



MINUTES of the **ORDINARY MEETING** of the **TOWN COUNCIL** held in the Council Chamber on **Monday 3rd March 2025 at 7pm**

Present: Janice Henwood Town Mayor
 Tofojjul Hussain Deputy Town Mayor

Graham Allen
Diane Black
Stuart Condie
Matthew Cornish
Cedric de Souza
Robert Eggleston
David Eggleton
Anne Eves
Bob Foster
Jon Gardner
Matthew Goldsmith
Simon Hicks
Mohammad Hossain
John Orchard
Andy Stowe
Brenda Williams
Peter Williams
Adam White

* *Denotes non-attendance*

*Also in attendance: Julie Holden - Chief Executive Officer
Sam Kimblin - Administrative Support Officer
Kaowen Ho – Unknown Works
Ben Hayes - Unknown Works
21 members of the public*

Presentation by Unknown Works, Kaowen Ho and Ben Hayes

The architects shared their images as a presentation. These were included in the Council Papers at Appendix B. The site is situated next to Cyprus Hall and includes the site of the old RBL club.

The projects consists of building on the open site. The wider project ambition is to include Cyprus Hall into the project. To form a fully functioning set of spaces for a wide range of stakeholders.

The scheme proposed an extensive amount of excavation into the ground. Includes dance theatres and has acoustic implications.

Unknown Works were engaged to re-look at the design to maximise the project gain for the best value for money. Materials and size have all been factors.

The representatives from Unknown Works talked about linkages with the towns history in relation to the brick kilns and beehives and the history of brick making.

It's proposed to have fully operational from day 1, a theatre, a lobby between Cyprus Hall and the theatre to include WCs. Initially however the main of Cyprus Hall will be untouched and the works there will be included in Phase 2.

Phase 2 – The architects see it as a multi-purpose space, could be used for weddings and conferences. Including a courtyard space which could be used as a breakout space for the theatre or events, it could be a café with seating. The architects presented a number of different use layouts that the venue could have. Different ways the spaces could be used.

Some minor improvements to Cyprus Hall could make it more versatile, by including sliding partitions or curtain racks to use the spaces more effectively as multi-use spaces.

Fundamentally the theatre is a multi-purpose space with retractable seats. Lower ground floor access from the car park or possibly from the front, could be another community space.

The design can be modified as required to bring the project to life.

The Chair thanked Unknown Works for their presentation.

222. OPEN FORUM

There were no initial comments or questions

223. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies as the Council was fully present

224. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Declarations were received from:

Cllr de Souza	Declared he was a trustee of the Beehive CIO and would not contribute nor vote on item 8. He also declared he was a trustee of the Park Centre
Cllr Cornish	Declared he was a Trustee of the Park Centre CIO

225. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Insp Derrick has advised of an incident in the north of the District where a child took a knife to school (hiding it outside of the school building). The Police are interacting with all schools in the District, regarding knife crime as a result. There was no use of the knife and no one was injured, but all the same it has been treated very seriously.

We were very pleased and wished to congratulate the Park Centre on completion of the building transferred to the new CIO. They are on course to open in April .

Following the last Council meeting, minute 220 refers; Paul Jackson Cole at WSCC has advised that he is following up the matter of the footpath alongside Marle Place and will come back to us.

226. COUNCIL MINUTES

RESOLVED: Subject to noting a correction of a typo in the circulated minutes to amend Alexander to Alexandra. The Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on Monday 27th January 2025 were **AGREED** and signed as a correct record.

227. PLANNING COMMITTEE MINUTES

RESOLVED: The minutes of the meetings on Tuesday 28th January 2025 and Monday 17th February 2025 were agreed.

228. STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT KEY AREA GROUP NOTES

The SDKAG Chair advised that consultation with key stakeholders had been carried out as per the request of the meeting. A summary of this was included in Appendix A of the Councils papers. He recommended that the Council approve the notes noting that minute 57(2) was subject to the next agenda item.

RESOLVED: To accept the notes and the decisions therein of the meeting held on 24th February 2025. Noting that minute 57(2) was subject to further discussion as the next agenda item.

229. THE BEEHIVE

Cllr Eggleston as Chair of the Strategic Development Key Area Group introduced the project and thanked Unknown Works for their presentation.

He stressed that the presentation is a starting point for the Beehive and is not the final design. RIBA stage 2 will progress this plan to a point that the final design should be complete.

He stated that this meeting was not for agreeing to borrow money nor even to approve final costs.

