

**Minutes of a meeting of Council  
held on Wednesday, 8th December, 2021  
from 7.00 pm - 8.56 pm**

**Present:** M Belsey (Chairman)  
P Coote (Vice-Chair)

J Ash-Edwards	J Edwards	J Mockford
R Bates	R Eggleston	A Peacock
J Belsey	A Eves	C Phillips
A Bennett	B Forbes	M Pulfer
L Bennett	I Gibson	R Salisbury
P Brown	J Henwood	S Smith
R Cartwright	S Hillier	D Sweatman
P Chapman	R Jackson	C Trumble
R Clarke	J Knight	N Walker
M Cornish	Anthea Lea	R Webb
R Cromie	J Llewellyn-Burke	N Webster
R de Mierre	G Marsh	R Whittaker

**Absent:** Councillors G Allen, A Boutrup, P Bradbury, H Brunson,  
E Coe-Gunnell White, J Dabell, B Dempsey, S Ellis, L Gibbs,  
S Hatton, S Hicks, T Hussain, C Laband, Andrew Lea,  
A Sparasci and L Stockwell

**1. OPENING PRAYER.**

The opening prayer was read by the Vice-Chairman.

**2. TO RECEIVE QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 9.**

**Question from Ms J Edell**

I am told that MSDC has distinguished itself by being the only district council in the South East with no up-to-date Climate action strategy, and one of a handful not to have declared a climate emergency.

In the 2.5 years since this council noted its support for the parliamentary declaration of environmental/climate emergency the IPCC report has emerged, demonstrating the need for far greater action and urgency from us all.

For the sake of clarity, accountability, and in support of its stated aim of raising community awareness of sustainability, might MSDC now consider declaring a biodiversity and climate emergency?

## **Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Service Delivery**

Thank you for the question. I believe this Council takes its environmental responsibilities extremely seriously and indeed has done so for many years. Back in early 2018 this Council implemented a Sustainability Strategy focused on sustainability actions for our Council, our environment and our communities and which was focused on becoming more resilient in the face of climate change and embedding sustainability in all our corporate actions. Action plans were developed at that time across many areas to promote sustainability. As examples, some of the areas of focus with targets included actions regarding improving recycling and waste collections, our greenspaces and biodiversity, improving energy efficiency of our own council campus as well as supporting businesses and homes in improving their energy efficiency.

Furthermore, in 2021 the Council committed to develop a new strategy and a cross party Member working group was set up to oversee the preparation of a new Sustainable Economy Strategy (SES). Extensive work to develop this strategy has been carried out including the appointment of consultants to provide evidence and engagement with key stakeholders including the business and local community. We are aiming for the strategy to be adopted by the Council in Spring 2022. The Member working group is also developing a new action plan which will ensure we continue to build on the work already done and to ensure that we deliver the Council's ambitious programme of climate and sustainable development activity as we work towards net zero. More than mere words or declarations, our plan will also establish new actions to ensure the Council's response to climate change is refreshed and up to date.

I trust this response helps demonstrate that the Council acknowledges the real importance of urgent action to mitigate climate change and to ensure a sustainable future for our District.

Ms Edell posed a supplementary question. She suggested that rather than mere words, a declaration is actually a demonstration of seriousness of intent and so why would the Council not declare the emergency that we all know is happening around us.

The Cabinet Member agreed to provide a written response but noted the aspirational aspect of the question which will be considered carefully. He also confirmed that when the Council sets targets and actions, they are ones that the Council can control.

### **Question from Mr M Bright.**

On 3/11/21 the Leader stated, "Clair Hall was a Community Centre when closed in March 2020", which is incorrect, as the 14/9/20 MSDC report and the 13/10/20 Scrutiny Committee minutes confirm Clair Hall's main purpose was for hosting live performances.

MSDC/SFC consultation shows a majority in favour of retaining Clair Hall.

Will MSDC apply for a government Cultural Renewal Fund grant to reopen Clair Hall, which is factually a performance venue, designed as such, and therefore eligible whilst funds are still available?

