

MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE MEETING

HELD ON MONDAY 3 FEBRUARY 2020 AT 5.30PM

- PRESENT:** Councillors Apel, Carter, C Hughes, Gershater and Sharp
- EX-OFFICIO:** The Mayor (Councillor Plowman)
Deputy Mayor (Councillor J Hughes)
Councillor Scicluna
- APOLOGIES:** Councillors Joy and Lishman, Pam Bushby (Communities and Wellbeing, Chichester District Council), Graham Pound – Chairman, Friends of Valletta
- ALSO PRESENT:** Councillor Bowden
Chief Inspector John Carter - District Commander Chichester and Arun
Julia Sander - Chairman, Friends of Chartres
Liz Turner - Chairman, Friends of Ravenna
Chris Holgate – Trustee and Chairman, Fire Safety Friends of Russia
Paula Chatfield, Acting Chair, Chichester Tree Wardens
Councillor Simon Oakley – West Sussex County Council (Chichester East)
Dr Linda Boise - A Resident of the City
- IN ATTENDANCE:** Town Clerk and Member Services Support Officer

48 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

As recorded above

49 MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE HELD ON 18 NOVEMBER 2019

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting held on 18 November 2019, having been circulated, were signed as a correct record

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

The Chairman and The Mayor declared a personal interest as Members of Chichester District Council.

The Chairman declared a personal interest as a member of the Friends of Ravenna and Valletta.

Councillor Scicluna declared a personal interest as a member of the Friends of Chartres, Valletta and Ravenna.

Councillor C Hughes declared a personal interest as a member of the Friends of Valletta.

51 UPDATE FROM THE PREVIOUS MINUTES

Minute 40(i) – Floral Displays

The Member Services Support Officer reported that a quote was still awaited from the Contractors regarding changing the planting scheme for some of the Cathedral beds to include more sustainable and 'wild' planting.

Members were further advised that the Contractor had indicated they had the capacity to increase the number of hanging baskets they could support this summer to 150 (up from approximately 90 in 2019) with Chichester BID offering to help meet the increased cost.

Councillor Sharp referred the Committee to the existing City Council planting scheme and in particular the specifications including use of chemical weedkillers and peat in the planters.

Councillor Sharp queried whether the specification could be changed to exclude use of chemical weedkillers and peat given their damaging environmental impact.

The Member Services Support Officer advised that, under Audit rules, the City Council would have to retest the planting contract and that the specification could be changed to suit the standing policies at the time.

At this point the Chairman moved to Agenda item 5 to hear reports from external attendees.

52 POLICING AND SECURITY IN THE CITY

(a) The Chairman welcomed Chief Inspector Jon Carter (Arun and Chichester District Commander, Sussex Police) to the meeting.

Chief Inspector Carter gave a presentation covering his areas of responsibilities. He advised that his area of Chichester District and Arun was the largest in the Sussex Police force and was also one of the largest in the country.

Members were advised that, as a result of three funding increases, more warranted officers and Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) were in the process of being recruited as part of the Chief Inspector's drive to provide more robust policing across his area of responsibility. To date this has resulted in 11 additional officers for the Chichester District response team, 4 officers on the Neighbourhood Policing team, 4 PCSOs with another 8 to be recruited.

The Committee then asked the Chief Inspector a number of questions about his work and responsibilities. During this discussion, the Chief Inspector was able to provide some clarification regarding beat Officers, PCSOs and levels of crime in Chichester.

Members were advised that the current model for providing PCSO cover meant that each ward had one or more allocated Officer and those Officers were expected to spend the majority of their time in that area, making themselves known and identifying issues within that area. Resources could then be bid for to help with tackling those issues.

The Chief Inspector emphasised to the Committee that it was vital that incidents were reported to 999, 101 or online as appropriate to generate statistics and evidence of the need for resources in tackling issues of concern. Direct contact with Officers and PCSOs was to be discouraged in case of absence as this would delay the matter being addressed.

The Mayor thanked the Chief Inspector for the update on the policing in the Chichester area and also noted the vital support provided within the City by the current Community Officer who was due to retire soon. The Chief Inspector advised that this vacancy would definitely be filled and the role would not be changing.

