

NOTES of the **STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT KEY AREA GROUP MEETING** held in the Council Chamber on **24 August 2023 at 19.00 hours.**

Present: Peter Williams Chairman
Cedric de Souza
David Eggleton
John Orchard
Matthew Cornish*
Janice Henwood
Robert Eggleston

Also Present: Anne Eves
Tofojjul Hussain
Diane Black
Brenda Williams
Richard Cherry

**denotes non attendance*

1. **OPEN FORUM**

A member of the public asked why there was no strategic plan for the provision of allotments. This should have a higher priority to Park Centre or St John's Pavilion. Cllr Eggleston responded and said that MSDC had commissioned a land study. This will be reviewed by cabinet shortly. The report identifies suitable areas in Burgess Hill for allotments. MSDC will engage with the town council in due course. Cllr Henwood commented that there did not appear to be any way that MSDC would budge with regard to the Chanctonbury allotment site.

A question was asked about the Burgess Hill CIC which had allocated the old Scrapless shop to a new tenant without seeking other tenants. It was felt at the time that it would be unlikely to find another tenant given the conditions of the lease which last until December where after it will be a rolling lease with 30 days' notice. Cllr Eggleston said that he had not been involved with the business when the lease was granted but now had a stake in it. The CIC was aware of his interest.

2. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Matthew Cornish

3. **SUBSTITUTES**

Ann Eves for Matthew Cornish

4. **APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY CHAIRMAN**

Councillor John Orchard was appointed as Deputy Chairman of the Strategic Development Key Area Group.

5. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr Eggleston declared an interest as a trustee of the Beehive CIO and is involved with MSDC regarding St John's Pavilion and Worlds End facility

Peter Williams declared he is a trustee of The Beehive.

Cllrs Henwood, Hussain and Eggleton likewise declared that they were district councillors.

Cllr Eves declared an interest in The Kiln.

Cllr Henwood declared an interest in The Kiln

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

The Notes of the meeting of the Strategic Development Key Area Group held on 11 January 2023, having been previously circulated, were **AGREED** and were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

7. **PARK CENTRE UPDATE**

The Chairman informed the meeting that discussions were ongoing between the Town Council and WSCC as well as with the Park Centre CIO. The preferred option at this stage was that the town council takes over the charity from WSCC as sole trustee and works closely with the Park Centre CIO and other bodies to provide a community centre. Other charities and organisations would be critical for the future success of the centre. It was pointed out that nobody and no organisation owns the building. It is held in trust. The current objectives are archaic and need to be updated.

Initially the rationale behind the Park Centre CIO was that it would be representing Sussex Clubs for Young People and the town council. SCYP had in the meantime gone into administration which changed the dynamic.

A structural survey of the building showed that it will need attention before anyone can start using it. This will require financial stability which the town council will be able to provide.

The question was asked as to how WSCC could hand over the facility in such bad condition when they had an obligation to look after it. How can this burden be passed on to the town?

The town council has access to funding and the CIO can use its resources to raise money for their main objectives rather than seek funding to upgrade the building.

While most would agree that WSCC should fund the repairs this was highly unlikely given their financial position. The charity accounts do not reflect any income or expenditure. The risk is that WSCC demolish the building. They have indicated that they will provide £30,000 for repairs and this will be negotiated further. The town council can apply pressure but WSCC is unlikely to yield. The reality is that WSCC has no spare funding. The best deal we can get is for them to hand it over to the town council. It is unfortunately a take it or leave it situation. To litigate would be extremely expensive with unknown outcomes. The town council would not own the building but would be the sole trustee and as such would have to act in the best interests of the charity.

Park centre has been empty for over a year. The centre would have youth as its focal point but would be for the whole community.

The CEO is a trustee of the Park Centre CIO but has found he is conflicted between the interests of the CIO and those of the town council. Consequently, he will resign.

RECOMMENDED

1. That the progress made regarding the governance of the Park Centre be noted.
2. That a councillor be identified to take over as trustee on the Park Centre CIO

8. **BEEHIVE UPDATE**

The chairman reported that 2 options had been explored and that neither was suitable. The first was to consider the top of New Look but only a short lease was available. The other was at the rear of the old Lidl building but with headroom of only 4m it was not deemed suitable. Its location would not promote the project either. A third option is being explored and the old RBL site is still an option. No further monies had been spent since the new administration had taken office.

FOR NOTING

9. **St JOHNS PAVILION UPDATE**

Councillor Eggleston recused himself from the meeting for this item.

The town council had had a meeting with the cricket club. The intention is for the pavilion to become a community building and not just a sports pavilion. It will provide additional changing rooms to accommodate women and girls at the same time as men were using the existing change rooms. This will enable

the club to have ladies' competitions. It will provide a venue for community events such as wedding receptions. It will also have meeting rooms. Planning permission has been applied for.

A question was asked as to whether the town council would just make a payment or could it expect a return if the venture was successful. The cost of the alterations was expected to be circa £1,1 million. The Cricket Club will provide at least £200k. The town council will provide £400k provided MSDC match funds this amount.

What covenants will be in place to ensure that activities did not conflict with each other? It must be inclusive for the community. The cricket club does not want to see it as just a pavilion but as a community facility.

Cllr Henwood expressed doubt that MSDC had expressed support for the project and also questioned the support of the town council (see below)

[Council Minute extract – 6th March 2023.

