

BURGESS HILL TOWN COUNCIL

PRESS RELEASE

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BURGESS HILL WELCOMES A BRIGHTER FUTURE

It has been a tough year for Burgess Hill residents and businesses alike facing the many challenges Covid-19 has brought during these unprecedented times and Burgess Hill Town Council is no exception.

Despite these difficult times, Burgess Hill Town Council has managed to achieve a great deal through the course of 2020. The Town Council has stepped up and provided a considerable amount of support through the first lockdown and, due to the skill and professionalism of the team, were able to move to a home working pattern with very little disruption. With our excellent connections in the community we supported two significant hamper initiatives reaching over 750 people in each instance. Our Maintenance Team demonstrated their versatility by being able to fit out units in the new Trading Spaces located in The Martlets Shopping Centre.

Two new charities have been formed. The Beehive CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation) will put the Town Council in a position to bring the major project to replace the Martlets Hall forward and we will embark on a consultation with the community on it early in the New Year. The Burgess Hill Community Cupboard CIO is the Town Council's project to tackle long term food insecurity amongst sections of the town's community and this initiative will go live in the early New Year as well.

Burgess Hill Town Council rolled out two major policy initiatives this year, Bridge the Gap and Trading Spaces. Their prime purposes are to lift trading activity and footfall in the town centre, bring empty retail units back into use and give the town breathing space in that period before redevelopment of The Martlets Shopping Centre takes place. A key element of Bridge the Gap is the Town Market which is proving to be highly successful with stall holders seeing regular customers returning each month.

As for Trading Spaces, the Town Council took the brave decision to directly intervene in the market by taking a lease on the former William Hill Interiors unit and refitting it. It is now home to three trading enterprises and the soon to be opened Burgess Hill Pantry (Community Cupboard). The decision to lease the vacant William Hill Interiors unit directly led to further interest from charities and traders. By the end of the first quarter of 2021 most of the units at the top of The Martlets Shopping Centre will be re-occupied and, hopefully, the old library site will have been cleared.

Councillor Robert Eggleston, Leader of Burgess Hill Town Council said: “our actions are already having a positive impact on footfall. Absolute numbers of visitors are up and there is a spike on market day. But significantly, the Market Place Shopping Centre team is reporting a 38% increase in ‘walk-through’ at the door that connects Market Place to The Martlets Shopping Centre. In other words, we have created a pull factor. As we continue to support this area, work with new enterprises, Workman and NewRiver REIT I am sure that we can increase activity further.”

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