

NOTES of the **STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT KEY AREA GROUP MEETING** held in the Council Chamber on **18th September 2025 at 19.00hours.**

Committee Present:

Robert Eggleston
David Eggleton
Cedric de Souza
Bob Foster
Janice Henwood
John Orchard
Andy Stowe

Chairman
Vice Chairman

Also Present:

Cllrs;

Diane Black
Anne Eves
Simon Hicks
Tofojjul Hussein
Brenda Williams
Peter Williams

Others: Julie Holden (Chief Executive)
Kaowen Ho – Unknown works for item 7
2 members of the public

**denotes non attendance*

69. Open Forum

The Chairman opened the meeting and invited any questions from the public gallery. There were no questions therefore the Chair moved to the substantive agenda.

70. Apologies for Absence

None were received.

71. Substitutes

There were none

72. Declarations of Interest

Cllr DaSouza declared that while he was a member of the Beehive CIO as the Council have not determined that this is the operating vehicle for the Beehive, at this time his interest was personal regarding agenda item 7.

73. Chairmans Announcements

There were none

74. Notes of the Meeting 28th July 2025

RESOLVED: To sign the notes as an accurate record of the meeting.

75. Community Land and Buildings Group

The chair referred to the working group notes at Appendix A, he advised that the Plan B proposal from West Sussex Councillor Cherry had interest, but that it was an outline and questions had been compiled to be responded to, the responses when received will be compared to the brief of the Beehive. The plan B proposal and the list of questions are attached to these notes.

A brief discussion as to whether the questions submitted, needed to consider the proposal against a like for like basis, was held.

It was commented that one of the main issues would be access to the building for community use and this had been covered in the questions submitted.

It was asked what the timescales were for the proposal response to the questions. Cllr Cherry had indicated he would aim to reply by 24th October to allow this to go forward.

Unknown works were then asked to go through the presentation of the plans to the KAG, as had happened at the Working Group.

Kaowen Ho, made the presentation, highlighting the seating numbers in the auditorium are 285 and that the foyer could be a living museum. He advised that the project is comparable to the other small theatre venues in the area including the Ropetackle in Shoreham and Chequer Mead in East Grinstead.

There were questions as to the catering facilities being able to cater a large event such as a wedding reception, that the width of the auditorium is 11m and the courtyard in the centre of the facility is not covered. It was suggested that the youth council should be asked to look over the presentation for their views.

It was also asked if the plans could be shared with the wider town residents and this was confirmed, that it would come.

There was a reference to RIBA stage 3 taking the plans to greater finesse, but the stage 2 designs take the stage 1 to a more settled place as to where the designs will finalise.

Cllr Eggleton proposed the following as recommendations to Council, which were seconded and discussed:

- (a) Obtains Pre Planning Advice from the Planning Authority on the RIBA Stage 2 design for The Beehive.
- (b) Meets with the Urban Design team at Mid Sussex District Council to obtain feedback on the design and its compliance with the Design Guide.
- (c) Commissions a Structural Engineering Report and Geotechnical Study at a cost of £22,000 plus VAT.
- (d) Prepares an indicative funding plan for The Beehive to be presented to the next meeting of the Strategic KAG.
- (e) Prepares an indicative business plan for The Beehive to be presented to the next meeting of the Strategic KAG
- (f) Allocates any further savings arising from additional design work or specifications as (a) additions to the existing £212k buffer for inflation and (b) design upgrades (e.g. Glulam beams).
- (g) Considers commissioning the suggested Mechanical Engineering Report at the KAG's next meeting which shall be scheduled for a date in November 2025.

There was further discussion including requests that a business plan be supplied before any further expenditure should be made. An outline of a funding plan should be drawn up for consideration.

It was clarified that the urban designer costs for a design panel were stated on the MSDC website as £240, it was hoped that an hour with the Urban Designer may be something that is not charged, but this has been asked of MSDC and an answer awaited, also for them to confirm that pre planning advice is free for town councils.