Delaying a grant application for a second consultation would not be in the best interests of our community.

### **Response from the Leader, Cllr Jonathan Ash-Edwards**

It is unfortunate that the question and answer potentially ends in a position where each says the other is incorrect but the point that I made in my response to Mr Bright's question at the last meeting was correct and the paper he refers to from September 2020 paragraph 28 specifically states Clair Hall's status was as a public and community hall in accordance with planning use class F.

As Members will know, currently the building is in use by the NHS as a successful vaccination centre. With the uncertainties around the pandemic and the presence of COVID variants creating new risks we are expecting that the NHS will continue to use the building for some time into the new financial year. As you'll appreciate this is important in delivering the booster programme, ensuring the safety of our communities.

Finally, at the next Cabinet meeting the Cabinet will carefully consider the outcomes of the most recent engagement and consultation on the Clair Hall site and will make considerations about the future of Clair Hall.

### **3. TO CONFIRM MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF COUNCIL HELD ON 3 NOVEMBER 2021.**

The Chairman noted that typographical errors have been corrected under items 9 and 10.

The minutes of the meeting of Council held on 3 November as amended were agreed as a correct record of the meeting.

### **4. TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS IN RESPECT OF ANY MATTER ON THE AGENDA.**

In relation to item 11, Councillor Eggleston declared a prejudicial interest related to Centre Parcs as he is a group company solicitor for a business that provides logistical services to Centre Parcs as a group.

### **5. TO CONSIDER ANY ITEMS THAT THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL AGREES TO TAKE AS URGENT BUSINESS.**

None.

### **6. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.**

The Chairman spoke of her attendance at recent events, details of which are available on the Council's website. She noted the success of the Mid Sussex Applauds Awards which took place on 21 November 2021. Thanking everyone for their nominations, she noted it was an awe-inspiring afternoon at which she met fantastic individuals and businesses who work hard to help members of the community. She also noted attendance at Remembrance Services and that the Chairman's Civic Service will take place on 12 December at Trinity Methodist Church.

## **7. REVIEW OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES FOR 2022/2023.**

Neil Gershon, Chairman of the Independent Remuneration Panel introduced the report, noting that the major proposal is a review of the basic allowance with an increase of £100 bringing it to £5200, as well as the continuation of the indexing of Special Responsibility Allowances. The indexing will provide a basis to consider relatives in future years in the context of other Councils in West and East Sussex.

Councillor Webster proposed the item, thanking the Panel for their work and noting from their biographies that the Panel is eminently qualified to undertake this work for the Council and the wider community. Councillor Ash-Edwards seconded the item adding his thanks also.

The Chairman took Members to the recommendations as contained in the report which were agreed.

### **RESOLVED**

The Council:

- (i) thanked the Panel for their work;
- (ii) considered the recommendations of the Panel, summarised in the report and
- (iii) agreed a scheme of allowances for the financial year 2022/2023.

## **8. COUNCIL TAXBASE 2022/23.**

Councillor Llewellyn-Burke proposed the item noting that it was a legal requirement to set a tax base each year and the method of calculation is laid down by regulation, the starting point being the Council valuation lists. The report proposes that the tax base for next year is increased by 1.62% within an estimated collection rate of 99.4%. This was seconded by Councillor Ash-Edwards.

The Chairman took Members to the recommendations as contained in the report which were agreed.

### **RESOLVED**

Council agreed:

1. (a) Pursuant to the Head of Corporate Resources' report and in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2003, the amounts calculated by Mid Sussex District Council as its tax base for the whole area for the year 2022/23 shall be 63,230.6 and for each parish area for the year 2022/23 shall be:

Albourne	313.7
Ansty & Staplefield	1,285.7
Ardingly	752.1
Ashurst Wood	760.4
Balcombe	849.7
Bolney	659.9
Burgess Hill	12,395.7
Cuckfield	1,685.3
East Grinstead	11,519.5

