

NOTES of the **STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT KEY AREA GROUP MEETING** held on Zoom on **28 February at 19.00 hours.**

Present: Joseph Foster Chairman
Graham Allen* Vice Chairman
Andrew Barrett-Miles*
Kathleen Willis*
Robert Duggan
Roger Cartwright

Also Present: Robert Eggleston
Anne Eves
Peter Chapman
Sylvia Neumann
Lee Gibbs
Matthew Cornish

**denotes non attendance*

87. **OPEN FORUM**
Nil

88. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
Graham Allen, Kathy Willis

89. **SUBSTITUTES**
Robert Eggleston for Kathy Willis

90. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
Nil

91. **NOTES OF THE STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT KAG MEETING**
The Notes of the meeting of the Strategic Development Key Area Group held on 26 May 2021, having been previously circulated, were **AGREED** and will be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

92. **BURGESS HILL INCLUSIVE TOWN**

The background to this item is a desire to make the town more accessible for everyone. This could be done by performing an audit of the town using local

expertise derived from members of the public. This will lead to the compilation of an accessibility plan identifying suitable funding sources. The plan will ensure joined up thinking between the various authorities.

The question was asked as to whether the plan would count as a material consideration when it comes to planning. While the plan could be referred to, there are better legal ways of ensuring accessibility is addressed eg the Equality Act. That act, however does not embrace hidden disabilities. The town council can have an effect by influencing and creating pressure to create momentum while raising awareness of a broad spectrum of disabilities.

Towns were never designed for physical or hidden disabilities. What can commerce, town, district and county councils do to make town centres and indeed towns accessible for all? The town council cannot deliver this programme on our own.

How can able bodied people appreciate the challenges facing those with disabilities? It is important that awareness is raised by engaging with people to make known the challenges they face. We will then be in a position to engage with other authorities and facilitate improvements to the environment we live in.

It was suggested that the town council seek accreditation www.disabilityconfident.dwp.gov.uk . This would provide a focal point for the council to concentrate on. While it is somewhat expensive, it shows the council is serious. It would try to ensure that every element of life is accessible.

How would the suggested seed money of £10k budgeted for be spent? There is nothing specific at this stage and it would be for the working party to identify issues which could be addressed. The working group would be part of the audit.

Some £2,5million has been suggested to be spent on the place and connectivity project. Perhaps this could be tapered by removing the nice to haves in favour of better wheelchair access for instance. Only once a person has experienced life in a buggy does it become clear the challenges that there are. This gives a whole different perspective. A good exercise would be to give people with no disabilities specifically designed activities to let them experience what it is like to have a disability.

Communications are important and involving disabled people to understand their experiences, knowledge and suggestions will make the difference. They will be able to report back on the condition of pavements, drop kerbs, parking on pavements and other buggy obstructions. There is technology which can be embraced to assist. Autistic people have different challenges eg cafes which do not accommodate their needs. The working group could talk to the hospitality sector about their needs eg a quiet hour. How do we live out our dementia friendly town theme? Training could be funded for commercial enterprises. There is a lot of potential.

Through publicity and promotion there is a good way to raise awareness and

involve people. Peer to peer involvement may be more successful than just officer involvement.

Cllr Willis had indicated an interest in being on the working party. All councillors would be asked.

RECOMMENDED

1. That the Council support the Inclusive Town Initiative.
2. That a working group of Councillors be established to develop the initiative with input and support from representatives of the disability community.
3. That an inclusivity audit in line with the proposals set out in the report be carried out with the objective of building an implementation plan for approval by the Council.
4. That a Town Accessibility Plan be developed.
5. That advice be sought from other local authorities that have worked on inclusivity initiatives and relevant third sector organisations to identify best practice.
6. That progress against the plan be regularly reviewed.
7. That the expenditure required to meet the plan objectives be identified and an initial £10,000 from the specific reserve be allocated towards this programme.

The meeting ended at 19.40