

**BURGESS HILL TOWN COUNCIL**  
**CULTURAL QUARTER STEERING GROUP**

**Agenda**

**Commercial in Confidence**

You are invited to attend a meeting of the Steering Group to be held online at **6 pm** on **Tuesday 2 February 2021** to consider the following:

**1. Opening, welcome and apologies**

**2. Notes of meeting 16 November 2020**

**3. Public Consultation**

3.1 The Council intends to finance the bulk of the Beehive project through a loan of between 4.4 and 4.8 million pounds from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB). One of the conditions from the PWLB is to show that the residents have been fully consulted and approve the project and the loan. In order to show that residents approve, a poll must be held.

3.2 To complicate matters further purdah starts on 29 March meaning that the council is not allowed to conduct a consultation between this date and the May election. There is, of course, every possibility that this date may be moved but for now we are assuming it will stay as scheduled. The aim therefore is to do as many as possible of the actions listed below by 29 March ending with the distribution of polling material.

3.3 Covid 19 prevents the Council from displaying drawings of the Beehive in public spaces such as Market Place. Councillors are also not allowed to approach people at home to discuss the plans with them, nor are public meetings permitted. The following list shows what can be done:

- The publicity will no longer consist of one leaflet but of a programmed series of publicity items.
- The first leaflet which is attached will be a general information leaflet only, to be followed by up probably 2 or 3 further leaflets including the approval poll.
- 4 pages in the centre of the next About Town
- Section in Annual Town Meeting Report – if this meeting does not go ahead then consideration will be given to sending a leaflet to each household. Possibly an A3 folded as opposed to the usual A4
- Videos on Social Media and on the Website. I am pleased to see that there is a start to this from Lara, however what are the chances (and cost) of an animated virtual tour of the centre?
- Zoom consultations
- Online survey/poll with an independent invigilator to avoid accusations of bias.

- Facebook campaign with advertising
- Pull up screens showing aspects of the Beehive and which can be placed around town and outside the HP etc
- A market stall at some stage
- An exhibition in Johnsons either inside or through the window.
- Presentation on a loop in the HP window and possibly the Library. We were looking at large screens preCovid and will look at this further
- Beehive Website with video
- FAQs (already somewhere but can be added to)
- Endorsements
- Community group engagement

3.4 The Group is asked to comment on the above strategy and make additional suggestions.

3.5 The Council received some criticism on the way it conducted the poll when it last applied for a 5 million pound loan. Officers used data available to authenticate the replies and to ensure as far as possible that people did not vote twice. This was a complicated and time consuming process as online and hard copy votes were compared. Despite there being a relatively small number of responses it took three officers the better part of two weeks to ensure that duplications were removed. Accusations of bias etc were levelled and a better system will need to be devised this time. Unfortunately data on the full electoral register cannot be used for this purpose.

3.6 The dilemma facing the council is that many prefer voting online while some prefer hard copy. It should be noted that this is a consultation rather than a ballot and the PWLB only require us to show that the majority of people support the project, Perhaps an online poll could be taken as well as a paper ballot and the results from each taken separately instead of comparing both to determine whether people have voted twice. There may be a way of restricting the number of times a person can vote online but objections can be expected if we restrict votes to one per household.

3.7 An alternative would be to use the edited version of the electoral register which contains the detail of only around 60% of the residents. A personalised polling paper with the name and address of each potential responder could be sent and easily verified on return. The problem is that not everyone will be given the opportunity to vote which would not be acceptable to those left out. A solution to this would be to ask people who do not receive a ballot paper to request one, however the more complicated we make the poll the fewer people there are who will bother to respond. In addition how would people who have been excluded get to know that they could register?

### 3.8 RECOMMENDED

1. That the methods of consultation set out in the report be approved;
2. That the difficulties facing the council regarding the polling of all residents be noted;

3. That separate online and paper ballots be used to conduct the poll and that the results from each be treated independently.
4. That further work be done to identify a suitable independent verifier.