

NOTES of the **STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT KEY AREA GROUP MEETING** held in the Council Chamber on **13 August 2024 at 19.00hours.**

Present: Robert Eggleston Chairman
David Eggleton Vice Chairman
Cedric de Souza
John Orchard
Janice Henwood
Bob Foster
Andy Stowe

Also Present: Anne Eves
Tofojjul Hussain
Brenda Williams
Peter Williams
Dianne Black
Simon Hicks

**denotes non attendance*

26. [PARK CENTRE PRESENTATION](#)

The Chairman welcomed Chris Cook and Cally Bryson from the Park Centre.

The Park Centre is awaiting a response from the charity commission on the transfer of the building which is still held by the original charity. A case officer has been appointed.

The CIO has been working through various structural issues.

Cally Bryson presented the attached plans for the centre. In concept there would be three entrances to allow for the centre to be zoned into three areas. There would be a youth drop in area with a small area for one-to-one mental health counselling. There would be a central hub incorporating a café which would also provide life skills training. There would be space for a local art gallery and possibly a museum. A sensory room for children with special needs would be developed. Woodlands Meed and Hambrooks would be taken on board with this part of the project. A hidden garden would provide a calming space. The Temple room would be for youth and could be hired out.

The current lift is to be moved as it opens into the hall at present which is not ideal. There would be a changing places toilet as well as toilets and accessible toilets spread around the building to support the three zones.

A mezzanine area is planned outside the main hall. With a second extension. The art room would remain as it is. The renovations and redevelopment can be done in phases.

Repairs are needed to the roof and solar panels are an aspiration. It would be a bio diverse roof. The Temple room would be fitted with bifold doors. The kitchen would be redone at some stage.

Some remedial works need to be carried out immediately and would form part of phase 1. A tender process will be followed and advice on VAT would be obtained as this amount is considerable. Planning permission will be needed. It is hoped that actual work would begin in March 2025 with phase 1 works taking up to 18 months. Contact will be made with MSDC regarding acquiring section 106 funds. In addition, the County Council will be approached for assistance. An exercise would be embarked upon to identify potential funders. It will be quite a few months before it is known what funds are available. Funding is available from Sussex Community Council to appoint someone to plan the development work. There is a lot more detail to be worked through. User fees are still to be determined. The centre will be sharing the plans with the public.

The building is ready to be used but it needs some remedial works first. It also needs to be zoned so that more than one group can use it at any one time. The costs for insurance and utilities still have to be determined

Ultimately the centre will need to sustain itself and it will take 2 to 3 years to be fully functional. At this stage the pressing needs are for the charity commission to respond and planning permission to be granted. Various organisations are interested in using the building.

The chairman thanked Mr Cook and Ms Bryson for their informative presentation. He hoped that they would be willing to return once more work had been done on the business plan.

The CIO is made up of 12 members with Clarion and the town council being allowed to nominate some members. Members serve for 3 years.

The transformation is ambitious but exciting.

27. [OPEN FORUM](#)

9 members of public attended

A question was asked about whether the trees in the Martlets would be removed. They do not have TPOs and planning permission has been granted

which allows for their removal. It is too early to know whether they would be removed.

A member of the public asked whether all meetings could be live streamed. A reply will be provided at a later date.

28. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

All present

29. **SUBSTITUTES**

Nil

30. **ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN**

Cllr David Eggleton was proposed and seconded. All agreed

RESOLVED:

That Cllr David Eggleton be appointed as Vice Chairman of the Strategic Development Key Area Group.

31. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr de Souza is a trustee of the Park Centre CIO and The Beehive.

32. **NOTES OF THE STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT KAG MEETING**

The Notes of the meeting of the Strategic Development Key Area Group held on 11 January, having been previously circulated, were **AGREED** and were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

33. **NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN REVIEW**

Cllr Stowe felt that the item could not be considered as an appendix referred to in the report had not been circulated and the report was therefore deficient. The item was deferred to a later meeting.

34. **BURIAL GROUND PHASE 2 DEVELOPMENT - STATUS REPORT**

Cllr Stowe was not supportive of a loan being obtained for the burial ground. He felt that there were sufficient funds in reserves to cover this project. It was pointed out that there were three projects which would need funding and in a sense by funding this project from reserves we would be taking funds from other projects where loan funding could not be guaranteed. There is £47,000 set aside for the burial ground. The Park Centre and St John's Pavilion would need £400,000 each. Other projects might be identified in the future as well.

