**An extraordinary meeting of Midhurst Town Council took place on**

**Monday 5th September 2022 at 7:00pm at the Midhurst Town Council Offices,**

**The Old Library, Knockhundred Row, Midhurst, GU29 9DQ**

**MINUTES**

**Present**: Cllr C. Lintott (Chairman), Cllr J. Sutton, Cllr D. Coote, Cllr R. Watts, Cllr D. Smallman, Cllr M. Richardson, Cllr J. Travers, Cllr L. Jeffries, Cllr G. McAra. Cllr A. Procter and Cllr D. Fraser

**Officer**: Julian Quail, Assistant Town Clerk

**In attendance**: Sharon Hurr, Town Clerk and RFO, and one member of the public.

**C/128/22 – Chairman’s Announcements** - None.

**C/129/22 – Apologies for Absence –** Cllr Jeffries. Cllrs Smallman and Upjohn were absent without apology.

**C/130/22 - Declarations of Interest -**

Cllr Sutton declared an interest as a trustee of Midhurst Community Hub (MCH) and Cllr Yeo declared an interest as a potential volunteer for MCH.

**C/131/22 - Public Participation Session**

Mr Johnny Culley provided a brief statement regarding the possibility of Midhurst obtaining Fairtrade Town Status. It was agreed that this would be added to the next C&E meeting for further discussion. Mr Culley also agreed to produce a short briefing paper for Councillors.

**Action: Assistant Clerk to add the issue of Fairtrade Town Status to the agenda for the next C&E meeting.**

**C/132/22 – Midhurst Community Hub**

The Report to Council was circulated prior to the meeting.

In summary: The report detailed the progress of the Midhurst Community Hub (MCH) and outlined MCHs difficulty in securing operational premises. In order to establish the MCH and initiate services, MCH have secured temporary (six months) use of part of the West Sussex County Council (WSCC) Library based in The Grange and use of the Registrar’s Office at specific times for private meetings with clients.

The report explained the progress made to date by the Town Council to secure Lilac Cottage (the premises attached to the Town Council offices) to provide an operational base for MCH. A purchase offer had been made by the Town Council of £425,000 and accepted by the current owners WSCC with the proviso, that the sale was completed within two months.

A £500,000 loan from the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities via a

Public Works Loan Board loan over a 25-year period at interest rate of 4%, would result in a total amount repayable of approximately £785,844. With regards to the precept, the impact of the repayment on a band D property would be an increase from £87.86 to £101.45, which would total an extra £13.59 per annum (increase of 15.5%) based on the current 2022-23 council tax precept and tax base. Lilac Cottage would be become a permanent asset of the Town Council.

A debate was held regarding the suitability for the premises for MCH and the work, and time required by MCH to become fully established in the provision of appropriate services for the residents of Midhurst. Further discussion took place in relation to the costs associated with the refurbishment of the building and impact on the precept, which was considered acceptable in order to gain the cited community asset. The cost of the operation of the building was also considered and the contribution that MCH would be able to make in this regard, and the potential to gain grants to support some renovation works.

The Chairman Cllr Lintott proposed that the purchase of Lilac Cottage should be progressed, which was seconded by Cllr McAra, and Cllr Lintott requested that a vote was taken. It was agreed by a majority of eight in favour, with three against and one abstention. Therefore, it was **RESOLVED** to continue with the purchase of Lilac Cottage.

The Chairman Cllr Lintott proposed to continue with an application to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to apply for a Public Works Loan Board loan of £500,000 over the borrowing term of 25 years for the purchase of Lilac Cottage to provide premises for the Midhurst Community Hub which was seconded by Cllr Watts, and Cllr Lintott requested that a vote was taken. It was agreed by a majority of ten in favour, none against and two abstentions. Therefore, it was **RESOLVED** to continue to seek approval by the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to apply for a Public Works Loan Board loan of £500,000.

The annual loan repayments will calculate to an approximate total of £31,433. It is also intended to increase the council tax precept by 15.5% per annum to £232,214. This will be subject to a precept increase consultation.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 08:09pm

Signed:………………………………………………………… Dated……………………………………….

Chairman