

**MINUTES OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD
ON TUESDAY 22 OCTOBER 2019 AT 5.30PM**

- PRESENT : Councillors Barrie, Dignum, Harry, K Hughes and Scicluna
- EX OFFICIO : The Deputy Mayor (Councillor J Hughes)
- APOLOGIES : The Mayor (Councillor Plowman)
Councillor Apel
- ALSO PRESENT : Councillors Gaskin and Sharp
- ABSENT : Councillor Joy
- IN ATTENDANCE : Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk, Property Manager and Member Services Support Officer

57 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

As recorded above.

58 MINUTES OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 4 SEPTEMBER 2019

The Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting held on 4 September 2019, having been circulated, were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

59 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE IN MATTERS ON THE AGENDA FOR THIS MEETING

Councillor Barrie, Dignum and K Hughes declared an interest as Members of Chichester District Council.

At this point, the Chairman informed the Committee that the majority of matters covered by Agenda Item 15 (namely Civic and Ceremonial Matters relating to Council Meetings) would be deferred until the next Finance Committee Meeting on 26 November 2019 to allow Members time to fully review the report from the Town Clerk and discuss its implications with their fellow Councillors.

The Chairman further commented that the part of the report covering the rearrangement of the Council Chamber furniture to better accommodate future Council meetings would be discussed at the appropriate point of the meeting

60 UPDATES FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

(i) Maurice Patten Statue

The Property Manager clarified the positioning and orientation of the plinth for the statue relative to the existing War Memorial.

The Chairman clarified for Members what the plinth was for and that the statue would be dedicated on 10 November 2019 at the Remembrance Day Service.

(ii) Charles I Bust

The Committee noted that the loan agreement with the Novium Museum had been signed and arrangements had been made for delivery of the bust to the Museum on 27 November 2019.

(iii) Finance Team Staffing

Deferred to Agenda Item 19.

Corrections to items on Agenda – the Committee were advised that the dates given for the Business Plan review and the Standing Orders review were incorrectly stated on the Agenda and have been corrected here.

(iv) Chichester City Council Business Plan review – held on 17 October 2019

No updates presented.

(v) Chichester City Council Standing Orders review – held on 21 October 2019

No updates presented.

(vi) Spending on Property Team spending approved at the last Finance Committee

Members noted that all projects and purchases had either been commenced or completed.

61 URGENT REPAIR WORK TO PASSENGER LIFT AT THE COUNCIL HOUSE

The Property Manager reported that, following the failure of the lift several weeks ago, two separate lift companies had been unable to rectify the fault and resume lift operations. Members were advised that the failure was due to faults in the control panel.

Members were informed that one of the contractors would be attempting a temporary repair the day after the meeting.

The Property Manager gave the Committee a brief history of the lift, which had been installed in 1992, and the preparations which had been made in setting aside reserve funds in anticipation of having to spend on major repairs on or replacement of the lift. He then informed Members that he had received indicative quotes from four contractors with a range of prices from £16,000 to £32,000. The range of prices resulted from the differing equipment suppliers and how much of the lift mechanism was being recommended for replacement.

Members then discussed the merits of the differing quality of equipment being proposed and the Property Manager's thoughts on what should be replaced. It was also reported that the controls were in need of upgrade to meet the current regulations for building access and safety.

The Property Manager requested initial approval for up to £32,000 in lieu of formal approval of a specific contractor while due diligence was undertaken.

It was RESOLVED that the Property Manager should continue researching the available options and report to a special meeting of the Finance Committee to be held on Wednesday 30 October 2019 at 10.30am.

62 COUNCIL HOUSE ROOF LANTERN

Property Sub-Committee Minute 18(a) refers

To consider the following Recommendation from the Property Sub-Committee:

It was RECOMMENDED to Finance Committee that an order be placed to the value of £7,444.12 plus VAT with Medina Joinery for the replacement of the lantern as specified. This to be funded from the Council House Reserve.

The Property Manager confirmed to the Committee that Planning Consent had been given for the thicker, thermally efficient glazing panels.

It was RESOLVED that an order be placed with Medina Joinery to the value of £7,444.12 for the replacement of the roof lantern to be funded from the Council House Reserve.

63 EXTERNAL BUILDING SURVEY

Property Sub-Committee Minute 18(b) refers

To consider the following Recommendation from the Property Sub-Committee:

It was RECOMMENDED to Finance Committee that Fuller Associates be commissioned to undertake the additional work as outlined at a cost of £3,600 plus VAT to be funded from the Council House Reserve.

It was RESOLVED that an order be placed with Fuller Associates for the additional work at a cost of £3,600 plus VAT to be funded from Council House Reserve.

64 NOTICE BOARDS ON EITHER END OF PORTICO

Property Sub-Committee Minute 18(f) refers

To consider the following Recommendation from the Property Sub-Committee:

It was RECOMMENDED to Finance Committee that an order be placed with Acorn Workshop to the value of £965.00 to provide two new hardwood noticeboards of identical design to the current boards, green painted and traditionally sign written to be paid from Public Realm.

