



MINUTES of the **ORDINARY MEETING** of the **TOWN COUNCIL** held in the Council Chamber on Monday **25 September 2023**

Present: Janice Henwood Town Mayor
Tofojjul Hussain Deputy Town Mayor

Graham Allen
Diane Black
Christine Cherry
Richard Cherry
Stuart Condie
Matthew Cornish*
Cedric de Souza
Robert Eggleston*
David Eggleton*
Anne Eves
Bob Foster
Matthew Goldsmith
Simon Hicks
Mohammad Hossain
John Orchard
Brenda Williams
Peter Williams
Adam White

* *Denotes non-attendance.*

(19.00)

47. STATEMENT FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

Councillor Richard Cherry spoke on the last Council meeting, and apologized for the wording of the statement made previously regarding open forum. He drew attention to the new wording of the open forum section, which was visible on the agenda.

48. OPEN FORUM

There were fourteen members of the public present.

The first member of the public spoke on agenda item 16, Grant Funding. They were opposed to the suggestion that the 'green grant' funding be reallocated, and referred to the information on the Town Council website regarding the 'green grants'. She suggested that should changes be made, that it be done for the following year's grants process, as the decision was being discussed ahead of the current deadline. She also spoke on the issue of the climate crisis and the town's environmental charter; suggesting that the environmental funding be promoted further, so that more organizations could apply. She mentioned that she was part of an organization that had recently applied to the fund, seeking to create a community garden in Victoria Ward – the ward with the most social deprivation within the town. A wide range of partner organizations had expressed interest in the project. She questioned how she could go back to these organizations to explain, should the funding be reallocated and their grant no longer considered. She encouraged Council to maintain the grant and consider restructuring at a later date.

A second member of the public spoke on the Chanctonbury Allotments. He stated that at the Strategic Key Area Group, he was told that Network Rail were not pushing to sell the land that Chanctonbury Allotments were on. He questioned why he had previously been told that they were. He also asked why allotment holders were not told of the threat to the site until Autumn 2022, when the Council had already been informed before this time.

Councillor Henwood deferred to the CEO, who read a letter from the Leader of Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC) which would be going out to those undertaking new tenancy agreements. He stated this letter would be sent to allotment holders within the next two weeks.

A third member of the public spoke on the recent Q+A session, held at Cyprus Hall. He stated that general feeling was that it had been a waste of time, and that it had led to militant calls on social media. He asked the Council what would be done regarding the Old Post Office site, on Station Road, explaining that it was an eyesore. He said he had asked the same question at the Q+A session and felt the answer he had received was condescending and rude.

Councillor Henwood thanked the member of the public for his question, stating it had inspired her to look into the situation. She had sent an email to the MSDC Planning Enforcement Officer, who had told her there were no outstanding planning applications, but that a new application was imminent. She had asked MSDC to keep her updated regarding the site and whether the condition of the building reaches the threshold for the issue of a s.215 notice.

A fourth member of the public asked a question regarding Burgess Hill

CIC and the awarding of the new lease to Zero Hub. He stated that a number of complaints had been submitted regarding the awarding of the lease, and question if there had been an investigation, and if so, what was the outcome.

Councillor Peter Williams explained that Council had received three formal complaints regarding the situation. He stated that according to Standing Order 28.2 any complaint made about a Councillor was to go to the Monitoring Officer at MSDC to look at all evidence and then make a decision. He stated the decision made was that it was not the responsibility of the Town Council, as the lease was between the Community Partnership CIC and the Zero Hub CIC. This was communicated to complainants, and they were offered the opportunity to forward their complaint to the CIC. One complainant agreed to have their complaint forwarded. He assured the public that it would be looked into and reported back with full transparency.

Following a small debate during the fourth member of the public's question, a fifth member of the public questioned the behaviour of Councillor Hicks, asking why he had been called a 'silly man'. Councillor Hicks apologized.

A sixth member of the public raised the question of public safety on the corner of St John's Park, opposite the chemists and nursery. He stated that many drivers were ignoring the double yellow lines and parking on the pavement. He said he had been verbally abused when confronting drivers and had almost been hit by cars mounting the pavement to park in the past. He raised concern over the safety of children on this stretch of road.

Councillor Henwood deferred to Councillor Condie. He said that as a Councillor for West Sussex County Council (WSCC) he received a lot of concerns regarding anti-social parking. He explained that enforcement of anti-social parking was down to MSDC, who had a limited number of people to undertake the work. He stated the police had little time for the matter either. He offered to give the member of the public his card and that he would look into the specifics of the site. Councillor Henwood went on to mention the 'pavements are for people' campaign, suggesting this could be brought back.

A seventh member of the public raised concerns over Councillor Condie's comments regarding the police during his response to the previous question. He stated he did not find it respectful.

49. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors David Eggleton; Matthew Cornish and Robert Eggleston.

50. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Anne Eves and Janice Henwood declared an interest in Item 16, as members of organizations that had benefitted from the 'green grants' fund.

51. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councillor Henwood announced that her Mayor's Charity would be Burgess Hill Creative Community.

She encouraged all Councillors to attend a public meeting on Monday 9 October, regarding allotment associations.

Councillor Henwood also mentioned that Burgess Hill Town Council (BHTC) would be setting up a working party to consider the St John's Park masterplan. She stated it was essential for the town to feed into this plan, and go direct to MSDC with their ideas.

52. COUNCIL MINUTES

The Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on Monday 3 July 2023 and the Extraordinary Meeting of Council on Tuesday 27 June 2023 were **AGREED** and signed as a correct record.

53. UPDATE FROM WEST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL (WSSC)

Councillor Cherry gave a verbal report on workings at WSSC. He stated that a change to the development at Brookleigh would be being announced via press release within the following forty-eight hours.

The advocacy budget for those with disabilities had recently been cut by £250,000 as reported in the local press.

Also disappointing was the delay in the opening of the new Woodlands Meed College site. No clear reason had been given for this, and the site would not be open until Christmas. This would go on to delay the demolition of the old site, which was due to be completed in February 2024. Councillor Cherry extended apologies to parents, teachers and those living near the site.

Councillor Condie stated that a letter would be going out to all schools in the area to ask them to check for RAAC (reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete). This would be ahead of a survey to be undertaken by WSSC. Assurances had been given by the Brighton Academies Trust that the Burgess Hill Academy was fine.

Speaking on the advocacy fund, Councillor Condie stated there had been no public consultation for the withdrawal, as there was no legal need for it. He said that he understood there was financial pressure, but that it was not right to take away money that would be used by the most vulnerable in society.

54. UPDATE FROM MSDC

Councillor Eves provided a verbal report on the workings at Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC). New River Retail had come forward with a proposal on the town centre development, there were no details available to share, but it would be taken to the MSDC cabinet.

Work was continuing on the District Plan, with the five-year land supply being brought into question by a developer.

Two options had been brought forward for the Clair Hall site, either demolition and the subsequent building of flats, or a community refurbishment.

There was a new green spaces contract, which would lead to a change in the sports pitch mowing.

Unanimous motions had been carried for the active travel routes proposed by the Green Group, and the Conservative party motion on more help for care leavers at eighteen.

Please note: Following the meeting it has become apparent that what is proposed by MSDC for Clair Hall is not just demolition and the building of flats. The proposal is a mixed-use development which includes residential accommodation AND a multi-purpose cultural facility).

55. PLANNING COMMITTEE MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings of the Planning Committee held on Monday 17 July, Monday 7 August, Tuesday 29 August and Monday 18 September 2023 were **AGREED**.

56. CUSTOMER SERVICES KEY AREA GROUP NOTES OF MEETING

The Notes of the meeting of the Customer Services Key Area Group held on Monday 24 July and Wednesday 13 September 2023 were **AGREED**.

Councillor Christine Cherry gave a short update on the meeting she had, had with the football club owner, regarding parking. This was left in the hands of the football club to look into, as they felt they may be

able to get better pricing and possible donations. The football club agreed to look at options and come back to Council. This would go to a meeting at a later date.

57. STRATEGIC PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT KEY AREA GROUP NOTES OF MEETING

The Notes of the meeting of the Strategic Planning, Economy and Transport Key Area Group held on Thursday 24 August 2023 were **AGREED**.

Councillor Williams clarified a statement made in the open forum of the meeting, explaining that the lease of the Zero Hub had a notice period of ninety days, not thirty.

Councillor Eves asked if a Burial Ground Working Party had been set up. It was decided that Councillors Hussain, Eves, Hicks and Condie should make up the working party.

58. HIGHWAYS RESPONSE TO ICENI REPORT: STATION ROAD SURVEY

Councillor Williams proposed that he and Councillor Orchard carry out a second walk-through survey to look at outstanding snagging issues. This would be carried out at the end of October. The Council agreed to this proposal.

RESOLVED that: Council noted the appendices.

59. PARK CENTRE UPDATE

Councillor Eves questioned why the Town Council was seeking to be the only trustee, asking why this decision had not been put to Full Council. She questioned where Clarion Futures were within the process.

Councillor Williams explained that it was felt that it was more appropriate to have a sole trustee for the building. This would allow quick access to funds, allowing renovations to begin. The Town Council as a trustee would work with the Park Centre CIO. The building as a whole was in need of renovations and repairs before children could go in. The CIO was too new and would not have the money for repairs at this time. He also explained the loss of Sussex Clubs for Young People (SCYP), who were the main deliverer of youth services in Burgess Hill. Following their dissolution, the Town Council needed to react quickly.

