

**Minutes of a meeting of Council  
held on Wednesday, 12th October, 2022  
from 7.00 pm - 9.17 pm**

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

K Adams	J Dabell	Andrew Lea
G Allen	J Edwards	Anthea Lea
J Ash-Edwards	S Ellis	G Marsh
R Bates	R Eggleston	J Mockford
J Belsey	A Eves	C Phillips
A Bennett	B Forbes	R Salisbury
L Bennett	I Gibson	S Smith
P Bradbury	J Henwood	A Sparasci
P Brown	S Hicks	L Stockwell
R Cartwright	S Hillier	D Sweatman
P Chapman	T Hussain	C Trumble
R Clarke	R Jackson	N Walker
M Cornish	J Knight	R Webb
R Cromie	C Laband	R Whittaker

**Absent:** Councillors A Boutrup, H Brunsdon, E Coe-Gunnell White,  
R de Mierre, B Dempsey, L Gibbs, S Hatton, A Peacock,  
M Pulfer and N Webster

The Council observed a minute silence in memory of the late Monarch, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

**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.**

**The following question was received from Mr Kenwood**

BOP Consulting in their final report on the future of Clair Hall make reference to the fact that Haywards Heath has cultural provision typical for a town of its size. Could council please state what the cultural provisions and facilities referred to were in their comparisons and also what were the towns that Haywards Heath was compared with in order to reach that conclusion.

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

Thank you. You will be aware that BOP is a nationally and internationally recognised research and consulting practice for culture and the creative economy. Their two reports are based on their extensive experience working with cities and towns across

the country. The comparison is based on their standard approach to mapping the culture and creative sector. They detailed the methodology used, including the indicators they looked at when mapping the cultural landscape in the area, in their interim report published in July. The mapping exercise outcomes are detailed in the table on page 12 in the interim report, in Section 4 The Cultural Landscape of Haywards Heath. Appendix B provides details on the mapping indicators and their definitions.

Mr Kenward's supplementary question sought to clarify the second part of his original question: what were the towns that Haywards Heath was compared with? In response, the Leader directed Mr Kenward to the sections of the report mentioned above which sets out the mapping and methodology used by BOP.

**The following question was received from Ms Wilcock**

The BOP report "Lead Specialist Advisor Clair Hall: Final Report" recently released by the Council, based its advice on potential sector target audiences by reference to a Council report now 6 years out of date, which does not take into account recent extensive housing developments.

Empirical evidence from the Haywards Heath Arts Festival shows in particular there is a strong demand and support for arts and cultural activities by young people, with events being sold out with standing room only.

What action is the Council taking to accurately ascertain the current demographics of Haywards Heath before taking any further action.

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

Thank you for your question. It is pleasing to hear of the success of the Haywards Heath Arts Festival and that you found suitable venues for the events.

BOP based their advice on numerous information sources. This included 2021 census results which were partially released this summer. In their report they observed that new Census data suggest the demographic changes across Mid Sussex District as a whole support the trends estimated in the report you referred to. I welcome your comments, based on your recent empirical experience. BOP's work recognises the strength of our local audience and accounted for that in their final report and recommendations (which will be considered by Cabinet next week). This is certainly something we will promote and want to build on going forward. Equally, BOP advise us that it is a very challenging economic climate to deliver culturally focused projects. Therefore, the Council is taking this robust, evidence-based approach to this project. We believe this gives us the best chance to take this work forward and be successful in securing a cultural anchor tenant for the site.

Mrs Wilcock posed a supplementary question asking, 'does that mean you are not going to have any review of the audience sectors referred to in the BOP report, which may be inaccurate?' In response the Leader noted that he had already answered the question in relation to BOP using the most up to date evidence in their report, including the 2021 census data.

**3. TO CONFIRM MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF COUNCIL HELD ON 10 AUGUST 2022.**

The minutes of the extraordinary meeting of Council held on 10 August 2022 were agreed as a correct record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.

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

The following Councillors declared an interest in relation to item 9 of the agenda due to being Members of Burgess Hill Town Council: Councillors Eggleston (Leader), Eves, Hicks, Henwood, Cornish, Hussain, Allen, Chapman and Cartwright. Councillor Bradbury declared an interest in item 9 due to being a Member of West Sussex County Council.