408. SPECIAL MOTION: RESCISSION OF RESOLUTION

RESOLVED that:

1. The Council would reinstate St John's Cricket Pavilion into the Town Council Capital program with the amendment -given the limited funds of the Council and the current increased cost of borrowing, no more than 50% of the funding for St John's Cricket Pavilion would be acquired in loans.
2. The contribution made by the town council would be in the order of £400,000 and would be subject to the town council becoming a trustee.]

Concern was expressed that if section 106 funding was used then it could be at the expense of the rest of the park.

FOR NOTING

10. **BURIAL GROUND DEVELOPMENT (Phase2)**

The chairman summarised the report. It is estimated that the project will cost up to £400k. At present £13k is sought to begin the planning aspect of the project. Concern was expressed that with all the development expected in Burgess Hill. no provision had been made for the provision of a larger burial ground.

Meetings will be held in September with MSDC where this can be discussed. In all probability LCI funding would be used rather than section 106 funds. The CEO was tasked with writing to MSDC to bring this matter to their attention. He responded saying that he had previously written but would write again.

RECOMMENDED

- a) That funding of £13k for the appointment of a consultant to develop a

tender document, providing designs, post tender evaluation and preparation of a development contract be approved

- b) That a Burial Ground Working party be established to assist with the project.
- c) That the CEO write to MSDC to highlight the need for land for a future burial ground.

11. **NEW DEPOT FOR MAINTENANCE TEAM**

The maintenance team currently has various storage facilities dotted around the town. This results in multiple journeys and is inefficient. A central depot is needed. The vehicles are currently parked at the rear of the council which is not ideal as thefts have occurred in the past.

This matter to be reported to the Finance KAG.

RECOMMENDED:

1. That £25000 per annum be set aside in future budgets for the rental of a new depot and the CEO be given delegated authority to enter into a lease if suitable premises become available.
2. If new premises are found the lease on the 2 garages at Gravett Court and Cyprus Road Storage Facility be terminated and the 3 shipping containers be sold.
3. That the matter be reported to the Finance KAG.

12. **KILN (NEW CIO) RELOCATION**

Burgess Hill Creative Community provided a comprehensive business plan. The situation they find themselves in is that they have a short tenancy in the old Argos building until the end of December whereafter a rolling lease with a 30-day notice clause replaces this. They are therefore looking for alternative accommodation preferably in the town centre as the town centre is easy for members to access and there is parking.

Cllr Eggleston recused himself from the meeting.

The town council is aware of the situation and will give as much support as possible. The members felt that they should be a core part of the regeneration project as more town centres moved away from retail to community activities.

They are visible where they are and attract passersby.

FOR NOTING

13. **THE PANTRY RELOCATION**

As with The Kiln, the Pantry faces relocation in the future. They aspire to increase their function within the community which they see as becoming more and more important. They also have the ability to fundraise which they are actively doing. The town council noted their pending fate and their aspirations and agreed to assist wherever possible.

FOR NOTING

14. **BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN**

The chairman introduced discussion of the document by stating that this will become law later this year. He said that it was unacceptable that, for example, the mitigation actions taken by developers in SO13 benefitted Steyning. It would be far better to have these actions within the community affected by the development and where that community could keep an eye on it.

Cllr Eggleton provided documentation which set out the effect of this legislation (appendix 1)

It is a big policy with governance challenges. Who would assess the steps taken? There does not appear to be a framework or any methodology. There is no evidence base to show that it works. The Environment Act shows that it can be out of the area and the district plan cannot usurp the law. The effect will be measured by ecological experts rather than councillors or the public. It is important to understand what we can in fact do. The district will call for site suggestions and the town council should in the meantime start identifying sites.

RECOMMENDED:

1. That Councillors receive 'BNG Awareness' training to establish competence in applying the Regulations.
2. That Council considers allocating a 'land bank'

15. **WORLDS END RECREATION GROUNDS PROPOSAL**

It was agreed at the outset that this is a matter for MSDC to deal with. However, the town council is interested in ensuring that the best outcome occurs.

The fields need improving with one often flooded and the other somewhat uneven. The pavilion is not easily used by the clubs.

Burgess Hill Football Club is looking for alternative facilities and would be happy to maintain and improve the pitches. It was noted that other clubs use the pitches and that they would need to be included in any discussions. BHFC

did not want exclusive use of the pitches but would like to have some use when other clubs were not using them particularly for women's football.

RECOMMENDED

1. That approval in principle be given to approach MSDC through the appropriate channels. .

16. **REVIEW AND UPDATES OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT AND HEAD OF PROJECTS**

A short history of events leading to the current situation was provided by Cllr Eggleston

RECOMMENDED:

- a) The Economic Development Department as it stands, cease and the operational management of the Burgess Hill Market move under the remit of Head of Projects;
- b) That a Market Steering Group be reinstated;
- c) That any current economic departmental initiatives are shared between the Head of Customer Services and Head of Projects, where appropriate;
- d) The Economic Development & Projects Officer post be re-titled to Market & Projects Officer and to come under the Head of Projects;
- e) The Head of Customer Services & Economic Development title return to Head of Customer Services; and,
- f) The Economic Development budget be moved to the Head of Projects and the remaining budget be utilised for any current economic departmental initiatives, Burgess Hill Market and projects.

The meeting ended at 20.45