

# Burgess Hill Town Council Business Plan 2025-2027

## 1. Introduction

- i. This Business Plan sets out the Council's strategy and action plan for the remainder of the current administration (to end In May 2027). This is a high-level plan, establishing clear aims and objectives, setting out a basic timetable for how the aims will be initially prioritised, and scope including how they are to be implemented and funded. This will form the operational programme throughout the Plan period where the detail of the business cases for each project will then be brought forward.
- ii. This is not a fully detailed plan, but the blueprint to take forward as the various projects are developed, scoped and presented to the Council.
- iii. It is important that both staff and Members are fully involved in the overall Business Plan in order that operational issues, policy and practicalities can be considered. It will also assist in the continued development of a successful and committed team.
- iv. The Business Plan must be achievable, funded and resourced.

## 2. Background to the Council

### 1. Mission statement

- i. The Council has an adopted Mission Statement:

*To Provide the best service and facilities for our residents, visitors, customers and businesses*

The principles that sit beneath this are:

- Focus on and be responsive to our community's needs
- Champion for Burgess Hill
- Go the extra mile
- Openness in communication
- Committed to making a difference
- Provide added value
- Facilitator
- Protect the environment
- Put people first
- Be innovative

- A listening council
- ii. The Council were reminded of this being the adopted mission statement on the vision day and it was felt that the basics of this were still at the heart of the Council therefore no revision was necessary.
- iii. In addition to the Mission Statement the Visioning Day (and subsequent Strategic Development KAG of November 2024) agreed to a new strap line for the Council: *For a Better Burgess Hill*
- iv. It was felt that with the current challenges in the town with the redevelopment, it would be good to make a statement that the Council's purpose is for the betterment of the town and it is the principle that the Council as a whole stands behind, to make things better for our residents. This new strap line will be integrated in to the Councils logo and used on publicity and in time the liveries of the Council fleet.

## 2. Resources

1. The Council will continue with capital investment for the Town, buildings, equipment, fixtures and street furnishings.
2. The Council owns various parcels of land (most notably Batchelors Farm & West Park Reserve) but also smaller parcels of land and buildings (96 Church Road, Cyprus Hall) and is a lease holder of the depot on the Bolney Grange industrial estate.
3. The Burgess Hill Town Council has 20 staff (18 fte). Our staff are our greatest resource being flexible and collaborative across the teams when pressures or emergent situations arise. Staff levels remain under review when work streams change, staff leave etc. All roles are considered to ensure the best productivity is given to the Council. Staff are invested in through training and development to ensure a knowledgeable and motivated workforce.

### Services provided:

- a. **Maintenance (7)**- inspect: play park, Sidney West Centre, Town Hall, depot, allotments, trading spaces tenants (handyman work, legal compliance etc), SIDS, street furniture, floral planters and hanging baskets (plus watering) maintain; burial ground, Batchelors farm, West Park Reserve, Folders Meadow. Maintain roundabouts, street name plates. Graffiti/ flypost removal from WSCC property. Admin associated with all of the above. Support local events when needed (eg Remembrance).
- b. **Projects (1)** – work with the Chief Exec and Managers to bring forward agreed projects to either completion or transfer to another team for ongoing delivery.

- c. Help Point; (4) assist the public with day-to-day enquiries for Town Council & Mid Sussex District Council Services and to signpost to other services or report to West Sussex County Council as needed. Administer bookings for Town hall rooms and payments. Run the shop, tourism services, public terminal, post official notices and local events. Liaise with local entrepreneurs, artists etc regarding rental space in the shop.
- d. Community Engagement (3) – organise and deliver over open to the community 50 events per year (some in partnership) including health screening and awareness, SEND, Carers, young carers, remembrance, Christmas light switch on, school holiday activities, silver sundays etc. Many of these events being free to attend and enjoy. Organise the content for the about town magazine, support the council and committee meetings with agenda and minute taking, manage the Councils social media and press releases.
- e. Corporate Services (4): finance, budget and monitoring, payroll, payments, debtors and creditors, pensions, health and safety, statutory returns for; the Town Council, Sidney West CIO, Community Partnership CIO, Beehive CIO. Bookings for Sidney west centre, burials and associated administration, website management. CIO administration for named CIO'S. Freedom of Information / GDPR & IT. Committee and Mayoral support.
- f. Chief Executive (1): Head of paid Service, day to day operation, HR, strategy, member and committee support, projects & CIO compliance.

In addition there is 1 adhoc help point cover, a caretaker/ cleaner (contracted) and Glendale contractors currently supporting the work of the maintenance team.