Councillor Jackson declared an interest relating to item 11 due to being a Member of Hurstpierpoint and Sayers Common Parish Council.

Councillors Sweatman and Dabell declared an interest relating to item 10 due to being Members of East Grinstead Town Council.

Councillors Gibson, Coote, Webb and Phillips declared an interest relating to item 12 due to being Members of Worth Parish Council.

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

None.

**6. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.**

The Chairman highlighted the Chairman's Charity Fundraising Concert taking place on October 20th noting that all Members are invited to help support the Kangaroos Disability Clubs charity.

The Chairman also acknowledged that Tom Clark, Corporate Solicitor will be leaving the Council after 15 years and invited comments from Group Leaders. The Leader along with the Group Leaders for the Green Party, Liberal Democrats and the Independent Group, as well as Cabinet Members and Chairmen of Committees thanked Tom for his significant contribution to the Council's work as Solicitor, Monitoring Officer and Returning Officer, noting his valuable and in-depth advice given with patience and humour which has been of immense help to both new and returning Members.

**7. REPORT OF THE RETURNING OFFICER AS TO THE PERSON ELECTED AS DISTRICT COUNCILLOR FOR THE WARD OF BOLNEY ON 15 SEPTEMBER 2022.**

The Chairman moved the item from the Chair, taking Members to a vote as set out in the recommendation which was approved unanimously. In announcing the result, the Chairman welcomed Councillor Adams to the Council.

## **RESOLVED**

Council noted the election of Councillor Kristy Adams as District Councillor for Bolney.

### **8. APPOINTMENT OF SENIOR OFFICERS.**

The Leader moved the item noting that it is a statutory requirement that Council formally approves the appointment to statutory posts. In doing so he welcomed the conclusion of the leadership restructure process. The item was seconded by the Deputy Leader.

The Chairman took Members to a vote on the recommendations as set out in the report which were approved.

## **RESOLVED**

Council agreed the appointment of:

- (a) Rachel Jarvis as the Council's Section 151 Officer;
- (b) Geoff Wild as the Council's Interim Monitoring Officer;
- (c) Kathryn Hall as the Council's Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer;
- (d) Louise Duffield to the Director Resources and Organisational Development post.

### **9. COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW - FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BURGESS HILL TOWN COUNCIL (BHTC) AND ANSTY AND STAPLEFIELD PARISH COUNCIL.**

Councillor Anthea Lea moved the item as Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee for Community, Leisure and Parking. She noted that the review was initiated following a valid petition submitted by the requisite number of local registered electors which required that the Council review the extent of the electoral wards of the Burgess Hill Town Council considering the Local Government Boundary Commission's (LGBCE) creation of two new parish wards, Northern Arc East, and Northern Arc West and to consider the number of Councillors required. Acknowledging that the review has been through two public consultations and considered by the Scrutiny Committee, she proposed that Council agree the recommendations as set out in the report and agree the naming of the two Northern Arc Wards as outlined in paragraph 20 and 21 of the report (Northern Arc East to become Brookleigh East and Northern Arc West to become Brookleigh West). She also proposed that the Council consider a fresh Community Governance Review (CGR) in 2025. This was seconded by Councillor Dabell.

Council debated the ward naming conventions with some Members noting that there was a case for more localised naming of the wards using recognisable landmarks and no statutory reason to go with the Brookleigh name which had been decided by Homes England as part of their marketing for the area. With regards to the potential Community Governance Review (CGR) in 2025, it was noted that a significant number of residents who will live in that area have not yet had a chance to comment and therefore a further review will give them that opportunity. Clarity was sought on whether the CGR is provisional or not, with the Solicitor to the Council noting that there will be a new Council in 2023 with the intention to bring various reviews back, depending on the views at the time.

The Chairman took Members to a vote on the recommendations as set out in the report seeking agreement to name the two wards added to Burgess Hill as Brookleigh East (for the Northern Arc East Ward) and Brookleigh West (for the Northern Arc West Ward) and the proposal to hold a further CGR in 2025. This was approved with 32 in favour and 12 abstentions.

#### **RESOLVED**

Council approved the principal electoral authority's final recommendations for Burgess Hill Town Council and Ansty & Staplefield Parish Council as set out at paragraphs 19 – 27 of the report with agreement to name the two wards added to Burgess Hill as Brookleigh East (for the Northern Arc East Ward) and Brookleigh West (for the Northern Arc West Ward) and to consider a further CGR in 2025.

