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21 February 2022

To: **MEMBERS OF THE STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT KEY AREA GROUP, BURGESS HILL TOWN COUNCIL**

A **MEETING** of the **STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT KEY AREA GROUP** will be held online on **28 February 2022** at **19.00 hours**, when your attendance is required.

Steve Cridland
Chief Executive Officer

Following government advice on social distancing, essential Council Meetings will be held virtually during the Covid-19 period. All papers will be published on our website as usual. Members of the public can attend the meeting by using the Zoom link that will be placed on the town council's website and social media shortly before the meeting takes place.

Filming, recording of Council meetings and use of social media:

During this meeting members of the public may film or record the Committee and officers from the public area only providing it does not disrupt the meeting. The Confidential section of the meeting may not be filmed or recorded.

If a member of the public objects to being recorded, the person(s) filming must stop doing so until that member of the public has finished speaking.

The use of social media is permitted but members of the public are requested to switch their mobile devices to silent for the duration of the meeting.

****PLEASE NOTE THE START TIME OF THE MEETING****

A G E N D A

Cllrs Joseph Foster (Chairman), Graham Allen, , Kathleen Willis, Andrew Barrett-Miles, Robert Duggan, Roger Cartwright

1. OPEN FORUM

Members of the public are invited to put questions or to draw relevant matters to the Council's attention. Each member of the public is allowed to speak once only in respect of a business item on the agenda (whether in the Open Forum or during the meeting) and shall not speak for more than three minutes at the discretion of the Chairman.

If it appears that the number of speakers is likely to unreasonably delay the disposal of business items on the agenda the Chairman may direct that a member of the public submits a question or comment in writing which shall be answered in due course.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

3. SUBSTITUTES

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In respect of any matter on the agenda.

5. NOTES OF THE STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT MEETING

Notes of the meeting held on 26 May 2021 (previously distributed).

7. BURGESS HILL INCLUSIVE TOWN

'A town that is accessible for all'

7.1 Introduction

Streets and buildings should be accessible to all but for people with disabilities (physical or hidden) the experience of navigating the built environment can be daunting. New street layouts and building designs can accommodate and resolve accessibility issues in the planning stage. The same cannot be said with existing structures created at a time when disability rights were not high on planning agendas.

Whilst the issue of accessibility is a matter for the whole of the town there is a particular need to ensure that the town centre is as accessible as it can be for all residents and visitors regardless of their physical or mental health circumstances. This is because the town centre is the retail and service hub of the town and accessibility should be maximised.

In addition, improving accessibility for residents and visitors with disabilities can give a positive boost to the local economy. It is

estimated that the “Purple Pound” is worth £274bn per annum across the UK (see infographic).

7.2 **The range of physical and hidden disabilities**

You are disabled under the Equality Act 2010 if you have a physical or mental impairment that has a ‘substantial’ and ‘long-term’ negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities. The list below is not exhaustive.

Wheelchair and mobility scooter users

People with mobility problems (e.g., elderly people using wheeled walking aids)

Visually impaired

Hearing impaired

People with dementia

Autism

Epilepsy

Other hidden disabilities

SEND

Over 18% of the working age population in Britain are disabled as defined by the Equality Act and there is not reason to expect that Burgess Hill’s population is out of line with this percentage.

7.3 **Town Accessibility Plan (TAP)**

An over-arching strategy for Inclusion and Accessibility. Much of this should sit at MSDC level because it is a matter for planning policy but having a TAP will mean that the ‘small wins’ fit into the context of an overarching plan and we can then measure our progress against that plan.

7.4 **Audit**

New building and townscape designs must, wherever possible, comply with the provisions of the Equality Act which are reflected in building regulations. The same cannot be said for streets and buildings created prior to equality legislation and it can be difficult to retrofit “accessible-to-all” features into these.

There is evidence from other parts of the UK, where towns have embarked upon changes in their community to improve inclusion and accessibility (e.g., Bedford Borough Council) and Burgess Hill can learn from their experiences.

But we can also take our own steps and audit the town centre to identify where changes or investment could be made to improve inclusion and accessibility. It is unlikely that an audit will fail to identify areas for improvement.

An audit can be carried out in many ways including surveys, interviews, and practical 'walking the street exercises' with residents that have disabilities.

We should include the following groups in the audit:

- (i) the experiences of residents and groups most affected by limitations on accessibility;
- (ii) third sector organisations with experience in disability rights and services;
- (iii) local businesses and centre managers.

7.5 Potential changes to improve accessibility and inclusion

- (a) ensuring that there are clear pathways for wheelchair and mobility scooter users across town and in the town centre.
 - Relaunch the campaign to stop pavement and verge parking plus promote how this ASB can be reported.
 - Review street level signage and location of street furniture.
 - Review dropped kerb provision and street quality (some of which may be upgraded as part of the Place & Connectivity project if funds become available).
- (b) Provision of mobility scooter charging points in the town centre.
- (c) provide more signage and information on the location of **Safe Places** in Burgess Hill and consider any additional points where these can be established (current Safe Places are Hel Point, Library and Triangle).
- (d) Review crossing points in the town to ensure they are appropriate for people with disabilities and recommend any adaptations or new works
- (e) Review accessibility for those with visual impairments and consider introduction of technology to assist with route finding and locations (e.g., 'Live Beacon' and/or 'Blindsquare')
- (f) Promote training on dementia and BSL and identify businesses where these skills are present
- (g) Work with retailers and the hospitality sector to increase support for people with disabilities, for example:
 - through 'purple pound days'.
 - specific times in a week where disabled people may shop in a more disability friendly way.
 - designating quiet areas in cafes and bars or adapting lighting where it supports those with autism (as an example).

7.6 Financial Implications

The Council has £10,000 in an earmarked reserve to support inclusivity initiatives and may want to consider adding to this fund. It should also seek support from MSDC for any s106 or LCI funds that could be allocated to this programme as well as look for support from the 3rd sector.

RECOMMENDED

1. Support this Inclusive Town Initiative.
2. Establish a working group of Councillors to develop the initiative with input and support from representatives of the disability community.
3. Carry out an inclusivity audit in line with the proposals set out in the report with the objective of building an implementation plan for approval by the Council.
4. Develop a Town Accessibility Plan.
5. Seek advice from other local authorities that have worked on inclusivity initiatives and relevant third sector organisations to identify best practice.
6. Regularly review progress against the plan.
7. Identify the expenditure required to meet the plan objectives and allocate an initial £10,000 from the specific reserve towards this programme.