

NOTES of the **CUSTOMER SERVICES KEY AREA GROUP MEETING** held in the Council Chamber on **Thursday 4 April 2024** at 18.30 hours.

Present: Adam White Chairman
Diane Black
Matthew Goldsmith
Tofojjul Hussein
Simon Hicks
Bob Foster

Also present: Janice Henwood, Peter Williams, Robert Eggleston, Brenda Williams, Steve Cridland, Chief Executive Officer

** Denotes non-attendance*

(18:300 hours)

Nick Brooks, Regional Director of West Glendale addressed the meeting setting out how his company would operate in the future. They have been awarded the contract to maintain MSDC land and assets including parks, trees, sport pitches, winter maintenance, ranger service, landscaping and moving of large trees.

The company has been going for 30 years and have won various awards. The new contract is radically different to the past one with just one contract addressing maintenance rather than a variety. They will be looking after trees and monitoring diseases. Sports bookings will be done by Glendale once the football season has ended and a website will be available. The company is looking towards commercialisation and working together with councils. They try to be innovative and do things differently to suit situations. Stakeholders will be consulted on bigger matters. They have placed an emphasis on community development and would like to bring organisations together to work together. They will provide a cohesive development of green spaces. They have a community development fund to seed groups and support them with labour and tools.

The company has a large training budget and they have apprentices being trained at Plumpton college. The contract they have is for 10 years with a 5-year break clause. They will try and employ local people. They

have made contact with clubs and have established relations. Unfortunately, wet weather has made the ground very soggy with unfortunate results at St Andrews cricket outfield. The damage will be repaired once the outfield dries. They have currently ceased grass cutting because it is too wet. In future, rather than cutting according to a schedule and providing a specified number of cuts, areas will be cut as and when needed according to the weather.

Regarding emergencies, they have a 24-hour number via MSDC and guarantee a quick turnaround. They also support Blue Heart areas which are rewilding areas.

20. OPEN FORUM

A lady expressed concern about badgers at SA13. While some badger setts have been determined as inactive, sightings would suggest otherwise. She asked what the buffer zone was between setts and development as there appears to be a discrepancy between 10 and 20 metres. Cllr Eggleston responded by saying it was not possible to monitor areas constantly but that the planning team would respond to any complaints. 25 surveys of badgers had been carried out. He confirmed that buffer zones are a minimum of 20m and are fenced, however, badgers are wide ranging, foraging animals. Quarterly checks are carried out on fences. Cllr Eggleston said he would take up a matter regarding the Badger Trust not being able to elicit a response from ecologists.

A member of the public suggested that councillors undergo GDPR training.

21. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Nil

22. SUBSTITUTES

Nil

23. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Hicks declared an interest as he is an allotment tenant.

24. NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Notes of the meeting of the Customer Services Key Area Group held on 13 September 2023, having been previously circulated, were AGREED and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

25. LAND HIRE – UNLOST DEN CO

Speakers were not in favour of this proposal. Cllr Peter Williams stated that it was not a council proposal but something that had been placed on the agenda for consideration. It was an approach from a company

which would provide a service and the council would benefit from income. It was brought to council for the sake of transparency as the CEO does not have the right to decide what should or should not be placed on the agenda.

Cllr Eggleston felt that it was an unsolicited sales pitch and should not have reached the council. The report makes no reference to planning requirements and in his opinion was contrary to item 19 on the District Plan. He said that the District Council would have handled this differently to which the CEO responded that there are 20 councillors who should be allowed to consider matters and not have them stifled according to the wishes of one or two members.

RESOLVED

That this Council will not now, nor in the future, entertain any suggestions, proposals or approaches from organisations that will disturb the ecology of Batchelors Farm Nature Reserve or conflict with its status as a Protected Green Space as set out in DPN2 of the District Plan.

26. HELP POINT FUNDING REPORT

Some debate was had regarding whether the Help Point was of any benefit with another member of the public asking that it be opened on a Saturday. Cllr Hicks felt that it was a valuable asset and is well used. It is also the reception area for the town council and receives 14000 enquiries per annum.

RESOLVED

The Item was **Noted**

27. HEDGEHOG HIGHWAY PROJECT

RESOLVED

The general feeling was that local groups looking after the interest of hedgehogs should be supported rather than going further afield.

RESOLVED

The item was rejected

28. FOLDERS MEADOW PLAY AREA

Various responses had been received following consultation with residents. Neither of the 2 schools approached had responded. Concerns were raised regarding the safety of a zip wire and the noise which would be generated by a basketball area. Cllr Hicks stated that there were zip wires on at least 2 other playparks and no accidents were reported. It was a popular piece of equipment. Cllr Black was

concerned that the basketball hoop would be broken as was the case near her and that cricket balls might break windows.

RESOLVED

- a) the suggested items of play/kickabout equipment contained within the report is supported;
- b) the Town Council commences with the tendering process; and,
- c) the Town Council liaise with Mid Sussex District Council to release the £44,999.02 S106 funds to the Town Council.

29. NEW BUS SHELTER, KEYMER ROAD

RESOLVED

The Town Council agree to take ownership of the new bus shelter on Keymer Road, subject to receipt of a one-off contribution of £275.

30. ALLOTMENT ADDITIONAL PROVISION REQUESTS

Cllr Hicks pointed out that the average waiting time for an allotment in Britain is 3 years whilst Burgess Hill is far less. He felt the report was very useful. Cllr Eggleston noted that there had been an 18% drop in the waiting list over the last 18 months. Every site has seen a drop in applications.

A 1.75ha site would be developed at Brookleigh in 2026/27 and would be given to MSDC. There would be negotiation as to which council ends up running it. The allotment spec is still to be agreed. They would be statutory allotments.

It was suggested that a working party should be formed now to explore the opportunities this site and the proposed Nightingale Meadows site presented.

A member of the public felt that such a working party would be micromanaged and manipulated by the two councils. He went on to ask why the asset of community interest was taken out if the town council had no intention of purchasing the Chanctonbury site. The acquisition of an ACV only gave the holder the right to bid rather than buy the site. This would only happen when the owner wanted to sell. The owner is not obliged to sell. The site is earmarked for the development of residences and the railway. Network Rail is not interested in selling it. The District Plan has allocated a site for the Chanctonbury allotments to be transferred to.

In all likelihood the new site would be given to the Town Council to manage on a long lease. This would ensure that the site is not lost if in time there is no interest in allotments for whatever reason. The site would be for statutory

allotments which offered the necessary protection.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Town Council note the contents of this report and the four residents who have asked for additional allotment provision be advised that we are unable to provide additional sites at this time.
2. That, a working group consisting of councillors, officers and allotment holders be formed to ensure future allotment sites are developed to everyone's satisfaction.

31. BEE MASON GREEN CIRCLE ARTWORK

The artwork had deteriorated due to water and ice damage. Some felt it was an important work and should be preserved. It was suggested that alternative funding be sought. More research was needed to determine whether the works proposed would work or whether the same problem would occur in the future. Some members of the public felt the money could be better spent putting more benches, bins or trees in.

RESOLVED

That alternative funding be researched and what the life of the artwork might be if repaired.

32. REQUEST FOR INTERVENTION: MAPLE DRIVE PAVEMENT PARKING

A resident living near the football club stated that verge parking was a problem. The chairman of the football club confirmed that his members would be happy to install the bollards if the council purchased them. It was further pointed out that the overspill carpark was not fully utilised due to it being overgrown.

RESOLVED:

That the Town Council purchase bollards and postcrete for the whole project provided the football club install the bollards and that this be funded from the Community Infrastructure Fund.

Meeting ended 20:25.