

# Burgess Hill Town Council

**MINUTES** of the proceedings of the  
**BURGESS HILL ANNUAL TOWN MEETING**  
held on **WEDNESDAY 11 APRIL 2018** at 19.30 hours  
at St John's Church, Lower Church Road.

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There were 116 attendees including the Town Mayor Jacqui Landriani, Town Councillors and members of the public.

## 1. **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

The Town Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked the church for allowing us to use the venue. The Town Mayor thanked all the volunteers in the community and gave special thanks to Burgess Hill District Lions; the Rotary Club; Friends of Green Circle Network; the History Society; Bonfire Society and Burgess Hill Rugby Club for their support.

## 2. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence had been received from Dave Farmer, Councillor Norman Webster, Jon Francies, Paul Myles, Andrew Harvey, Sgt Allan Philip and Sir Nicholas Soames MP.

## 3. **GUEST SPEAKER: MS KATY BOURNE**

Ms Katy Bourne introduced herself and thanked the Town Council for inviting her to attend. She began by asking where we were with policing now? It had been a difficult time recently for policing. However working with the police for 6 years she was aware there were dedicated staff and officers in Sussex Police. She didn't have a high opinion when she initially joined but over the years her opinion has changed. They deal with violence and aggression in their jobs. Society seemed more disrespectful towards the Police.

Policing now has two beats – physical beat and digital beat. A lot of crime was enabled by technology behind closed doors, a lot of fraud on young and particularly old who were being deliberately targeted within Sussex. Child exploitation is also taxing police nationally.

We were looking to reduce the budget by £26 million prior to Christmas. The model has changed to adapt to both beats, high expectations of the public and

additionally complex crimes that take time to investigate. There was a large volume of information that has to be obtained. Sussex Police wrote a new model to be delivered within a smaller budget. Ms Bourne lobbied for an increase with her colleagues. Central government took the cap off and allowed taxes to be increased. This allowed the Police to increase the council tax bills so an average tax payer would pay an additional £1 a month. So now the Police have the extra resources they were asked for, resources were to be spent on local policing. Prior to Christmas the Police were looking at reducing police numbers. Now they can reinvest and would not be reducing police numbers and would be recruiting 200 officers a year for the next 4 years.

The challenge for Sussex Police is now that they have additional resources, they would try to deliver a better response to 101. Next week the Chief Inspector will be delivering a new plan for the next four years and this will be monitored by Katy Bourne. For Sussex this is a good place to be. It would take time to change, but it was a lot better than it was. Sussex residents pay the fifth lowest amount in the country so residents receive good value for money. There was an overwhelming yes to pay extra when she consulted on this and the public were thanked for their support.

There were ongoing operations in Burgess Hill, with a small number of people causing harm but this was being tackled.

Katy Bourne then took questions from the audience.

A question was asked on the use of 101 non-emergency telephone lines. The resident stated a better response time was required. He had raised this three years ago with Ms Bourne when he had waited an hour on the telephone. He asked if the report commissioned by Katy Bourne on the service was in the public domain and whether she felt that half an hour was an acceptable wait time.

Katy Bourne responded that there were two response desks in the Contact Centre and when there is a difficult time on 999 desk the 101 desk staff will be shifted to the emergency response 999 desk. The average wait time is ten minutes on the 101 number. She stated a half hour wait was extreme and the resident may have called when emergency calls were waiting. She has asked the Chief Inspector to advertise quieter times which is being investigated. The report commissioned was for internal use only and not in the public domain. There was also an increase in online reporting. Next year there will be a single online home launched nationally. The Chief Inspector and Ms Bourne were keen to join this programme to enable it to be ready.

A questioner pointed out that criminals do not respect county boundaries, police do. Several years ago there was a plan for amalgamation of East and West Sussex, Surrey and Hampshire saving millions enabling police cuts to have been avoided and he requested Ms Bourne's opinion on this.