#### **10. COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW - FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EAST GRINSTEAD TOWN COUNCIL (EGTC).**

Councillor Anthea Lea moved the item as Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee for Community, Leisure and Parking noting that the review was initiated following a request from East Grinstead Town Council asking the Council to consider how Town wards could be aligned to District wards, and to consider the reduction of the number of Councillor numbers from 19 to 16. This was seconded by Councillor Dabell.

The Chairman took Members to a vote on the recommendations as set out in the report. This was approved with 38 in favour, 1 against and 5 abstentions.

#### **RESOLVED**

Council approved the principal electoral authority's final recommendations for East Grinstead Town Council as set out at paragraphs 16 – 20 of the report.

#### **11. COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW - FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HURSTPIERPOINT AND SAYERS COMMON PARISH COUNCIL.**

Councillor Anthea Lea moved the item as Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee for Community, Leisure and Parking noting that the review was initiated following a valid petition submitted by the requisite number of local registered electors. The petition called on the Council to constitute a new Parish Council for the existing Sayers Common parish ward, however following two public consultations and consideration by the Scrutiny Committee it is proposed to make no changes to the governance arrangements at this time. This was seconded by Councillor Dabell.

Discussion was held on distinct identities of both Hurstpierpoint and Sayers Common, including how residents align themselves depending on which side of the A23 they live. Members agreed that this is not the right time to redraw Parish boundaries.

The Chairman took Members to a vote on the recommendations as set out in the report. This was approved with 43 in favour and 1 abstention.

## **RESOLVED**

Council approved the principal electoral authority's final recommendations for Hurstpierpoint & Sayers Common Parish Council as set out at paragraphs 23 – 26 of the report to make no changes to the Governance arrangements for Hurstpierpoint & Sayers Common Parish at this time.

### **12. COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW - FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WORTH PARISH COUNCIL (WPC).**

Councillor Anthea Lea moved the item as Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee for Community, Leisure and Parking noting that the review was initiated following a valid petition submitted by the requisite number of local registered electors. The petition called for the Council to constitute a new Parish Council for the existing Crawley Down parish ward, however following two public consultations and consideration by the Scrutiny Committee it is proposed to make no changes to the governance arrangements at this time. This was seconded by Councillor Dabell who noted that for financial reasons, it was not the right time to make a change.

The Vice Chairman clarified a point which had been raised during the Scrutiny process, confirming that he had not initiated the proposed split. Discussion was held around the potential to consider a division in the future once developments in the area are complete, noting that each area had a unique identity with unique issues. It was also mentioned that a change of name for Worth Parish Council ought to be considered in the future, to accurately reflect the area and avoid confusion with an area in Crawley, also called Worth.

The Chairman took Members to the recommendations as contained in the report which were agreed with 30 in favour, 1 against and 13 abstentions.

## **RESOLVED**

Council approved the principal electoral authority's final recommendations for Worth Parish Council as set out at paragraphs 25 – 31 of the report to make no changes to the Governance arrangements for the Worth Parish at this time.

### **13. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET HELD ON 26 SEPTEMBER 2022.**

The Leader moved the item, highlighting the forthcoming challenges facing the Council in relation to both rising energy costs and inflation on the Council's budget for 2022/23, something that is faced by Local Authorities nationally at this time. The Deputy Leader seconded the item acknowledging the challenging financial position but noting the number of exciting projects in the Capital Programme which despite the financial position will continue to support residents in the short to medium term.

In response to a question on what is being done to reduce energy demand on Council premises and with partner organisations, the Leader noted that the Council continues to promote ways of being energy efficient on site, (including the use of solar panels) and will continue to take those opportunities as they arise.

The Chairman took Members to a vote on the recommendations as contained in the report which was agreed unanimously.

