

Burgess Hill Town Council

MINUTES of the proceedings of the
BURGESS HILL ANNUAL TOWN MEETING
held on **WEDNESDAY 22 MAY 2024** at 19.00 hours
at Burgess Hill Academy, Station Road, Burgess Hill.

Those present included the Town Mayor Janice Henwood, Town Councillors and approximately 60 members of the public.

1. **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Town Mayor Janice Henwood greeted the attendees of the meeting and asked all Councillors present to introduce themselves and the wards that they represented.

2. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for the absence were received from:

Inspector David Derrick
James Baldwin – Chair of Mid Sussex Voluntary Action
Katy Bourne – Police Commissioner
Katie Rabone – CEO of Mid Sussex Voluntary Action
Councillor Stuart Condie
Councillor Bob Foster
Jo Homan – Burgess Hill Creative Community

3. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 22 May 2023 were **AGREED**.

4. **STATEMENT FROM INSPECTOR DAVID DERRICK, SUSSEX POLICE**

Town Mayor Janice Henwood read the following statement from Inspector David Derrick of Sussex Police.

“Sussex Police have received several criminal complaints which they are investigating. These complaints consist of threats to cause harm to

a person and others racist in their nature. If proven in a Court the person charged with committing those acts could face a custodial sentence.

The letters are in control of Police Investigators and currently being tested for forensic experts to supply a finger print or any other forensic evidence to identify the Offender.

While these letters are sent to elected officials, our response is based on “preventing and detecting crime”. Members of the public are not free to threaten any person regardless of any agenda they have. This is a crime and we will do what we can do within the law to ensure offenders are brought to justice and everyone in Sussex feels safe.”

5. HIGHLIGHTS OF THE BURGESS HILL COMMUNITY

Burgess Hill Youth – Jackie Cooper, Chairperson

Jackie explained the history of Burgess Hill Youth, starting in 1959 as Burgess Hill Boys Club. The club were celebrating their 65th anniversary in 2024. The club ran two sessions for young people on Mondays and Wednesdays with a variety of activities, an outside sporting facility and coaches provided by Brighton and Hove Football Club.

Working with the Town Council, the club ran sessions for Young Carers, in the school holidays. These events were run on-site with trips to the local Westall House. The children would also visit Westall House, which was a good example of intergenerational working. The club were also involved in the Town Council led Family Fun Mornings and Christmas Hamper Project among others.

As part of the Lions Young Leaders in Service, the club had a group of young leaders that would work at events and at the club itself. The club were fortunate to have their own building, and children attending were asked to pay a nominal fee of 25p.

Mid Sussex Older People’s Council – Dianne Misler

The new Vice-Chair of MSOPC, Dianne explained that the organisation was a group of older people putting on events to cater for older people. All activities were free and for over 60s, or those who were retired. The group worked in Burgess Hill and across Mid Sussex, running a range of events which included a lunch and talks from groups and organisations which may help the older people in the community.

During the pandemic, the group delivered hampers to their members, and were sometimes the only people that their members saw during lockdown. The club had a positive impact on those in need including carers and those struggling with money.

Burgess Hill Creative Community – Jo Homan, Chairperson

Councillor Janice Henwood read a statement on behalf of Jo Homan.

***“The Creative Community was formed in August 2023, after the BH-Shed left the premises. The Kiln is a unique asset to Burgess Hill, providing a safe, relaxed, friendly environment where members can come together and enjoy creative activities with Art Groups, Pottery, Sewing, Weaving, Craft Club and more. Totally run by Volunteers, our Creative Community has formed a good membership base, and we would love to be able to continue grow, to continue providing an inclusive creative space which gives members the opportunity to connect and socialise, improving their wellbeing and sharing their skills in an affordable friendly way in an arts and crafts environment.*”**

The Kiln also acts as a platform for other Charity/Organisations that help in our community, The BH Repair Cafe, Summerhaven Group and the Burgess Hill Community Crafters’ Market. We also host Childrens Crafting activities and get involved in local town events working alongside the BH Town Council. The Kiln is a great space, and we would like to make use of it as much as possible. This is why it is important to us to be at the heart of BH’s potential to become a creative hub for mid Sussex. Our location and visibility within the town centre are key to make the creative arts accessible to as wide a range of people as possible, continuing the creative history of the town (craft pottery etc since Roman times)

If anyone has any enquiries, please feel free to contact us through our website at bhcreativecommunity.co.uk, or pop in and see us.”

