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29th October 2024

To: **MEMBERS OF THE STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT KEY AREA GROUP, BURGESS HILL TOWN COUNCIL**

A **MEETING** of the **STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT KEY AREA GROUP** will be held in the Council Chamber on **4th November 2024** at **19.00 hours**, when your attendance is required.

Julie Holden
Chief Executive Officer

Filming, recording of Council meetings and use of social media:

During this meeting members of the public may film or record the Committee and officers from the public area only providing it does not disrupt the meeting. The Confidential section of the meeting may not be filmed or recorded.

If a member of the public objects to being recorded, the person(s) filming must stop doing so until that member of the public has finished speaking.

The use of social media is permitted but members of the public are requested to switch their mobile devices to silent for the duration of the meeting.

A G E N D A

1. OPEN FORUM

As per Standing Order 2.4 each member of the public is permitted to speak once only in respect of business relevant to the agenda (during the Open Forum). They can also speak during the meeting (on topics relating to the published agenda). Speakers may speak for a maximum of three minutes, at the discretion of the Chairman or nominee (including the Chair of any other meeting of the Council). Speakers are reminded that they may ask a question, give

evidence or representation but their participation will not give rise to debate.

If it appears that the number of speakers is likely to unreasonably delay the disposal of business items on the agenda the Chairman may direct that a member of the public submits a question or comment in writing which shall be answered in due course.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

3. SUBSTITUTES

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In respect of any matter on the agenda.

5. CHAIRMANS ANNOUNCEMENTS

Any items on which the Chair wishes to update, which are not on the agenda, for noting.

6. NOTES OF THE STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT MEETING

To approve and sign the notes of the meeting held on 13 August 2024

7. MARKET WORKING GROUP

Purpose of Report; To consider the recommendations from the Market Working Group of 9th August as previously circulated to Council on 23rd September 2024.

1. This KAG is the reporting line for the Market Working Group and as such need to consider the recommendations from the Working Group. The recommendations were reported to the Council on 23rd September where they were noted, however this KAG need to support the recommendations as a working group cannot make decisions, therefore this is referred back for appropriate discussion and resolution. A precis of the report from the working group is below:
2. The monthly Saturday market was launched in September 2020 attracting at its peak around 15-20 stallholders and was well supported by shoppers, existing shops and businesses. However during the pandemic and government restrictions the number of market traders attending each market fluctuated between 7 and 21.
3. The market had initially been run in house by the Head of Projects, and then in September 2021 the Town Council agreed to appoint an external market operator to see the market grow and make Burgess Hill a destination.

4. At a meeting of the Market Working Group in 2022, it was reported that the market operator had decided to give the Town Council notice to withdraw after the September market. Despite the operator's best efforts to find new traders to join the monthly market the number of traders had been dwindling each market day. The market operator felt the enthusiasm for regular markets had changed. Burgess Hill Town Market had not been viable for the operator and in the current climate they felt it was unlikely to become so in the foreseeable future.
5. In April 2022 the Town Council applied for and was granted planning permission for a change of use to hold a market on any day of the week on Church Road, Burgess Hill for a maximum of 30 stalls. This enabled traders to trade on days when they weren't already committed to other markets.
6. In 2023, the Town Council installed an external electricity supply to enable food/drink traders a hook-up for a nominal fee. A couple of market traders took advantage of this facility, however these traders reported they felt cut off from the main market area and missed out on footfall. The regular market traders were not keen to move down Church Walk from their normal pitch as customers knew where they were. It would not have been an issue if the number of traders had increased to fill up Church Walk. The Head of Projects explored the possibility of installing free standing power supply units, similar to the set up at Horsham Market, at several points along Church Walk to make it more attractive to prospective traders but was unable to progress this. An alternative power supply was available at the Bandstand subject to The Martlets Shopping Centre manager's permission, however traders still felt it was too far away from the other traders.
7. The Burgess Hill Market has remained challenging with regards to attracting and retaining new traders. Adverts to find traders were posted locally, regionally, digitally and nationally and officers visited other local markets to try and entice traders to Burgess Hill. Our loyal traders have also promoted the Market to their fellow traders and some have come but not stayed due to low footfall.
8. Overall, the market was initially attractive to traders, with free pitches, electricity on site, free advertising for stallholders and the potential for expansion, however many of the recent traders anticipating an immediate captive audience which is not there
9. The on-going economic crisis and the change in people's shopping habits has also had a negative impact on the market's viability and can be seen at other well-established markets within Sussex. The delay in the redevelopment of the town centre continued to negatively affect casual footfall.
10. To support the Burgess Hill Community Crafters who hold quarterly Saturday markets at The Kiln, the Town Council agreed to hold a Saturday market in Church Walk on the same

day to make the day a bigger attraction and bring in additional footfall. The Festive Market in December 2023 and the Summer Market in June 2024 were successful and attracted additional footfall into the town centre.