Fulking	145.4
Hassocks	3,622.8
Haywards Heath	12,350.9
Horsted Keynes	701.0
Hurstpierpoint & Sayers Common	3,196.9
Lindfield	2,863.7
Lindfield Rural	1,648.6
Newtimber	40.5
Poynings	134.8
Pyecombe	131.7
Slaugham	1,615.0
Turners Hill	666.2
Twineham	159.3
West Hoathly	961.5
Worth	4,770.3

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET HELD ON 18 AND 29 NOVEMBER 2021.**

### **Budget Management 2021/22 Progress Report April to September 2021**

Councillor Llewellyn-Burke proposed the item noting that the forecast revenue outturn position for 2021/22 at the end of September shows a projected net overspend of £311,000 against the original budget. The unbudgeted leisure costs and leisure sports consultancy costs will be met from the leisure covid support specific reserve. Separately a claim has also been submitted to the income compensation scheme and it is estimated that the Council will receive £377,000. The Deputy Leader outlined the recommendations noting that overall the revised capital revenue projects stands at £12.8m; projects which make a positive contribution to living and working in Mid Sussex. The item was seconded by Councillor Ash-Edwards

The Chairman took Members to the recommendations as contained in the report which were agreed unanimously.

### **RESOLVED**

Council approved:

- (i) That £500,000 be transferred to the Job Evaluation / Redundancy Specific Reserve as detailed in paragraph 29 of the Cabinet report;
- (ii) the variations to the Capital Programme contained in paragraph 42 of the Cabinet report in accordance with the Council's Financial Procedure rule B3.

### **Introduction of Flexible Season Tickets and Review of Pay and Display Parking Charges**

Councillor Hillier proposed the item noting the need to facilitate amendments to season ticket charging as the current offering is not suitable in the post covid environment. He acknowledged this is one of several recommendations from the Parking Strategy Working Group along with a need to set a base level for pay and display charges, which have not been increased for 10 years.

Several Members sought to consider differential charging based on individual towns and car parks. The Cabinet Member acknowledged the concerns raised regarding Burgess Hill and noted that it could be considered by the Scrutiny Committee at a

later stage. He reiterated that it is not yet possible to determine the full effects of Covid on people's shopping behaviour and the proposed increase was of an acceptable level to not adversely affect shopping habits.

A Member raised concern over the loss of spaces for shoppers in favour of season ticket holders, and the cost in relation to the railway carpark. The subject of digital improvements to parking was discussed and it was noted that it is an aspiration of the Council to improve the digital platform. It was acknowledged that car parks are there for the primary purpose of supporting the local economy and it is important to invest in them. The current proposals will allow revenue to be generated to progress this investment further. Work Place Parking Levy was also discussed although it may be more suited to larger cities. The Council has monitoring data available to address any issues that may come up regarding the number of spaces available, and it is not expected for the season tickets to impact shoppers parking.

The Cabinet Member confirmed that the proposed changes are subject to a statutory consultation which was clarified as being 21 days and will include the public and key partners. Any decision made following the consultation will follow the Council's decision-making processes. The item was seconded by Councillor Ash-Edwards who reiterated that the proposed charges were competitive to neighbouring Local Authorities and are modest and reasonable.

The Chairman took Members to the recommendations as contained in the report which were agreed by the majority with 2 objections and 4 abstentions.

## **RESOLVED**

Council approved, subject to consultation:

- (i) The introduction of flexible 3, 5 and 6 day season tickets;
- (ii) The introduction of new tariffs, as outlined in Paragraph 16 of the Cabinet report.
- (iii) An annual inflationary review of parking charges thereafter.

## **10. TO RECEIVE THE LEADER'S REPORT.**

The Leader noted last month the District had the 2nd highest rate of Covid in country. Although there are now signs of numbers reducing, the numbers remain high and a level of caution is required within the community. He encouraged people to take up booster jabs when called forward and reiterated thanks to everyone involved in the vaccination programme in the District. He noted that the Prime Minister had within the last hour announced further Covid safety measures and the Council will fully review and implement as required.