The current cost of borrowing is 5.22%. This might come down. It was pointed out that our reserves are earning 5% in interest which would offset much of

the loan repayment.

Phase 1 of the burial ground had been covered by a loan. It is a way of spreading out the cost of the development while income is awaited from the sale of burial sites. Current income is £36,000pa which more than covers the expected expenditure of £33,000 including maintenance and loan costs. A loan for the burial ground would be easier to obtain as this is a statutory function of councils. The other projects would require consultation which would take longer and could not be guaranteed.

RECOMMENDATION

That an application for up to £300,000 be made to the Public Works Loan Board to cover the costs of developing phase 2 of the burial ground.

35. **COMMUNITY BUILDING PROJECTS**

Park Centre:

Covered above

St Johns Pavilion

The MSDC Drainage team had reviewed the planning application and raised an objection based on the guidance they have from the Environment Agency and under the NPPF for extensions in FRZ 3b. More modelling work is needed to show that the risk is mitigated or not. Members could not understand why a further study was needed. MSDC had installed a swale to mitigate flooding. The reality is that an objection has been raised which will need to be resolved based on evidence.

A member of the public felt that this project should be reconsidered. In response it was stressed that the project is a community project and not a Cricket Club (CC) project. The CC uses the facility for up to 80 days per annum. The facility is under-utilised at present and redeveloping it would add more rooms for other groups to use. This project is a council policy and if members wanted to withdraw it they would need to bring a motion to council to reverse the policy.

Cllr Stowe felt that the pavilion and the Park Centre are in competition with one another. He questioned why the original estimate of circa £1million had not changed given rising prices. The Council would assist with the provision of a nursery with no return. It was pointed out that Park Centre would not provide a return either and that the two buildings would not be in competition. The pavilion is currently subsidised by MSDC and increasing usage would make the building viable. Cllr Stowe felt that it should be discussed at the visioning day in October along with other projects and priorities. He asked what funds could be raised from operational savings. Cllr De Souza asked about the time

line for these projects. Needs to be planned holistically. Regular consultations with the public are needed to determine priorities and needs. There is no business plan for the next 3 to 5 years. It was suggested that the Finance Committee should consider this, however it was pointed out by Cllr Peter Williams that a Community Building Development Group had been formed to do just this and would be convened in due course.

Cllr Brenda Williams pointed out that the CC has 200 boy members and 75 girls. Along with adults it caters for over 400 people in the community. It is not in conflict with the Park Centre as they have different objectives.

The Pavilion is currently running at a loss. The redevelopment would make it usable throughout the year and not just the summer. The proposed plan is to ensure that it covers all its costs.

The question was raised as to what the Council response would be if similar facilities such as the rugby club or Football club asked for funding. It was stressed that the money would not be going to the CC but to a community facility. The CC would be a hirer. Similarly the Council is not giving money to the Escape Youth club. The Council would give money to the Park Centre and the Escape Youth Club would be a hirer. Any organisation approaching the council would have to show how it would benefit the greater community. Finances at the time would determine whether the council could fund such a proposal. So far no request has come forward.

The St Johns Masterplan is about upgrading the park and the pavilion A business plan is currently being developed which factors in the type of development under discussion.

The Beehive

The Chairman stated that the plans currently being developed and paid for are in terms of Council resolution number 412. They would be discussed further at the Visioning Day.

FOR NOTING

36. **FUNDING**

The principal of taking out a £300,000 loan had been discussed already. The chairman supported the mix and match approach and felt that it was unnecessary to put a stake in the ground at this stage on the proportions.

Cllr Henwood felt that other projects such as the changing places toilet in Cyprus Road carpark should be considered at the visioning day.

The chairman pointed out that the three projects form part of council policy and cannot be amended at the visioning day. Only council can amend the projects agreed on by way of a motion by members. This item is only about the funding of agreed projects not about amending them. It was once again

suggested that the Community Building Development group look at the three projects before the visioning day particularly with regard to timelines.

RECOMMENDED

1. To authorise the Responsible Finance Officer to apply for a PWLB loan towards the full cost of the burial ground phase 2 project, and
2. The view of the Members as to how they would like to fund the balance of projects and any other projects be considered in regard to the use of internal resources and obtaining PWLB loans at the visioning day in Oct

The Recommendation was agreed.

37. **CONFIDENTIAL SECTION**

RESOLVED

To exclude the Press and Public from the meeting during consideration of the following items in accordance with Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the said Act.

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The meeting ended at 20.50