



MINUTES of the **ORDINARY MEETING** of the **TOWN COUNCIL** held in the Council Chamber on **MONDAY 19 MARCH 2018**

Jacqui Landriani Town Mayor
Chris Cherry Deputy Town Mayor

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

* *Denotes non-attendance.*

(19.00)

276. OPEN FORUM

A resident addressed the Council regarding the Community and Performance Venue consultation. Council should regard this as a setback and not a termination of the project. It was important to retain arts and theatre for future generations. Another resident agreed and felt that the local press reported the project was finished. There was obvious enthusiasm for the concept and the Town Council should persevere with the project. The Town Mayor gave assurance that this matter would be discussed under Agenda Item 9.

A resident asked the Town Council to give an estimate of the amount of Community Infrastructure Levy it was likely to receive based on the housing due to be built over the planned development period.

Andrew Barrett-Miles confirmed the District Plan was yet to be approved by the District Council. Once approved it would have to set about deriving a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) which would need to go to consultation and be examined by an inspector. The process could take 1 to 2 years. It is anticipated CIL would be slightly greater than would be received from Section 106 money.

At this present time we would expect the basic formula for Section 106, and for each house around £700 would be generated which would mean that, based on the Northern Arc development, the Town Council could receive around £2.5 million. This money would come as houses are developed and would appear at intervals over a 10-15 year period, unlike CIL. 25% of any CIL payment would come directly to the Town Council. Money would be available from this source over the next 15 years but the amount was not yet known.

The Community & Performance venue was part of the Mid Sussex Infrastructure Plan and CIL payments would be available for it. The Town Council had around £250,000 in Section 106 money that would become available for community buildings from current developments which would be put towards the Community & Performance Centre as and when it was developed. It was confirmed that the range of funding could be anywhere between £0 – 5 million.

A resident asked why the Annual Town Meeting was to be held at St John's Church. The resident asked whether the meeting could be held in a secular venue where everyone, religious or not, could attend and feel comfortable.

The Town Mayor explained that the Annual Town Meeting was always held on the second Wednesday in April and as the venue was available and it was a central location, Council decided it was an appropriate choice of venue as Cyprus Hall was otherwise occupied on that date. The resident asked whether the date of the Annual Town meeting had been changed. It was confirmed that the Annual Town Meeting would take place on 11 April 2018.

A resident asked what the Council proposed to do with the increase in precept, as it had been voted against by the public. A lot of people were unhappy with the increase and would like to know where the money would be spent this year and next year. The Town Mayor explained this would be discussed under Agenda Item 9.

A resident was pleased that the Town Council was investigating options for a new community and performance venue as Martlets Hall would not be replaced. The resident was also interested to know whether a refund in Council Tax would be given, after the public voted against the rise.

A resident felt Mid Sussex District Council was responsible for the problems that had arisen. Mid Sussex District Council had said Martlets Hall was different to Clair Hall and was underused. They looked closely at replacing Martlets Hall but independent experts had confirmed it would not be economically viable. Burgess Hill Town Council experts said it was. The resident asked whether the Town Council's experts could take on the District Council's experts and get Mid Sussex District Council to pay for what they had abolished which had caused all these problems. The Town Mayor gave assurance that this would be discussed under Agenda Item 9.

A resident said it was striking that in this age of technology, hardly anybody was aware of the plans for replacement of Martlets Hall. Most people would have discarded the paper flyer as junk mail. The resident felt that the Town Council did not promote well enough. The town centre redevelopment plans had been advertised through a pop up shop in the high street, and this was inadequate. The Town Council should have promoted the consultation more effectively as it affected thousands of people.

The Town Mayor explained the Town Council had used the several noticeboards around the town, in addition to the website and social media pages to notify residents. The Council could not force people to view this information but it was made available.

277. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Wendy Agate, Claire Fussell, John Merrill and Mandy Thomas-Atkin.

278. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

279. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Town Mayor reminded Councillors that reports from her recent engagements could be found on The Mayor's Blog, which could be accessed via the Town Council's website.

280. COUNCIL MINUTES

The Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on Monday 29 January 2018 were **AGREED** and signed as a correct record.

281. PLANNING COMMITTEE MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings of the Planning Committee held on Monday 12 February and Monday 5 March were **AGREED**.

282. **STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT KEY AREA GROUP: NOTES OF THE MEETING**

The Notes of the meeting of the Strategic Development Key Area Group held on Wednesday 7 February 2018 were **AGREED**.

283. **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT KEY AREA GROUP NOTES OF MEETING**

The Notes of the meeting of the Community Engagement Key Area Group held on Monday 19 February 2018 were **AGREED**.

Mandy Thomas-Atkin entered the meeting during this item at 19:21.

284. **COMMUNITY BUILDING**

Pru Moore addressed questions from the Public Forum.

Both Martlets Hall and Clair Hall had always been subsidised by Mid Sussex District Council. Martlets Hall was subsidised by £100,000 per year. Clair Hall would continue until the future of the building was decided. New River Retail had made it clear they would invest £65 million in Burgess Hill and would not replace Martlets Hall. Negotiations with New River Retail (NRR) had taken place over 4 years. Without NRR the town would still have a redundant gasholder, there would not be a new Iceland shop or a new library due to open. Mid Sussex District Council had also made it clear they would not replace Martlets Hall as it was drastically underused. There were many other alternative venues that could provide cheaper hire rates. £65 million was a lot of investment and the Council would have done residents a big disavour if the redevelopment had been refused.