11. The working group explored various options and noted that following the former project officer having been successful with an internal promotion, this post would not be filled.
12. Since the working group met, the Council have now filled the post of the Head of Projects, which has been filled like for like, on the assumption that the recommendation to pause the markets will be approved. There is now no resource allocation available for a regular weekly market, however as a project such as the winter market, the new Head of Projects will be available to co-ordinate special events, potentially with support from other teams in the Council.
13. The Working Group considered other ways to encourage footfall in to the town centre including car boot sales, more town centre events etc.
14. The Working Group agreed the following courses of action which are now to be considered by the KAG.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- To put the weekly Burgess Hill Market on hold for at least 2 years, to see what happens with the joint venture between Mid Sussex District Council and New River Retail.
- The Town Council to grow the town centre events, subject to staff resources, using additional funds from the Bridge the Gap budget, and to ask the Community Team to research what they could deliver on top of the existing plans for the 'It's Christmas Lights Switch On event with an additional £5k budget.
- The Town Council to continue to support the Burgess Hill Community Crafters and their quarterly markets.

Risks:

Financial implications: As the pitches were free for the weekly market there is no loss of income in pausing the markets

Environmental implications: due to the small number of traders there are no significant implications arising from shoppers driving elsewhere.

Community Safety Implications: there are none

8. VISIONING DAY

Purpose of the Report: To note the outcomes from the recent Visioning Day and agree the steps to bring forward the strategic projects there from.

1. The Council held a visioning day with Councillors and senior staff on 10th October. A Business Plan will be forthcoming to set out the steps the Council wish to consider for the remainder of this administration (to 2027). Following that, individual plans and reports will be submitted to the appropriate KAG for consideration of the identified projects and services.
2. In 2023, the following items were pre-identified as priorities for the Council;
 - Burial Ground Extension
 - Depot (shortly to be completed)
 - Review the Neighbourhood Plan
 - Beehive

The Burial Ground Extension is ongoing, the Depot is shortly to be completed, the Neighbourhood Plan is to be considered for review and delivery of the Beehive remains an aim with a new design substantially prepared.
3. Continued support was stated for:
 - The redevelopment at The Park Centre
 - The aspirations for St Johns pavilion
 - The community groups who will be displaced following the regeneration of the Town Centre.
4. New priorities to explore further, were identified and split in to short term (business case to be brought forward within the next 12 months) and long term (business case to be brought forward after 12 months) and were identified as:

Short Term	Long Term
Improvement of the Stone Garden	Temporary stage for events
Banking Hub	Changing Places Toilet
Christmas Lights	Community Warden / potential funding of dedicated PC's/ PCSOs
More WSCC public realm work	Brookleigh Changes (eg. community buildings)
Maps for interest routes (virgin media boxes, walks cycle paths etc)	Carbon neutral council
Public Realm Enhancements. / Church walk planters and hanging baskets	E Bike hire
	West Park Reserve

5. The Visioning day supported the introduction of a strap line "For A Better Burgess Hill" to be included in the logo of the Town Council. To promote the Town Councils aspiration to rebuild the pride in the town. The Council will be looking at how we can smarten the town up and heighten the community spirit alongside the town centre redevelopment and other factors that are beyond our control.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To note that a Business Plan for the Council will be forthcoming to lay out projects and aspirations to the end of this administration.
2. To agree to approach Jackson Coles for an estimate to provide the build costings for the revised plan of the Beehive.
3. To agree that the short-term priorities as identified at the visioning day (shown in the report at paragraph 4), will be worked in to business cases for review at the appropriate KAG
4. To alert the Finance KAG that appropriate budgetary allocation should be considered for 2025/26 projects.
5. To agree the inclusion of "For A Better Burgess Hill" in to the Council logo and other profiles.

