

BHTC REQUEST FOR INTERVENTION

TITLE: Pantry – Proposal for support

DATE: November 2024

Reason (please place an x in the corresponding box):

Financial:

Economic:

Social:

Health & Safety:

Legal:

Other

(Please
state):

Please complete the following information regarding the project:

Background:

The Pantry has proved itself to be a valuable and much-needed support service for our community in Burgess Hill, offering a range of 'supermarket-style' products at a reduced price.

Residents qualify for assistance as members of The Pantry, paying a small subscription each week for a basket of groceries worth around £20.00. A range of free products are also available. Each member self-refers and receives help in times of difficulty, enabling them to have a dignified return to normal life.

The services The Pantry offer also include a drop-in cafe, learning classes and cookery lessons, enabling those in need to make progress towards self-sufficiency.

Purpose/ Justification:

Burgess Hill Town Council has supported The Pantry since its inception, enabling it to reach out to those in the town and immediate surroundings. It has become an important pillar of our community and its value cannot be underestimated. The services it offers are delivered, in the main, by a team of dedicated volunteers and trustees. As numbers of those seeking help grows so do the demands placed upon the existing premises. The Pantry has plans to expand and offer yet more services.

Benefits:

The Pantry is enabling those facing hard times to cope with their difficulties and ensure that mouths are fed. It is part of a national charity organisation, delivering hope to many thousands throughout the country.

Food donated by supporting supermarkets and food outlets has saved over 25,000 kg of food from going into landfill.

Payback/ Value for Money:

Value for money is demonstrated by the number of adults and children currently being helped and a growing waiting list for their services.

Current Situation:

The Pantry currently operate from 25 -29 Martlets, Burgess Hill; these premises are due for demolition and redevelopment in the 'near future' and that is creating much uncertainty, preventing expansion of the services to be provided.

It is now time for The Pantry to enter more certain times and to this effect they are seeking to acquire a lease on a retail unit at 83 Church Walk, adjacent to the Foodbank and in a more prominent trading position.

The landlord is offering a 3-year lease on the premises for £16,000, this price to include rent, service charge and VAT. It will cost in the region of £6,000 + VAT to fit-out the unit, to provide a shopping area, storage and delivery bay, an office and small meeting space.

Other Options:

The Board of Trustees have looked at other opportunities around the town and have concluded that this retail unit offers the best immediate solution for their expansion plans.

It is considered that the landlord has made a very generous offer, one that should not be turned down.

Desired Outcome:

The Pantry is seeking help from the Town Council to cover the initial set-up and rental costs over a period of 3 years.

Conclusion and Recommendation:

This is a very worthwhile project that should be supported. Council is recommended to approve an annual payment to The Pantry of £15,000 for a period of three years, commencing January 2025*. This amount is made up annually of £13,333 net cost of rent etc and £1,667 towards initial set-up costs.

*This date may vary slightly, dependant on date of legal completion.

This Recommendation is proposed by Councillor Peter Williams.

6th November 2024.

Burgess Hill Pantry, What We Do and Why We Do It

We are all aware of the work and role of foodbanks, the emergency support they give to those in desperate need is vital to those struggling with food poverty. The Pantry model whilst less well known plays an essential role in addressing issues of food insecurity and also helping those in need back to a normal way of shopping and eating, working in partnership with food banks and other community groups and organisations. Burgess Hill Pantry is part of a national network, Your Local Pantry, offering as close to a normal shopping experience as possible in partnership with our members.

We currently support 270 members representing nearly 800 adults and children in Mid Sussex with a constantly growing waiting list for our service.

We average 120 member visits per week

We have saved over 25,000kg of food from going to landfill

The Food Ladder Model (Dr M Blake, University of Sheffield) clearly illustrates the necessity for a community food system. The gap between the crisis of food poverty and normality is too large for the vast majority to breach. The move away from emergency to normal provision requires smaller steps or rungs on the ladder. Ensuring that those in need are supported with the correct resources and environment to thrive are essential during this process.

The Pantry offers that next rung up the ladder for those struggling to feed themselves and their families, food on a long term, sustainable basis. Users of the service self refer and are able to shop weekly paying a small amount towards the costs of the Pantry. They are able to choose from a wide selection of items, fresh fruit and vegetables, chilled items such as cheese, yoghurts and meat and of course tins and packets, cereals etc. We work hard to offer alternatives to ultra processed foods and also provide basic household essentials such as laundry detergent, washing up liquid, nappies, shampoo and shower gel. By working with local retailers we are able to redistribute surplus food that would otherwise go to landfill, reducing food waste in the process of helping those in need. As this service is offered to those upstream of crisis we are in many cases a preventative service and those using us are able to access other wraparound support within the Pantry. From cookery sessions, homelessness prevention sessions to functional maths and literacy support, we aim to help our users up the ladder and work to increase our offering to meet the needs of our membership. Our work in Burgess Hill has contributed to a reduction in demand for emergency support at Burgess Hill Food Bank.