The Chairman advised that the noticeboards were in need of replacing due to the poor condition of the current units.

It was RESOLVED that an order be placed with Acorn Workshop to the value of £965.00 to provide two new hardwood noticeboards of identical design to the current boards, green painted and traditionally sign written, to be paid from Public Realm.

65 ST PAULS ALLOTMENTS – URGENT TREE WORK

Property Sub-Committee Minute 18(f) refers

To consider the following Recommendation from the Property Sub-Committee:

It was RECOMMENDED to Finance Committee that orders be placed with S&P Tree Services to the value of £4,640.00 for the work on the northern treeline at St Pauls allotments and that an order to the value of £900.00 be placed with Chichester Tree Services for the work on the Oak trees on the same site to be funded from the Allotment Improvement Fund.

The Property Manager advised that, due to a change in the specification of the work for S&P Tree Services, the cost had come down to £2,840.

It was RESOLVED that orders be placed with S&P Tree Services and Chichester Tree Services in the amounts of £2,840 and £900 respectively for the work on the northern treeline and oak trees at St Pauls allotment site. To be funded from the Allotment Improvement Fund.

66 **PRECINCT PAVING – RESURFACING OF CITY CENTRE SHOPPING PRECINCT**
Property Sub-Committee Minute 23(d) refers

To consider the following Recommendation from the Property Sub-Committee:

It was RECOMMENDED to Finance Committee that the City Council agree to participate in the initial Options Report with a funding contribution of no more than £8,000 in the first phase.

The Chairman advised the Committee that it had been suggested that West Sussex County Council, Chichester District Council and Chichester City Council share the estimated £40,000 cost of an Options Report on an equal basis. Members were further advised that the Property Sub-Committee had agreed that, when considering the available resources in each authority, it was disproportionate to expect the City Council to pay a third of the cost.

Members discussed the Property Sub-Committee's suggestion that the City Council contribute no more than £8,000 to the Options Report. The Committee also discussed the options available for speeding up the process as well as the funding options for the full project. The Property Manager informed the Committee that the current estimate for the full project was £3.6million and that the Options Report would be required to bid for Department of Transport funding.

It was RESOLVED that the Property Manager be authorised to offer no more than £8,000 towards the overall cost of the Options Report when he reported to the next meeting of the Chichester Vision Group where the project would be discussed. This to be funded from Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) receipts.

The Chairman moved to the Supplementary Agenda.

67 It was RESOLVED to adopt and approve the Minutes of the Property Sub-Committee held on 1st October 2019

Peter Roberts left the meeting.

68 **NEW HOMES BONUS**

The Deputy Town Clerk advised the Committee that four of the projects submitted to Chichester District Council had been accepted in full.

The Committee was further advised that two of the projects had been agreed subject to specific conditions that the Members had to be informed about and accept for the funding to be provided.

The two projects subject to the special conditions were:

- The Dears Almshouse Trust – £15,000 - the condition applied being that the grant should only be used for landscaping of the new gardens and NOT for the installation of the proposed solar panels.
- Chichester and Selsey Sea Cadets – £9,750 - the condition applied being that the grant should only be used to develop a planning application for the replacement of the existing building on the land currently occupied by the Sea Cadets.

The Committee then discussed why the proposed solar panels had been excluded from the funding being provided to the Dears Almshouse Trust. The Deputy Town Clerk advised

Members that, as this could potentially provide income through Feed-in-Tariffs, it was ineligible for funding from the New Homes Bonus.

Members expressed disappointment that, given the declared Climate Emergencies from the City Council and Chichester District Council, grant applications for solar panels did not qualify for funding on the basis of the Feed-in-Tariffs. This was felt to be particularly difficult to justify given the number of New Homes Bonus grants awarded to village halls that were also seen as income generators.

The Committee agreed that City Councillors who also sat on Chichester District Council should make enquiries about exceptions being made where environmental considerations were involved.

69 CHICHESTER CITY COUNCIL DRAFT BUDGET – 2020-2021

The Deputy Town Clerk presented the draft budget for the City Council for 2020-2021.

Members were advised that, given the current budget proposals, the City Council precept would show a 11.76% increase. This equated to an increase of £6.17 per Band D property (approximately 12p per week). The Deputy Town Clerk summarised the main areas that were impacting on the budget for 2020-2021. The Committee agreed that there were two issues of particular concern.

The Deputy Town Clerk reminded Members that one of the biggest impacts on the new budget would be variances in the rental income from the Market House. The risk to the City Council's income in the current retail environment was discussed and the effect it would have on the precept.

The Town Clerk proposed inviting a representative of the City Council's Business Partner in the Market House to formally present proposals to the Special Meeting on Wednesday 30 October at 10.30am.

The Committee discussed the proposal to restore the Discretionary Grant budget to £50,000 from £30,000 while also keeping the Public Realm budget of £20,000. The Chairman reminded Members of the difficulty of funding all the applications from groups for Grants which is why the proposed budget increase had been put forward.