The Leader confirmed that a formal response has been provided by the Council to the Gatwick Airport consultation on their Northern Runway Project. The main elements of the response are that the Council is not satisfied there is sufficient robust evidence to justify the need for the Northern Runway Project, or to demonstrate that the environmental, social and economic impacts of the project have been properly assessed and can be satisfactorily mitigated.

He announced that a new age manufacturer of super-computer technology capable of helping the world's most challenging problems is going to be based in the District,

which is positive news for the local economy. A Consortium led by University of Sussex scientists has been given a grant from the Government to develop a fully scalable quantum computer. Universal Quantum is establishing a laboratory in Haywards Heath and the Council has been working with them to secure the investment. It is a positive sign of the ambition the Council has for the District and the work being done to attract cutting edge companies to the area. Universal Quantum's goal is to recruit 100 people at its new premises such as electronic engineers, physicists and operations experts and the Leader looks forward to it being a huge success bringing investments to the area as it generates more demand for associated businesses.

**11. REPORT OF CABINET MEMBERS, INCLUDING QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 10.1.**

The Deputy Leader

The Deputy Leader noted that Budget Management had already been discussed during the meeting and therefore there was nothing further to report at this time.

A Member sought clarification on the Deputy Leader's response provided after the Council meeting on 3 November with regards to the energy generated by PV panels at Bridge Road Depot in 2021. He noted that the new work Ricardo has been instructed to do focusses on carbon as opposed to Co2 and asked what is the reason for the new focus on carbon, considering that it is Co2 and Co2 equivalent gasses emitted into the atmosphere which causes global warming.

The Deputy Leader noted that the work carried out by Ricardo relates to the Sustainability Working Group and a written answer will be provided by the relevant Cabinet Member for that work if appropriate.

Cabinet Member for Economic Growth

The Cabinet Member confirmed that the Council will receive £70k grant funding to support independent retailers making improvements to their premises. Officers are finalising the details and publicity and Members are encouraged to promote it. If Members know of other businesses that may require funding outside of this particular programme he encouraged them to contact the Council as Officers can direct them to the most appropriate options.

He also noted that work is progressing on 'Opportunity Mid Sussex', the branding around an online brochure to attract investment to the District.

Cabinet Member for Customer Services

The Cabinet Member noted that the Council and software platform TellJO have won a national technology award for the support they provide for vulnerable residents. She also confirmed that a 50% relief on business rates will continue next year and process for those applications is being put into place.

The Cabinet Member noted the success of the Applauds Awards and reiterated congratulations to the winners. She also noted that Mid Sussex Matters has been delivered to all residents, and over 500 families have signed up to the Secret Santa mission which is part of the Welcome Back fund to encourage people to the highstreets.

In terms of the digital roll out, the Cabinet Member confirmed that the first two phases have been completed on time and on budget and digging has commenced on the first part of the rural connectivity programme between Ardingly and Haywards Heath. A digital workshop is planned for Members in February 2022.

A Member made a request for the Council to use social media to encourage people to sign up to the broadband voucher programme to receive a sum of money from the Government towards extra fast broadband, for those in rural areas who may not immediately benefit from the Council's digital programme. The Cabinet Member agreed to investigate this further.

#### Cabinet Member for Environment and Service Delivery

With regards to fly tipping, the Cabinet Member confirmed that training and briefings have taken place for Officers and the Council is now able to issue fixed penalties where there is sufficient evidence to do so, including following up on retrospective incidents in the past 6 months where there is sufficient evidence. A workshop to provide more information is planned for Members in the new year. He agreed to provide a written response to Members regarding the penalty amounts.

He noted that since reopening in July, the leisure centres are performing ahead of budget through to September and as of October the income recovery is at 68% of pre pandemic levels, in line with national trends. However, the impact of rising energy costs and the latest Covid variant is yet to be determined and work will take place to understand what impact these will have on the financial recovery in the coming weeks. He agreed to provide a written response to a query on the types of sport that is increasing or is it a 68% increase across the entire offering.

