to go on Burgess Hill bus stops.
- Sending the information to all local doctors' surgeries, pharmacists and shops.
- The Help Point is responding as usual to enquiries via phone, email and website although is closed to face to face enquiries.
- Keeping residents informed of new developments via our social media.
- Putting together a 35 slide Power Point display in the Help Point window with all the latest information from the Government, BHTC and other organisations to help residents.
- Compiling a list of shops that are open – all on our website.
- Compiling a list of take-away food outlets and restaurants doing takeaways – all on our website.
- Compiling a list of pharmacies and whether they do deliveries – all on our website.
- Compiling a list of major supermarkets volunteers' shopping cards – all on our website & circulated to voluntary groups.

Liaison

- Liaison with Sussex Police, WSCC, MSDC, MSVA, Food Bank, Age UK, Neighbourly Care, Community Transport Sussex, Citizens Advice, Mid Sussex Voluntary Action & other key voluntary organisations.
- Contacted the informal volunteer groups that have set up locally via Facebook to encourage them to operate safely and pointed them in the direction of MSVA who can provide guidance.
- Established an Emergency Committee of BHTC, MSDC, WSCC, Police, Food Bank & other key voluntary organisations, which is meeting weekly via Skype to share information, support each other, identify gaps & ensure we meet needs as they arise.

Funding

- Set up a £10k Covid-19 fund for local support – with an additional £10k added by Burgess Hill District Lions Club.

Practical support

- Our Maintenance Team is available with vans to help where needed and this has been offered to local groups.
- Liaison with the pharmacies offering Maintenance Team delivery of prescriptions.
- Helping the Food Bank find a new distribution venue, providers of electronic vouchers and liaising with supermarkets to source food items in short supply.
- Working with the Food Bank to move to a town centre venue & expand their offer to include frozen meals & fresh/chilled produce.
- Putting out an appeal for PPE masks and eye protection for The Brow surgery.
- Ringing local dental surgeries to request donations of masks and eye protection.
- Distribution of donated nitrile powder gloves to local groups that need them.

Community Engagement & Keeping People Cheerful!

- Lockdown Festival via social media, to keep people engaged and cheerful - to continue for the duration of the lockdown, involving local people where possible to share online activities e.g. yoga, tai chi sessions, children's crafts & stories and anything else they can offer.

RECOMMENDED:

1. That the Council formally approve the allocation of £10,000 for an emergency fund to assist the community during the Covid-19 crisis.
2. That the actions of the Town Council to support the community during the Covid-19 crisis be noted.

8. RELATIONSHIP WITH DISTRICT COUNCIL

A question has been raised about the Town Council's relationship with the District Council during this period. The District Council has been made aware that the Town Council is willing to assist wherever needed but no requests from the District Council have been forthcoming.