The Mayor then asked how Chichester fared in terms of levels of crime. The Chief Inspector was able to provide Members with a variety of statistics for Chichester and compared them to other towns in the Sussex region. The Committee was advised that, while the figures gave some of the picture, they did not represent the full story as they covered an area larger than the City itself and included incidents that were not necessarily crimes.

Members were presented with comparisons for areas such as Horsham North, which showed a similar level and variety of incidents; and Brighton Pavilion, which had experienced far higher levels of incidents of all types. The Chief Inspector assured the Committee, that on the basis of the statistics, Chichester could be considered a safe place to live but that would not make policing complacent in the area.

The Committee also discussed the issue of homelessness in Chichester. The Chief Inspector reported that there were approximately 30-40 homeless people in Chichester, a relatively small number, and that not all those experienced problematic drinking issues. Members were advised that the genuinely homeless did not all experience substance abuse issues, included a significant proportion of ex armed forces members and often suffered mental health issues. This was in contrast to the larger street community who were usually younger, often had somewhere to live but regularly suffered issues with substance abuse.

Councillor Sharp asked for an update on traffic policing and the County Lines drug running issues. The Chief Inspector advised that County Lines utilised a single mobile phone number for drug transactions which made it an effective system which was very difficult to police. It was reported that the majority of County Lines were believed to be outside Chichester and that they were considered a problem and a threat, particularly to vulnerable individuals.

The Chief Inspector advised Members that, while he was not directly responsible for traffic policing, he was able to bid for traffic police resource if a particular issue required it.

The Chairman, as a City Angel volunteer, asked if the police considered the services and support provided by the City Angels as a useful addition to city centre support. The Chief Inspector advised that he has spent some time with a City Angels representative and that he considered them a very positive part of Chichester's nighttime economy. He further advised that he expected the police to provide them with support when appropriate.

Councillor Oakley (West Sussex County Council) asked what arrangements were in place for liaison between the PCSOs and the Warden service. The Chief Inspector advised that the PCSOs should have identified themselves to the Community Wardens and should be in regular contact for the purposes of joined up working. He also praised the Wardens for the work they undertake in the City.

(b) Community Warden Update

The Committee noted the summary Report from Pam Bushby (Divisional Manager, Communities and Wellbeing, Chichester District Council) which had been circulated to all Members prior to the Meeting.

(c) Community Wardens Report

The Committee noted the Community Warden Reports for the City Centre, South, East and West Wards which had been circulated to all Members prior to the Meeting.

53 REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES OF FRIENDS OF CHARTRES, RAVENNA AND VALLETTA

(a) Friends of Chartres

The Friends of Chartres report had been circulated to all Members and noted.

(b) Friends of Ravenna

The Friends of Ravenna report had been circulated to all Members and noted.

(c) Friends of Valletta

The Friends of Valletta report had been circulated to all Members and noted.

Councillor Scicluna, as Vice-Chairman of the Friends of Valletta, advised the Committee that she was representing the Friends as the Chairman was recovering well from a recent operation.

The Chairman asked that the Committees best wishes for a full recovery be passed on to the Chairman of the Friends of Valletta.

The Mayor commented that, in light of the UK's exit from the European Union, it was more important than ever that the City's ties with its European Friends be maintained and strengthened in the years ahead.

54 FIRE SAFETY FRIENDS OF KURSK

The report from Chris Holgate on behalf of the Fire Safety Friends of Kursk had been circulated to Members and noted.

Mr Holgate began his statement to the Committee by asking whether there had been any regular contact between Chichester City Council and Kursk. The Town Clerk advised that, outside of the occasional fraternal message, no formal communications had been received.

The Committee were then advised by Mr Holgate that he was concerned that he appeared to be the only person in active contact with the Friends in Kursk and asked what the City Council's intentions were with regard to Kursk. The Town Clerk reported that, outside of occasional Mayoral contacts, communication was very limited.

Mr Holgate advised that the Friends in Kursk were regularly asking about Chichester and that opportunities within the educational, cultural and business areas were being missed. He further advised that opportunities to experience the friendship and hospitality of the people of Kursk were also being missed. The Chairman suggested that the new Mayoralty would be an opportunity for the links to be refreshed.