Regarding playgrounds, the Cabinet Member confirmed that work at St Andrews playground in Burgess Hill and the Turners Hill recreation ground is underway, with an aim to be concluded in early 2022. Designs can be seen on the Council's website, along with a pump track in Bolney. The re-consultation on the Forest Field's play area will be launched soon.

Local cycling infrastructure plan engagements have begun in East Grinstead and it is hoped that it will shortly begin in Haywards Heath too. He has recently attended meetings with East Grinstead Town Council working group and East Grinstead Cycle forum as well as looking at potential improvements around the area and is pleased to see this phase of work commencing.

#### Cabinet Member for Community

The Cabinet Member noted that the Legal department has recently been successfully assessed by the independent Lexcel Assessor in November.

Sussex Resilience Forum and other partners have worked throughout covid and may get increased demand over Christmas. He has passed on elected Members good wishes to them as it is because of their efforts that our residents are kept safe during emergency situations. In terms of ongoing pandemic support in the community he confirmed that the Sussex Community Hub is still running from 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday and 9am to 5pm at the weekend and bank holidays. In East Grinstead the emergency action group have provided valuable services, with similar groups run in Burgess Hill and Haywards Heath. Along with the Mid Sussex Partnership Board and other partners such as Mid Sussex Voluntary Action, the Council is always ready to help wherever possible.



He highlighted the importance of remembering those who find the festive season difficult, noting that the Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust Stay Alive app is a pocket suicide prevention resource full of information to help those who may need it.

#### Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning

The Cabinet Member highlighted that the health and safety of rough sleepers is always a concern but especially during winter. The housing team has been working hard to support Turning Tides in identifying and housing individuals, alongside Brighton Housing Trust. In 2018 there were 10 rough sleepers in the District reducing to 8 in 2019 and 3 in 2020 as a result of the 'Everyone in' initiative. As of November 2021 there has been 4 people accepting accommodation and 6 people left rough sleeping. The Council does enquire if they are ex-military to see if additional support can come from the RBL and SSAFA. Contact with the rough sleepers will be maintained throughout the winter. As a result of a Member question, the Cabinet Member agreed to investigate the various routes that people may take before it results in rough sleeping to understand possible causes. He also noted the importance of supporting local charities as donations are vital in enabling them to support those in need.

Regarding the District Plan, he confirmed that the Inspector's modifications to the District Planning document were received at the end of November and consultation has started running from 29 November until 24 January. All information from the consultation process goes to the Inspector to help form his final report.

With regards to the Northern Arc, in November the Bellway Home reserved matters application was put in for the development east of the A273 which includes 247 homes plus the extension to Bedelands. He agreed to pass a Member's comment to Planning Officers regarding the potential for Bellway Homes to be encouraged to future proof their homes with electric car charging points ahead of the requirement for all new homes to have one in April 2022.

In the area of Hassocks he highlighted that Network Rail will be putting in a pedestrian tunnel between Friars Oak development and Ockley Lane development. Therefore, it may be advisable to avoid travelling by train between 19 and 27 February. He acknowledged that there has been debate on the access for this work and noted that there is currently legislation sitting with Secretary of State which affects the access. It has been decided to use Mid Sussex Land and consultation with residents is ongoing.

The Cabinet Member highlighted the concept of water neutrality noting that areas of Horsham have Ramshorn snails which require a lot of water. Due to the number of developments in the area the water levels go down, harming the snails. Developers must work to reduce water usage to 90 litres per head per day or be restricted on the number of developments that can take place. In response to a Member question, he noted that it was not possible to enforce a policy restricting households to 110 litres of water per person, but it is a standard that the building industry accept as a target for water consumption

He drew attention to Center Parcs, as they made a statement in London to the financial institutions to say they were confident that the site off junction 10 of the M23 is likely to go ahead. The Council has little knowledge of what is planned as Members have been not approached. Two senior officers met with Centre Parcs

agents to establish their plans but as of today there have been no pre-applications or applications.

