



MINUTES of the **EXTRAORDINARY MEETING** of the **TOWN COUNCIL** held in the Council Chamber on **Thursday 31 March 2022**

Present: Anne Eves Town Mayor
Janice Henwood Deputy Town Mayor

Graham Allen*
Andrew Barrett-Miles
Roger Cartwright
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.*

322. OPEN FORUM

There were two members of the public present at the meeting. The first speaker asked if there would be an update on the Beehive, as well as asking if there was a plan in place to create a multi-purpose space for the area near Lidl. She suggested that there should be something there that could encompass summer activities, such as an open theatre, a green space or an area for teen outdoor art – especially for SEN children and people with disabilities who are no longer in the educational system. The second speaker reaffirmed the above and suggested the idea of a 'green centre', saying that she felt the town needed something they were able to use, as currently she could not see a future for the Town Centre. The second speaker also asked why Mid Sussex District Council were not prioritising Burgess Hill when it clearly needs to be

a priority.

In reference to the Beehive, Councillor Foster explained that currently the Town Council are tendering for the demolition process, and they are hopeful that the demolition will be underway in the next month or two. He also explained that the loan funding is secure. Councillor Eggleston added that the pandemic has had an impact, as well as the situation in Ukraine, especially the energy crisis and rise in raw material costs. He went on to explain that a quantity surveyor was in the midst of re-costing the project and that it will most likely increase due to inflation.

Councillor Chapman went on to speak about summer activities and what plans the Town Council had. He explained that after Covid, the town was finally getting back to a good and regular event plan. Councillor Eggleston added that there was a higher events budget than previous years, owing to the Jubilee and the 'Jubilee Fest' being organised by the Community Engagement Team. He said that the Council are aware that there needs to be a range of summer events, especially for young people.

Town Mayor Anne Eves added that there was currently an inclusivity project taking place to make the Town Centre more accessible for disabled people.

Answering the question about the Mid Sussex District Council, Councillor Eggleston explained that there was a tense relationship between the two Councils and that he could not explain why it seems that Burgess Hill is not a priority. He called to Councillor Barrett-Miles, who concurred that there was a difficulty and pointed to the Neighbourhood Plan as a possible reason.

Councillor Duggan said that he hoped the notes from the meeting could be fed back to MSDC for comment, and Town Mayor Eves explained that there was a meeting set with MSDC for April 11 in which the notes from the Council meeting could be relayed to the District Council.

323. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Lee Gibbs, Councillor Max Nielsen and Councillor Tofojjul Hussein.

324. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

325. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were none.

326. COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

Town Mayor Eves explained that during a District Scrutiny Committee meeting, an amendment had arisen, suggesting that the Northern Arc should remain in the parish of Ansty and Staplefield for at least three years, and not be moved into Burgess Hill. It was this occurrence that led to the calling of an Extraordinary Meeting of Council.

Councillor Eggleston went on to explain that there had been previous assurances made that the Northern Arc housing would go on to be part of Burgess Hill – the creation of the website burgesshill.net was an example of this. He explained that the delays now left the Town Council with one chance to petition and restart the process. The petition would require 7.5% of residents to sign, equating to a figure in the region of 2000 names. Should the petition reach the required amount, it would mean that MSDC were legally obligated to carry out a review.

Burgess Hill Councillors believe they are doing the right thing for the town with this campaign, in order to deliver on their ten-year vision.

Councillor Barrett-Miles supported the petition and raised his thoughts on there being a necessity to reconfigure the wards, in order to create an equality of representation in the electorate. He added that he believed that despite there being a delay of the boundary review, that the Northern Arc would end up being a part of Burgess Hill eventually, anyway.

Councillor Cornish raised the issue of the next steps following the petition, the publicity for it and where there would be a cost to the Town Council. Councillor Eggleston said that once the 2000 names had been collected, the petition would be taken to MSDC and it would go into scrutiny about Community Governance Review – this would then go into consultation for six weeks in both Ansty and Burgess Hill. Councillor Eggleston also pointed out that the consultation would be about what would create a coherent community, rather than which authority they would like to choose. He said that the recommendation would be made after the consultation and that if the boundary is changed it will be difficult for anyone to oppose after the fact. He also added that the leaflets had cost £456.

Councillor Cartwright said that he was in favour of the Community Governance Review.

Councillor Duggan said he supported the actions taken, and asked about the disparity of the Town Council Wards, and whether it was down to the Mid Sussex District Council or the Boundary Commission.

Councillor Foster explained that there is a point in law, where it was put into legislation that principal authorities are required to respond, and run boundaries for Parish and Town level, whereas there was an Act of Parliament that requires the Boundary Commission to look after District level boundaries. He explained that the idea of these laws is to give Town Councils the power to force a review of the boundaries.

Councillor Eggleston added that this information can be found in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act of 2007.

Councillor Hicks added that he supported the proposal, but worried for

the deadline as it was not particularly long away. He expressed the need for a plan of action to divide up the town for campaigning and asked if more leaflets would be necessary.

Steve Cridland (CEO) suggested that each ward councillor looked after their own ward and split it accordingly.

Town Mayor Eves suggested including 'Burgess Hill Can' with the circulation of the petition, to which Councillor Cornish said that volunteers should be kept within the wards they were living in, as so not to confuse anything.

Deputy Mayor Henwood suggested that volunteers should knock on doors with the petition, and not only have it in the form of a leaflet. She added that it was important for volunteers to communicate within the wards, so that people who had already signed the petition would not have people knocking again.

Steve Cridland added that the campaign was being publicised on the website and on social media.

Councillor Foster suggested a WhatsApp group, within wards, for planning of actions as it would be easier to use. He also suggested that some money could be put towards boosting social media posts.

