

**MINUTES OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING  
HELD ON TUESDAY 26 NOVEMBER 2019 AT 5.30PM**

- PRESENT : Councillors Barrie, Dignum, Harry, K Hughes and Scicluna
- EX OFFICIO : The Mayor (Councillor Plowman)  
The Deputy Mayor (Councillor J Hughes)  
Councillor Apel
- APOLOGIES : Councillor Joy
- ALSO PRESENT : Councillors Gaskin, Gershater and Sharp  
David Fanchi – Director – Real Estate Finance, Foot Anstey LLP
- IN ATTENDANCE : Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk, Member Services Support Officer,  
Finance Assistant

89 APOLOGIES

As recorded above.

90 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting held on 22 October 2019 and the Special Meetings of Finance held on Wednesday 30 October 2019 and Wednesday 6 November 2019, having been previously circulated, were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

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

Councillors Barrie, Dignum, K Hughes and Plowman declared an Interest as Members of Chichester District Council.

**At this point the Chairman moved to deal with Agenda Items 5 and 6 to allow the City Council's Legal Adviser to leave the meeting before other items of internal interest.**

92 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 6 only because of the nature of the business to be transacted, namely confidential business matters.

93 THE MARKET HOUSE

The Chairman introduced David Fanchi from Foot Anstey LLP. Mr Fanchi was asked to attend the meeting to advise Members on the matters raised by Orion Developments (Southern) Ltd in connection to the Market House.

The Town Clerk advised Members that these matters related to a proposal from Orion Developments that the City Council grants an increase in the term of the Head Lease on the Market House to 125 years from the original 99 year term.

Mr Fanchi outlined to Members the possible options available to the Committee in relation to the Head Lease, including the financial implications attached to granting such an extension.

The Chairman reminded the Committee that the implications outlined would have a direct impact on the public money under the stewardship of the City Council. Mr Fanchi concurred and advised Members of the need to exercise due diligence.

It was proposed, seconded and RESOLVED that Mr Fanchi should liaise with the City Council's Property Consultants, HO<sup>2</sup>, to review the options available to Members with regards to the request to extend the Head Lease and the financial and other implications of each of those options. It was agreed that, if needs be, arrangements would be made for Special Meetings of the Committee and the Council to progress this matter.

Mr Fanchi left the meeting.

The meeting returned to public session and the remainder of the meeting following the original Agenda order.

#### 94 UPDATE FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

- (i) Council House passenger lift  
**(Minute 81 refers)**

The Town Clerk informed the Committee that an order had been placed and regular contact was being made with the lift company to monitor progress. Members were advised that, due to the complex and bespoke nature of the necessary equipment, it was unlikely that this would be resolved until early 2020.

Members noted the frustration being experienced by room hirers and also that Officers had put in place temporary solutions for less mobile visitors.

- (ii) Charles I Bust  
**(Minute 60(ii) refers)**

The Chairman confirmed that the bust would be delivered to the Novium Museum on 27 November 2019 at approximately 12.00pm. Members agreed that the bust returning "home" would be a positive step for the City.

- (iii) Chichester City Council Standing Orders review  
**(Minute 47 refers)**

The Town Clerk advised that he had gone back to square one with the Standing Orders review following difficulties with the original framework that he had proposed.

Members were informed that he was currently working on another set of draft Standing Orders which would be modelled on those of Lewes Town Council. The Town Clerk stated that he aimed to have the draft ready in early 2020.

The Chairman commented that, as the Standing Orders were the rules that the City Council was governed by, it was important that they were clear and easy to understand.

The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk following the receipt of a letter from two local residents about certain aspects of the City Council operations namely, the layout of the Council Chamber for Council Meetings, the use of the Assembly Room for meetings, prayers at Council Meetings and ceremonial aspects of the conduct of meetings and other proceedings of the City Council.

