

**NOTES of the COMMUNITY BUILDINGS DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP MEETING held in the Council Chamber on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2025 at 19.00hours.**

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**Cllrs Present:** David Eggleton Chairman  
Bob Foster Vice Chairman  
Robert Eggleston  
Anne Eves  
Janice Henwood  
Peter Williams

**Also Present:** Cllr Andy Stowe  
Julie Holden (Chief Executive)  
Ramize Easter (Head of Projects)

*\*denotes non attendance*

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1. Cllr Eggleton opened the meeting, welcoming all to the first meeting of this group and advised that the first item on the agenda was to elect a Chairman

**RESOLVED: Cllr Eggleton was elected as Chair of the Group**

2. Cllr Eggleton asked for nominations for Vice Chair

**RESOLVED: Cllr Foster was elected as Vice Chair**

3. The Terms of reference were noted, it was asked whether the name of the group could be amended to Community *Land* and Buildings.

**RECOMMEDED:** to ask Council to amend the name of the Working Group to COMMUNITY LAND & BUILDINGS DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP

4. It was requested by Cllr Henwood that she remain on the group after May when she is no longer Town Mayor.

This would be a matter for Council, it was also mentioned that the political balance may not be correct with this amendment. It would be a recommendation to the Council that Cllr Henwood be appointed to the working group at the annual meeting, taking in to account other members and the political balance.

It was clarified that working groups like KAG and committees were open to all Cllrs to attend but they would not have voting rights.

#### **4 Current projects**

Beehive:

A significant discussion followed about the Beehive, Cllr Eggleston gave a brief history and current status report. He advised everyone to look at the history folder in the Chief Executives Office (on the table). He advised that unknown works were instructed to produce a revised design (shared at the visioning day) which has been costed by Greenways. He believes there is a lot of wriggle room in the costs and that the plans could be rejigged to make it smaller and therefore cost less. But not too small as that could mean it is not fit for purpose and therefore would be unsuccessful. It was also felt that it needed to go to the public for views to confirm that the public enthusiasm remained for the project. He proposed that the project should progress to RIBA stage 2 to finalise costs and the design.

The timescales were outlined for the current process, after tonight recommendations will go to Strategic Development KAG on 24<sup>th</sup> February and then recommendations and full background on the project to Council on 3<sup>rd</sup> March to confirm whether the Council are or are not willing to take the project forward. This has been promised as not all Councillors were involved in the original project and a full discussion is necessary. While the final costs and how it is to be financed are not yet known, it is the principle that will be discussed as to the continuation of this project.

There was support of the Beehive but wariness as to the potential costs and any associated borrowing that may be necessary. Cllr Willaims had looked at the Public Works Loan Board rates of interest and while mindful they are today's rates; the interest rates would have to drop significantly to allow the repayments to be reasonable. He felt that that this will affect the precept or require reduction of other services to afford. He was also concerned about a long legacy of the debt if it were taken over 35 or even 50 years. It was countered that part of the discussion for the future is the funding, this needs to be found so that the effect on the council is reasonable and affordable.

It was asked about needing to have a referendum on the project, clarification was given that we had held a public vote before, this is not essential, but public consultation is and the need to determine sufficient public support if a loan were to be applied for.

*Paragraph redated due to commercial sensitivity.*

It was further commented that the 2018 survey made it clear that the Beehive or similar evening entertainment venue was a viable proposition for the town.

It was commented that it would have been nice to see MSDC support the project financially. It was also noted that many local theatres lose money and rely on public subsidy.

The previously agreed costing would suggest that to reach RIBA stage 2 would be around £27,000. The Chief Executive will clarify that. It was suggested that other options should be considered, that the Beehive was all that had been proposed for the site. Other options had been discussed last year, but the Beehive was still the aspiration for the Council from the Business Plan. If this could not be delivered then future discussions as to the old RBL site would be needed. It was clarified that the overage clause on the purchase of the RBL building was poorly drafted and this would need revisiting with all parties to agree what this meant and this was being carried out outside of this working group as the proposal to site the beehive there would not result in a payment of overage.

**Recommended to Strategic Development KAG:**

- 1- To carry out consultation with known stakeholders for the proposed Beehive to determine appetite for the scheme and if still supportive to
- 2- Recommend to Council that the project proceed with the previously appointed architects and project managers to RIBA stage 2

St Johns pavilion:

Cllr Williams advised that the Cricket Club has had further surveys done. The flood risk remains a one in thirty and one in one-hundred-year risk. This risk is no different to that for the current building, however the current building is not required to have mitigation put in place. However, if it is developed as is proposed, mitigation is required. The CC are back in discussions with Mid Sussex DC as to this issue.

**5 Future Projects - Changing Places Toilets in Cyprus Road**

This is on the Business Plan, at this point it was for noting. The Working group were very supportive and wanted to see this come forward but were mindful of costs. Grants are available and modular toilets can be fitted. It was clarified that there is room for the development and to retain some storage. The officers were asked to bring back costings and funding streams later in the year for this to be considered further.

There being no other business the meeting ended at 20.26