It was stated that the Council subsidises a number of events each year as well as other buildings.

It was felt that it was important to be clear as to costs and design and then consider funding and viability.

It was stated that the project should be suspended until the WSC Councillors plan B proposal and the funding plan can be considered.

There was reference to the circulated indicative quotes (shown attached to these notes) that show the cost of the next steps could be over £90,000. It was clarified that quotes would still be needed and it may not be that high. The M&E report in particular would need looking at further as to the scope and costs and this is expected to happen in November.

It was stated that the RIBA stage 2 would reduce the overall cost, which is has and the footprint has increased. A structural report is needed to refine the estimated costs from the Greenwoods report.

The question for council is whether we wish to continue with the vision of getting this project completed or accepting delay that we then go nowhere.

It was suggested that recommendations A&B could be agreed but not to go further.

It was commented that the National Wealth Fund was ½% below the PWLB rates and could be considered.

It was asked when the plans would be shared with residents, the answer was when a funding plan and the scheme is further progressed.

There were concerns that the public were not wholly in favour of the project and that even though the two consultations had given majority approval there was a very low turn-out.

It was noted that the Burgess Hill Girls school was already a performance venue used by professional companies. This should be considered as part of plan b which will deliver similar at the Academy.

Cllr Foster proposed amending the recommendations by removing (c) which was seconded and approved by vote

The revised substantive motion was then put to the vote, a recorded vote was asked for

Cllr Eggleston - In favour
Cllr Eggleton - in favour
Cllr DeSouza - in favour
Cllr Henwood - in favour
Cllr Foster - against
Cllr orchard – against
Cllr Stowe – against

RESOLVED: To recommend to Council;

- (a) To obtain Pre Planning Advice from the Planning Authority on the RIBA Stage 2 design for The Beehive.
- (b) To meet with the Urban Design team at Mid Sussex District Council to obtain feedback on the design and its compliance with the Design Guide.
- (c) To prepare an indicative funding plan for The Beehive to be presented to the next meeting of the Strategic KAG.
- (d) To prepares an indicative business plan for The Beehive to be presented to the next meeting of the Strategic KAG

- (e) To allocate any further savings arising from additional design work or specifications as (a) additions to the existing £212k buffer for inflation and (b) design upgrades (e.g. Glulam beams).
- (f) To Consider commissioning the suggested Mechanical Engineering Report at the KAG's next meeting which shall be scheduled for a date in November 2025.

76. BROOKLEIGH COMMUNITY BUILDING

The Chief Executive outline the report and offer from Mid Sussex DC. There was a strong feeling that unless the rent was peppercorn the Council would not be able to run the building, but the KAG were equally supportive of the building remaining available to the Community. It was commented that the nursery being the anchor tenant would be necessary, but if there was to be a second nursery in the school or retail area, this could reduce the options for a nursery being available and again without the anchor tenant this could be a big risk for the operator of the building. The KAG wondered who else may be available to run the facility if not the Council and if this became a potential concern that it would not then be built, then the Council would want to consider further.

RESOLVED: To thank Mid Sussex District Council for considering the Town Council, however this Council would not be able to take the management of the building on the current outlined terms.

77. LAND AT THE WEST SIDE OF JUNCTION ROAD ALLOTMENTS

The KAG noted that the recent Allotment Working Group had advised that they did not wish to see any changes to the management of the area adjoining the allotments.

The KAG noted that the current Council Policy would not consider sale or lease of the land.

There being no other business the meeting ended at 20.44

To: Burgess Hill Town Council Community Land Group
From: County Councillor Richard Cherry, Burgess Hill East
Date: 22nd August 2025

Appendix A

An Outline Proposal to fully investigate the potential to place the Beehive at The Burgess Hill Academy campus.

1. Background

The concept of Burgess Hill Town Council building a new theatre and community centre was first suggested some ten years ago when Mid Sussex District Council announced that the Martlets Hall would be closed and demolished. The project was named the 'the Beehive' as a result of a community competition and vote in 2019.