## **RESOLVED**

Council approved:

- (i) that £150,000 grant income from WSCC in respect of a payment for Ukraine Support be transferred to Specific Reserve as detailed in paragraph 27 of the Cabinet report;
- (ii) that £20,000 grant income relating to Neighbourhood Planning be transferred to Specific Reserve as detailed in paragraph 28 of the Cabinet report;
- (iii) that £445 grant income for new burdens relating to Council Tax Submissions be transferred to Specific Reserve as detailed in paragraph 29 of the Cabinet report;
- (iv) that £16,335 grant income relating to Housing Benefit Award Accuracy Initiative be transferred to Specific Reserves as detailed in paragraph 30 of the Cabinet report;
- (v) that £62,857 grant income from WSCC relating to Employment Projects Coordinator be transferred to Specific Reserve as detailed in paragraph 31 of the Cabinet report;
- (vi) the variations to the Capital Programme contained in paragraph 35 of the Cabinet report in accordance with the Council's Financial Procedure rule B3.

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

The Leader began by welcoming Councillor Adams and noting apologies received from 2 Cabinet Members. He addressed the cost-of-living issues faced by residents and provided reassurance that the Council will continue to play a part in supporting local communities in the months ahead. He noted that the Council plays an important role in providing financial support to residents on lower income and those in financial difficulty. To date this year over £18m has been given in housing and council tax support schemes as well as through the exceptional hardship scheme and discretionary housing payments scheme. Food banks also offer immediate support across the district and the Council is in regular contact to offer support and grants where possible. There is also a winter support guide that has been produced by the Council to signpost people to further help. The Council community connections brochure has also been updated, providing information on services for older residents.

He drew attention to three items that the Council has been active in bidding for investment for the District. The first is the UK Shared Prosperity Fund which has an allocation for Mid Sussex of £1m over three years and requires an investment plan which the Council has submitted. Highlights of the fund include employability support to young people not in employment or education, development of community hubs and the roll out of the parks and town centre investment programmes and the outcome of the submission is expected soon.

A second submission has been made for the Levelling Up Fund for Burgess Hill Town Centre to unlock the redevelopment of the Martlets, the Church Walk public realm development and the digital hub. The Council's bid continues to score highly and an update is expected in November.

The third is in partnership with West Sussex County Council (WSCC). The Council will be making an expression of interest for investment in 2 sites (the technology park and the Martlets) to attract businesses to these two business zones. The Leader noted that recent press coverage has indicated it will have streamlined planning but

noted that both sites already are mature in planning terms and so planning powers have already influenced this. Should the expression of interest be successful, more discussions will be held with the Government to develop matters further. He concluded by thanking officers who worked at pace to deliver this on time, and thanked WSCC for their support as well.

Concern was raised by a number of Members that planning processes and environmental controls will be relaxed on these two sites to the detriment of the area. The Leader noted that although the Government has signalled a desire to streamline the processes, both sites are tightly defined sites that already have planning support by the Council. Careful consideration will happen at every stage to ensure they are going in the right direction. He reiterated that it is important to seek the opportunity to accelerate delivery of projects that people want, and it will provide tax incentives for businesses relocating and provides a competitive edge to the sites.

In response to a question on the Place and Connectivity Programme, the Leader confirmed that more projects have been identified that exceed the amount of funding available and the Church Walk programme has been one of them which is why the Council is bidding for more funding.

In response to a question on overlap between the WSCC Growth Bid and the Levelling Up Fund, the Leader confirmed that the growth deal remains in place and thanked WSCC for their constructive engagement.

Discussion was also held on warm hubs and food banks and the Leader referred Members to agenda item 16 which would provide more information.

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

Deputy Leader

The Deputy Leader thanked residents involved in the food waste trial noting there has been 80% participation with over 20 tonnes collected in the first few weeks. In response to a question regarding a local biodigester, he confirmed that the results of the pilot will need to be considered, and he has asked Officers to work on a potential for a local facility as one proposed option. In terms of garden waste, he confirmed that a business case is being compiled for an additional collection vehicle for consideration over the winter budget process for the new financial year.

He provided an update on the Centre for Outdoor Sports as meetings have been held with Officers, consultants and sports clubs and proposals are still being worked up for the facilities. He acknowledged that it is not anticipated to include an athletics track, and the athletics and running clubs are aware. Further meetings are proposed with England Athletics to address their needs. In response to Member's concerns regarding this lack of provision he noted that there are 4 tracks in about half hour of each other on the outskirts of the District and England Athletics has expressed concern about a 5th track taking valuable business from them. It would also mean that either the junior pitches or the first-class pitches could not proceed.

Discussion was held on the progression of park improvements to Finches Field and Hemsleys Meadow, and the lack of toilet facilities at King George Fields which the Deputy Leader agreed to investigate further.

