



MINUTES of the **ORDINARY MEETING** of the **TOWN COUNCIL** held virtually on **25 January 2021**

Present: Roger Cartwright Town Mayor
Anne Eves Deputy Town Mayor

Graham Allen
Andrew Barrett-Miles
Emma Coe-Gunnell White *
Matthew Cornish
Peter Chapman
Robert Duggan
Robert Eggleston
Lee Gibbs
Janice Henwood
Simon Hicks
Tofojjul Hussain
Joseph Foster
Sarah Lawrence
Sylvia Neumann
Max Nielsen
Kathleen Willis

* *Denotes non-attendance.*

(19.00)

The Town Mayor welcomed all to the meeting and noted a sad milestone has been reached whereby almost 100,000 lives have been taken by Covid 19. The Town Mayor requested that the meeting hold a one minute silence to contemplate those that have lost their lives or been impacted by this virus.

174. OPEN FORUM

One member of the public was present.

175. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were none.

176. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Robert Eggleston declared an interest stating he was a Trustee of the Beehive CIO and a Director of Burgess Hill CIC.

Cllr Janice Henwood declared an interest stating she was a Member of the CIC.

Cllr Andrew Barrett-Miles declared an interest stating was a Trustee of Beehive CIO.

Cllr Robert Duggan declared an interest stating he was a Member of the Burgess Hill CIC.

Cllr Simon Hicks declared an interest stating he was a Member of the Burgess Hill CIC.

177. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Petanque course has been approved by Mid Sussex District Council located in Fairfield Recreation Ground. The CEO was thanked for his hard work on this project. He confirmed he met with the contractor on Friday last week with a target build date of April 2021.

An officers meeting will be held early February to discuss the issues at the McDonalds roundabout.

The CEO had contacted Mims Davies (Member of Parliament for this area) requesting information and support for an application to the Central Government Levelling up fund towards the Beehive Centre on two occasions but had received no response to date.

Cllr Peter Chapman raised the issue of the proposed closure of WSCC Children and Family Centres. Recent discussions at WSCC indicated that they intended closing both Burgess Hill venues. He noted that the Town Council had the lease Sidney West Centre and questioned if there could there be financial consequences for our Council as well as loss of services to the community. It was confirmed that Kirsty Lord and Anne Jones MBE as County Councillors had spoken against the proposals.

Cllr Andrew Barrett-Miles declared an interest as County Council Member and suggested that a full response be submitted via the consultation that will be in the public domain. Cllr Anne Eves highlighted the outcry on social media to the proposed closures locally.

The Town Mayor had received an enquiry from a resident in his ward regarding the vaccination programme and the lack of a facility in Burgess Hill. The Clair Hall venue was open to Burgess Hill residents and positive feedback was provided by a Councillor on her experience there. There was a briefing call provided by Sussex Clinical Commissioning group and it was raised at that as to why there was not a venue in Burgess Hill. The availability of the vaccine to our area was

a factor due to storage and Clair Hall was accessible to all. It was requested that Councillors encourage our residents to take up the vaccine. The Brighton Centre was opening today and it was hoped they will vaccinate 22,000 people a week.

178. COUNCIL MINUTES

Cllr Janice Henwood queried Minute 167 item 4

“That the 10 week public consultation period be reaffirmed and started on a date to be agreed by the Council to be followed thereafter by a residents’ vote on The Beehive plan.”

Cllr Henwood queried as to why this item was not on the Agenda and queried if this was correct procedure. It was confirmed that this was agreed via email to all Councillors in January for this to be delegated to the Strategic Planning Key Area Group who were meeting on 2 February.

The Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on 23 November 2020 were **AGREED** by all Councillors apart from Cllr Henwood and signed as a correct record.

179. PLANNING COMMITTEE MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings of the Planning Committee held on Monday 30 November 2020, Monday 21 December 2020 and Monday 11 January 2021 were **AGREED**.

52 applications were considered. The representative from St Andrew’s ward had resigned. It was confirmed that the meeting membership would be looked at later in the month.

180. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT KEY AREA GROUP NOTES OF MEETING

The Notes of the meeting of the Community Engagement Key Area Group held on 26 November 2020 were **AGREED**.

Cllr Hicks chaired this meeting which reflected how keen the team is to progress events once the current situation improves.

181. CUSTOMER SERVICES KEY AREA GROUP NOTES OF MEETING

The Notes of the meeting of the Customer Services Key Area Group held on 6 January 2020 were **AGREED**.

A sub-committee has been appointed to discuss verges working with WSCC officers. The project was welcomed and supported by Councillors. It was noted £9,500 was available in an environmental grants pot. It was highlighted this fund was for community groups but the Council did have £18,000 in the minor works budget where it was felt these funds would come from.

