

A Message from the Mayor

I would like to take this opportunity to highlight some of the events I have been privileged to attend in 2023/24. Burgess Hill has lots to offer including the Choral Society Concert, the Academy Summer Showcase and the Nautical Training Corps Band Competitions. I was delighted to join the u3a festival, and mark the second year of the Pantry. Silver Sunday and the Christmas Tea Party had some lovely tea and cake; and it was brilliant to meet our visitors from twin town Schmallenberg. It was pleasant to visit local schools, promoting the Mayor's Christmas Card competition, and to see the launch of the STEM Challenge. It was enlightening to visit the Steve Willis Training Centre and learn about one of the many businesses operating in our town. Thanks goes to the officers at the Town Council and our partnership organisations.

Operation Golden Orb

Saturday 6 May 2023 saw King Charles III crowned at Westminster Abbey. Following protocol dictated by the Pageantmaster to His Majesty, the Town Council organised the Big Coronation Lunch, in St John's Park. Performers from local talent competition, Mid Sussex Search for a Star, took to the stage alongside some other local talent. Twelve crates worth of food were donated by residents to the Foodbank and the Pantry.



Festive Market

In collaboration with Burgess Hill Community Crafters Market a Festive Market was held in Church Walk in December. Stalls included locally sourced produce, handmade crafts, artwork, gifts and street food, with live music from the Rock Choir and free face painting! The event was supported by Mid Sussex Radio. The day was well received by shoppers, and traders reported a successful trading day.

Help Point: Top 5 Enquiries

A single point of contact for all local government enquiries in West Sussex, working in partnership with Mid Sussex District Council, the team handle a large volume of enquiries each day. With an in-house reporting system, we can track enquiries received by the team and understand the top enquiries per year. In 2023, the top 5 enquiries were: reception for BHTC, Food Bank, Help Point Shop items, bus timetables and community events.



Batchelors Farm Orchard

Following the management plan for Batchelors Farm, a community orchard was created in March 2023; planted by the Town Council's Maintenance Team and volunteers, supported by the Community Engagement Team. 80 fruit trees were planted and made available for residents to sponsor. An information board on-site shows the type and location of each tree. Thanks to the Rotary Club for their donation of a bench for the area.

Development of Phase 2 of the Burial Ground

The existing burial ground (phase 1), managed by the Town Council was opened in June 2004 and has provided a respectful and serene final resting place for members of the Burgess Hill community. Within the next two to three years, it will start to reach capacity and we are now looking to develop the site immediately adjacent to the existing ground to provide a peaceful and sympathetically designed setting for the residents of Burgess Hill for the next 30 years. Planning is at the early stage and the Town Council has appointed a consultant to assist with the design layout of this new phase. Costs of the development are estimated to be in the region of £350-£400k with the potential for funding to come from the Public Works Loan Board.



Virgin Media Boxes

Holly Sellors, of Burgess Hill Artists, painted a Virgin Media box on the corner of St John's Road and Church Close. The design illustrates St John's Church with three Martlet birds. A Martlet is a mythical heraldic bird which is thought to represent the Swift or House Martin. Martlets have been associated with Sussex for centuries and appear on the Sussex County crest. The Town Council entered an agreement with Virgin Media for local artists to paint some of the media cabinets around the town. Other Virgin Media boxes around the town have had a makeover, details can be found on the Town Council's website.



Help Point Shop

The Help Point Shop has gone from strength to strength, providing an affordable rental home to 34 local small businesses, community organisations and charities. We've had a 40% increase in shop turnover for our tenants; with £8530.91 being taken in 2023 in comparison to £6112.01 in 2022. Tenant retention has improved by 47% which corresponds with increased shop turnover. Moving forward, the shop will continue to provide local creatives an affordable platform to sell their products, with the team focusing on shop and tenant promotion, customer satisfaction and overall, creating a unique gift shop, representative of the fantastic businesses we have in the local area.

Youth Council

Pupils from seven local schools took part in the Youth Council and engaged well. It is hoped that more will join as the project progresses. Students were given an introduction to democracy at local level, and the Mayor gave insight into their duties. A Youth Mayor will be chosen by the pupils at the next meeting when a Chain of Office, sponsored by partner organisations, will be presented.



