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Wednesday 22 November 2023

To: MEMBERS OF BURGESS HILL TOWN COUNCIL

**A MEETING of the Council will be held in the Council Chamber on Monday 27 November 2023 at 19.00 hours, when your attendance is required.**

**Steven Cridland**  
CEO

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

FILMING, RECORDING OF COUNCIL MEETINGS AND USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

**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.**

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## A G E N D A

1. **OPEN FORUM**

Each member of the public is permitted to speak once in respect of business relevant to the Town Council or of local concern to the residents of the town at the discretion of the Chairman (during the Open Forum). They can also speak during the meeting (on topics relating to the published agenda and any other business raised during the meeting) as the agenda debate is progressed. Speakers are encouraged not to speak for more than three minutes, at the discretion of the Chairman or nominee (including the Chair of any other meeting of the Council).

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. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

In respect of any matter on the agenda.

4. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

To hear Chairman's announcements, for noting items only, if any.

5. **COUNCIL MINUTES**

To consider the Minutes of the of Annual Meeting of Council held on Monday 25 September 2023 (copy herewith) and the Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of Council held on 23 October 2023.

6. **UPDATE FROM WSCC**

Cllr Richard Cherry will provide a report.

7. **UPDATE FROM MSDC**

Cllr Robert Eggleston will provide a report.

8. **PLANNING COMMITTEE MINUTES**

To consider the Minutes of the meetings of the Planning Committee held on Tuesday 10 October, Monday 30 October and Monday 20 November 2023 (minutes previously circulated).

We have considered 60 applications for planning permission under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Our decisions and recommendations within our terms of reference are set out in the Minutes.

David Eggleton  
Chairman

9. **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT KEY AREA GROUP – NOTES OF MEETING**

To consider the Notes of the meeting of the Community Engagement Key Area Group KAG held on 16 October 2023 (previously circulated).

Our decisions and recommendations within our terms of reference are set out in the Notes.

Brenda Williams  
Chairman

10. **FINANCE KEY AREA GROUP - NOTES OF MEETING**

To consider the Notes of the meeting of the Finance KAG held on 15 November 2023 (previously circulated).

Our decisions and recommendations within our terms of reference are set out in the Notes.

The following recommendations have been made:

<b>EXTERNAL AUDIT – 2022/23</b>	<b>RESOLVED</b>  To note the contents of the report
<b>BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2023/24</b>	<b>RESOLVED</b> a) Defer the additional £4k requested by the Grants Panel to the next Council meeting to be held on Monday 27 November 2023,  <i>[see agenda item 12]</i>  b) Allocate an additional £10k from the 2023/24 Surplus to the 2024/25 Events programme as requested by the Community Engagement KAG,  c) Allocate £2.3k from the 2023/24 Surplus towards the purchase of software and tablets to enable the council's maintenance team to be able to work and report remotely in regard to safety inspections and other off-site activities, and  d) Allocate £19k from the 2023/24 Surplus towards the provision of a new town council Depot.
<b>INTERIM AUDIT 2023/24</b>	<b>RESOLVED:</b>  To approve the interim internal audit report for the 2023/24 financial year.

<b>1st DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET 2024/25</b>	<p><b>RESOLVED</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To defer approval of the requested increase in the Annual Grants fund from £12k to £40k to the Finance KAG to be held in January 2024, and for the RFO, during the interim period, to review the town council's reserves to assess the potential to support the requested increase,</li> <li>2. Not to approve the request from the Community Engagement KAG to allocate additional funds from the 2024/25 Revenue Budget towards the Events Fund, <i>[For clarification, the £10k agreed towards additional events as part of the disposition of the 2023/24 surplus is separate to this item.]</i></li> <li>3. Not to approve the request from the Community Engagement KAG for an additional employee resource, and</li> <li>4. To approve the town council entering into negotiations to secure a lease for a Depot at Bolney Grange with an annual budget allocation of £45k towards the lease and other running costs.</li> </ol>
<b>RESERVES AT 31/10/2023</b>	<p><b>RESOLVED</b></p> <p>To approve the current schedule as presented.</p>
<b>ST JOHN'S PAVILION - FLOOD RISK SURVEY</b>	<p><b>RESOLVED</b></p> <p>To approve a refundable Grant of up to £2,500 to Burgess Hill Cricket Club to carry out a flood risk survey on the condition the town council's standard grants application form is used and up-to-date financial information is provided to the town council's RFO and for the club to look to raise its own funds towards the survey with any such funds being raised repaid to the town council up to the value of the grant given.</p>
<b>PARK CENTRE</b>	<p><b>RESOLVED</b></p> <p>To allocate £20k from the Community Building and Infrastructure Fund towards the Park Centre Project to cover preliminary costs associated with legal/consultancy costs, building surveys and other costs of a minor nature.</p>
<b>BANK RECONCILIATION AND INVESTMENTS</b>	<p><b>RESOLVED</b></p> <p>To note the contents of the report</p>

Cedric de Souza  
Chairman

**NOTE:** Members should be clear that the £20k allocated to Park Centre is from existing ringfenced reserves in the Community Building and Infrastructure Fund. It will remain within the Council and will be subject to the usual financial scrutiny before being spent.

11. **GRANTS AWARDS PANEL – NOTES OF MEETING**

To consider the Notes of the meeting of the Grants Awards Panel held on 12 October 2023 (previously circulated).

Our decisions and recommendations within our terms of reference are set out in the Notes with the schedule of awards shown at appendix 1.