Escape Youth Club – Stuart Harvey

The Escape Youth Club was formed in 2018, following a young person in Burgess Hill taking their own life. This moved club chairman, Karen Taylor, to form the youth club in Park Centre. The group met on Friday nights, and within the first few months had around 60 children in attendance. Following some location changes, the youth club settled at Burgess Hill Academy, with the goal of moving back into Park Centre. The club was a safe space for children, and those interested in volunteering were encouraged to get in touch with the club.

Park Centre CIO – Yann Davies

A local businessman, Yann had been involved with Park Centre just before lockdown. He explained the concern regarding the mental health of young people in Burgess Hill, stating that Park Centre – an 1872 building donated to the town by benefactor Emily Temple – was very important to the town. Whilst it would be the home for Escape Youth Club, it would become a community hub once it was up and running.

As one of twelve, diverse trustees, he explained that Park Centre was still a

work in progress and encouraged the community to get involved. Updates would be available on their social media channels, or via their website parkcentre.org.uk.

6. ADVANCE QUESTIONS

Ahead of the meeting, residents were provided the opportunity to ask questions in advance of the meeting. This was promoted on the Town Council noticeboards, in the Help Point and on social media. The questions were as follows:

Q. Housing plans – is any of the money being given to the upkeep of the roads, to the town centre development and towards potholes?

A. The Developers and the Mid Sussex District Council agree financial infrastructure contributions known as Section 106 towards items such as roads, schools, health, public realm, culture and education.

Q. Plans for the regeneration of the town centre. Local amenities for young people.

A. The town centre is on private land controlled by a business. MSDC are in discussion with New River. Regarding the amenities for young people, Burgess Hill is considered rich in the provision of youth clubs delivered by volunteers, two of which are represented this evening. The town also has several uniformed youth organisations all of whom participate in the annual Remembrance parade. The newly formed Youth Council collate ideas from our young people too.

Q. What are the collective goals of the Council to improve the town?

A. Please see the Visioning Report attached at Appendix 1.

Q. What allotment provision is there?

A. The Council has a statutory duty to provide allotments and we have 6 sites Leylands Road (RH15 8HS), Junction Road (RH15 0LG), Eastdale Road (RH15 0NH), Chanctonbury Road (RH15 9EU), Poveys Close (RH15 9TA) and Gatehouse Lane (BN6 9LD). The waiting lists are as follows:

New applicants – 168

Wanting to swap plots – 7

Gatehouse Lane tenants on the waiting list in case their site closes in December 2026 – 17

Wanting additional plot – 20

Q. The redevelopment of the town centre.

A. The town centre is on private land controlled by a business. MSDC are in discussion with New River. The Town Council cannot determine which businesses operate but do deliver a range of initiatives to support the local businesses such as the sandpit, free Wowzer Wednesday sessions and trails at Easter and Halloween which businesses participate in.

Q. When do the Town Council intend to make the public transport in town more accessible?

A. The Town Council is working in partnership with West Sussex County Council to upgrade the bus stop infrastructure around Burgess Hill. The improvements will see an additional 36 new real time information displays installed at bus stops, giving bus users 'live' information on when the buses are due to arrive (using Global Positioning System (GPS)). The Town Council is also taking the opportunity to upgrade some of our existing tired bus shelters and will also be installing 10 new shelters, subject to landowners' permissions. The Town Council's Bus Forum and Transport Groups and local bus companies serving Burgess Hill reviewed the proposal and suggested locations, plus a public consultation was held by West Sussex County Council. The works are already underway and should be completed by late Summer/early Autumn. The funding for these bus stop infrastructure improvements, costing approximately £300,000 has come from the wider Local Growth Fund, Burgess Hill Place & Connectivity Programme. There is also an additional £10k from developer contributions allocated to bus shelters. We have received an update from Network Rail regarding Wivelsfield station. They have entered their next 5-year 'Control Period' from 2024 -2029 and are awaiting funding approval from Department of Transport. Designs for Wivelsfield are completed and will be circulated when funding is available.