It was RECOMMENDED to Full Council that

- (i) When a larger than usual attendance of members of the public is known about, not just for Full Council meetings, the default option of the Assembly Room being used be implemented as has been done in the past. However, it was essential that Councillors keep Officers updated about local issues which may indicate greater numbers attending so that timely arrangements could be made, including checking upon the availability of the Assembly Room. The Annual Parish Meeting would continue to be held in the Assembly Room. Other than for these occasions, the Council Chamber would remain the first choice for meetings;
- (ii) The present practice of prayers being said at Council Meetings be discontinued and replaced with the following arrangement:
  - a. Prayers would be said in the Mayor's Parlour at 5.55pm for those wishing to participate;
  - b. The Council Meeting would then commence at 6pm with the Mayor saying a few words to concentrate the mind on the purpose of the meeting and those we serve. There would then follow a short period of reflective silence prior to the commencement of formal business. (This routine would also be implemented, informally, for the meeting of the Full Council on 4th December, pending approval of this minute).
- (iii) Prayers would continue to be said at the Annual Meeting of the City Council in May each year.
- (iv) A Mayor's Chaplain continue to be appointed who would provide pastoral care to Councillors and staff.
- (v) With regard to current civic ceremonial practices, the City Council is recommended not to make any changes at the present time, but the Council would be prepared to reconsider this decision at a later date. The present 'three level' arrangement being:
  - a. Full Ceremonial eg at Remembrance Sunday, Mayor's Sunday, Freedom Ceremonies, the Annual Meeting of the City Council or other occasions of significance.
  - b. Part ceremonial as occurred at Full Council meetings, and
  - c. No ceremonial - for example at Committee meetings.
- (vi) It was noted that, as had been agreed at the previous Ordinary Committee Meeting, a new seating layout would be trialled at Council Meeting on 4th December. This would extend the present 'top table' on each side.

On one side of the Mayor would sit the three Committee Chairman and on the other side, the Mayor's Chaplain and the member of staff taking the minutes. The current Committee black plastic chairs would be used in this layout, other than for the Mayor and Deputy Mayor's chair.

## 96 CITY COUNCIL BUDGET 2020/2021

A copy of the Budget for 2020/2021 and the Deputy Town Clerk's report had been circulated to all Members with the Agenda. The report included the Earmarked Reserves Balance at 19 November 2019, the Planned Maintenance Programme for 2019-2029 and a Schedule of Fees and Charges for 2020/2021.

The Budget for 2020/2021 showed a 9.85% increase in the Precept. The Deputy Town Clerk advised that, as the draft tax base figure received from Chichester District Council had shown a 1.73% increase from 2019/2020, it had been possible to reduce the original draft increase in the precept from 12.04% to 9.85%.

Members were advised that, for 2020/2021, the Band D Council Tax would show an increase of £5.17 per annum on the 2019/2020 figure. This represented an increase of 9.9p per week for Band D properties.

The Chairman and Town Clerk thanked the Deputy Town Clerk for her efforts in managing the budget and presenting a lower increase on the Precept despite the various challenges facing the City Council's revenue and expenditure, in particular the loss of income from Market House rentals.

It was RECOMMENDED to Full Council that:

- (i) the City Council budget for 2020/2021 be £817,767 resulting in a Precept Demand of £644,098 and a Band D Council Tax payment of £57.65 (an increase of 9.9p per week); an overall increase of 9.85% on the Precept - providing the Draft Tax Base remained unchanged at 11,144;
- (ii) the Earmarked Reserves Balance to 19 November 2019 be approved;
- (iii) the Planned Maintenance Programme for 2019-2029 be noted;
- (iv) the Schedule of Fees and Charges for 2020/2021 be approved.

Councillor Apel left the meeting.

## 97 REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2019

A copy of the Revenue Budget Monitoring Report to 30 September 2019 had been circulated to all Member with the Agenda.

The Deputy Town Clerk informed Members that this report was currently showing a deficit of £24,519. She advised Members that this was the largest deficit she had seen in her 13 years in post and outlined the variances that had appear in the Monitoring Report.

Members were further advised that the largest contributing to factor to the deficit would be the significant reduction in rental income from the Market House.

The Deputy Town Clerk also updated Members on the New Homes Bonus allocations with the only change being that, following the extension of its funding deadline, the South Downs Planetarium had now fully expended its allocation of £25,000 for structural alterations.