The consultation process had been devised in accordance with the Ministry of Housing and Local Government to ensure an application for a Public Works Loan could be considered. Leaflets were distributed to Burgess Hill households and the consultation was advertised on social media. The Town Council had been asked by residents to act fast on this project. It was also important to apply for a loan before interest rates increased. Cyprus Hall Community Association was opposed to the development. In November, they served a notice on Council, in terms of section 26 of the Landlords and Tenants act of 1954, to provide a further 10 year lease. The development was dependent on the two buildings interlinking. If the loan had been secured, the Town Council would have had a case to take to court.

Residents were given four weeks to vote in the consultation. This was publicised on the Town Council website and social media pages, as well as in the local press. The Help Point was opened on Saturday mornings to allow residents to vote and discuss it. The Town Council

did more than was legally expected of it. Martlets Hall was not fit for purpose, unlike the proposed community venue, which was a multi-functional space that would be more viable.

Pru Moore sympathised with people who were concerned about the rise in Council Tax. £1 a month was nothing to some people, but a lot to others. The public voted against the increase and so the money would be ring-fenced and reversed. Pru thanked the councillors and members of the public for their hard work on the project. The Town Council could not move with speed without the loan being secured. However there were other options to be explored. The Town Council had the Royal British Legion building to use and there would be future opportunities. The project could take up to 5 years or more now instead of 3. Pru Moore put a motion forward:

‘That this Council does not apply for a £5 million loan from the Public Loans Board.’

Andrew Barrett-Miles felt the Town Council was morally obliged to continue with the project. Two thirds of voters approved of the project but the majority did not want to pay for it. The only way to deliver the venue within 3 years was by applying for the loan. In 2010/11 the Town Council made a commitment in the Town Wide Strategy that we would look for funding from developers of the Northern Arc to support the development of this building. A further commitment was made in the Neighbourhood Plan, which was approved by the public. The Neighbourhood Plan stated the Town Council would deliver a venue in Cyprus Road and so there was an obligation to proceed.

It was proposed that the following be added to the motion:

‘The Steering Group meet again to look at options to keep this project moving forward.’

Andrew Barrett-Miles expressed disappointment with the result and was keen to push ahead and give Burgess Hill something it deserved. Haywards Heath also had £4 million designated for a performance centre in their Neighbourhood Plan.

Chris Thomas-Atkin explained that the precept had increased in anticipation and that the funding was no longer required and therefore the increase next year would not happen. This increase for this year would ultimately be refunded. The Finance Key Area Group would meet to discuss this and revisit the Budget for 2019. Anne Jones expressed support for the motion.

Janice Henwood suggested the Council proceed with the fundraising group that had been interviewed, reinstate the steering group and get the community engaged. The Town Council should send a press release stating that this was not the end of the road. She felt NRR could provide more for the town, as there would be no social housing or public toilets included in the redevelopment.

Pru Moore advised that fundraisers were expensive to employ and that it was premature to begin fundraising. The town centre redevelopment was important for future generations and would create employment. Town Centres would become venues for entertainment, and more people would get greater use from the town centre than they would from a new arts venue.

RESOLVED that:

- A) the Council consider the results and implications of the public response to the proposed community centre.
- B) this Council does not proceed with the application to the Public Works Loan Board for £5 million.
- C) the Steering Group meet to discuss ways to move the project forward.

285. **CYPRUS HALL LEASE**

Cyprus Hall was owned by the Town Council and was leased to the Cyprus Hall Community Association, which had managed the hall for the last 21 years. The lease had expired in 2015. When the future of Martlets Hall became known, the Council decided a 10 year lease might not be in the best interests of the community and so a two year licence was offered but was rejected.

The Town Council met with the Cyprus Hall Community Association in November and it was explained that Cyprus Hall would be retained as part of the proposed new community and performance venue. This plan was rejected and Cyprus Hall Community Association served a Section 26 notice on the Council to provide a further 10 year lease. Cyprus Hall Community Association was asked to delay the process until the outcome of the public vote was known. They refused and the Council was forced to take action to oppose the notice.

If the court had awarded Cyprus Hall Community Association a 10 year lease this would have stopped any chance of the project progressing. In addition, the committee had underinsured the building and the Town Council should take the insurance over and a new lease would be offered, and in addition, a 5 year review clause.

RESOLVED that:

- a 10 year lease be given to Cyprus Hall Community Association with a 5 year review clause provided the hall is insured with the Council's insurers.

286. **DIARY DATES**

Council received a schedule of forthcoming events as set out in Agenda Item 11 dated Monday 19 March 2018.

RESOLVED that:

The contents of the report be noted.

Janice Henwood expressed concern that a lot of people would not attend the Annual Town Meeting this year because it was to be held in a church. This should be avoided in future.

A debate ensued and it was confirmed that Cyprus Hall was already booked on this day and the Town Council was forced to seek an alternative venue. The Annual Town Meeting would take place at St John's Church as it was a good, centrally located venue.

287. Meeting terminated at 20.06 hours.