**12. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 10.2.**

**The following questions were received from Cllr Ian Gibson:**

Noting that the latest Quarterly Performance Monitoring Report identifies a loss of 66 affordable housing units due to the failure to achieve policy compliant S106 Agreements, and also that the Council is currently supporting 117 households in temporary accommodation, can the following information be provided:

For each of the four S106 agreements referred to in the report which were not policy compliant:

- The related planning application reference number
- The number of new homes proposed in the planning application and any reduction in this number resulting from the failure to achieve a policy compliant S106 agreement.
- The number of affordable homes that could have been achieved through a policy compliant S106 agreement.
- The number of affordable homes actually agreed.
- The value of any payments agreed in lieu of the provision of a lower number of affordable homes then would be policy compliant.
- Whether free serviced land in lieu of affordable housing was sought by the Council in accordance with District Plan policy DP31 part 5.

Also, the equivalent details for any developments approved in previous years where the re-negotiation of an S106 Agreement has led to a reduction in the number of affordable homes.

**The following response was provided by the Cabinet Member for the Housing and Planning.**

I have provided Councillor Gibson with a chart with all the information, and I will have my answers published with the chart for any other Members.

Talking about language, Councillor Gibson talks about a loss of 66 units but it is not a loss if they were not there from the start. You then must look at the viability of the site to see if you were ever going to produce those units. Councillor Gibson also says 'due to the failure to achieve policy compliant S106 Agreements'. All S106 agreements are policy compliant but one has really to understand which part of the policy as there are supplementary planning documents behind policies. The question of the 66 units comes down to viability. There are three documents that support DP31, the Developer Contribution SPD, Affordable Homes SPD and Development Viability SPD, all of which are available on the website and will provide answers to some of these questions.

Viability is assessed by an Independent valuer that the Council employs. Once he/she decides a development cannot be viable with the level of S106 contributions, accommodations are made such as taking out units. They are not necessarily removed, they are deferred. Some sites may not have affordable housing, but larger developments are assessed at stages through and at the end. Some units will have then to be provided. Sometimes a financial contribution is required.

With regards to Councillor Gibson's last question on whether free serviced land in lieu of affordable housing was sought by the Council, I can assure you it is, and the

Housing team work hard to pursue this. It is vitally important that we provide affordable housing for people in our community. Every Member can be confident that any affordable housing that is taken out of a site is not done lightly and is challenged all the way through.

Councillor Gibson's supplementary question asked if it was possible to strengthen DP31 part 5 in the coming District Plan review and the Cabinet Member confirmed that all policies were being revisited as part of that review.

**The following questions were received from Cllr Robert Eggleston:**

Noting that MSDC regularly submits bids for funding from central government what bids:-

have been submitted in the current calendar year by value and purpose; and what has been the outcome of these bids?

Noting the Leader's comments (Minutes of Council 3rd November 2021) that "the criteria for the LUF is such that projects could only be considered if there were no other options available",

- why was it considered that there were not other options available to complete the Place and Connectivity scheme for Church Walk and Church Road; and
- when were the proposals for the Digital Hub drawn up and how was that to be originally funded?

**The following response was provided by the Leader**

As you know, the Council proactively seeks out opportunities to secure inward investment to deliver the best outcomes for our residents and businesses. In Burgess Hill alone we have secured over £46m in grant funding to support a range of enhanced infrastructure projects such as the A2300 corridor improvements, the Place and Connectivity programme and the delivery and rollout of the gigabit speed full fibre project and the upgrades to the sewage treatment plant at Goddards Green.

Turning to the specific question, during this financial year the Council has made 2 bids for Government funding in Burgess Hill.

The one Public Estate programme - the Council received £50k from OPE Phase 8 funding to support a feasibility review of a proposed regeneration of the Burgess Hill Train Station and adjacent land. This is in addition to the £25k contribution from Network Rail to support the feasibility work.

