



MINUTES of the **ORDINARY MEETING** of the **TOWN COUNCIL** held in the Council Chamber on **20 September 2021**

Present:	Anne Eves	Town Mayor
	Janice Henwood	Deputy Town Mayor

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

* *Denotes non-attendance.*

(19.00)

259. [OPEN FORUM](#)

West Sussex County Councillor Richard Cherry addressed the Council on Park Centre. He was not speaking on behalf of WSCC. Plans were in process to close 33 of 44 Children and Family Centres across the county including two in Burgess Hill – The Gattons and Sidney West. Park Centre, although not a Children and Family Centre, was included on this list. WSCC were withdrawing their services in running the building in the hope that one of the building users would take over the task. Councillor Cherry couldn't see that these organisations would have the resources to run it. The building was a prime location for development. It was currently run by St John's Trust which had one

trustee – The County Council. They could not sell the building and take a profit, but they could sell it and use the profit to support disabled children. Was there some preventative measure possible to protect the Park Centre?

Two representatives from Escape Youth Club, based in the Park Centre, were present and addressed the Council. They responded to Cllr Cherry's point on the current building users not being able to run the centre, and said that yes they were a newer club so weren't currently in a financial position to do this, but they did feel they could run the building. They had thought that as the building was in trust it could not be sold, it was a community building with Covenants on it. Escape and some other organisations were interested in the building, and felt WSCC could support these groups to run the building. Children's services in Burgess Hill were changing, services were stretched to their maximum. Escape were not just a normal youth club, they also supported mental health issues, and this was why they had started the club. They knew a lot about what the children of Burgess Hill wanted, and this should be listened to.

260. [APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE](#)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Graham Allen, Councillor Andrew Barrett-Miles and Councillor Max Nielsen.

261. [DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST](#)

Councillor Robert Eggleston declared an interest in Agenda Item 8 as he was a trustee of The Beehive Trust.

262. [CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS](#)

After Agenda Item 5, Council Minutes, Item 12 on the Welcome Back Fund would be bought forward. Immediately after this, the Council would take the proposed Park Centre emergency motion.

263. [COUNCIL MINUTES](#)

The Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on 21 July 2021 were **AGREED** and signed as a correct record.

264. [WELCOME BACK FUND](#)

Mid Sussex District Council were the agents for the Government's Welcome Back fund. The Town Council put forward a list of projects to be considered for funding. A response was received from MSDC as set out in Agenda Item 12 dated 20 September 2021.

Jennifer O'Grady and Emily Bryant from the Community Engagement Team presented a proposed events programme to the Council,

presentation attached as Appendix 1.

Questions were then taken on the presentation when the following points were raised.

It was asked how much Councillor support would be needed for this events programme.

It was responded that it would depend on the event, some would not need any support. The main event, already in the events calendar, which would need Councillor support was the Christmas event.

It was asked if all of the events proposed could be afforded from the Welcome Back fund.

It was responded that this would depend on the Council's views on what they wished to spend the money on. It was noted that the proposed programme took into account both sets of funding, for events, and for trails, so combined this was £16,500.

It was commented that the Council were also looking at some art projects around the town, which would be taken out of this fund. If it was not possible to fund all of the proposed events from the Welcome Back funds, there was money available in Town Council pots which could be allocated.

It was commented that it was not clear how MSDC would be giving out the money, and the Council needed clarification on this, as we needed to be certain how it would work.

It was commented that, looking at how the money had been allocated in the District, there could be some money left over. As BHTC were being proactive on this project, and were the only town in the district currently really focussing on spending this money, we could request some of this additional money. It was not District or Town Council money, so it would be a shame not to use the opportunity and spend it all.

It was commented that there were two proposals for escape rooms/games, which were proposed to be two weeks apart – both did not necessarily need to be done. It was questioned whether the outdoor game would be weather dependent.

It was responded that, regarding the weather question, attendees would be able to dress appropriately for the weather conditions, so unless it was extreme weather it could still go ahead. Regarding choosing between the two, escape rooms were currently very popular and had a wide appeal. The inflatable indoor room could only be played by one group at a time, and groups could be various sizes, so it was difficult to give exact numbers of users. Although both options

were escape games, they were very different, with one being self-contained and one a trail walking around the town.

Regarding the proposal for music on the bandstand, it was questioned why the Community Engagement Team could not manage this internally, rather than using Burgess Hill Radio to find performers and manage this. Most performers would have their own equipment, so why did this need to depend on outside sources. It was commented that as much money as possible should go towards the artists rather than Burgess Hill Radio.