In summary:

*Major & Minor (Phase 2) 2023 [non-green]*

£ 9,026	Available in the Fund
<u>£12,750</u>	Potential Awards
<b>£ 3,724</b>	<b>Shortfall in Fund</b>

*Green*

£ 7,588	Available in Fund
£ 7,588	Awarded
<b>£ nil</b>	<b>Balance</b>

As noted in the recommendations of the Grants Panel, the major and minor grants awarded are subject to agreement by Council to allocate an additional amount of £3,724 towards the Grants Fund. Applicants have been made aware of this position.

Should Council not agree to the additional amount requested, the Grants Panel will need to reconvene to re-evaluate the awards given to match the available funds.

**RECOMMENDATION**

To allocate an additional £3,724 to the Grants Fund.

Matthew Goldsmith  
Chairman

12. **PARK CENTRE UPDATE**

Cllr De Souza will provide a verbal update.

13. **ST JOHN'S PARK WORKING GROUP**

Council is asked to note the establishment of a small working group of councillors to consider improvements to St John's Park including

funding. The following councillors serve on this group: Cllrs Henwood, Chris Cherry, Peter Williams, White and Foster.

Attached as Appendix 2 is the masterplan for St John's Park as well as other relevant documentation. The work and recommendations of the working group regarding improvements to the park will be considered at the Strategic and Development KAG to be held in January.

## **FOR NOTING**

### **14. CLOSURE OF OFFICES**

The Council usually opens its offices for 3 hours on the 3 weekdays between Boxing Day and New Year. A skeleton staff is in attendance and staff put in leave to offset the time they are not in the office. The number of residents who come into the offices are minimal and Council is asked to consider closing the offices for this period both this year and future years. All staff will still be required to take leave.

Should Members agree to this short-closure, costs associated with heating and lighting will be saved over the holiday period.

## **FOR CONSIDERATION**

### **15. STAFF COSTS**

The following information regarding staff costs was sent to various councillors, and members of the public raised the matter at the last council meeting. It is clear the information is incorrect. Quite what the intention was behind distributing erroneous information is unclear.

*“East Grinstead Town Council  
Precept £1.1mil  
Staff Costs £480k  
44% ratio*

*Haywards Heath Town Council  
Precept £726k  
Staff Costs £404k  
56% ratio*

*Burgess Hill Town Council  
Precept: £966k  
Staff Costs: £728k  
75% ratio*

*We pay £250k more for staff than East Grinstead and a whopping £324k more than Haywards Heath. I really don't know why it's being suggested that most of the projects we need to do must be done via PWLB loans when we should be having another £150k per year to pay for things in cash!”*

In response to the query raised in regard BHTC staff salaries in comparison with the two other major towns in the district, the Responsible Finance Officer has commented as follows:

Firstly, the figures quoted for East Grinstead are incorrect. Their 2023/24 budgeted salary bill (including pension and NI) amounts to £834k, which is 76% of their budgeted Precept (1% point higher than BHTC). This is born-out from the 2022.23 Financial Annual Returns (actual figures) which show BHTC and EG had similar salary percentages of 72% each.

Secondly, it is not possible to make meaningful comparisons between individual town councils without understanding the underlying operations of each local authority i.e. you need to ensure you are comparing apples with apples, for example:

- BHTC operate a Help Point and TI centre, as does East Grinstead. Haywards Heath do not.
- Each local authority will have different funding approaches to 3rd party organisations. For example, BHTC support fully (for a Management Fee) the Sidney West Centre where the costs of labour to run the facility come directly from the town council's salary budget. Haywards Heath do not and East Grinstead, although they support the Chequers Mead, offer this support through an annual grant as opposed to direct council labour.
- The use of contractors instead of directly employed staff can also distort the salary/Precept relationship.
- The number of staff employed that are members of the Pension scheme, where charges are 19% of gross salary, can also impact on the overall salary bill. All staff at BHTC are members of the Local Government Pension Scheme.

Finally, in regard to looking how salary costs can be saved by cancelling/restricting the annual Cost of Living awards, Members need to be aware the Town Council is, and has always been, signed up to the National Joint Council for Local Government Services (made up of the Government and unions) who determine the national agreement on pay and conditions of service (known as the "Green Book"). Any material deviation from this would put the Town Council in breach of its employment contracts with all staff employed.

## **FOR INFORMATION**

### **16. [STREET AND PLACE NAMING POLICY](#)**

MSDC often approach the Town Council to consider and approve names for new streets and parks etc. These are usually put forward by the developer of the area. It is suggested that in future the Town Council adopt a policy to use the names of the fallen which appear on

the war memorial. The names will be selected randomly each time a request for new names is received.

**RECOMMENDED:**

1. That the names of the fallen appearing on the war memorial be used to name streets and places in Burgess Hill.
2. That the names be selected randomly when requests for names are received.
3. That MSDC be informed of this policy and be asked to adopt it for future naming of streets and places in Burgess Hill.

**17. DIARY DATES**

<b>DECEMBER</b>		
Planning Committee	Monday 11 December	19.00 hours
<b>JANUARY 2024</b>		
Planning Committee	Monday 8 January	19.00 hours
Strategic and Development KAG	Thursday 11 January	19.00 hours
Council	Monday 22 January	19.00 hours
Planning Committee	Monday 29 January	19.00 hours

Council is requested to note the planned Holocaust Memorial Day event to be held on Monday 29 January. Further details will be circulated in the New Year.

**Recommended:** For noting.