Regarding the Levelling Up Fund bid, as you are well aware this was for £14m to accelerate regeneration and private sector investment into Burgess Hill Town Centre. Unfortunately, that bid was not successful. It must be remembered that round 1 allocated only around third of the money available and whilst dates for round 2 are awaited, the Council is working with DHLUC on formal feedback of the LUF bid and will consider preparation of a Round 2 bid.

We also take the opportunity to make joints bids where possible and during this financial year we made a joint bid with West Sussex County Council to the UK Community Renewal Fund for £600k to develop community hubs across the district in collaboration with MSVA and Citizens Advice to deliver community outreach and

support on issues such as debt, employment and housing. Unfortunately, this bid was unsuccessful but we will continue to explore opportunities to pursue that.

Councillor Eggleston's supplementary question asked if Officers could consider providing a dashboard twice a year to update Members on the status of the bids. The Leader confirmed that it was a matter for the Members of the Scrutiny Committee who consider performance. He also noted that bids are not secret and are often detailed in committee papers unless there are commercially confidential elements.

The Leader addressed Councillor Eggleston's specific questions regarding the LUF Bid with the following response:

As a member of the Burgess Hill Member Steering Group, you will be well aware of how oversubscribed the Place and Connectivity programme is and of the ongoing work the group is doing to prioritise the potential projects. There are far more projects than available funding. The Church Walk/Road scheme presented to the group was not affordable, within the Place and Connectivity budget and a phased approach was recommended. The Steering Group at its meeting in May 2021, agreed that officers should investigate and make additional bids for all possible grant funding streams in an attempt to deliver the comprehensive project including to the levelling up fund. The successful award of LUF, match funded with existing grant money, would have enabled the comprehensive scheme to be delivered. The fact that this bid was unsuccessful means that the Church Walk scheme will once again need to be considered and prioritised by the steering group alongside all the other potential projects in the programme. I understand the Steering Group will consider this at its next meeting in January 2022.

In relation to the Digital Hub the Full Fibre Programme has funded a high standard fibre network which is supported by a digital exchange. The exchange consists of technical equipment that has been specifically designed so that it can be relocated to serve a Digital Hub, a highly connected shared workspace, if this opportunity arises. This was planned as part of the Council's Local Full Fibre Network Project to maximise the opportunities for further economic and social developments. As we have been very clear throughout, it is not just a question of putting the fibre in the ground, it is about ensuring our local economy is able to leverage that investment and make the most of it in terms of the connectivity it provides. The LUF bid would have provided the opportunity in order to deliver the Digital Hub components of that work already in place through the Local Full Fibre Network programme. Clearly, we are seeking the opportunity to take that to ensure the maximum economic benefit from the investments already made.

Councillor Eggleston's supplementary question sought clarification that the two bids aren't market failure, it just happens that in terms of bringing together a pot of money part public and part S106 there are more projects than can be funded without sourcing other funding. The Leader confirmed this is the case in terms of the Place and Connectivity Programme despite the amount of funding already secured.

**The following questions were received from Cllr Paul Brown:**

How many households in Mid Sussex have applied and paid the £150 deposit to join the WSCC Solar Together, Infinity Renewables project?

What is the aggregate estimated installed peak power capacity of these Solar PV installations if they all go ahead?

**The following response was provided by the Cabinet Member for Environment and Service Delivery**

I am sure Cllr Brown is aware registration for the scheme is free of charge. All those registering will receive a no obligation quote based on the information they provide about their house. It is only when the customer has considered the quote carefully and has decided to move on to the full survey and installation stage that a £150 deposit is payable. The number of households paying a deposit changes on a daily basis. The Council receives monitoring data from the County Council but there is a time lag. The most recent available data is from the end of September, and I am pleased to report that this shows Mid Sussex is currently topping the tables on the number registrations and offer acceptances with 1020 registrations of which 292 have been accepted.

It is not possible to estimate the installed peak capacity of installations at this stage as that will be entirely dependent on the surveys at each location.

Further details of the scheme can be found online at:  
[www.westsussex.gov.uk/campaigns/solartogether](http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/campaigns/solartogether)

The meeting finished at 8.56 pm

Chairman