Further points from Mr Holgate's report were outlined to Members, in particular about the importance of people to people links outside of broader political issues.

The Chairman suggested that a special meeting would be called in the near future to further discuss the links with Kursk.

The Mayor thanked Mr Holgate for keeping the links with Kursk alive despite the geographical challenges of the location of the City.

Councillor Scicluna suggested that the Mayor send a message from the City of Chichester to the Friends in Kursk via Mr Holgate. The Mayor and the Committee agreed that this would be a good idea.

55 CHICHESTER TREE WARDENS

The report from the Chichester Tree Wardens had been circulated to all Members and noted.

Mrs Chatfield (Chichester Tree Wardens) advised the Committee of an error in her report. Where it referred to Brian Cole, it should read Brian Hopkins.

The Committee was then asked if it would support asking West Sussex County Council to ensure that any tree loss caused through works on the Highways would be made good as at the current time it was the Tree Wardens' understanding that there was no budget for this and little had been done by way of replacement recently.

Mrs Chatfield also asked if, in the future, it would be possible for the City Council to hold any monies raised by the Tree Wardens in a Civic Tree Planting fund. The Town Clerk agreed this should be possible but it would require the involvement of the Deputy Town Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer.

City resident, Dr Boise, then commented that she was pleased that the enthusiasm for tree planting was growing and for the successes enjoyed by the Tree Wardens. She went on to ask for clarification on three points:

- (i) Ensuring that the County's Highways Budget makes provision for tree planting to replace lost highway trees and starts closing the 'austerity tree gap'.

Councillor Oakley (West Sussex County Council) responded that the County Council's Highways budget was directed primarily towards safety with annual inspections and work to remove dangerous and diseased limbs and trees as appropriate. He suggested that Parish Councils could bid for New Homes Bonus grants to fund tree replacement where it was felt that this was needed.

Councillor Oakley then suggested that, while trees definitely have benefits, it was felt there were certain negative aspects to trees in urban plantings; namely root ingress in to drains and pavement damage.

The Chairman asked that the availability of funds for replanting within County Council budgets be investigated. Councillor Oakley agreed to look in to this, with the caveat that he was not optimistic; and would report back to the next Community Affairs Committee meeting. The Town Clerk agreed to send an email to Councillor Oakley to back up this request.

- (ii) Undertaking or commissioning a comprehensive Chichester tree inventory leading to a strategy to complement the Neighbourhood Plan.

Mrs Chatfield responded by advising the Committee that the Tree Wardens were all volunteers, giving as much of their time to the Tree Warden role as they were able. She further advised that the Tree Wardens had originally suggested the idea of a comprehensive audit of the trees in Chichester and it was hoped that the forthcoming Tree Summit would feed in to this process.

As the question had referred to the Neighbourhood Plan, the Chairman then asked the Mayor to comment as Chairman of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. He advised the Committee that the Steering Group would be setting up a Trees Working Group which would include Mrs Chatfield. This Working Group would review the amount of tree planting required to achieve the carbon neutral target and also ensure that the right trees were planted in the right places.

Dr Boise responded that she felt that street tree planting had been overlooked in favour of a much bigger scheme as envisaged by the Neighbourhood Plan and the Tree Summit. She stated that it was her opinion that street trees should form a much more important part of the focus of the discussions and plans.

Mrs Chatfield pointed out that, in the discussion about land owners and their involvement with tree planting, one of the organisations involved would be the County Council who had already indicated a willingness to attend the public sessions of the Tree Summit to advise the public on how they could get involved with planting trees on the highway. Additional landowners being invited included the hospital, the District Council and the Cathedral. It was hoped that this would then feed in to a strategy for Chichester as a whole.

The Chairman asked Dr Boise to write directly to the Mayor to ask for this discussion to be included within the Neighbourhood Plan process.

- (iii) Increasing funding for tree planting by for example encouraging and match-funding public donations.

The Chairman indicated that this would be something that the City Council could consider.

Councillor Gershater advised the Committee of a process, previously highlighted by Councillor Joy for calculating the number of trees required to offset carbon emissions; and offered his assistance in producing a mathematical model for this purpose.

Councillor Sharp reminded Members about the Urban Tree Fund Challenge and the Mayor indicated that it was the City Council's intention to investigate this and other funding sources as appropriate.