Risks:

Financial implications: There will be significant implications which will be costed with the business cases, the approval of the priorities does not give rise to any additional costs at this stage.

Environmental implications: The short-term priorities have significant positive environment implications in better management, more plants in the public space and encouraging local people to stay local reduces car journeys.

Community Safety Implications: there are none

9. PUBLIC REALM ENHANCEMENTS

Purpose of report: To consider enhancements to the public realm and request the Finance KAG make appropriate allocation in the budget for 2025/26.

1. The Visioning Day on 10th October identified strong support for more enhancements in the public realm. This fell in to two categories. The first being visual enhancements such as more planters and hanging baskets in the main shopping area to lift the town and make it look welcoming to visitors and shoppers.
2. A piece of work to consider increasing hanging baskets throughout all of Church Road up to the station and then further afield was undertaken in 2016. At that time the cost was prohibitive, but could be achieved as a gradual increase or a smaller area encompassed.
3. Included in this first category could be exploration as to improving the look of the Stone Garden on Church Walk. The feature belongs to Mid Sussex District Council and is not therefore in the gift of the Town Council to remove or remodel, however we do look after the flower beds incorporated in to the feature and some exploration in to how more plants may be able to be incorporated to soften the look and make it a more attractive area could be considered.
4. The second category being exploration as to whether the Town Council would be able to take back some of the tasks previously

undertaken by the Council under contract to the West Sussex County Council Highways Team. This work included; removal of epicormic growth on trees, strimming of verges, twitten and vegetation monitoring and management, weed management, cleaning highway signage, repainting of lamp posts, bollards and other street furniture owned by WSCC. It also included the temporary fill of potholes and fixing small kerb defects.

5. When this work was carried out by Burgess Hill Town Council, West Sussex CC paid BHTC as an agent. Due to financial pressures at the County Council, these contracts were reviewed and the contracts subsumed in to the overall County contracts and there was no potential for BHTC to be paid to carry out this work. Due to financial pressures the County also advised that it would only be carrying out works that were required for safety of the highways, therefore the ability to keep the town centre and entry points to the town smart and cared for, lessened. Since the removal of the contract there have been many comments and complaints as to the height of weeds and vegetation generally, the lack of mowing of public spaces, leaves blocking drains and a generally unkempt appearance of the town. It must be stressed that this is not just Burgess Hill, but County and indeed Country wide where Highway Authorities have been forced to reduce the “extras” due to financial constraints.
6. The Town Council is proposing that we take on some of the previously carried out tasks, at our own cost in order to show that Burgess Hill cares about what it looks like across the town.
7. There will likely be concerns as to “double taxation”, if the Town Council choose to be bold and take back the care of the Highways work, however this is not the case. Double Taxation is where you pay for something twice, this is not being suggested. The County Council will continue to be responsible for Burgess Hill, however where they are not able to provide the standard of response or level of service that we want in the town we would be paying for additional works to be carried out. Burgess Hill residents would be paying for an enhanced service, for the public areas that matter to them and which they have been asking for. Burgess Hill would be leading the way in determining the standards of our public realm.
8. It is possible that this enhanced work could be provided to other surrounding parishes (in the way we used to have a cluster of councils that we supported), where they would pay for the work to be carried out in their parish and thus provide an income to Burgess Hill Town Council.
9. A full business case will need to be drawn up for this proposal looking at the scope of the work, resource implications and overall

budgetary implications. At this stage the Officers are seeking approval from the KAG to enter in to negotiations with West Sussex County Council to act as an agent for them in a range of highways works and also to start planning enhancements to the public realm in and around the town centre. It should be noted that any development of this nature will require approval from West Sussex County Council.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To approve the principle of additional feature planters and hanging baskets in the town centre and more planting in the stone garden, and to recommend to Finance KAG to allocate £10,000 in the 2025/26 budget towards this.
2. To authorise Officers to explore with WSCC the possibility of taking on some of the lapsed Highways tasks and bring back a business case for consideration of inclusion in the 2025/26 budget.

Risks:

Financial implications: There will be significant costs depending on what is wanted, this will need to be budgeted.

Environmental implications: This will improve the environment as drains and ditches are kept free from leaves to avoid flooding, vegetation is managed etc.

Community Safety Implications: A welcoming and pleasant environment will hopefully boost pride in place, encourage more use by residents of the public realm and have an impact to reduce vandalism and ASB.