



MINUTES of the **ORDINARY MEETING** of the **TOWN COUNCIL** held in the Council Chamber on **Monday 29 January 2024**

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)

83. OPEN FORUM

There were three members of the public present.

84. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Graham Allen, Simon Hicks, Mohammad Hossain and Tofojjul Hussain.

85. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

86. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Cllr Janice Henwood informed the Council that the Holocaust Memorial Commemorations had taken place that morning, for the second year in a row. She added it was peaceful and well attended.

Cllr Henwood stated that the Council regrets if Standing Orders were not followed correctly, in any circumstances and regrets any inconvenience this may have caused.

87. **COUNCIL MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on Monday 27 November 2023 were **AGREED** and signed as a correct record.

88. **UPDATE FROM WSCC**

Cllr Richard Cherry informed the Council that West Sussex County Council (WSCC) were in the process of finalising the budget for the 2024/25 and that he attended a workshop about factors at play.

He stated that they deliver over 300 services to the 882,700 residents across 769 square miles, including Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care, Education and School Places, Public Health, Highways And Transport, Libraries and Archives, Fire and Rescue Service, Trading Standards, Waste Disposal and Recycling, and Minerals and Waste Planning. He added that WSCC is Corporate Parent to over 800 children and supports 760 children on Child Protection Plans, 1,585 children on Child in Need Plans and 2,130 families through Early Help, while 12,394 residents receive an Adult Social Care Service. WSCC also maintains 4,000km of roads and 3,956km of footways.

He stated that gross expenditure was to be the order of £1.2billion, with the Adult Services being the bulk of the spend, and the second highest call on funds being Children and Young People. Council Tax funds around half of this spend, government grants cover £226.3m, businesses rates £110m, sales fees and charges £110.1m and other income £146.7m. He added that the Council Tax increase was likely to be 4.99%.

He then provided an update on Woodlands Mead College stating things were still uncertain, there was no set opening date and that it would not be before the Easter break. In reference to the Bedelands Academy he stated that it would not open until 2027, but that a new tender was going out. He added that WSCC were investigating temporary cabins being provided on the planned school site or at Burgess Hill Academy, until the school was built.

It was then questioned if WSCC would be solvent. Cllr Cherry responded stating that there was an increase of £3.6 million to the

previously announced shortfall of £4.4m in the coming year, put down to the minimum wage increase, social care and miscalculating the revenue from new house building, as well as the notable increase in people claiming Council Tax relief. He countered saying the Government had announced increased funding to all local councils totalling £600 million. The specific amount for West Sussex is yet unknown.

Cllr Stuart Condie informed the Council that he was keeping on top of the procurement process for the school at Brookleigh and was trying to get WSCC to consider a ban on disposable vapes. He added it would fall under the Public Health remit, but that it might not go out before central Government legislation. He stated that he was working to resolve the flooding on William Way, and had recently visited Burgess Hill Shed at Burnside but that he was concerned about the short lease. and the site becoming subject to development, so was looking to increase the community use of the building to help cement its future.

RESOLVED that: the Council noted to update provided.

89. UPDATE FROM MSDC

Cllr Robert Eggleston informed the Council that MSDC was working through the corporate plan budget, which includes the 4-year legal term financial plan, adding the balance would then be set at end of February.

He stated there were cost pressures from inflation, contract cost increases, pay, and new burdens, which set a structural gap, over the 4-year medium term, of £1.8m in financial year 2024/25, £1.5m in 2025/26, £1.8m in 2026/27 and £1.7m in 2027/28. He stated that they had managed to plug the gap for 2024 by drawing down on reserves and from extraordinary income currently being received from treasury management. MSDC was not in a position to claim 114 bankruptcies, like other Councils have, and has a healthy level of reserves.

It was anticipated within the budget that MSDC would be able to increase its Capital Expenditure Program, which included the £6m spend on temporary accommodation, to increase the roll out the food waste recycling pilot program from 3000 to 5000 households, to become a real living wage employer, to create an apprentice programme, and maintain the corporate community grants programme.

He stated that MSDC was capped at a Council Tax rise of 3%, without holding a referendum, so they planned to raise it by 2.95% and then they would look at fees and charges to bridge the budget gap.

He informed the Council that the Planning application for the Centre for Outdoor Sports had been submitted. Subject to approval he hoped spades would break ground this year. He stated it was one part of

addressing the playing pitch deficit, and that there was a playing pitch strategy that would look at providing space for netball and hockey, which are not included in the Centre for Outside Sports. MSDC has an additional hectare of land at the Triangle and land at St Francis sports ground in Haywards Heath which is sitting on £1.5m of 106 section money and has been earmarked for hockey provision.

He stated that the District Plan review had moved to Regulation 19 stage, following approval at Council on 13 December 2023, and was currently out for consultation on behalf of the Planning Inspectorate. The Regeneration Levelling Up Build was sent in October and did not change the basis for plan making. The revised Nation Planning Policy Framework update was issued on 19 December 2023, after the Regulation 19 was approved. This changed the way the requirement for the way a 5-year land supply is calculated and the requirement to have a buffer in the plan. MSDC benefit from this because it was approved after the Regulation 19 was agreed.

It was questioned what the progression was in spending Section 106 funds, as several allocations would be reaching their 10-year anniversary. Cllr Eggleston stated that generally when the 10 years was reached developers did not claim back funds. He added that MSDC was recruiting a Section 106 officer.