182. FINANCE KEY AREA GROUP NOTES OF MEETING

The meeting was held on 18 January proposing a 0% precept increase which was good news for local residents.

The Beehive was discussed in terms of its business plan – the financial aspect and the considered projections over next 5 years

Cllr Eggleston thanked Graham Fairbairn (RFO for the Town Council) for his work on the budget in a difficult year. He noted that if we reflected back none of us would have considered the year ahead, it has been very hard work for the officer team and they had performed magnificently. He stated the Council wanted to balance two priorities. Firstly to maintain and expand current services and secondly to put the council in a position to deliver the Beehive project in a way that was prudently financed. Officers and Cllr Simon Hicks had worked hard to come up with this budget to make this Beehive project work.

Cllr Eggleston was pleased that the council tax could remain at the same level without cutting services and that we had a plan to deliver the Beehive project. He is aware that it was dependant on residents support to apply for the loan. This year the budget supports the community in the current circumstances which is the right and proper thing to do. Coming out of the pandemic, people are social beings who want to gather and the Beehive is a statement to the town that we wished to bring the community together.

The Notes of the meeting of the Finance Key Area Group held on 18 January 2020 were **AGREED**.

183. RECOMMENDATION FROM THE FINANCE KEY AREA GROUP MEETING-REVENUE BUDGET AND PRECEPT 2021/22

Council was requested to consider recommendations from the Finance Key Area Group, following their meeting of 18 January 2021.

Cllr Andrew Barret-Miles welcomed the 0% precept increase however he expressed concerns on the budget allocation across the different departments. Furthermore he confirmed that the proposed loan application of £4.4 million was not enough. He had examined the financial plans and had looked at the forward projections that left a deficit in his view of £280k despite having 1% precept increase in every year apart from this one to hopefully provide enough money. He stated that the figures do not show in the base budget the ability to pay back the 140k that we will have to do each year and the deficit on the operating costs. He suggested that if the Council requested an additional £0.4million, it would demonstrate costs fully covered and deficit tackled. There was the need to show that the repayments could be made and currently there was a shortfall. He suggested budget headers be reviewed including the Royal British Legions costs, Councillor Allowances (if double hatted should only claim from one Council) and the burial ground allocation. It was essential to demonstrate to the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) that payments were covered. Finally he reaffirmed his commitment to the Beehive

project and asked the ruling group to reconsider the application amount and the budget allocations.

Cllr Simon Hicks confirmed this would be considered at the Strategic Development Key Area Group Meeting.

Cllr Simon Hicks thanked Cllr Andrew Barret-Miles for his comments and the points would be considered. This would not affect the overall total but the different budget lines may alter.

Cllr Eggleston confirmed he had stated that there was no need to accrue funds for the Burial Ground. The budget was agile and there were sums of money from reserves that would close the gap. When he considered the application to the PWLB he felt £4.8million was a bigger number and there was a risk they would not approve it. He reaffirmed his commitment to £4.4million as felt that was sustainable. With prudent management of the Council finances he felt that the gap could be closed and once the project was underway there was a greater chance of success at grant awarding bodies.

Cllr Eggleston wanted another 0% precept increase next year but allowed for 0.9 due to other inflationary potentials. This is a balanced judgement for all as to what loan amount to apply for, however there was flexibility.

Cllr Andrew Barret-Miles confirmed his commitment to applying for £4.8million. As demonstrated from the outset the Council was covering all costs. If do get money in as the projects progress then we don't need to pull down all the funds. This project was about regenerating the town. There was little difference between £4.4 million and £4.8 million. Currently the Council was presenting a case that shows it could not fund the entire project and should therefore consider the larger amount. He offered to send his calculations to the RFO and to Cllr Eggleston which was accepted. Cllr Eggleston stated he wished to discuss this with the RFO.

It was suggested that an Extra Ordinary Council Meeting be held to enable all councillors to attend and vote.

RESOLVED TO:

- A) approve the 2021/22 Revenue Budget and set the Precept at £923,047,
- B) Inform Mid Sussex District accordingly, and
- C) Defer the decision to approve, in principle, an application to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government for a loan of £4.4 million towards the delivery of the Beehive project to the Extra Ordinary meeting to be held on 2 February.

184. CENSUS 2021 21 MARCH

An introduction to the Census for 2021 was provided by the government, as set out in Agenda Item 11 dated 25 January 2021.

RESOLVED that:

The Council noted the report.

185. DIARY DATES

Councillors noted the forthcoming dates. The Council would be advised on the meeting on the 2 February as this may be an Extra Ordinary Meeting of Council rather than a Strategic Development Key Area Group Meeting. Sufficient time needed to be given to review the Beehive and Budget figures.

186. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

In view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it was proposed that, in the public interest, the public and press be temporarily excluded and they were requested to withdraw from the meeting.

187. Meeting terminated at 19.55 hours.