Katy Bourne responded stating forces do work together. Sussex Police pay to Thames Valley Police regional organised crime on behalf of 4 forces. A review is underway and currently looking at people's services and the finance

programme. Surrey and Sussex Police do work together - 33% of work is collaborative and they were looking to increase this. There were different organisations with different ways of doing things and HR processes and this does need to be looked at – criminals never respect boundaries. Digital beat have no physical boundaries and it was keeping us safe with national crime organisations.

A question was asked on the issue of traffic noise and anti-social nature by drivers of cars. The resident hears noise constantly and groups were populated in car parks which was intimidating. He had been advised to take registration numbers and report to the Police which he had done. He had young children and was unable to open windows and could not overstate how much of a problem this was.

Katy Bourne responded that this was one of the ongoing areas being investigated in the town which she hoped would come to fruition soon. Sergeant Bentham responded that there was currently ongoing work on car cruisers which included locking gates and the plan was to move them away from the area.

A question was asked by a resident whose son was the victim of a serious assault recently. The Police were brilliant however she was then made aware that the station opening hours were 10am - 2pm. She felt it should be open at weekends and evenings. The resident had to show officers from Crawley where the incident was on a map and felt there was a need to report incidents to police with local knowledge.

Katy Bourne responded by saying that decisions about police opening hours were taken prior to her election. People were reporting more via telephone. The police counter was rarely used. The Police would not close any police stations but if needed a front counter may be relocated if there was a better alternative. How we access policing was changing and Police need to be flexible and adaptable. She also requested details be provided to her to ensure Victim Support contacted the family.

A question was asked that given the changing face of policing and online presence and given recent events in London what proportion of Sussex police were social media police?

Katy Bourne responded that there were not specific social media Police. There were approximately 2500 officers and 100 support staff. There was a Corporate Communications department that dealt with accidents putting out signs etc. and serviced the press. The social media was run by officers – local officers post about local incidents.

The final question raised neighbourhood panel meetings. The Town Councillor thanked Sergeant Phillips for attending the meetings even when these were held on his days off. She asked if this support would continue in the future.

Katy Bourne responded by stating as far as officers attending events/meetings, this was the Chief Inspectors decision. Clearly Sergeant Phillips was committed to attending. The Chief Inspector would like police at

annual events and she hoped local neighbourhood police would attend panel meetings. Councillors would have the details of their neighbourhood teams and could always contact them.

Katy Bourne was thanked by the Town Mayor and left the meeting at 20.07 hours.

#### 4. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on Tuesday 11 April 2017, having been previously circulated, were signed by the Town Mayor with the agreement of those present.

#### 5. **REPORT ON THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF BURGESS HILL TOWN COUNCIL IN 2017/2018**

The Town Mayor presented the Annual Report (attached at Appendix 1) on the work of the Town Council for the period 2017/2018.

The Town Mayor then took questions from the audience.

A question was raised on the Citizens Advice Bureaux and asked if the Council were aware it was closing in May.

The Town Mayor invited Councillor Gary Marsh from Mid Sussex District Council to respond. He confirmed that grant funding was recently approved which meant that the CAB would not be closing. Some of the services may change but it was up to the CAB how they allocate resources.

A question was raised regarding Bedelands. Two years ago residents were promised £90k had been earmarked for refurbishment of pathways. Last year the minutes of the meeting referred to £80k. This was a wonderful facility used by local people and was in a disgraceful state that has been made worse by recent weather. Can he be assured that the money is still allocated and what the amount was and when the works would be done?

The Town Mayor invited Pru Moore, Leader of the Council to respond. It was frustrating and the work should have been started. Dominic Moore, Chairman of the Friends of Green Circle Network, was in constant contact with Mid Sussex District Council and was fully informed. The figure allocated was £90k and this was confirmed by Councillor Marsh from MSDC. They had to work with ecologists, as there were dormice and newts works can only be done at a certain time of year. The work was due to start next week but weather had been appalling and been deferred. The money was safe and works would be done. It was requested that an update be provided in the About Town magazine. Pru Moore responded that this was a good point and members of the Friends of Green Circle be kept informed. She encouraged residents to join.