## 4. Finance

1. The Councils Financial situation is solid in 2024/25 with an approved budget of £1,196,550 balanced by precepted income of £1,054,366 and other income of £142,185.
2. The Council had reserves as at 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 of 1,155,865. Of this £261,233 are general reserves or “the rainy day fund”. The chartered institute of public financial accountants (CIPFA) advise that the reserves should be between 3-6 months of operating cost. Our reserves are below this level as the Council have resolved that this level would be too high and 2 months operating costs are sufficient. 2 months operating costs for this Council would set a reserve at approximately £200,000, but to allow for increases in the medium term to the precept it is recommended to sit nearer £240,000 for April 2025.

Allowing a reallocation of general reserves to the revenue budget for 2025/26 The remaining balance of reserves £894,632 are earmarked reserves, set aside for specific projects that the Council have identified. The largest of these being the community buildings and capital projects reserve which sits at £532,809 with an annual allocation of £64,000 being added to this fund. From April 2025 this will decrease to £42,000 as £22,000 per year from the allocation will be ring fenced for the repayment of the public works loan taken out for the extension of the burial ground. The commitment to support the refurbishment and reopening of the Parks Centre is allocated at £400,000. This commitment is already being drawn against in 2024 and will continue in to 2025 therefore seeing this fund reduced considerably.

3. The current list of earmarked reserves were reported to the Finance Key Area Group on 13<sup>th</sup> November at appendix 4: [Management accounts for 2024.25.xlsx](#)

## 5. Objectives 2023-27

1. The Council held a visioning day in 2023 following the Council elections, but little was determined as to a clear set of objectives. Following a second day in October 2024 there were two areas identified, existing projects and new projects.
2. Existing Projects : The Council have previously approved the following as capital projects:
  - a. Extension of burial ground (phase 2), the land adjoining the current burial ground is already owned by the Town Council, however the costs to make it ready to be a burial ground are significant. The Strategic Development KAG in August and Council in September (Minute 181 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2024) agreed to applying to the public works loan board to finance this project. The repayments are estimated at £22,000 per year for 25 years. This has been allocated from the Community Buildings Fund Reserve.
  - b. Support to the Park Centre (referred to in 3 (2) above). This is a commitment up to £400,000 for this community project to bring back in to the use the former West Sussex County Council building where youth services and youth clubs were provided. The new use will be all age but will also provide a home for the Escape Youth Group. The asset is being transferred from West Sussex County Council to a new Charitable Incorporated organisation (CIO). The Town Council due to the level of investment, will have representatives on this board. There is no ongoing allocation of budget from the Town Council for this project, it is intended to raise its own income from community use, grants and other investment.

- c. Support investment in to St Johns Pavillion. This was agreed by the Council to support the plan to remodel the pavilion to allow for greater community room availability. The Cricket club (leaseholder to the trust who own the building) have been developing plans. There are several planning stumbling blocks to this development as a flood plain has been identified. The Town Council have previously agreed that based on a rebuild plan of £1.2m, the Town Council would fund £400,000. The caveat is that the District Council have to agree to fund £400,000 and the Cricket Club will need to pay the remainder. The £400,000 that the Town Council have committed is subject to no more than 50% of this being taken through loans, therefore the capital and building earmarked reserve would be the likely funder for at least 50% of the Councils contribution. With the Park centre and both projects not being called upon to fruition until 2026 this would be manageable for the Councils earmarked fund but would significantly deplete it at that point, and again provision for any loan repayment would need to be allocated from the annual provision to that reserve, reducing the amount that is to be set aside to grow that fund.
- d. The Beehive. This project remains an aim for the Council. The Council previously purchased the old Royal British Legion property (which was subsequently demolished), with the intention of this site, coupled with the already owned Cyprus Hall to be combined to make a new arts and entertainment centre for the town. This project will be solely the Town Council, although there is a Charitable incorporated Organisation (CIO) set up. The CIO will have Town Council representation on it due to the significant investment. The Town Council will likely remain the owner of the building and the CIO will operationally run the centre once complete, unless a third party is brought in to run the centre.
  - i. The Centre build and fit out costs have been estimated at £5m, based on a revised scheme in 2024. Detailed costs are currently being sought for this to be returned to the Council for full deliberation.

## 6. New projects

- 1. The new projects are shown in the table below as a set of aspirations to be explored further by the Council over the remainder of the administrative term. These aspirations were split during the visioning day in to short term (to be brought forward for further consideration within the next 12 months during 2025) and long term (to be considered 12 months plus 2025-2027). Budgets and resourcing will need to be allocated to all projects to be explored as well as brought forward. This

allocation was approved by the Strategic Development KAG on 4<sup>th</sup> November. [Notes-of-Strategic-KAG-4th-November-2024.pdf](#)

The purpose of the projects are to improve services in the town for the residents, services which will not be provided by the Principal Authorities or other providers. Identifying local needs and wishes and providing where financing from the Town Council or external funds can be achieved. Broadly focusing around:

- the environment
- aesthetic of the Town Centre
- enhanced community services
- accessibility
- events provision
- community safety

<b>Short Term (2025)</b>	<b>Long Term (2025-2027)</b>
Improvement of the Stone Garden	Temporary stage for events
Banking Hub	Changing Places Toilet
Christmas Lights	Community Warden / funding PC's/ PCSOs
More WSCC public realm work	Brookleigh Changes (comm bldngs)
Maps for interest routes (virgin media boxes walks cycle paths etc)	Carbon neutral council
Church walk planters and hanging baskets	E Bike hire
	Improving use of West Park Reserve

Each of these aspirations will report to the appropriate KAGs with costed and detailed Business cases brought forward as needed and budget allocation/ funding plan approval/ consideration. Some may be subject to public consultations to gather the publics views.

## 7 Adhoc/ Emerging projects

- 1 There will be a number of emerging work streams due to government legislation which may from time to time require focus of the Council resources. Two awaited legislative changes are:
  - i. "Martyns Law" the requirements that the Town Council will have to undertake under the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) bill which is currently working its way through parliament. The requirement of the bills will require consideration as to the safety of this building and our events that we organise and run in various other community buildings

as well as open spaces in the town. We do not as yet have detailed guidance as to what we may have to do to comply with this.

- ii. Remote meetings. The Government have recently announced that the provision to allow hybrid or remote meetings for the Council is to be considered. This was allowed for during the pandemic when the Council were not allowed to meet in person, but the law was not continued. There is current consultation underway to determine how a provision should be introduced. By allowing a Teams meeting to be streamed on to youtube, this will allow the Council meetings to be watched by residents during and after the meeting. The Council have had requests from the public for all meetings to have audio broadcast via the internet (as our current Council meetings do). This proposed law now means that the Council should consider a bigger solution to not just broadcast the sound but also the images (if Councillors are to be able to attend via the virtual medium). This will need to be considered and costed as the legislation comes forward, it may be within a year or a longer term. Once the full situation is known the Council will be able to consider this further.
- iii. Devolution: A White Paper was issued from the Government in December 2024, laying out an opportunity for devolution of power from Central Government to new local government arrangements, particularly embracing the Mayoral strategic model already in place in London, Manchester, Birmingham and other large cities. It is not yet known what effect devolution will have on Town and Parish Councils, what is known is that West Sussex CC along with East Sussex CC and Brighton and Hove Unitary Council are proposing a new model for Sussex to include the strategic Mayoral level and then three Unitary Councils to undertake the service delivery (one each for East Sussex, West Sussex and Brighton). These Unitaries will replace the remaining services from the County Councils and all services delivered by the existing District and Borough Councils. If this model is approved by the Government the changes will all be in place by 2028 (with the Mayor being elected in 2026). Town and Parish Council responsibilities will not change, but in the fullness of time some services or parts of services may be appropriate to be transferred to the most local level. Officers will continue with dialogue over the next year or so exploring whether there are any options.

- 2 At this time it is not possible to determine the costs for these emerging items as the requirements of the law are not known. They will come to Council in the fullness of time.

## 7. Town Regeneration - Joint Venture Mid Sussex DC and New River Retail and Brookleigh development

- The District Council and New River Retail (the landowners of the Martlets and surrounding lands) are currently exploring a joint venture to get the long-awaited Burgess Hill Town Centre redeveloped. It needs reiterating that this is not threatened by the devolution process, this JV will continue through Mid Sussex District Council and in to any successor authority that may replace it in the fullness of time.
- While the legalities of the JV do not include the Town Council directly, it remains of keen interest to the Town Council as this is part of the growth programme of Burgess Hill where the new homes (circa 5,000, including the 3,500 homes for the new Brookleigh neighbourhood) a science and technology park and centre for sport all need a thriving community and retail centre of the town to meet all needs. The Town Council has been involved with discussions around the planning of Brookleigh and the places and connectivity scheme and awaits the revised plans to be released to provide the details and the timetable for the rebuild of the town centre.
- As the Brookleigh development is well underway, the Council has put in to the second-year priorities, considerations as to what may be needed for the community buildings being provided. Again the Town Council, while an important voice, is a stakeholder not a delivering participant in the development and only has so much involvement in shaping the new facilities. Therefore, in this business plan the emphasis is on the areas the Town Council can control rather than then bigger picture for the redevelopment of the town. The Town Council will continue to lobby for protection of our environment, and encouraging a thriving local economy.
- The Council will also be revisiting the Neighbourhood Plan, following the approval of the District Plan (expected to be finalised 2025/26). The Neighbourhood Plan was approved in 2015 and is due for review. While it remains part of the Planning process for determination, it carries less weight as it has not been reviewed since the approval of the current District Plan and needs revision to ensure it remains in line with the emerging national Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the New District Plan.