It was discussed that the trend in needing temporary accommodation had increased and this could be put down to an increase in people being made homeless due to things such as domestic violence and reduction in the availability of rented properties. The purchase of the new temporary accommodation was covered with MSDC putting up 60% of the cost and central Government covering 40%.

It was questioned whether MSDC would start to charge for parking at night, as there had been rumours. Cllr Eggleston responded stating that MSDC had a Parking Strategy, which was publicly available to read, that looked at things such as fee income and investment into parking technology. He added the Budget had not been set but this was one area where MSDC could raise funds.

RESOLVED that: the Council noted to update provided.

90. PLANNING COMMITTEE MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings of the Planning Committee held on Monday 11 December 2023 were **AGREED**.

91. STRATEGIC PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT KEY AREA GROUP – NOTES OF MEETING

The Notes of the meeting of the Strategic Planning and Development Key Area Group held on 11 January 2023 were **AGREED**.

RESOLVED that: Council agreed with the recommendation from the Key Area Group to purchase Speed Indicator Devices.

92. FINANCE KEY AREA GROUP - NOTES OF MEETING

Cllr De Souza stated that in order to ensure that there is a full and proper transparency of the budget process and to enable the residents of Burgess Hill to understand in an open, factual and transparent manner as recorded in the Town Council's minutes and agenda he requested the Council note:

- The Finance KAG were presented with a list of options at a preliminary precept meeting held in November and, accordingly discuss and accept, defer or reject proposals. Recommendations are made to full council, however the precept is NOT LEVIED at such meetings
- Following the meeting, a review was completed by both the RFO and the Chair of the Finance KAG who also seek to consult with all Councillors prior to a Finance KAG meeting in January 2024 to discuss the proposed precept increase.
- An agreed levy is then presented to the Full Council for consideration.
- Members of the public were welcome to contribute to the discussions about the precept at all meetings, however the minutes note that their contributions from the public were minimal at these meetings.
- He clarified that the pressure that has applied at all times in this process is fiscal responsibility and accountability to residents.

Burgess Hill had a prudent budget; it sought to maintain this strategy. It saved towards viable community build projects, it had reserves in place and it had no requirement to increase the precept to any more than is necessary. It also had the strength and flexibility to extend further if such a demand ever arose.

In essence the base budget from 2023/24 to 2024/25 went up by less than the Cost of Inflation, despite a planned 6% increase in staff costs based on national awards due to prudent management of expenses and income from investments and other sources.

The additional items that were considered and recommended are as follows:

- £59k cost of a new depot of which £19k has been taken out of £30k a surplus this year.
- The remaining £40k for the depot was added to the precept.
- £10k was allocated to the events team as a top up for 2024/25 Budget also from the current year surplus.

An increase in grants budget of £4,250 from £12,000 to £16,250 was also added to the precept. It was needed to support volunteer community projects and it included environmentally friendly awards.

An increase in allocation to Community Build fund from £60k to £64k was made out of the precept to continue to save towards the viable projects in place, namely the Park Centre, St John's Pavilion and a new burial ground.

The precept of £1,054,366 for 2024/2025 represents a 7.3% BAND D increase taking the charge from £76.51 to £82.13 per year, an increase of £5.62 per year or 47p per month for Burgess Hill.

RESOLVED that: Council approved the 2024/25 Revenue Budget and set the Precept at £1,054,366.

93. REPORT FROM ST JOHN'S PARK WORKING PARTY

Cllr Janice Henwood stated that the Working Group was working on suggestions to MSDC for new facilities in St John's Park, with rough costings. They had investigated a splash pad but quotes had come in around £400,000 for installation and £25,000 - £30,000 a year to maintain. The cost was deemed to be too high and so they were therefore looking at other suggestions including a zip line and trampoline pad. The Working Party invited anyone with ideas to pass them onto them for consideration.

RESOLVED that: the Council noted to update provided.

94. MID SUSSEX DISTRICT COUNCIL DISTRICT PLAN

Cllr Henwood informed the Council that the consultation for the District Plan was now open and that a paper copy was available to be viewed in the Help Point, as well as being available online.

RESOLVED that: the Council noted to the information provided.

95. COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

The Council discussed what should be considered a complaint.

Complaints about matters not relating to work by BHTC, such as pot holes or parking, where BHTC reports to the responsible agency would not be subject to the complaints procedure.

Complaints that relate to work BHTC are responsible for, or works that have been carried out by BHTC, would be considered a complaint. If the complaint was dealt with informally by the CEO or an Officer and is resolved then this would not need reporting to the Council. If the

complaint is unsolved it would need to be provided in writing by the complainant and the Council would need to be informed.

It was also suggested that MSDC Legal Team could be consulted for advice in resolving a complaint.

It was stated that the Standing Orders needed to be updated to reflect what was considered a complaint to BHTC.

RESOLVED that: it was agreed that Cllr Eggleston would review the Standing Orders with regard to complaints and a proposed change would be brought to the next Council meeting.

96. **DRAFT ROTA OF MEETINGS FOR 2024/2025**

RESOLVED that: The Council noted the dates at Appendix 2.

97. **DIARY DATES**

RESOLVED that: The Council noted the dates provided in Agenda Item 15, dated Monday 29 January.

98. **Meeting terminated at 19.54 hours.**