A question was raised regarding the maintenance of roads taken back by West Sussex County Council. Was this a retrograde step and did the Town

Council have any choice in the matter? The resident also noted there was a large number of apologies for the meeting tonight and was advised that there were many on holiday with the meeting being close to Easter.

Councillor Moore responded on the Highways contracts that there had been a meeting with County Council three months ago. The contractors are paid by County Council and are responsible for all road repairs. She was sorry that the Town Council had lost the contract for this. She was reassured that if the contractors do not get work done then this would be revisited. The potholes were bad this year but the weather had contributed to this. The situation was well under review and County Council have said they will work with us.

A question was raised regarding the status of the Cherry Tree Centre. Councillor Moore confirmed background details of the centre. Age UK said they were coming out of a contract a year early, and the town reacted strongly. Young at Heart group formed themselves into a formidable force. The Town Council said it did not want the centre to close. Age UK backtracked and said they would stay another year. The Town Council were concerned about the future and Councillor Jones and Councillor Moore will be meeting with District Council, County Council and Age UK from June. The Town Mayor confirmed support for the centre.

A question was raised on the proposed community venue and why it was rejected and also the communications of the project.

The Town Mayor confirmed that the reason given for not wishing to pursue the project was the method of payment. Councillor Moore responded that the Town Council reacted to the 6000 signature petition and the concerns expressed in it. The Royal British Legion building was purchased previously to expand the cultural quarter as set out in the Neighbourhood Plan. At the last Annual Town Meeting, David Clark presented at the meeting and his report was accepted. Council had met with the main users plus some smaller user groups of Martlets Hall. The Town Council appointed Colliers to try to satisfy all needs identified and they delivered a final impressive design. This was presented in November at this venue with 500 people attending and 200 people signed in support. This was a clear indication that the Town Council had support for this scheme. The Public Works Loan Board was approached as they provide a good facility for council to launch the project. The PWLB were pleased with work completed to date. The Town Council asked what was needed and they confirmed the wording of flyers to all households. The Town Council was open on Saturdays mornings to answer questions. The media was intense over this project. The Mid Sussex Times were thanked for their balanced approach.

More people voted against paying for it because they did not want their council tax increased and believe they should not be responsible for paying for the project. The timing of it was not good as the Police and Social Care elements on Council Tax bill were also increasing. The venue had been planned to open in 2021 which was ambitious but the residents voted no. All households received a flyer and those that called into the Help Point were given a new leaflet. It was a disappointing turnout.

Councillor Andrew Barrett-Miles provided an update on the first meeting since the vote. There were three new committee members who were David Andrews, Robert Eggleston and Jacky Hillary. The general view was that we should continue with the project and felt morally obliged to do so as 70 per cent were in favour of the project. The Neighbourhood Plan included provisions for a community and performance venue. The committee agreed to pursue the plan, and have set up two project groups. The easiest way of doing this is through a loan but this has been ruled out at the present. There will be a further meeting in May.

Further questions were raised on the communication of the proposed venue. It was confirmed that the Public Works Loans Board had advised on the wording to be used on the leaflet. The Town Council were not professional marketers and had to spend public money wisely. It was confirmed that the steering group would not stand down and it was confirmed that the public would not be asked to pay for the venue.

One resident commented he voted for the new facility and the costing for it as there was no other way to pay for this. He could not understand the communication issues raised by previous residents. It was in the local paper and the About Town magazine. The leaflet arrived at his house and he felt the meetings and details of the venue were well publicised. He stated the information stated councillors were available to answer any questions and he had attended the well-advertised meetings.

A question was raised on Section 106 funds being spent on the town directly. It was confirmed that these funds do come from Mid Sussex District Council and are spent on the town. Examples were the new schools and improved sporting facilities for the town.

The final speaker raised a request for residents to be more positive. He said a lot of good things were happening in the town such as the development. He stated that social media reports of the town appearing shambolic were destructive for the town and for future residents and businesses wanting to come to Burgess Hill.

The meeting ended at 21.00 hours.