Q. The town centre needs to developed as priority the disused LIDL and multi-story is adding to ASB. Youth centres clubs are key to future of town and need the correct funding and share and use the facilities the town already has e.g., the Triangle.

A. The town centre is on private land controlled by a business. MSDC are in discussion with New River. Youth clubs do have access to grant funding from local councils. The Town Council work with the Triangle to deliver free sporting sessions and the Triangle has been identified by Youth Council as a highlight of the town.

Q. Can you advise costs to BHTC? Does BHTC make a profit on the allotment portfolio? If not, why? Surely should be cost neutral at the very least. Is priority given to flat residents? How many plots are allowed per household?

A. Income from rental for 2023/24 was £8170, and the expenditure was £5,009. The expenditure figures exclude the Town Council's own labour. The Town Council has a statutory duty to provide allotments and the rental needs to be affordable. We compare our rental prices with other local councils to make sure we are comparable. Allotment plots are allocated in date order from when applications are received, no priority is given to flat residents this would be discriminatory. Only 1 plot is allowed per household although this is under constant review depending on waiting list numbers.

Q. What is the mowing schedule of the smaller parks in Burgess Hill as the ones in the area are overgrown?

A. MSDC are responsible for grass cutting in their play areas. There has been an issue between MSDC and their new contractor which has now been resolved and we have been advised the play parks will be cut over the next

few weeks. Glendale are the new contractors. Any concerns regarding grass cutting may be reported to the Help Point who will liaise with the correct authority.

Q. Progress on upgrading roads?

A. Cllr Condie provided information on the following:

Proposals to increase capital and or revenue by £5m were rejected. In the meantime, arterial roads in Burgess Hill continue to degrade and plans to improve drainage are taking time to implement. Bus information screens are being rolled out across Burgess Hill and WSCC are awaiting consultation on a new Leylands Road crossing.

Q. When will the town centre be redeveloped and when will the Market Place Shopping Centre roof be repaired?

A. The town centre is on private land controlled by a business. MSDC are in discussion with New River. Market Place Shopping Centre has had recent roof issues, but this is operated by a private business and they have issued a statement that the repairs are being worked on.

7. OPEN FORUM

Councillor Janice Henwood asked the public to try and keep questions to the list of what the Town Council is responsible for.

1. The Chair of Burgess Hill in Bloom spoke requesting residents to be part of the Garden Safari on Sunday 21 July. Money raised would be going to St Peter and St James Hospice and interested residents were asked to contact the organisation via Facebook.
2. Why was it not possible to get a wheelchair-friendly taxi in the evenings? Why do town buses not run in the evenings? It makes it difficult for disabled people to travel.
Cllr Eves explained that since the pandemic there had been a 50% drop in people using taxis from the train station. Licensing at Mid Sussex District Council were being asked to consider a 12-year licence for wheelchair taxis. Cllr Henwood said that the question on buses running in the evening would be taken to the quarterly bus forum.
3. Concerns were raised over unsustainable overdevelopment in Burgess Hill not being match in infrastructure – was all Section 106 (S106) money being spent in Burgess Hill?
Cllr Eggleston explained that all funds were allocated in the area for development.
4. Were S106 monies being spent in the northern arc development (Brookleigh)?
Cllr Eggleston stated that S106 monies for Brookleigh were approximately £300million. This would include infrastructure e.g., a bus service of five buses per hour from Brookleigh to the town centre.

