

**NOTES** of the **CUSTOMER SERVICES KEY AREA GROUP MEETING** held in the Council Chamber on **Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> January 2025** at 19.00 hours.

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**Present:** Adam White Chairman  
Diane Black  
Robert Eggleston  
Anne Eves  
Matthew Goldsmith  
Tofojjul Hussein  
Simon Hicks

**Also present:** Cllrs Andy Stowe, Brenda Williams, Peter Williams.  
Sarah Hughes Head of Operations, Alice Banister Head of  
Customer Service & Julie Holden Chief Executive Officer  
6 members of the public

\* *Denotes non-attendance*

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(19:00 hours)

### **33. OPEN FORUM**

The chairman opened the meeting and explained about the Standing Orders

RESOLVED: that Standing Order 3.4 be suspended for the duration of this meeting

Comments were made regarding two agenda items; that no additional signage was needed on the Help Desk and that the Christmas Lights costs should be met in full by the Council

### **34. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were none

### **35. SUBSTITUTES**

There were none

**36. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr Hicks declared a personal interest in item 12 and 18 as an allotment holder

**37. NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Notes of the meeting of the Customer Services Key Area Group held on 4<sup>th</sup> April 2024, having been previously circulated, were AGREED and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**38. APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR**

The Chair proposed Cllr Goldsmith as the vice chair for this civic year

**RESOLVED:** Cllr Goldsmith would be the Vice Chair

**39. HELP POINT REPORT**

The Chair thanked Alice Bannister for her comprehensive update on the work of the Help Point. A discussion followed regarding how feedback was currently captured and options to expand this. It was commented that it was good to see the use of the help point for the Town, District and County advice and that the use was increasing annually. It would be good to have further structured feedback on the time spent on qualitative enquiries in the future.

It was noted that the number of enquiries at the desk was not the only work carried out by the help point staff as emails and telephone calls are also dealt with along with project work for the shop and tourism. There was some discussion as to Saturday opening, however this was generally not felt to be necessary, the help point used to be open on a Saturday and was stopped due to lack of enquiries. It was also noted that the councillor surgery is open on a Saturday twice a month by Councillors for their surgery and there were few enquiries.

It was noted that numbers of enquiries don't represent the length of time that some enquiries can take and the depth of support that can be given to the public during longer enquiries.

It was clarified that the current use of the Help point by one bank would shortly become two as the Halifax were also taking one day a week. It was also clarified that the closure over Christmas was Council Policy having been approved in 2023, staff take a mixture of statutory leave and annual holiday entitlement.

The report was noted

#### **40. TOURISM UPDATE - Railway 200**

The KAG noted the events to mark the anniversary and agreed that the Railway 200 project was worthwhile. There were comments as to whether it would truly be a tourist attracting trail as it had limited appeal outside of Burgess Hill. It was also asked to include in the trail the possibility of getting a toot of the trail whistle if you wave at the bumpy bridge. A member of the public suggested a permanent marker could be added to the Bumpy Bridge to mark its significance.

#### **RESOLVED**

- 1- To approve the Railway 200 walking and cycle trail
- 2- To recommend to Finance KAG that the tourism budget introduce an annual allowance of £400

#### **41. TOWN GUIDE MAPS**

The Chair introduced the item and asked for views as to whether the Council should continue providing a town map. It was generally agreed that a digital map was needed and it should be available in layers such as cycle routes, low traffic routes, walks, Green Circle, points of interest etc. It was also felt a stock of physical maps was needed of the town centre as not everyone had access to the internet nor apps. The flip book app was suggested to be looked at to help build our own map.

#### **RESOLVED:**

Officers to investigate the creation of an updated digital town map to better serve the community and visitors. If budgets are to be used for the production of the map, then this will return to KAG for approval to fund.

#### **42. FRONT DESK SIGN**

The Chair introduced the item that a welcome sign be purchased to match the current colours in the Help Point. There was some discussion as to this not being needed, that people were already aware of the help point purpose. It was explained that the proposal had come forward to break up the large expanse of the desk which is a little imposing. It was suggested that the murals in town, belonging to the Town Council may help break up the frontage.

#### **RESOLVED**

Not to purchase a sign for the front desk, to consider repositioning the town murals on display in the town, to the to the front desk panels if appropriate.