Supporting Data

The overall price of food and non-alcoholic beverages rose around 25% between January 2022 and January 2024. (Office of National Statistics - Cost of living insights - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)).

4 in 10 adults (41%) who pay energy bills said it was very or somewhat difficult to afford them (Office of National Statistics - Cost of living insights - Office for National

Statistics (ons.gov.uk)).

Food banks in the Trussell Trust community saw the highest ever levels of need as more people found their incomes did not cover the cost of essentials like heating and food. Between April 2023 and March 2024, the number of people that used a food bank for the first time was 655,000. Trussell's UK-wide community distributed more than 3.1 million emergency food parcels to people facing hardship, an increase of 94% over the past five years. (The Trussell Trust)

Overall, nearly two thirds (65%) of the support provided by food banks in the previous year was for families with children. Families with three or more children are especially likely to face severe hardship, with 30% of parcels provided by food banks in the last year being distributed to families with three or more children. (The Trussell Trust – EYS UK Factsheet 2023-24)

The most deprived fifth of the population would need to spend 50% of their disposable income on food to meet the cost of the Government recommended healthy diet. This compares to just 11% for the least deprived fifth. (The Food Foundation, 2023b).

The University of Oxford recently published an update to their study on the costs of achieving a healthy diet based on the government Eat Well Guide. To meet a baseline diet in 2023 would cost £190.96 per month per person, to meet the healthy diet requirements £209.44 per person per month. With food cost inflation of an average of 18% in recent years this will have increased in 2024.

Poor diet is now the biggest risk factor for death and disability globally, with four out of the five top risk factors for death and disability in the UK now diet related. (The Food Foundation, Afshin et al, 2019). Restricting an income restricts diet, ultra processed foods replace natural ingredients with concomitant effects on health and wellbeing.

Indirect and direct healthcare spending and impacts on the labour market of Obesity and poor diet cost the UK £74 billion every year and reduce GDP by 3.4% - equivalent to £409 lower per capita GDP (The Food Foundation, 2023b) Since 1980, it is estimated that the prevalence of obesity in England has risen from 6% of men and 9% of women (over the age of 16) to 27% of men and 29% of women in 2019 (UK Health Security Agency, 2021)

Obesity among 10-11 year olds has increased by 30% since 2006 (A Neglected Generation: reversing the decline in children's health in England: The Food Foundation, June 2024)

Type 2 diabetes among under 25s has increased by 22% in the past 5 years (A Neglected Generation: reversing the decline in children's health in England: The Food Foundation, June 2024)

The height of 5 year olds has been falling since 2013. (A Neglected Generation:

reversing the decline in children's health in England: The Food Foundation, June 2024)

Currently almost a third of children (29%) aged between 5 and 10 years of age report eating less than one portion of veg a day, with 98% of children aged 4-10 exceeding the recommended intakes for free sugars and 89% the recommendation for saturated fat (The Food Foundation, 2021)

Proposal for Support – Burgess Hill Community Cupboard CIO-T/A Burgess Hill Pantry

Through continued support of a wide range of stakeholders, Burgess Hill Pantry has grown from strength to strength from early beginnings in 2020 at the height of COVID, to serving over 250 members across 450+ visits per month in July 2024.

Throughout this time, the charity has benefited from the involvement and support of Burgess Hill Town Council, particularly with real estate; a place for the pantry to operate from. This has been a critical factor in our success. However with the impending redevelopment, the hunt is now on for a permanent home for the Pantry so we can continue to expand our service and support those in our community in need.

There will be a significant additional cost to relocation to a commercial unit, a refit cost and also a significant increase in rent and service charges. The Pantry team has reviewed all available commercial real estate within Burgess Hill with the following criteria:

- 1) A retail unit to allow us to continue to offer the choice and shopping experience the Pantry provides.
- 2) An accessible unit for members and also for delivery, stocking and distribution of our current stock with additional capacity to allow for growth.
- 3) Easily accessible town location so we remain at the heart of our community.

There is not an excess of space available within Burgess Hill town centre which is suitable. Much is already under offer, is physically impractical (e.g. would have access issues for members), or is in a poor state of repair and therefore would have significant setup costs.

We have identified a unit within The Martlets Shopping Center which we believe to be suitable:

- 1000sqft - Similar to our existing unit (which will be retained for our other activities)
- Easily Accessible, with onsite facilities (e.g. toilets), security etc.
- The cost of this unit is £16,000 inc of VAT, service charges etc.
- Adjacent to the Foodbank.
- Available on a 3 year lease.

The Ask:

For the Town Council to consider making a yearly grant to the Pantry to cover the rent, so we can focus our resources on delivering our services.