Members debated the relative merits of Discretionary Grants to groups versus the City Council managed Public Realm projects. The Deputy Town Clerk then proposed increasing the Grant budget by £5,000 and the Town Clerk advised the Committee that there would be a carry forward from the 2019-2020 budget which would allow.

Members then discussed the Mayor's proposal to transfer funds from the Allotment Improvement Fund to allow an increase of £10,000 in the Grant budget. The Deputy Town Clerk advised that the Allotment Improvement fund had been virtually used up with works on and equipment for the allotments.

In light of the ongoing uncertainty with the rental income from the Market House and the carry forward of the Discretionary Grant budget from 2019-2020 to 2020-2021, it was proposed, seconded and RESOLVED that the Discretionary Grant budget for 2020-2021 be increased from £30,000 to £35,000.

The Deputy Town Clerk reminded the Committee that discussions had taken place about the creation of a separate Climate and Environment fund to support suitable projects in the future following the declaration of a Climate Emergency. Members agreed that it would be likely that the environment would become a fundamental part of the work of the City Council and therefore current budgets and projects would be managed in line with the declared Climate Emergency.

The Committee was advised by the Deputy Town Clerk that, until the issue of the income from the Market House was resolved at a meeting the following week, work to confirm the overall budget would be difficult.

70 DRAFT CHICHESTER INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN

The Chairman updated the Committee on projects currently on the Infrastructure Plan that had now been completed and would now be removed, namely:

- Replacement cycle racks
- Bus shelters
- Lighting in Litten Gardens

The Chairman proposed and Members agreed that the wording of "Improve access for elderly people in City Centre" (IBP/24) be modified to remove the word "elderly".

The Committee was advised that IBP/712 – "Improve City signage" was under way with the joint project with the Chichester Business Improvement District (BID) to renovate and restore the exiting finger posts.

Members discussed new projects and items that would be included under projects by the City Council. This included the sum of £50,000 that had been previously agreed for funding of the Neighbourhood Plan.

The Committee discussed projects that had been proposed, including a Hub for the Homeless, work on the Council House portico, City wide tree planting and a bike hire scheme.

Members agreed that tree planting and the portico project should be added to the Infrastructure Plan while the Hub for the Homeless should be deferred for further discussion.

71 EXTERNAL AUDIT OF ANNUAL ACCOUNTS – 2018-2019 – BY MOORE UK

The Deputy Town Clerk reported that the External Auditors had agreed and approved the City Council accounts for 2018-2019 with two caveats.

The Committee was advised that the public accounts should be displayed and available for the public for a period of 30 days including the first ten days of July. The Deputy Town Clerk further advised that, under the current meeting schedule, the accounts had been approved during this 30 day period. The External Auditors advised that the accounts must be approved by Council before the commencement of the public right dates.

Members were then advised that a N/A tick box in Section 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability return had been missed and that this had now been completed in accordance with the other responses given in the return.

72 CIVIC AND CEREMONIAL MATTERS RELATING TO COUNCIL MEETINGS

The Chairman reminded Members that the majority of the Town Clerk's report would be deferred until the next Finance Committee meeting to allow Councillors and political groups to discuss the contents of the report in more detail.

The Member Services Support Officer distributed copies of the proposed new layout for the Council Chamber intended for use at full Council meetings to allow more space for members of the public who wished to attend. The main point of the new layout was to form an extended "top table" that would include the three Chairmen.

The Town Clerk reported that several layouts had been tested and that the plan being put before Members was the proposal from Officers for trialling. The Chairmen requested that, due to the size and weight of the brown ceremonial chairs, the Councillors should, instead,

use the black Council Chamber chairs with the exception of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor who would continue to use their specific ceremonial chairs. The brown ceremonial chairs would then be used for seating in the public gallery.

It was RESOLVED that the proposed layout, as modified, would be trialled at the next full Council meeting.

73 UPGRADE OF THE CITY COUNCIL ACCOUNTS SOFTWARE

The Deputy Town Clerk reported that, due to the new requirement to submit VAT returns online, the City Council's accounting software had recently been upgraded to add the ability to comply with the new VAT regulations.

74 ITEMS TO BE INCLUDED ON NEXT AGENDA

- Budget
- Town Clerk's report on the matter of Civic and Ceremonial matters
- Budget monitoring

75 PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT 1960

RESOLVED that, in the view of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, the public (including the Press) be excluded from the meeting for Agenda Item 19 only because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, namely staffing matters.

76 FINANCE TEAM STAFFING

The Deputy Town Clerk reported that the current Temporary Finance Assistant had now reached the end of her original three month posting.

Members were advised that the postholder had shown considerable resourcefulness and willingness to learn during her time and that she had become a considerable asset to the City Council. The Deputy Town Clerk informed the Committee that it would be a shame to lose the skills that she had been contributing to the Finance Team.

It was proposed to the Committee that the current postholder be offered a 12 month contract at 15 hours per week with an option to increase these hours if required by operational needs.

It was RESOLVED by Committee to offer the current postholder a 12 month contract on the terms proposed by the Deputy Town Clerk.

77 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 26 November 2019 at 5.30pm

The meeting closed at 6.49pm.