5. One resident suggested to councillors that each councillor create their own set ambitions for the year. Councillors would have three targets for the year that were easily measurable to allow people to see councillors doing something physical in their ward.
6. Why were the S106 monies from the northern arc development not being used for the Beehive project?
Cllr Henwood explained that S106 monies were split amongst multiple projects. Cllr Eggleston stated that this included the creation of roads, bridges etc in the development itself; as well as land transfer of parkland, Phase 1 of the Centre for Outdoor Sport and public transport provision. The S106 allocations are prescriptively written, allocation for the community buildings was not included in this.
7. Will there be further development of the bus service to allow users to better access the town? Cllr Williams stated this would be taken to the Bus Forum and residents would be informed once arrangements were in place.
8. Why was the new development to get a more regular bus service than the rest of the town? The number of residents using these services would vary hugely. Cllr Henwood explained that this would be discussed at the Bus Forum and encouraged residents to write in with questions so that definitive answers could be given.
9. What was happening with the provision of a secondary school in the Brookleigh development?
Cllr Henwood explained there was a delay on the completion of the school. Cllr Eggleston explained that two primary schools would be delivered by Homes England, and they would provide 18 million to West Sussex County Council (WSSCC) towards the cost of secondary provision. WSSCC would need to provide the remainder of the funds.
10. Where was the S106 money from previous developments e.g., SA13 spent?
Cllr Henwood explained that S106 monies from SA13 went towards medical facilities. Cllr Hicks said that planning applications from each site would have a breakdown of allocated funds.
11. Why were there less buses running from Folders Lane when Brookleigh were being given more provision?
The contribution of S106 monies differed depending on the location.
12. Could BHTC or MSDC force developers to stop work until provision of secondary schools and other infrastructure such as water was in place?
Cllr Henwood sympathised with the points raised and stated that the Town Council did write letters to authorities to raise concern.
13. What would the Town Council be doing regarding the increased parking charges in town?
Cllr Stowe suggested that the Town Council consider introducing a free parking initiative as had been done previously.

14. What was happening with the roof in Market Place Shopping Centre?
It was agreed that Cllr Williams would speak to the management and seek answers for residents.
15. What influence do towns and parishes have on planning discussion with MSDC?
Cllr Henwood explained that the Town Council had been able to discuss the District Plan with MSDC. Whether the voices of BHTC were listened to was a different point.
Cllr Stowe said he believed that there should still be a neighbourhood plan in place to be followed. It was explained that the Burgess Hill Neighbourhood Plan was 10-years old but it was advised not to review until the new District Plan had been adopted in 2025.
16. An update on the Beehive project was requested.
Cllr Eggleston explained that the Beehive project was currently paused with architecture firm, Unknown Works in the process of creating suggested plans. This would be considered and then put out for wider socialising.
17. Where were the S106 monies spent east of Burgess Hill as there was no new medical provision?
Cllr Hicks shared the concern and said that the money would have been given to the NHS and allocated from there. It would have been documented in the planning application.
18. What was the relationship of the Burgess Hill Community CIC to the Town Council, and what have the Town Council had in return from the Trading Spaces building, following investment?
It was requested that this question be submitted in writing so that Council could formulate a full response.
19. What was happening with the Woodlands Meed building?
Cllr Williams shared the concern and stated that this delay was due to a contractual issue between the contractors and WSCC.
20. Cllr Williams was asked to request restoration of benches in the Market Place Shopping Centre.
21. Clarification was sought for how decisions on S106 monies were made.
Cllr Hicks stated that the policy regarding allocation was listed on the MSDC website.
22. Could dog bins and regular bins around town be made bigger?
Cllr Henwood agreed the Town Council would take this on board.
23. What was the stand of BHTC on the increase of parking charges?
Cllr Henwood explained that the parking charges were income for MSDC towards their responsibilities. Burgess Hill got the lowest increase.
Cllr Williams agreed that no charges would be ideal, but that it was necessary

to be pragmatic and that other incentives could be considered. BHTC were beholden to MSDCs decision.

Cllr Stowe stated that he did not agree with the increases.

24. A resident asked what their council tax went towards, if other income was needed such as the parking charges. It was explained that the allocation of council tax is listed on the bill provided.
25. A resident asked if other sports clubs would be able to present to the Council, following a presentation by Burgess Hill Town FC.
Cllr Henwood said all clubs were welcome to present plans to the Council and encouraged groups to apply for grants from the Town Council.
26. What figures are provided to show that charging for car parks on Sundays and evenings will bring money in?
Cllr Eggleston explained that £280,000 per year was estimated across both Sundays and weekends. Council tax charged by MSDC did not meet expenditure as it was a capped figure; this meant that income must be sought elsewhere. There was a need to shift resource to enforcement of illegal parking, requiring more income.
27. What would happen if there was not extra money generated from increased car parking charges?
Cllr Eggleston explained that there was no evidence of decrease in car parking. A consultant firm had been used to make the decision and the decision was data-driven with an evidence-based approach.
28. Cllr Brenda Williams addressed the audience stating she appreciated the frustration of residents. She explained that councillors were working behind the scenes on casework that whilst not noticeable to the general public was making a big difference to individual residents.

Meeting terminated at 21:30pm.