The CEO has met twice with the Cyprus Hall association regarding the ongoing lease and had shared the plans with the trustees in order to keep them up to date with the developments. There has been an undertaking that disruption will be discussed with the existing users and if temporary re-siting is necessary or storage the Council will be open to discuss how the Town Council can help with this.

He advised that the addition of a new auditorium will provide over 5000m² of floor space. The stakeholder meeting was positive and constructive.

He stated that Unknown Works had talked about incorporating the town's brick making history into the design, and how the artifacts can be put on display. It was accepted that there is caution and concern in the room about this project and that is why the Council have engaged experts. He felt that If the Council are serious about providing an arts location in the town then they need to support this project at this stage. He felt that If the council vote against the resolution tonight, then it's unlikely the project will continue.

He reiterated that Phase 1 will not impede or damage Cyprus Hall at all. He proposed the recommendation from the report.

The Chair invited any questions from the public gallery

It was asked what is the seating capacity in the theatre and what is the overall cost of delivering the theatre area. There was a further question about fire escapes.

It was advised that the capacity was 260-280 seats.

Costs are difficult to answer regarding the individual cost areas, the project as a whole has been indicatively costed.

Fire escapes have yet to be looked at, this will come in later phases of

design.

The Chair returned to the Councillors, advising that the motion had not been seconded, it then was, and asked for Council Comment before she returned to the Public Gallery.

Councillors view included:

Having looked in detail at the plans which was now version 2 of the Beehive project and was much smaller than the original ideas. He remained concerned, that being so much smaller (being 11 metres wide) that it would not be fit for purpose against the original publicly supported ideas. He also mentioned that the proposals do not mention any fire safety, the £5.2m cost, doesn't include pre-constructions or the cost of stage lighting and fixtures.

It remains a concern about the amount of residents money that has been spent so far. It was also noted that five more local authority theatres have been placed "at risk" around the country.

Having looked at the cost appraisal which excludes consultant fees, main contractor fees, design fees, sundry fees and additional reports, sound system and lighting, the total project cost could be £7m.

It was asked whether the architects had designed a theatre before. Unknown Works said yes, and gave examples including the Vortex Jazz club in London which is a multi-functional space. Also, a multi-functional arts space in Walthamstow is being built right now and very similar to this space.

It was further commented that if we commit to this project, we could end up with a £7m build cost. No-one has come forward with any grants in 10 years. The existing groups that use the hall will be impacted by the proposed use of the space.

The concept of the Beehive was felt to be good, but the majority of residents don't want it due to the very high cost. The suggested amendments to the design will add costs to the build. Future generations of residents will still have the burden of loan repayments for years to come. To our residents, £30K is a lot of money, will future users be able to pay the hire charges that will be necessary?

Progressing to RIBA 2 was necessary to get a better idea of the design and the realistic cost plan. Kaowen Ho from Unknown Works said the current cost plan is provisional, the Quantity Surveyor has applied a risk factor for every single cost. This tends to inflate predicted costs, and the brief is to deliver within those costs.

The presentation was felt to have lots of interesting detail but it's part of a journey. We've had feedback from our local arts and cultural groups that they need a venue of this size and there aren't many alternative venues in the south of the County. Yes, it will involve a significant loan but the people of this town will also be able to use the

venue. Tonight, we are only asking for the go-ahead to properly cost it out and properly look into the design. Are we going to risk losing the opportunity to explore this further? He added that the £30K comes out of the council existing reserves – it's not coming from the precept.

It was felt there had been a certain lack of transparency. The stakeholder meeting didn't include some of the smaller existing hirers from Cyprus Hall and this was a shame. The Cyprus Hall existing hirers could lose their existing storage as part of the scheme. We have a tenant in Cyprus Hall and they have filed a notice to request a 10year lease again as they are entitled to do this under the 1954 Landlord and Tenant Act.

It was thought to be quite straightforward at this stage, if Councillors want an arts centre in this town, then vote for it. If you don't want an arts centre in this town, vote against it. All alternative arts venues of a similar size will cost a similar amount. There is no alternative site. Further decisions will have to come back to Council regarding the funding.

It was felt that this was a rush to make this decision, we should consult residents again at this stage, before spending the £30K.

Modifications to the plans would still need to be made and the Cyprus Hall users must be part of the ongoing consultations.

Many residents felt that the revamp of the town centre was more important than this project.

The Chair then returned to the Public Gallery

Comments followed;

If this was the first £27,000 to be spent on this project that would be OK. But this has been going on for many years and lots of money has been spent on this project so far, with no further progress.