Various designs have been proposed, at varying costs, in the intervening years and the designated placement of the Beehive has been on the site of the, now demolished, Royal British Legion building, with possible combinations with the existing Cyprus Hall, next door, also under consideration.

Whilst the designs submitted have been very credible, they have been thwarted by their high cost of construction, in the range of £5 – 10 million for the building.

2. The Current Situation

The latest attempt to reduce the scale of the building still has a price tag of £5M - £6M. with no confirmed governance structure for the long-term management of the Beehive.

Over the past decade, although various options have been given passing consideration, a fully-fledged secondary option to building on the old British Legion building site, 'a Plan B', has never been fully developed or studied.

3. The Proposal

This 'Plan B' proposal seeks to redress that lack of an alternative option and provide a fully developed one that could: -

- Eliminate the risk of low demand and usage
- Directly benefit the town's students and young people
- Dramatically lower construction costs
- Feed directly into a readymade facility management and maintenance structure (venue hiring is currently outsourced to a professional company, PlaySport)

Community theatres based on school campuses exist elsewhere. In terms of quality and variety of offering, The Park Community Theatre on the outskirts of Havant is a good example of what can be achieved. <https://pcs.hants.sch.uk/theatre.php>

As it currently stands, the Burgess Hill Academy has a large hall, capable of seating up to 200 persons in theatre style, or 120 persons at tables. In the hall, there is a purpose-built stage with performer changing rooms at the rear. There is also a gallery seating 150 persons. The Academy's hall can also host sizeable performances and provide audiences with refreshments during intervals.

Several local performing arts organisations already hire the stage and hall for plays, musicals, pantomimes and concerts throughout the year. In addition, the Academy produce their own shows as well as use the stage to host ceremonies for the students.

Constant use and its age over the years, has left the stage needing modernisation; similarly, the support equipment such as curtains, lighting, sound and audio-visual need an upgrade.

In addition, the possibilities for retractable-tiered-seating and separate seating arrangements for students at lunchtimes should also be reviewed.

This outline proposal is to bring the Beehive to the Academy under the banner 'The Beehive Performing Arts Centre', a community theatre, where it will have the benefit of an existing but state-of-the-art performing area.

4. Other Benefits

- Car parking – the Academy has a large, easy-access, car park in the centre of Burgess Hill.
- Proximity to public transport – the campus is within a short walking distance of Burgess Hill railway station and nearby bus stops.
- Proximity to pubs, bars and restaurants – most of the town's hospitality and fast-food outlets are within easy reach of the campus.
- Capacity - the hall has an existing capacity of up to 350 persons.
- Extended usage – the hall can be used for conferences and exhibitions.
- Storage – capacity for storing the hall's seats, for example, already exists.
- Hospitality – there is a kitchen close to the hall.
- Changing facilities - performers' changing rooms already exist, at the rear of the stage.
- Performance space - there is scope to increase the performing area.
- Acoustics - the acoustic balance in the hall can easily be improved.
- Lower build costs - for redesign, refurbishment and replenishment, instead of new build.
- Lower project initiation costs – the possibility of a turn-key project without additional consultant fees.
- Charitable donations - grants for youth acting initiatives may be available
- Educational benefits - the Academy will have a modern theatre to enrich its arts curriculum

5. Next Steps

The Acting CEO of UBAT, the CEO of Sussex Learning Trust and the Principal of the Academy have all enthusiastically offered their support to this idea.

The proposers are seeking the support of Burgess Hill Town Council to proceed to draw up a draft specification for the refurbishments required and involve at least 2 theatre design companies to prepare quotations. By doing so, the Council and its residents will be able to compare a 'Plan B' with the current Beehive plans.