Planters in Church Walk

During the summer months tiered planters were installed in Church Walk. The Maintenance Team, along with a work experience student from Plumpton College, filled these with bright flowering plants. As this had such a positive impact in the town centre, additional planters will be installed in 2024.

Mid Sussex Business Crime Partnership (DISC)

Launched in Burgess Hill to help police, retailers and security staff tackle retail crime, the smartphone app, 'DISC' is funded by Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner and the Mid Sussex Partnership. A secure, online information-sharing system that allows retailers to share news, information and intelligence, including images and the times offenders were last seen. Over 197 Burgess Hill businesses have signed up in their bid to tackle retail crime and anti-social behaviour.

Bus Stop Infrastructure Improvements

The Town Council is working in partnership with West Sussex County Council to deliver phase 2 of the Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) displays at bus stops around Burgess Hill. More RTPIs will be installed at stops around Burgess Hill. There will be some improvements to bus stops, costing approximately £300,000 funded by the wider Local Growth Fund, Burgess Hill Place & Connectivity Programme, being delivered to support improved sustainable transport infrastructure.

Summer Fayre

The inaugural children's parade opened the Fayre with a bang in 2023! Led by Burgess Hill Marching Youth, the parade consisted of schools and community groups from the town. We worked with Same Sky, a local community arts charity, to provide the primary schools with flower lanterns. Fairground games, inflatables and even a miniature railway were on offer for the afternoon. Attendees could support local businesses, or help raise funds for charities and community groups. The Summer Fayre returns on Sunday 23 June, with the new theme 'Love Sussex' celebrating the countryside, heritage and community, right on our doorstep!



Financial Summary

2023/24 Budget Analysis

The Town Council's budgeted revenue expenditure (including transfers to reserves and projects) for the year amounted to £1,099,959 with a total of £965,833 being funded directly by residents through their council tax. The Council is pleased to announce that a modest surplus will be achieved which will be reinvested to provide future services for the community.

The annual charge for services levied by the town council for a Band D property in Burgess Hill for the 2023/24 financial year was £76.51. The town council can announce the charge for the forthcoming financial year, 2024/25, sees a small increase of £5.62 per annum (47p per month / 7.3%) to £82.13.

Revenue Budget: Income and Costs £000s

Where the money comes from:	2024/25	2023/24
Council tax payers (Precept)	1,054	966
Partner income (MSDC/WSCC)	47	51
Hire of Council facilities	10	10
Burial Ground income	36	34
Interest On Balances	21	10
About Town magazine	4	3
Other	24	26
Total Income	1,196	1,100

Where the money is spent:

Help Point Services	136	123
External Services (Grnds Maint, Burial, Allot')	342	278
Community Engagement & Events	216	195
Provision for Community Facilities	111	106
Civic, Planning + Econ Dev.	120	120
Total Direct Services	925	822
Support Services	183	164
Insurance, Business Rates, Utilities etc	88	114
Total Revenue Expenditure	1,196	1,100

Council Tax - Band D rate per annum **£82.13** **£76.51**

Council Reserves at the 1 April 2023 £000s

General Reserve	£332
Earmarked Reserves	£653
Total Reserves	£975

Town Council Employees

	24/25	23/24
Full-time equivalents	Bud Bud Act	
	17.2	17.2 17.2

Public Notice: Under sections 20(2) and 25 of the Local Audit & Accountability Act 2014 Accounts & Audit Regulations 2015 (SI 2015/234), it is reported the accounts for year ending 31 March 2023 for Burgess Hill Town Council have been duly audited by the District Auditor, Moore.