Councillor Eggleston explained that the petition must be in by April 20th, so that it will coincide with other reviews and be implemented by May 2023. He added that he was hopeful for volunteers, and had the idea to control the campaign through the Help Point, including the use of a spreadsheet to keep track of who had signed.

Councillor Chapman said that he would be setting up a Facebook group.

RESOLUTION:

That a Community Governance Review be requested on the terms set out in the petition request and in accordance with the guidelines set out in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

All in favour.

327. PLANNING APPLICATION: TOWN MARKET

Councillor Eves explained that the monthly market was spreading to be more than one day – this was a motion to ask for planning permission to hold the market on any day of the month.

RESOLUTION:

That planning permission to hold markets in Church Walk every day of the week be applied for.

All in favour.

328. MARLETS PROJECTS

Councillor Eggleston explained that there had been attempts made to engage MSDC to make improvement to the visual appearance and social and economic activity in the Martlets area. The vinyls and murals that have been placed around the Town are only a small-scale improvement. He explained that last year, a proposal had been made to turn the area into three zones, but terms were not agreed as there had been optimism that MSDC would be successful in obtaining fund from the Government's 'Levelling Up' scheme. He explained that himself, and CEO Steve Cridland had been in contact with MSDC about resurrecting the plan, and had formulated a proposal. He explained the two major projects that had been envisioned for the Martlets Shopping Area:

Project 1: the Urban Garden Project would involve the creation of a mobile garden, possibly to be named after Victoria Shilling, a well-known resident of Burgess Hill. The garden would need to be mobile as ITV will be returning to film more series of 'Grace' and will require the land for their trailers etc. Also, by making the garden mobile, there is the possibility of creating a multi-purpose space, with the planters being moveable to make way for a range of community events.

Project 2: 4000 square feet of the Lidl buildings ground floor is vacant and can be converted into a pop-up Community Centre, for things such as arcade games and other activities that will appeal to the 12-17 demographic. It could also be used as a centre for music, comedy and drama. Councillor Eggleston explained that the money used for the projects would not be lost, as activities put in place could then be used elsewhere once development of the area is underway. He explained that these two projects would help to improve the visual experience of the town, as well as furthering the focus on community experience. He said that it would be delivered quickly and have a quick impact on the town. As well as this, he suggested that if footfall in the Town Centre increased, then investors in the Town Centre may kickstart a more traditional investment in the High Street.

Councillor Eggleston went on to add that the cladding on the old Lidl building was falling apart, but hopefully would be repaired soon, with a contractor having been brought in to look at possibly concealing the cladding. He gave thanks to CEO Steve Cridland and Maintenance Section Head Sarah Hughes for their help in the organisation of the project, as well as to the three external contractors who had given their time for free. He explained that, once agreed, the proposal would be submitted and agreement hopefully reached at a meeting with MSDC on April 11th.

Town Mayor Eves endorsed thanks to the officers and also to Councillor Eggleston for their work on the projects. She questioned why the Town Council should pay anything at all towards the project, asked what kind of activities and improvements New River Retail have planned, and if there was any more information on the idea of a 'Pocket Park' mentioned at MSDC by Councillor Sam Smith. She also added that the project should consider the sensitivities of the Kiln - which is a community hub next to the old Lidl building into which people have invested thousands

of hours of voluntary work - and that there should be careful consideration, as so not to 'step on their toes'.

Deputy Mayor Henwood also asked how much communication there had been with Kiln, adding that she believed there should be communication with groups in the area surrounding the proposed site. In reference to Town Mayor Eves' questions, Councillor Eggleston explained that there was no proposal for the Town Council to spend money on these projects, instead using money left over from a previous project – it would therefore be money from MSDC being the balance of the £250,000 New River had given to them when they received their first planning consent, rather than BHTC funds. He added that the new community centre would be more of a performance venue and not too similar to the Kiln.

Councillor Foster moved to insert a motion into the agenda. He suggested that the Town Clerk should write to local businesses in the immediate vicinity and explain the plan, in order to receive feedback on the project for the Council to consider. Seconded by Councillor Eggleston.

Councillor Barrett-Miles questioned the timeline of the project, questioning if the public should be consulted before it has been discussed with the District Council.

Deputy Mayor Henwood agreed about the timescale but believed that it was a good idea to share visions and communicate with local businesses. She agreed with the movement for the Town Clerk to write a letter to local businesses. She added that businesses should be advised before April 11th.

Councillor Foster said that it is best to tell businesses that the Town Council are speaking with MSDC and that they will come back to them with further information.

Councillor Eggleston countered the idea with the suggestion the if MSDC do not believe the proposal to be firm, then it will be rejected. He agreed that BHTC should consult with local businesses and was sensitive to the needs of businesses such as the Kiln, but said that the Council need to be firm with MSDC on what they want to deliver.

Councillor Eggleston continued with the previous discussion of the projects and explained that ideally, AstroTurf would not have been used – but the other options such as play bark and real turf were not feasible (especially as the area is made of concrete). He added that AstroTurf is reusable and relatively cheap. He also informed the Councillors that there was a water supply in the area, which works well with the idea of a garden. He also explained that landlords 'New River Retail were planning on putting corporate branded vinyl onto other empty units, as well as pressure washing canopies of shops and other buildings in the Martlets Shopping Area.

RESOLUTION

1. That council approves the project and authorises the CEO to negotiate the details of the project with MSDC.

Nine in favour. One abstention.

2. That the CEO write to local businesses in the immediate vicinity and explain the plan, in order to receive feedback on the project for the Council to consider.

Nine in favour. One abstention.

Meeting terminated at 20:17 hours.