Cabinet Member for Economic Growth and Net Zero



The Cabinet Member noted that the Micro Business Grant scheme totalling £71,428 was launched in April and £27,309 has been allocated so far. He also noted that the Economy team has provided support for Burgess Hill Science Week and Haywards Heath STEM Challenge as part of the Sustainable Economic Strategy action plan. In relation to that strategy, excellent Low Carbon videos were released in conjunction with WSCC and the link will be provided in the Member Information Bulletin.

He confirmed that the “Opportunity Mid Sussex” inward investment promotion materials have been completed and make a compelling case for bringing further economic activity to the district. A successful launch event was held in London on 7th September. There will be a joint local launch for Opportunity Mid Sussex and the Sustainable Economic Strategy at Edwards Vacuum in Burgess Hill on 17 November.

The Cabinet Member provided an update on the Gigabit connectivity programme which continues to go extremely well and on target, both in time and cost. In terms of commercial roll out he noted that a website is being promoted so that businesses can register interest and it is hoped to start connection to some businesses depending on size in the first quarter of 2023. The economy team has also continued business engagement via a quarterly newsletter and with the three Business Associations particularly around support for businesses through the universities’ RISE & Hothouse programmes, and about grants. Further support is also planned around digital adoption strategies and skills.

He noted that the ShopAppy app has already launched successfully in Burgess Hill (including Hassocks & Hurstpierpoint) and Haywards Heath (including Cuckfield & Lindfield) and will be launched in East Grinstead next week.

A Member posed a question regarding Scope 3 Carbon Emissions, and the Cabinet Member agreed to consider it further and provide a response.

Finally, in relation to the Burgess Hill Growth programme, he noted that an Employment & Skills Plan has been prepared with Homes England with regards to the Brookleigh development, to provide opportunities for local people through jobs training and apprenticeships.

#### Cabinet Member for Housing and Customer Services

The Cabinet Member noted that the Revenue and Benefits team are working hard to administer grants in unprecedented times. She acknowledged that the Head of Department Kevin Stewart is leaving the Council in October and thanked him for his expertise, energy, and enthusiasm.

She noted that the deadline for the Energy Rebate grant has passed, and the Council has now paid just under £6m to 40,000 recipients. Over £3m has been paid from the Covid Relief Fund. The Local Discretionary Scheme closes on 13 November and £57,150 has currently been paid out of £200,550.

The Council has also paid just under £15m on covid business grants and £3.4m from the Covid Additional Relief Fund.

With regards to the Comms team, she noted that they are working to promote the many initiatives that the Council is managing, and that Mid Sussex Matters will land with residents in November.

With regards to Housing, the Council is reducing the number of people in temporary accommodations by improving procedures. In August there were 83 households in temporary accommodation whereas there were 128 in December last year. As a contingency plan the Council has acquired 25 properties to use as temporary accommodation. with 6 more coming. 5 have been designed for single vulnerable people with complex needs.

We have had a successful bid for the rough sleepers accommodation funding and the Brighton Housing Trust Sussex have bought flats in Haywards Heath.

She noted that the objective of the Council is to intervene early in the process to prevent homelessness and the intervention and prevention team has been expanded to provide support. As at the end of August, 149 discretionary housing payments have been awarded, committing £82,690 to the most vulnerable residents. The Council is also working with other District Councils to utilise a £9203 award for the Domestic Abuse Act to help residents suffering abuse.

The Homelessness Prevention Grant is £432,728 and the spending will focus on preventing homelessness, contributing to ending rough sleeping and reducing temporary accommodation numbers.

An additional £90,733 this financial year to top up the Homelessness Prevention Grant and a one-off payment to support low-income households in private accommodation who have covid related arrears to avoid eviction or homelessness.

We are committed to preventing homelessness and at the end of August 7 rough sleepers were accommodated under the discretionary covid powers. Support is also needed for those still on street and in August a new mobile hub was launched, a Converted bus will allow Turning Tides to connect directly with the hidden homeless. The bus will be visiting 4 locations weekly and a flyer can be circulated for Members to promote.

The Cabinet Member noted that a joint bid to provide funding for a rough sleepers outreach service, Housing First and Turning Tides Support was successful and funds were awarded to support the off the street offer, split between Mid Sussex and Horsham.