Community Grants Awarded

£30,582 in community grants were awarded:

Respect Youth Club	£900
Summerhaven	£700
Sussex Chorus	£700
Windmill Opportunity Playgroup	£1000
St Edward's Wives	£1000
4sight	£500
MSVA	£1000
Heritage and History Association	£500
BH Flower Club	£1000
Home-StartCHAMS	£500
Kangaroos Mid Sussex	£1000
BH Rugby Football Club	£1000
Time4Children	£500
BH Marching Youth	£1000
SASBAH	£400
Mid Sussex Radio CIC	£500
St Peter and St James Hospice	£500
Family Support Work	£780
BH Creative Community	£1000
BH Artists	£400
BH Guide and Brownie Association	£2000
Age UK	£1000
BH Marching Youth	£1170
BH Cricket Club	£2000

Green Grants

Friends of Sheddingdean School Assoc.	£1,000
Burgess Hill Swift Supporters	£972
St Edward's Community Garden	£7,102
Friends of Green Circle	£486

Councillors' Allowances Claimed

Annual Allowances are paid under the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) Regulations 2003

Adam White	£1,337
Anne Eves	£1,337
Bob Foster	£0
Brenda Williams	£1,337
Cedric de Souza	£0
Christine Cherry	£1,191
David Eggleton	£0
Diane Black	£1,337
Graham Allen	£1,337
Janice Henwood	£2,002
John Orchard	£1,337
Matthew Cornish	£1,337
Matthew Goldsmith	£0
Mohammad Hossain	£1,337
Peter Williams	£0
Richard Cherry	£1,191
Robert Eggleston	£0
Simon Hicks	£1,337
Stuart Condie	£1,337
Tofojjul Hussain	£1,337

Total allowances claimed: **£19,091**

Half annual payments are paid 6-monthly in arrears in November and May
Members Travel and Subsistence Claimed: None as at 31/03/2024

Holiday Activities

In summer, children in Burgess Hill enjoyed a range of free holiday activities. Wowzer Wednesdays saw over 750 children across 5 weeks enjoy events in Church Walk and St John's Park. With crafts, circus skills, magic and inflatables, there was something for all children to enjoy – and even some adults too! We had tennis and basketball sessions, with over 290 children enjoying getting active outside across the holiday period! For young ones, the sandpit returned to Church Walk throughout the entire summer holiday, open 7 days a week.



St John's Church Clock

Over time, the condition of the 4 clock faces had deteriorated and the Town Council took the decision to have them refurbished. This work was completed in January 2024 and the clock faces now look fantastic and should last for many years.

Depot

A new depot has been secured which will improve our day-to-day efficiency, by reducing time and travel between the previous four storage sites.

Tourist Information

Throughout the past year, the Help Point Team have been busy working away finding new events, places, and days out across Sussex, refreshing our online offering on the Town Council's website and within the Tourist Information Centre at 96 Church Walk. From exploring local hiking routes that criss-cross the stunning views of the South Downs National Park, to visiting one of our local farms where you can see some of our Sussex wildlife, we have ensured there is a wide selection of information on local attractions for families to choose from. Since Covid-19, the way in which tourism is communicated has changed, with the sector accelerating towards a paperless system. As a result, our team have and will continue to work hard on sourcing available literature for visitors, but higher attention has been paid to our online offering and social media presence; ultimately, focusing on getting the information to residents.

It's Christmas!

The town's Christmas Lights were turned on at the annual It's Christmas! event, on Saturday 25 November. More Radio's Jack the Lad joined Town Mayor, Janice Henwood, alongside the winners of the Mayor's Christmas Card Competition, to illuminate the town centre. The event ran from 11am – 5:30pm, with stall holders, entertainers and even Santa's Grotto! The amazing Flying Buttresses returned with a debut of their brand-new act 'Stocking Up!'; the giant talking toys were a hit with everyone who saw them. Approximately 3000 residents turned up to watch the Lights Switch On, with the community group led Santa's Grotto seeing 187 children throughout the day – each of whom were given a present. Burgess Hill Marching Youth returned as part of the full day of festive performances, and children could enjoy a range of free activities throughout the day too.



Additional Rewilding Sites

The original rewilding areas created by the Town Council were so successful that additional areas have been created. The team removed the turf from verges, raked the area, and then scattered wild flower seed. During the summer, these areas have the surrounding grass cut on a regular basis and then the wild flower area is cut at the end of the summer.



Grit Bins

Following icy conditions in December 2022, the Town Council received requests to install grit bins around the town. These requests were supported by the Town Council and 11 new grit bins were installed in 2023.