

NOTES of the STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT KEY AREA GROUP MEETING held in the Council Chamber on **Thursday 29 October 2020 at 19.00 hours.**

Present: Joseph Foster Chairman
Graham Allen Vice Chairman
Andrew Barrett-Miles*
Kathleen Willis
Robert Duggan*
Roger Cartwright

Also Present: Robert Eggleston
Anne Eves
Janice Henwood
Peter Chapman
Sylvia Neumann
Lee Gibbs
Simon Hicks
Tofojjul Hussain
Matthew Cornish

**denotes non attendance*

79. **OPEN FORUM**
Nil

80. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
Robert Duggan

81. **SUBSTITUTES**
Matthew Cornish for Robert Duggan

82. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
Nil

83. **NOTES OF THE STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT KAG MEETING**

The Notes of the meeting of the Strategic Development Key Area Group held on 29 October 2020, having been previously circulated, were **AGREED** and will be signed by the Chairman as a correct record. Cllr Henwood asked what the status was on the new community hall. A meeting had been held with Age UK and it was agreed that they were in a good position to run the facility. The Council would provide support if necessary. It was suggested that this be

reiterated to Age UK.

84. **APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN**

The Chairman called for nominations for the position of Vice Chairman. Cllr Graham Allen was nominated. All present supported the nomination and he was therefore appointed as Vice Chairman of the KAG.

85. **LIVE STREAMING OF MEETINGS**

Covid 19 has seen the introduction new technology and virtual meetings. Meetings in the council chamber will return at some stage and the technology to enable people to easily engage with these meetings without having to be physically present was considered. It is possible to purchase equipment which can be set up easily by one officer (set and forget) at the beginning of the meeting and be linked to Council's social media enabling anyone to listen to the meetings. The proposal is an affordable and effective solution. This would enhance the transparency of the council.

In response to a question regarding on-going costs, the chairman said that it was possible to purchase data on a pay as you go basis. This could be upgraded if necessary. The streaming cost would be minimal. Another question concerned the possibility of adding subtitles. This will be looked into.

RECOMMENDED:

1. That council and committee meetings be live streamed to enable the public to listen to proceedings;
2. That £500 be approved to purchase the necessary equipment;
3. That the possibility of adding subtitles be investigated.

86. **URBAN GARDEN**

A proposal has been drawn up for the temporary use of the bleak demolition site which was once the old library and Martlets hall. At present MSDC is only willing to grant a licence for 6 months which would not make the proposal viable. The suggestion is that the site be divided into 3 areas; an allotment site with 12 raised beds, a recreation site with astroturf and a garden area. The garden area would be sponsored and developed by New River Retail.

The project would be an ideal project within the government's Welcome Back initiative currently being strategized by MSDC (£133k has been made available to Mid Sussex). It may well prove so popular that it becomes a permanent feature or the concept incorporated into any future development design. The psychology of open spaces within developments is important for people's wellbeing. At present people are put off from going into town with some seeing the area as scary.

A 6 month licence will not do justice to the project and a minimum of 18 months is needed. If we do nothing it is likely that the area will remain unsightly for a long time to come. It was recognised that MSDC need the flexibility to make decisions but 6 months is just too short for anything

meaningful. If our bid is rejected then a further meeting should be convened to consider our options.

The option of using astroturf should be relooked and an alternative found as astroturf is not environmentally friendly and is expensive.

It was felt that a fee should be charged anyone using an allotment. A request was made that no trees be planted in the planters.

RECOMMENDED:

1. That an application be submitted to MSDC for a temporary licence to develop an urban garden on the old Martlets/ Library site including raised allotments, raised beds and a recreational area provided the licence issued is for a minimum of 18 months;
2. That an amount not to exceed £17,000 be spent on developing the site provided funding can be obtained from the Welcome Back initiative;
3. That if the application is rejected then a further meeting of the KAG be convened to consider any options available;
4. That the materials be sold at the end of the project or donated to worthy causes or schools.

The meeting ended at 20.05