It was responded that, as it would be 3 hour music sessions, this would likely be more than one act, so would need to be one PA system that was set up, and it wouldn't work having the artists bring their own systems. The Town Council did not have the equipment to do this, so the technical side would need to be outsourced. Someone would also be needed to manage the artists on the day, and this would need a lot of officer resource to do this, which was why it was proposed to outsource.

A suggestion was made for a children's competition with a trail of animals displayed in shop windows.

A suggestion was made for a talent show, which could cater to all ages.

It was responded that talent shows were logistically very difficult to run.

The advertising of events was raised, and it was suggested that other radio stations be approached for paid advertising.

Councillor Eggleston responded that in previous experience with events, paid radio advertising was not successful. It would be better to put money into boosting posts on social media, and potentially literature through doors.

It was commented that the proposed programme gave a holistic approach, working around other town events such as the market and the Christmas event, this was appreciated.

A question was raised on the suggestion from MSDC for £4000 to be put towards shop window vinyl prints for vacant shop units, as this seemed like a strange use of public money. It would be better if this money could be used for something else.

It was responded that it had taken MSDC until now to deliver on what they would support Burgess Hill doing with the Welcome back Fund. No towns or parishes had submitted proposals for vinyls for empty shops, so it was unclear where this had come from.

Questions were raised on how this fund is utilised, which would be asked to MSDC. There was £151,000 in total for the District; the 3 towns in Mid Sussex made up 58% of population, but had only been allocated 40% of the pot of money.

It was raised that some of the proposed events may drive footfall more than others – for example the Drive in Cinema was not quite in the Town Centre. It was agreed that it would be useful for the Councillors to put together a priority order for the proposed events, and this could be included when submitting the plans to MSDC.

It was suggested that, regarding the drive in cinema, local food businesses could be approached to provide discounts on the night for example, as a way of driving the footfall more into the businesses.

It was suggested that town traders be approached to get their views on what would be helpful for them. A meeting was already in place with the centre managers of the town's two shopping centres, so this would be discussed then.

It was commented that it would be good to use the bandstand more for live music, and this should be encouraged throughout the year.

It was suggested to approach the ITV crew currently filming in the town, to see if they would be involved in the Christmas event.

It was responded that there were already separate plans for Christmas in place so this wouldn't be pursued at this stage.

It was asked whether the full programme had to be submitted by 24 September, or just confirmation that the Town Council would accept the money?

It was responded that this was being looked into by the Officers, as they would also need a clearer idea of how the control of the programme would work, as it complemented existing Town Council events, we would like to have some control over it.

A member of the public commented that the public should be consulted on what they wanted, and if they were involved they would be more likely to attend events.

It was responded that the Community Engagement team were currently consulting with the public on events.

RESOLVED that:

Mid Sussex District Council be advised that the Town Council wished to take up their offer of funding from the Welcome Back Fund.

265. PARK CENTRE EMERGENCY ITEM

Councillor Robert Eggleston moved to suspend Standing Orders (Under S) 8 a (xxii) so that the Council may consider as an emergency motion a resolution to prepare an application to MSDC to place Park Centre on the Register of Assets of Community Value. Councillor Janice Henwood seconded this. It was voted on and agreed to suspend standing orders.

Councillor Eggleston presented the item. The Council had heard from Councillor Cherry and the Escape Youth Club. He stated there was a risk to the future of Park Centre, either if WSCC ran out of money to maintain and mothballed it, or if it got sold and potentially demolished. Cllr Eggleston commented that although there were covenants on the building, covenants could be released so this wasn't a guarantee.

As a defence mechanism, the Town Council could make an application for Park Centre to be made an Asset of Community Value (ACV). If it was made an ACV, and in future there was a proposal to sell, this would create a 6 month moratorium where the community could make a bid to buy the building. The seller did not have to accept this, so it was not fool-proof, but was the best thing the Town Council could do. The Town Council could also say to WSCC that any proceeds from the disposal of that building for development should be used for the same sort of resources as were at Park Centre.

Councillor Eggleston proposed a motion that:

1. This Council makes an application to MSDC to place Park Centre on the register of Assets of Community Value.
2. The CEO should prepare the application
3. The wording of the application be reviewed by the ACV working group prior to submission

It was commented that this was a unique building; it had so many different rooms and offered so much. If it was lost, where would something else be built, the current building was in a town centre location. Escape Youth Club had a real opportunity to see what they could do. It was commented that the building had been left to the people of Burgess Hill, so it would not be right for WSCC to sell it and use the money elsewhere in the County.

It was commented that the Park Centre had been used by Summerhaven, a local mental health group, and was a valuable facility. They had not stayed there as they could not be given confirmation that they could stay on a longer term basis.

It was commented that when the Town Council had proposed buildings

be registered as ACVs before, none were successful. It was disappointing that Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC) just turned these down and didn't negotiate and engage. It was hoped that the Town Council would be better prepared for this application.

