



MINUTES of the **EXTRAORDINARY MEETING** of the **TOWN COUNCIL** held virtually on **2 FEBRUARY 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)

188. OPEN FORUM

There were no members of the public present.

189. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were none.

190. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Robert Eggleston and Andrew Barret-Miles declared an

interest in Items 5 and 6, as they were trustees of the Beehive CIC.

191. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were none.

192. BEEHIVE CONSULTATION

Councillor Joseph Foster provided a verbal update on the Cultural Quarter Steering Group Meeting held prior to the Council Meeting (minutes attached as Appendix 1). The group had discussed the proposed outline for the consultation and were in support. It was noted that the website was not yet live, and this would be done soon. A suggestion had been made to have Beehive Champions – people supportive of the project, who could be asked to provide case studies and stories of why they were in support, and talk to members of the public. It had been agreed that two leaflets should be produced – the introduction to the project, and the invite to consultation, and, if needed, a third leaflet could be distributed part way through the consultation process as a reminder for people to respond. The third leaflet would be dependent on the initial response. The publicity for the consultation would include posters and information packs being sent to community groups and other third parties and Zoom consultations could be held.

It was noted that the consultation project had effectively already started, as the social media campaign had gone live. It was commented that the website must be live before the leaflets were distributed.

The aim was to complete the project by 29 March, which would be the start of the purdah period for the County Council elections.

There was talk of distributing a secondary selling document, which would promote what the Beehive was about, and who would be using it. There was also talk of a digital information pack to be distributed to community groups.

The final leaflet containing the consultation leaflet would be distributed one per household. If a household wished to make more than one response there would be a downloadable form on the website which they could print and send in. There would be a digital consultation running in parallel to this, and results would be checked for duplicate submissions.

There was a suggestion that the aim for carbon neutrality of the building had been overlooked, and was important to include in the public campaign. Members of the public may enquire as to the carbon emissions of the new building, so it was suggested to include a statement regarding this in the publicity leaflet. This would be in line

with the Climate Emergency Statement the Council had made in July 2019.

It was responded that it was true this was not currently included in the materials. It could be difficult as the building had not been fully specced yet, so the Council should make sure carbon neutrality could be delivered before putting this in the publicity. There were plans for solar panels and other sustainability measures. It was suggested that the leaflet could state that the building would be modern and sustainable, and then the campaign could later talk in detail about carbon neutrality.

It was commented that the best way to have the conversation around sustainability could be through social media . Specific pieces could be done on how the building was being created with the environment and sustainability at heart. Likewise, inclusivity, disability access, dementia friendliness and other areas could be talked about through social media to allow conversation.

It was suggested that a sentence could be added to the initial leaflet, for example 'There will be an aspiration for the building to be carbon neutral', and then more detail could be given in later stages.

It was asked what the framework was for a 'good response' to the consultation, was this a certain percentage of residents? This was important in terms of agreeing whether the third reminder leaflet would be required.

It was answered that it wasn't a specific threshold, but the understanding was that the Public Works Loans Board (PWLb) would expect at least 10%, which would be around 2500 responses.

It was asked of the responses, was the requirement a simple majority for approval? It was answered that it was not that prescriptive.

A question was asked about the role of the Steering Group. Some of the members were concerned about the timings, however as a Council it was wished to start the consultation and building as soon as possible if the public approved. Did the Council have ultimate authority to make this decision?

It was answered that the Steering Group was advisory only, and could not set Council policy on its own. Decisions would ultimately have to be made through Council, however the Council should be listening to the Steering Group for advice.

It was asked whether, if the Council approved the consultation plan, would a group or committee then need to be authorised to run it?

It was answered that, if it was approved, officers would then run it.

It was suggested that a protocol be agreed in which progress was reported back to the Council. Steve Cridland, CEO, responded that currently it was working well with officers working on the project, then reporting back to the Cultural Quarter Committee, then when necessary to Council.

It was noted that the project was running quickly, so when materials were sent out to be reviewed a rapid turnaround was needed.

A point was raised regarding inclusivity that the current leaflet design was not very inclusive in terms of legibility with contrast and font size issues. The consultation process should reflect inclusivity, particularly as it was trying to reach people who were not online.

It was responded that this would be looked at and compared against the guidelines for colour contrast accessibility.

RESOLVED that:

There was a vote to support the consultation process as put forward from the Cultural Quarter Steering Group. This was agreed.

193. BEEHIVE LOAN

The Council resolved to consider applying for a 4.8 million pound loan from the Public Works Loan Board. The report was set out in Agenda Item 6 dated 2 February 2021.

Graham Fairbairn, the RFO, was thanked for reworking the figures to look at the 4.8million figure.

Councillor Simon Hicks presented the report, and highlighted that it would not be a huge difference per annum, but would give more flexibility. Adjustments could be made to the budget to allow for the increased loan amount. With the higher loan, the Council could feel confident that the fundraising target could be achieved while remaining affordable for the Town Council.

It was asked whether the ability to repay the loan would ultimately be related to the amount of income the Beehive was making?

It was answered that it was a slightly separate issue, as the loan was being taken by the Town Council to fund the initial build, and it was not expected that the finances of the Town Council would change dramatically to effect repayment. The success of the running of the building would determine the ongoing input from the Town Council, as the Beehive would be paid a subsidy to provide for any deficit they may incur. It was noted that there was a business plan in place that the building should be run in accordance with.

It was noted that Graham Fairbairn had received a quote from the PWLB on the settlement of the RBL building loan, which would be an additional cost of £44000. Therefore repaying this loan may not be in the Council's best interest at this point.