Councillor Eves asked who the present trustees on the CIO were. Councillor Williams stated there were two persons from Escape Youth

Club, one from Clarion Futures, Chris Cook, now trading as Sussex Youth and one from the Council.

Councillor Cherry clarified further, explaining that a substantial amount of money would be needed for Park Centre, and that the running of the building would continue with the existing trust – St John’s Institution Trust. He said it was right to question why BHTC would be better than WSCC (previous sole trustee of Park Centre). He stated that BHTC was closer to the community and therefore more accountable. He knew that BHTC would be challenged by the public and saw this as a stronger safeguard on public funding.

Councillor Hicks supported the proposal, stating that it would safeguard the Town Council’s investment and that ultimate ownership of the building would not be put under threat.

Councillor Eves questioned whether SCYP were ever in a financial situation to be part of Park Centre, stating that Clarion Futures would have the ability for financial input. She reiterated her frustration that the decision on the CIO and trustees was not taken to Council.

Councillor De Souza stated that the Town Council needed to provide youth services in Burgess Hill, explaining that in his experience it was not uncommon for local authorities to delegate to CIOs. He explained that with the situation as it was, should the established CIO not survive for reasons out of its control (such as with SCYP), the Town Council would still be able to run the building. Giving a private organization such as a CIO complete access would put Park Centre in a more vulnerable position.

A member of the public questioned why a vote was not taken and asked why Councillor Williams had referred to the Council making the decision. He stated he believed the Council was bringing itself into disrepute and that an Extraordinary Meeting of Council should have been called.

Councillor Williams clarified that it was the Strategic Key Area Group that had made the decision. SCYP had been in a strong financial situation in January 2023, and five months later had gone into administration. Councillor Williams stated that it was a situation in which they needed to move quickly, to delay the process with WSCC; this way the Council could stand back and create a credible proposal without SCYP at the forefront.

Following the resignation of the CEO as trustee of the Park Centre CIO, the Town Council put forward Councillor Richard Cherry as a replacement. This would be taken to the CIO, and they would vote.

RESOLVED that: Councillor Richard Cherry was nominated as the new representative of the Town Council on the Park Centre CIO.

60. PLAN B – SURVEY OF PUBLIC

Following the unsuccessful bid by MSDC to secure Levelling Up funding from the Government to unlock the redevelopment of the Martlets Shopping Centre, a search was carried out for a Plan B. Burgess Hill Town Council (BHTC) sought views from Burgess Hill Residents.

RESOLVED that: Council noted the feedback and comments from members of the public on Plan B.

61. SPEED LIMIT KEYMER ROAD/ OCKLEY LANE

The housing development along Keymer Road/ Ockley Lane had led to an increase in traffic, prompting concerns over road safety. Hassocks Parish Council had approached West Sussex Highways to put a 40MPH speed limit in place, between the two 30MPH limits on the stretch of road.

Councillor Cherry explained that the application had been made to WSCC and that it needed the assent of Hassocks Parish Council and Burgess Hill Town Council to go ahead.

A member of the public asked if it was possible to set up a Residents Speed Watch on this stretch of road, as she lived nearby. The CEO explained that they would need a minimum number of volunteers and agreement from the police. Councillor Orchard stated he was a member of the Hassocks Speed Watch Group, and that he was happy to support the CEO to look into the formation of one in Burgess Hill. It was also mentioned that a Speed Indicator Device could be installed.

RESOLVED that: Council agreed to reinforce the efforts of Hassocks Parish Council by lobbying West Sussex Highways to make Ockley Road a 40MPH speed limit, up to where it became a 30MPH speed limit.

62. GRANT FUNDING

Following the introduction of a £10,000 budget in 2020 for 'green grants' supporting environmental issues, four grant applications had been received with circa £3500 awarded and paid to date. Fifteen applications had been received for the second round of Minor Grants in 2023, amounting to £12,366. Major grants were also set to be considered in October 2023. Transferring the balance allowed the Council to support more community groups in light of the low uptake of the 'green' grants funding pot.

Councillor Hicks suggested that the grants funds be left as they are, and that should further funding of minor grants be necessary, this could be taken from reserves at the discretion of the Grants Panel. He

suggested a maximum of £8000, to match what would be taken from the 'green grants' budget.

RESOLVED that: The funding pots remain the same, with a separate budget for 'green grants'.

63. DIARY DATES

Council received a schedule of forthcoming events and meetings as set out in Agenda Item 17 dated Monday 25 September 2023.

RESOLVED that: Council noted the diary dates.

64. ADDENDUM – COMMUNITY HIGHWAY SCHEME REQUEST

WSCC Highways had received a Community Highway Scheme request from a local resident, requesting central refuge islands on Jane Murray Way. Written support from the Town Council was needed to take this request forward to the moderation meeting in Autumn.

RESOLVED that: Council agreed to support the request.

Meeting terminated at 20:11.