#### **43. SHOP LOCAL**

The Chair introduced the report and thanks were given to the Help Point team for the work that was put in to it. It was noted that the return was really low on the entries. It was proposed that the scheme should continue, but with emphasis on local shops rather than services or one off purchases. It was noted that there were less shops in town but it was felt with better advertising by the participants and understanding as to how the scheme works it could be better supported. It was also noted that a cash prize to use in a business or shop may be better received.

**RESOLVED:.**

- 1 The Shop Local scheme should continue for Christmas 2025 and that, subject to sufficient available funding in the reserve, the Customer Service KAG, recommends the Finance KAG allocate £1000.00 from the Bridge The Gap (Economic Development) Reserve to finance monetary vouchers to be used as prizes.
- 2 Officers shall report back to this KAG with:
  - the proposed split of prize vouchers and their period of validity,
  - how they intend the scheme to operate including the period in which it will run,
  - what if any, additional publicity they feel is required.
- 2 Officers shall contact Mid Sussex District Council to see if it will be willing to support this scheme either financially or promotionally.

#### **44. CHANGES TO ALLOTMENT AGREEMENT**

The Chair advised he would take item 18 with this item as they both referred to allotments. He thanked the allotment stewards for coming forward with a suggested amendment to the agreement which would improve the letting and management of plots.

**RESOLVED:**

1. To amend paragraph 9 d to: If the allotment is not clear and in a good state of preparation for cultivation. Between the months of April and September, at least 75% of each plot should be cultivated.
2. To add a new clause at section 1: Within the first three months the tenant is within a probationary period. If the tenant chooses to return the allotment to the Council during this period, the tenant will

have to return the plot in a condition suitable for reletting.

If the tenant undertakes no significant work (no less than 40% cultivation) to a plot within the first three months of receiving the plot, then the tenancy will be terminated, and the plot returned to the Council for re-letting. In such instances of termination, there will be no return of the rental and a charge will be made for the plot to be cleared ready for re-letting.

He then turned to the Allotment report at item 18 and noted the current position with Gatehouse Lane Allotments. Officers advised that they had met on site with Southern Water and that the allotments were due to be closed for 2 weeks while remedial work to repair the pipe is undertaken. It was noted that the Chief Executive was writing to Southern Water regarding the fix and that this stretch of pipe has had three faults in one year resulting in leakage and damage to plots. She would be seeking a permanent fix.

The remainder of the report was noted.

#### **45. MAINTENANCE TEAM REPORT**

The Chair thanked Sarah Hughes for the report, The team are still stretched with many tasks outstanding, but legal compliances are being met. The staffing would be reviewed along with the Glendale contract later in the year when the contract runs out and following the budgetary discussion as to additional resources for the team.

The report was noted with thanks to the team

#### **46. IMPROVEMENTS TO PUBLIC REALM**

The chair introduced the item reminding the KAG that this was from the visioning day and the finance KAG have already agreed to make an allocation in the 20205/26 budget. There was support given for trees on the church walk, but this was felt to be unlikely to receive permission from WSCC. It was also noted that trees in planters was not in accordance with the Councils policy. There was support for softening of the stone garden, more planters and hanging baskets. There was discussion as to the removal of the stone garden, however it was reminded that the ownership is not with the Town Council and removal of other persons property could be a legal matter. It was asked if the Officers could approach MSDC to try to establish the ownership.

It was clarified that this fund would not be a one off but would need to be a building fund to allow ongoing improvements, it was suggested

that no improvements be done in 2025 but wait until the fund had grown to make a bigger impact. It was also clarified that where available, S106 would be used.

**RESOLVED**

Officers to proceed with improvements to the public realm

**47. FOLDERS MEADOW**

It was clarified that where S106 was available this will always be used and that allocations will continue to be made in appropriate developments.

**RESOLVED:** to request the finance KAG to make an allocation of £5,000 starting with the 2025/26 budget for an earmarked reserve for the replacement of play equipment in Folders Meadow Playpark

**48. DEPOT**

The report was considered and there was a suggestion that shared use of the depot may be worth considering to reduce the costs. The report was noted.

**49. CHRISTMAS LIGHTS**

Councillors were keen to know what £10k would get, would it be the same as previous years or will it be less now? It was suggested that rather than being formulaic we should consider bespoke decorations. There were ideas around a big reveal lead by the Town Hall. A member of the public said that the town centre should be the priority if funding was reduced. It was also stated that funding should be found if this was a priority.

It was clarified that the Christmas Tree was owned by the Council and was not part of the budget. It will return next year.

KAG noted the timeline and that attempts to enhance the display would be made.

Meeting ended at 21.02.