Councillor Cherry addressed the Council again, commenting that there was form from WSCC on this. Previously buildings associated to Park Centre were sold off, and the proceeds were used to fund maintenance and running of Park Centre. The Charity Commission website showed that this money had run out in the end of 2019.

One of the representatives from Escape Youth Club asked whether, in the case that the ACV was unsuccessful, was there something else the community could do, for example crowd funding or setting up a charity.

It was responded that there was nothing preventing members of the public from setting up an organisation to try and buy the building, but they should be aware that local authorities were obliged to get the best value for money, and would therefore want to sell to a developer. Any community organisation and/or BHTC would be looking at raising the development value of the site. This was a tough thing to do, so the sooner the Town Council knew what was happening and organised a response, the better equipped we would be to act.

It was commented that it was important to get the Park Centre on to the ACV register, as it acted as a stumbling block to anyone looking to sell it. There was currently a debate around the future of Clair Hall, which was on the register.

It was commented that there was a complicating factor, as it was held as a charitable trust. Clair Hall was directly owned by council. If the charitable trust wanted to dispose of the building they would have to use the money to meet their charitable objectives, this could be by funding other groups.

The Council voted on the motion proposed by Councillor Eggleston, and it was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that:

1. This Council makes an application to MSDC to place Park Centre on the register of Assets of Community Value.
2. The CEO should prepare the application
3. The wording of the application be reviewed by the ACV working group prior to submission

Standing Orders were resumed.

266. PLANNING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Councillor Janice Henwood, Chair of the Planning Committee, presented the minutes. The Committee were still in pursuit of one retrospective application where a historical wall was destroyed. The application was refused by MSDC and the applicant had 6 months to respond. The Chair would be interested to see how MSDC enforced this. It was commented that if they didn't follow through and enforce this, the case could be taken to the Ombudsman.

The Minutes of the meetings of the Planning Committee held on Monday 9 August and Tuesday 31 August 2021 were **AGREED**

267. CUSTOMER SERVICES KEY AREA GROUP NOTES OF MEETING

Councillor Robert Duggan, Chair of the Customer Services Key Area Group, presented the notes of the meeting. The group had considered the wildflower verges, which had received a positive public response, and members of the group felt the project had been a success. They had agreed with the suggestion not to expand the project until costs were better understood. The Petanque project had been held up by further negotiations. The first Virgin Media box had been painted, a memorial tree for Prince Philip would be planted in Folders Meadow, the Help Point was to undergo improvements. Rewilding of open spaces in the burial ground was being considered, a new tipper truck was to be leased, a contractor was being employed for the Town Market, a rainbow bench was to be installed in Queen Elizabeth Avenue, 9 trees were to be planted around town and 30 saplings were to be planted in Batchelors Farm.

The Notes of the meeting of the Customer Services Key Area Group held on 18 August 2021 were **AGREED**.

268. BEEHIVE: APPROVAL OF LOAN APPLICATION

The Council applied for a £4.8 million loan from the Public Works Loan Board. Approval had been received for the first tranche of £1.68million. Further tranches would be applied for and approved depending on the progress of the project. The Bat survey showed there were no bats in the building. MSDC Planning was currently reviewing our application for an amendment. Hopefully we would be able to commence with demolition in the coming months.

It was hoped that building work would start next year when the construction market and supply prices had settled. The application for the demolition of the RBL building was in to be considered by MSDC. Now that the first tranche of the loan had been approved the Council could apply for grants and look for donations, which could allow for Phase A and B to be built at the same time, and for the Council not to take the full amount of the loan. This was the biggest loan ever approved for a Town Council by the Public Works Loan Board.

The Council wished to record a vote of thanks to Graham Fairbairn, RFO, for his work on the numbers and queries from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB), and a vote of thanks to Steve Cridland, CEO, for his support on pushing through the Public Works Loan liaising with professional consultants. A vote of thanks was also given to Councillor Robert Eggleston, Leader of the Council, for his work on the project.

The Council also acknowledged the groundwork done on this project by previous Councillors.

RESOLVED that:

The item was noted.

269. MID SUSSEX MARATHON

A question was received from Mid Sussex District Council on whether Burgess Hill Town Council would support the upcoming Mid Sussex Marathon (MSM), as set out in Agenda Item 9 dated 20 September 2021.

It was commented that the approach had been from MSDC, however Places for People Leisure had the contract. There was some confusion about this structure, as it seemed to be run by a private entity, however MSDC were also involved. The Council would like further clarity on who owned the project, who was running it, whether it was commercial, and what was the plan.