Proposers – West Sussex County Councillors

Richard Cherry – Burgess Hill East

Jane Davey- Burgess Hill North

Erika Woodhurst-Trueman – Hassocks & Burgess Hill South

List of questions submitted to the representatives from BH Academy regarding a possible Plan B proposal

The Beehive – Request for Information (RFI) from Burgess Hill Academy (the Academy)

This RFI is submitted in response to an indicative proposal for the development of community and auditorium facilities at the Academy received via a third party. This would be as an alternative to the proposed location in Cyprus Road. The Academy has been supplied with a copy of the Council’s RIBA stage 2 report to assist it in its evaluation of its proposal and the extent to which it can meet the aspirations of this plan.

Question	Narrative	Academy Response
<p>1. What is the estimated number of days during a school year that the Academy stage may be available for non-school performances? Will the availability only be evening and weekend or will there be other options. A full projection as to the potential availability for 3rd parties is requested including the number of days and the breakdown of the times in the days that availability may be granted. Please take in to account the number of days that the facility would be used for after school and extra-curricular activities.</p>	<p>The Council has been keen to re-provision the Martlets Hall. If the availability for non-school use is significantly reduced this will not meet the ambition. The expectation for the Beehive was availability to public hire morning, afternoon and evening 7 days a week, while appreciating that there are “low” seasons in theatre and auditorium desirability.</p>	
<p>2. Do you know if the stage and fixings have been updated in, say, the past 20 years?</p>		
<p>3. What is the maximum seating capacity, if laid out in 'theatre style' and where are the seats stored? How would this change in a new format?</p>	<p>To determine the expectation of the capacity and disruption to the school should a large production be in residence.</p>	
<p>4. How would access to (opening) and egress from (closing) the facility be managed?</p>		
<p>5. How has the outgoing UBAT and Sussex Learning Trust indicated support for the Plan B initiative?</p>	<p>To understand the potential support from the governing administration.</p>	
<p>6. When would you expect to have a more detailed proposal available e.g. designs and costs?</p>		
<p>7. What is the premise of the investment plan? Are the Academy looking to do this work as an Academy project with investment from others? If this is the case what is the level of investment that the Council would be asked for? (this may not yet be known) From where would the other investors be sought?</p>	<p>The facility will be owned by the Academy, while the Council may be willing to make a contribution to the project this would be in line with other investment offered to other local charities and clubs. The Council would not be paying for the project in entirety as it is not a Council owned building and would not thereafter be under the Council authority,</p>	
<p>8. What is the anticipated time frame for the project should it be approved?</p>	<p>The Council will need to determine whether it has sufficient reserves to</p>	

	support the project and when these may be called upon.	
9. Could space be provided for a Heritage Visitor Centre?	The RIBA stage 2 report for The Beehive identifies a vision for a Heritage Visitor Centre creating a museum and facility for the history of Burgess Hill and its brick and tile making past. Consideration needs to be given to how this could be provided and museum materials displayed allowing for all day access.	
10. Box office and staff office, how would the Academy expect to manage the non-school bookings and hires.	Space required for taking enquiries, selling tickets, dealing with suppliers and performers etc.	
11. If the administration is separated could The Beehive have first choice/first refusal for all evening hall hire		
12. Could The Beehive (if administration is separate) be a key holder	If the answer is no, could there be a separate access to the auditorium with its own facilities which could be used exclusively by The Beehive?	
Questions Regarding Brandon Hall operation if this is to be the blueprint	Narrative To better our understanding of this model	Academy response
(Q1) Provide details of regular weekend hirings of the Barnden Hall during morning, afternoon and evening.	This is to assist us in calculating availability and whether the proposal will be able to accommodate the Council aspiration.	
(Q2) Approximately how many evenings in the year is the Barnden Hall available for use on weekdays outside term time.		
(Q3) Approximately how many evenings in the year is the Barnden Hall available at weekends outside term time.		
(Q4) In respect of the last two questions is this spread evenly or concentrated at certain times of the year.		
(Q5) During term time how often is the hall used for afterschool extra-curricular activities during the week.		
(Q6) When do these after school extra-curricular activities end.		
(Q7) When can a hirer start to use the Barnden Hall on a weekday evening in term time (access time) .	We understand that this is currently 5.00pm.	