Some were very happy to hear the word heritage mentioned. We need a museum in Burgess Hill. There is only a very small space for the current museum/heritage centre.

The project was very exciting, if we don't go with it tonight, the project will die. Having a good theatre/arts centre in the town would at least be something for pride for the town.

Current users of the Cyprus Hall were seeking assurances that they would be able to continue in the new venue after the refurbishment and at reasonable costs.

There was still much support for the project. This town has been without a suitable arts venue for many years to house productions like the Theatre group pantomime, which are having to use the local secondary schools. Yes, there will be future costs to pay back the loan, but Councillors were urged to think about the investment in young people in the town for the future. The investment is also about the cultural heritage of the town and the wellbeing of young people for many generations. Councillors were urged to take the project forward.

When there was public support for the Beehive last time, there wasn't going to be a rise to the precept, there is no funding for this so it will have to impact the precept and Councillors should consider this. What services may have to be cut in order to make this project a reality?

The plans were questioned at the stakeholder meeting and it was advised that the plans can be changed. The more times we change the plans, there are more costs. There cannot be a bottomless pit of spending as the plans constantly change.

Cyprus Hall is not used by many residents of Burgess Hill. We need a space that is used by lots of different people in the town. The Beehive proposal can be used for so many different things, not just the arts. It has lots of different possibilities, it is not all about costs but also the possibilities. The project should be considered as a whole.

It was suggested if the concern was the funds, the Council could agree on an absolute max spend, if it will breach this, it cannot go forward.

Cllr Eggleston as the proposer was invited to respond to some of the comments before the vote was taken.

He said that it will be difficult to please everyone. We will work with a broader number of stakeholders to address concerns and fine tune the design. We will do what we can in terms of the money and space available. RIBA 2 is an iterative process which will involve stakeholders including existing Cyprus Hall users.

The auditorium design although smaller than originally considered is still within the original scope. When this was originally scoped, the external consultants suggested a theatre of around 250 seats was needed.

While, of course the town centre re-development is important, that falls to MSDC and New River and not BHTC. Also, the town centre development is not going to provide any cultural or arts facility.

Regarding the concerns about increase in precept, in all likelihood we will need to borrow and we will address this at the appropriate time. Fundraising will leave a gap and we will have to look at how we bridge

this gap.

This version of the plans have cost £6,000 for this re-design.

The purpose of taking a design to RIBA stage 2, will get us to a settled design, if the council can't deliver it, then we have a design to fit the space that a future administration could deliver. If we stop now this work would have to start again. It would be a great shame to let this project die now.

The Chair advised that she wished the vote to be recorded and the votes were as follows:

Recorded vote

For	Against	Abstain
Cllr Henwood	Cllr Cornish	Cllr deSouza
Cllr Hussain	Cllr Eves	Cllr White
Cllr Allen	Cllr Foster	
Cllr Black	Cllr Orchard	
Cllr Condie	Cllr Stowe	
Cllr Eggleston	Cllr B Williams	
Cllr Eggleton	Cllr P Williams	
Cllr Gardner		
Cllr Goldsmith		
Cllr Hicks		
Cllr Hossain		

RESOLVED: That the (Beehive) project proceed with the previously appointed architects and project managers to RIBA Stage 2

230. PRINCIPAL COUNCIL UPDATE

The Chair referred to the circulated report which was noted.

231. TOWN TWINNING VISIT TO SCHMALLENBERG

The arrangements for the visit and ongoing discussions were noted.

The chair thanked Cllrs B Williams, Eves and Condie for their work on this visit and strengthening links.

232. RISK MANAGMENT PROCESS AND RISK REGISTER

It was commented that the register should include higher level risks such as cyber crime and contingency around key staff. The register

was more risks from items that had been through KAG. It was suggested that A higher level risk register be considered at the Finance KAG and brought back for additions.

It was noted that the process had the risk and likelihood added together when it was more normal to multiply.

The Chair advised that the papers indicated the Shop Open as an open risk, this should however say closed as per the decision at the last Council meeting.

RESOLVED: to approve;

- a) the updated Risk Management Process, and
- b) the updated Risk Register

233. DIARY DATES

The forthcoming dates were noted.

The Town Mayor said this was her last time as chairman of a full Burgess Hill Town Council Meeting. There was applause.

The Town Mayor ended the meeting at **8.18pm** thanking all for attendance

Chairmans Signature

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