## 98 PUBLIC REALM PROJECTS

A copy of the Public Realm Projects to date had been circulated to all Members with the Agenda.

The Deputy Town Clerk advised that a total of £23,612.62 had been either spent or committed for 2019/2020 with the only outstanding payment being for the replacement of the external Portico noticeboards at a cost of £965.00.

Members agreed that the Public Realm budget was a very important way for the City Council to be able to undertake projects to improve the environment within and look of the City.

## 99 EARMARKED RESERVES UPDATE

A copy of the Earmarked Reserves Balances to date had been circulated to all Members with the Agenda.

The Deputy Town Clerk updated the Committee on the expenditure from each reserve with Members noting the current balances held.

Councillor Dignum left the meeting.

The Mayor and Councillor Harry left during discussion of Agenda item 12.

## 100 SWANFIELD DRIVE BUS SHELTER

The Town Clerk advised the Committee that this matter had previously been discussed at the Property Sub-Committee held on 1 October 2019 (**Minute 22(d) refers**), the Minutes of which were approved and adopted by Finance Committee at the meeting held on Tuesday 22 October 2019 (**Minute 67 refers**).

Members discussed the merits and costs of providing the requested bus shelter at the bus stop nearest to the Swanfield Community Centre with Councillors J Hughes and K Hughes from East Ward advising the Committee that they had been speaking to residents about the need for a shelter to be provided.

The Town Clerk reminded Members that the City Council did not have a Duty to provide bus shelters within Chichester but that a discretionary Power rested with the City Council to provide such a facility if agreed upon by the Council.

The Committee was further reminded that providing the additional bus shelter would cost an estimated £12,000. It was stated that a suggestion had been received that a New Homes Bonus application could be used to fund the additional bus shelter but Members were advised that Chichester District Council would undoubtedly consider that the City Council had a Power to act in this instance.

The Chairman stated that there were a total of seven bus stops on the Swanfield estate alone and expressed concerns that, if the City Council exercised its Power and provided a bus shelter at this stop, it would set a precedent for other bus stops currently without shelters.

It was RESOLVED that the matter be referred to Full Council on 4 December 2019 for a decision where the relevant Minutes would be available for consideration.

## 101 ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

A report from the Town Clerk outlining the key features of Annual Parish had been circulated to all Members with the Agenda.

The Town Clerk briefly talked about his report and advised Members, for information, about the key differences between and requirements of the Annual Parish Meeting and the Annual Meeting of the City Council (Mayor Making).

## 102 BUSINESS PLAN

A copy of the current draft of the Business Plan for 2019-2023 had been circulated to Members with the Agenda.

Members discussed the complexity of the process of updating the current Business Plan and agreed that it was a bigger piece of work than could be satisfactorily resolved as an Agenda item in a wider meeting.

Councillor Gershater emphasised to the Committee the importance of a properly structured Business Plan which should include benchmarks against which the success of the implementation of the Business Plan could be measured.

Members further agreed that it would aid the process if the discussions could be held in a more informal setting away from the Council House before the proposals were presented to a Special Meeting of Council where the only item of business would be the Business Plan.

It was therefore RESOLVED that an "away day" be arranged for all Members and Officers at a venue away from the Council House in the New Year. This, ultimately, would lead to a Special Meeting of Council being called to adopt the new Business Plan for the current administration going forward.

Councillors Gaskin and K Hughes left the meeting

## 103 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION ONLY

- (a) MONTHLY RECONCILIATION WITH EVIDENCE OF BANK STATEMENTS TO END OF AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER 2019

RESOLVED to note the monthly reconciliation with evidence of Bank Statements to the end of August and September 2019

- (b) LIST OF CHEQUES PAID FOR AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER 2019

RESOLVED to note the cheques paid for August and September 2019

- (c) LIST OF BARCLAYCARD PAYMENTS FOR AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER 2019

RESOLVED to note the Barclaycard payments for August and September 2019

## 104 ITEMS TO BE INCLUDED ON NEXT AGENDA

- Market House
- Business Plan

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: TUESDAY 14 JANUARY 2020