It was commented that the issue being discussed was the 4.8million number – what would it mean for the Council? The Council could afford it, and it was sustainable going forward. The increase in housing growth in Burgess Hill – currently projected at upwards of 2000 houses over the next 6 years - would mean the Council's income would increase.

The 4.8million number would mean that the Town Council would not be dependent on MSDC for section 106 money or the balance of the Martlets Relocation Fund. It is expected that this money would be received, and there would need to be legal and procedural reasons for this money not to be received, but the increased loan would mean that the project could be funded without this. However, MSDC could potentially deny the Town Council the funding if they thought the Town Council already had sufficient funds due to the increased loan.

A question was asked regarding the figures provided by Councillor Andrew Barrett-Miles following the last meeting on 25 January, which included cuts to public grants money and the Community Development budget. Could there be an assurance that these budgets would not be tapped into to fund the loan repayments? Secondly, if the population of the Town was going to grow, the Town Council may wish to spend more money on community events, would this be taken into account?

Steve Cridland responded that most of the additional £10,000 a year repayment would be taken from staff restructuring later in the year, the details of which were currently confidential.

It was commented that a large amount of the additional money would potentially be used to pay back the RBL building loan, effectively consolidating the loan. Could it be that the PWLB had noticed that the Town Council would be saving money by doing this, and this was why they were quoting the extra charge? It was asked what would the money that was going to be used for the repayment of the RBL loan be used for? Would it still be as a contingency?

It was answered that the suggestion for the extra 0.4million was not in relation to repaying the RBL loan, rather that it was because the projection did not cover the full cost of the building.

It was noted that the full 4.8million would not all need to be drawn down. If there was a significant amount of funds raised, it may not all be needed.

The extra 0.4million was a contingency against MSDC not providing the funds, and potentially against fundraising. It gave more flexibility – issues may arise, so it was useful to have the contingency.

It was commented that the Town Council needed to show we could cover the costs of the project, applying for the larger loan was effectively an insurance policy against the PWLB deciding not to give the loan. This was a big project and the chances of overrun were significant.

It was asked whether it was planned to have a kitchen facility in the building, and it was answered that this was included in Phase 3.

RESOLVED that:

Members resolved to:

Agree to an increased loan of £4.8 mil on the understanding the full £4.8 mil may not be applied for and/or may be applied for but not drawn down fully,

- B) For the RFO to seek confirmation from the Public Works Loan Board in regard to the full cost of repaying early the existing Royal British Legion loan and continue to assess, in liaison with the Finance KAG Chairman, the viability and presentational aspects of early repayment, and
- C) For the RFO to assess the presentational aspects of including the full loan repayments in the Revenue Budget and seek guidance from the council's SSALC representative.

194. DRAFT ROTA OF MEETINGS 2021/2022

The Council was asked to consider a draft rota of meetings for the Council year 2021/2022, attached as Appendix 2 of the Agenda dated 2 February 2021. Key Area Group meetings would be called as and when required and added to the rota during the year.

It was noted that there was a mistake in the Agenda item, which listed the year 2019/2020 rather than 2021/2022.

RESOLVED that:

Council approved the draft Rota of Meetings.

195. PAINTING OF VIRGIN MEDIA BOXES

Council had previously agreed to the painting of Virgin Media junction boxes. This was subject to the memorandum of agreement as

amended between the Town Council and Virgin Media for the decoration of Virgin Media cabinets around town be agreed and the CEO be authorised to sign the agreement. Virgin Media had responded to say that they are not prepared to accept the amendment. It is suggested that the original agreement be entered into. The memorandum of agreement was attached as appendix 3 of the Agenda dated 2 February 2021.

It was noted that the artists were ready to start the project, however each design would be subject to Virgin Media approval so there would be a delay before it could start.

It was asked what would happen if Councillors change within the three year contract, and a new Councillor for an area did not support the project?

The memorandum noted that the Town Council's Maintenance Team may be needed to put in work on this project, had this been agreed with the manager for the department?

It was answered that yes, the department were aware and understood that there may be calls to the Maintenance Team if there were any issues with the boxes, or if in the future they needed respraying. There was capacity for this.

It was noted that this would be a gradual process, and boxes would be considered as Councillors identified suitable boxes and found someone to paint them.

It was commented that this could encourage graffiti.

It was commented that residents should have a say on whether they wanted this in their street. The ward Councillor should sign off on each box after consultation with their residents.

It was responded that this was included in the memorandum that the local Councillor would have to give written approval for each box. It was noted that Virgin Media could give notice and ask for the boxes to be restored to their original condition at the Town Council's cost at any point.

It was commented that, when looking at designs, they needed to be done in a way that wouldn't expose the Council to undue future maintenance costs. The memorandum did expose the Council to some

risk, and this should be considered. The Council should have a handle on the potential financial costs of reinstatement.

It was commented that there were examples of similar projects around the country which had not encouraged increased graffiti.

RESOLVED that:

That the memorandum of agreement between the Town Council and Virgin Media for the decoration of Virgin Media cabinets around town be agreed and the CEO be authorised to sign the agreement.

9. RE-ORGANISATION OF KEY AREA GROUP COMMITTEES

The current Key Area Group Structure was under review. It had been proposed to merge the Strategic and Finance Key Area Groups, and the Community Engagement and Customer Services Key Area Groups in order to streamline decision making and reduce workload for officers. It was suggested to form a working group and discuss.

RESOLVED that:

It was agreed to form a working group made up of Councillors Andrew Barrett-Miles, Roger Cartwright, Robert Eggleston, Anne Eves and Peter Chapman.

196. Meeting terminated at 20.07 hours.