Please see following a list of requirements that the new facility would need to achieve should this go ahead. These requirements are taken from the current plans for the Beehive project, the Council would need to understand what the level of facility would be, if not directly comparable, to ensure it is fit for purpose as a professional use facility. Answers to these questions may not be available at this time but would be necessary to be taken in to account as plans were drawn up.

Requirement (R)	Narrative	Academy response
Design needs		
(R) Replacement of glazed walls with masonry and plasterboard finishes. Replace plasterboard corridor wall with masonry. Acoustic treatment for both exterior and all internal auditorium walls.	Auditorium needs to eliminate light and sound leakage and therefore needs 'black box' approach.	
(R) Lift stage roof and allow for weight bearing to rig stage lights and allow for fly bars (if possible)		
(R) Eliminate light leakage into stage area		
(R) Supply electrics with separation of circuits for sound and light. Install appropriate theatre lighting cabling with correct weighting.		
(R) 3 phase power and 16amp & 32 amp rating. Install XLR, DMX and ethernet cabling		
(R) Acoustic treatment to commercial auditorium standard to include: (a) acoustic linings to walls (b) acoustic underlay to floor (c) sound absorbing ceiling finishes.		
(R) Heating and air conditioning installation to auditorium	With a black box auditorium air cooled ventilation is required to maintain appropriate ambient temperature	
(R) Plant for the above to be located externally to avoid noise disruption.		
(R) Retractable (raked) seating on ground floor of Barnden Hall	Raked seating probably to run from the rear near to the gallery with loose theatre seating thereafter to improve experience	
(R) Licensed bar and stock room	A key part of the performance experience is a commercial bar. This needs to be situated close to the auditorium but acoustically separate from it.	
(R) 3 x secure Green Rooms together with a minimum of 3 x WCs, 1 x Accessible WC, Walk in shower, Washbasins. Separate fire exit. Level access to stage or access via lift or ramp.	Green Rooms need to be at rear of stage and provide a secure space for performers (so no possibility of interruption or risk to performers' property). Level access from the Green Rooms to the stage or ramps/lift where this is not possible	
(R) A minimum of (a) 11 female WCs (incl. 1 ambulant), (b) 4 male urinals and 2 male cubicles, (c) 1 unisex accessible WC (d) 1 Changing Places facility (e) Associated wash basins to Part T regs.	Provision required to comply with Part T 2024 regulations. The facilities should be accessible to the auditorium and visitors should not need to use facilities reserved for pupils. Leaving aside the obvious safeguarding risk if school toilet facilities were being used by pupils and visitors, at the same time, there is a need to create	

	a genuine theatre experience.	
(R) Circulation corridors provided at Document M standards.		

Indicative quotes submitted to the SDKAG of potential costs for M&E and Structural Engineer reports along with a management quote for RIBA stage3

Indicative Quotes received via unknown works, to assist the KAG in determining the next steps: Please note that the names of the companies have been removed due to commercial sensitivity as no quotes have been sought by the Council and contracts are not at this time being let.

Structural Engineer Reports

A Proposed fee for structural services at RIBA Stage03 for The Beehive Theatre. This proposal is based on a two-step stage 03, with eventual handover of structural drawings and a structural report to a design and build contractor.

RIBA Stage 03 A as Outlined Above Total: £11,000 + VAT RIBA Stage 03 B as Outlined Above Total: £11,000 + VAT

Total £22,000 plus VAT

M&E Reports

A quote indicatively for costs of Base M&E Services: £50,000.00

Environmental and Energy Modelling: £12,500.00

Total: £62,500.00 plus VAT

Management:

A proposal: To develop the project through initial phase of Detailed Design, specifically coordinating information and designs with a Structural Engineer and an MEP Engineer, with the goal of obtaining a more detailed understanding and breakdown of costs for Structural and Services packages. £7080 plus VAT