She concluded by noting that WSCC has confirmed a local assisted network award will support Ferny Help, Haywards Heath food bank, East Grinstead food bank and children and family centres.

In response to a Member's question about the number of rough sleepers and homeless who may be from the Armed Forces, the Cabinet Member agreed to liaise with Turning Tides to see if this information is available. The Cabinet Member also agreed to share the content of this report by email.

Cabinet Member for Planning

The Cabinet Member discussed Development Management noting the positive statistics on the time taken in turning around planning applications and the increased number of applications which have been received this year. As an example, 1230 applications have been received so far this year against 1178 in 2020. Also, of major schemes determined in 13 weeks, 90% as an average have been turned around in that time. He also noted the reduction in the number of refused applications that went to appeal which is 15 in 2022 as opposed to 35 in the previous year.

He acknowledged that in terms of enforcement action, it is in the 90 percentile of enforcement that is acted on within 10 days.

The Cabinet Member provided an update on the importance of maintaining a 5-year housing land supply, citing the amount of costs awards, and agreed homes decided by two Inspectors for neighbouring Councils as they had made unreasonable decisions and failed to provide evidence on appeal. He highlighted that in comparison, the District Council was not vague, generalised or inaccurate and works on an evidence-based process.

In response to a question from a Member he confirmed that the additional housing delivered by the Council already, will count towards the 5 year housing land supply.

## **16. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 10.2.**

The following question was received from Councillor Henwood:

Community buildings which may be able to provide "warm hubs" are a way of providing warm places for those citizens in the District that will be not able to afford to pay the costs for keeping warm. "What is Mid Sussex District Council doing to co-ordinate and publicize warm hubs in the District?"

The Deputy Leader provided the following response:

We have already heard from the Leader in terms of the winter support being rolled out in Mid Sussex. West Sussex County Council on behalf of all the District and Boroughs in the County, is coordinating our response to 'warm hubs' and this Council is working closely with them to identify buildings that can be used. Many Parish and Towns are doing similar and the Council is looking at grants that can be offered to other groups to do same.

This Council recognises the advantages of the 'warm hubs' scheme and we will play an active role in promoting the offer and its benefits.

Councillor Henwood asked a further question on what funding may be available to support and fund any District Council community buildings that may be identified. The Deputy Leader noted that the position is developing and said he will provide a reply as the position becomes clear.

The following question was received from Councillor Marsh:

Please could the Leader of the Council clarify the cost to the taxpayer of Cllr Eggleston's letter before action challenging the Sites Allocation DPD and the extraordinary meeting of Council on 10th August, including the costs of the additional meeting, legal advice, and officer time.

The Leader provided the following response:

Officers have calculated the total costs to the taxpayer as £11,761. This includes officer time, barrister's opinion, and the costs of holding an extraordinary meeting of the Council. It is clearly regrettable.

The following question was received from Councillor Alison Bennett:

Looking at the Cabinet papers for Monday when you will consider the final consultants' reports for Clair Hall, please can you explain whether you intend to engage a single broker/agent to pursue both Model 1 (refurbishment) and Model 3 (cultural and other provision via redevelopment), or whether you intend to run two separate processes in parallel with two independent third parties as suggested in the BOP report?

And given that over 145k has been spent since your botched plan to close it.

The Leader provided the following response:

Thank you for your question. Please note the subject of your question is a matter for the Cabinet to decide at their next meeting on Monday. The proposal is to commission specialist help to pursue further the recommended models. How and when both models would be taken forward is a matter for further work experts to work on and advise us on. This would be the focus of the next phase of work, subject to the Cabinet agreeing to the recommendations.

Councillor Bennett asked the following supplementary question:

Reading the policy context on p14 of the Cabinet report it is clear that the decision to close Clair Hall was counter to the District, Neighbourhood and Town Centre plan. If Clair Hall remains closed, the facility will be lost and BOP report makes it clear that a replacement is not a certainty in the current economic climate. Why have neither the Cabinet, Steering Group nor consultants spoken to groups who have proposals to run it on a no cost basis?

The Leader responded by noting that the process being followed is set out in the report. He reminded Members that Clair Hall is currently being used by the NHS and the Council is using an evidence-based process to ensure it is fit for purpose and for the future.

The meeting finished at 9.17 pm

Chairman