It was commented that, although Burgess Hill wanted to be involved, there had been historical issues with the MSM, previously it had been proposed that the MP for Mid Sussex be the figurehead, it was suggested that it should not be a political person, and perhaps should be a local sports person. There had also previously been a request for money from BHTC towards advertising the MSM on the London Underground, it was commented that this may not be the best use of money, as it should be for the benefit of the people of Burgess Hill and Mid Sussex. Any money given by BHTC would be money that would otherwise be given to community groups through the grants process, so it needed to have a clear benefit.

It was suggested that there should be further conversations with the organisers to discuss these questions, and see how the values of the organisations aligned with those of the Town Council.

RESOLVED that:

In principle the Town Council wished to support the Mid Sussex Marathon, subject to better understanding of structure of the organisation, what contribution was wanted from the Town Council, and how this would be spent. The Town Council did not wish for the event to be politicised.

The organisers of the Mid Sussex Marathon would be invited to the Community Engagement Key Area Group to discuss further.

270. BURIAL GROUND: MOUNDING AND SALE OF PLOTS

A report was provided on recent developments at the burial ground where Members views were sought, as set out in Agenda Item 10 dated 20 September 2021.

MOUNDING OF PLOTS POST BURIAL

It was agreed that the proposal from the officers was a good solution to the issue. It was suggested that alternative ways of demarcating the graves could be researched, in discussion with the Maintenance Team, to still allow for the burial ground to be maintained.

RESOLVED that:

The newly purchased respect barrier would be used as opposed to the mounding of individual plots.

The Council should look into alternative ways of demarcating the graves in the future, still allowing for the maintenance of the burial ground.

PURCHASING OF ADJACENT (2ND) PLOTS

There was a concern over the Muslim burial area running out of space, the Town Council would like to reassure the community that there was an additional field available which had not yet been prepared, so there was not immediate pressure on space.

RESOLVED that:

At the time of a burial, the additional adjacent plot would be available to be purchase to allow a husband and wife to be buried next to each other.

271. WSCC TRANSPORT PLAN

Councillor Robert Duggan had submitted a brief and proposed resolution for consideration by the Council, attached as Appendix 2 to the Agenda dated 20 September 2021.

Councillor Robert Duggan presented the item, and highlighted first that priorities needed to be considered. There were 17 objectives in the plan, 2 of which were for economic prosperity, which may compete with the others. The document did not pin down how these objectives would be balanced. Secondly he highlighted that, in the first five years of the plan, there was no mention of on-street electrical vehicle

charging, except from Balcombe, Lindfield and Ardingly. There may be difficulties with doing this in towns, but this should be addressed.

Councillor Robert Duggan was thanked for his work on this report.

A discussion ensued during which the following points were raised:

- The Haywards Heath to Burgess Hill cycle route was not identified as a priority in the proposed response. Could this be altered to say it was a high priority? Councillor Duggan clarified that the resolution was highlighting that, although this route was important, it should not be prioritised at the expense of the other items.
- Bus transport for rural connectivity was vital, and WSCC would need to be prepared to subsidise this.
- It was regretted that there were no targets or indicators on biodiversity, geodiversity, landscape, greenspace provision, soils and agricultural land
- More explanation was needed on the proposed behavioural initiatives to tackle inappropriate speeds on rural roads.
- It should be considered to build in electrical vehicle charging points in the new developments in Burgess Hill from the start, for example the Northern Arc.
- A lot of cycling improvements for Burgess Hill were being picked up in the Place and Connectivity Programme
- Wherever possible cycleways, pedestrian routes and motor vehicle routes should be segregated to avoid accidents.

Specific changes for Councillor Duggan's proposed resolution would be submitted by the other Councillors by email.

RESOLVED that:

Specific changes for Councillor Duggan's proposed resolution would be submitted by the other Councillors by email.

Steve Cridland would send the resolution to WSCC before 8 October.

272. EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS

The Council noted recent episodes of heavy rain such as the localised flooding in various locations around Burgess Hill as set out in Agenda Item 13 dated 20 September 2021. A report was provided which proposed formalising Council policies to build in resilience to extreme weather events, as set out in Agenda Item 13 dated 20 September 2021.

It was commented that the public should be educated on the importance of green spaces for drainage and flood prevention.

RESOLVED that:

A working party would be formed to get an idea of the issues around the town, and discuss what further could be done to increase resilience. Councillors Peter Chapman, Matthew Cornish, Robert Eggleston and Simon Hicks volunteered to be part of this working party.

273. DIARY DATES

Council received a schedule of forthcoming events as set out in Agenda Item 14 dated 13 September 2021.

RESOLVED that:

The contents of the report were noted.

274. 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.

275. Meeting terminated at 20.50 hours.