56 CHICHESTER TREE SUMMIT

- (i) The Town Clerk reported to Members that Officers had met with Councillor Sharp the previous week to discuss the basic outline plans for the Chichester Tree Summit. The Town Clerk further advised that, once work on the Annual Civic Awards ceremony had been completed, Officers would be focusing attention on the Tree Summit arrangements. This was to include a letter from the Mayor inviting interested individuals and organisations to attend.
- (ii) The Town Clerk advised that, as the inception of the Tree Summit had not aligned with the budget planning for 2020/2021, it would be appropriate to allocate funds from the Public Realm budget to fund any reasonable expenses incurred by the Tree Summit. These expenses would include some catering and travel costs.

The Town Clerk further advised that he expected the total cost of hosting the Tree Summit would not exceed £1,000. Members expressed agreement for this amount.

The Mayor expressed his support and stated that he thought this would be a positive event for the City Council to show its ongoing commitment to supporting actions on the Climate Emergency.

57 CHICHESTER BID RANGERS

The Chairman noted the report from Chichester BID about the activities on the BID Rangers and expressed the view that the Rangers were doing a good job.

Councillor Gershater informed the Committee that he had received comments about the need for the Rangers. He asked the Chief Inspector for the Police viewpoint on the functions being undertaken by the Rangers.

The Chief Inspector disagreed that the Rangers were an unnecessary addition to the City Centre patrols and advised Members that they were not a replacement for the Police as they had no powers to arrest or interrogate. He stated that he felt the Rangers, as well as the Wardens, showed a keenness by the local community organisations to have eyes and ears out in the community. He advised Members that Chichester was unique in Sussex for having a Community Police Officer in the City centre and that the post would be filled following the current incumbent's retirement.

The Chief Inspector expressed support for the Rangers who he felt provided a very important first visible presence on the streets and crucial eyes and ears if the Police presence was focused elsewhere.

Councillor Scicluna asked for it to be noted that, while Rangers do not have any statutory powers, residents and visitors liked having the Ranger presence on the streets.

Councillor Sharp then reported to Members a positive incident involving the Rangers where they had used their own money to provide a homeless person with accommodation for the night. She advised that she had received several positive messages from City residents about this.

58 PROPOSAL TO ADOPT A RED TELEPHONE BOX ON THE RIDGEWAY

The Chairman gave the Committee a brief background of previous efforts to make alternative use of this particular phone box. This had involved setting up a small library for the use of the local community. She also reported that, sadly, local drug dealers had cut the cores out of the books in order to hide drugs in them. This had resulted in the Library being removed.

The Town Clerk gave a brief outline of the scheme that was available to Parish Councils to adopt unused red K6 telephone boxes. He advised that Mrs Chatfield, on behalf of the Parklands Residents Association had been in contact with regards to adopting this phone box on the understanding that they had learned lessons from the previous problems that had been experienced.

The Committee were advised by the Town Clerk that the intention now was to investigate being able to lock the phone box and to use the space for a displays on subjects of interest to the Parklands area.

It was proposed, seconded and RESOLVED that the Committee would support the Town Clerk applying to BT to adopt this phone box for the stated uses by Parklands Residents Association.

59 NORTHGATE SUBWAY IMPROVEMENTS

The Town Clerk reminded Members about the recent refurbishment of the Northgate subway and advised that, sadly, it had been subjected to vandalism within hours of being completed.

The Committee were then referred to Pam Bushby's Community Wardens report which included mention of safety mirrors being installed at either end of the subway to improve visibility through the underpass.

The Town Clerk reported that, while West Sussex County Council would be able to fund the purchase of the mirrors, it appeared there was a shortage of funding for the fixing of the mirrors in the appropriate locations in the subway.

Members were informed that the Town Clerk had offered the services of the City Council Property Team to install the mirrors in the interests of partnership working.

60 VE AND VJ DAY CELEBRATIONS

The Town Clerk reported to Members that approximately 12 months ago he had contacted a number of organisations that are involved with the Remembrance Sunday service to ask about involvement with VE and VJ Day commemorations. The Committee was advised that there had been no responses.

He further advised that, to date, he was aware of two events that were being planned for VE Day:

- i) A street party organised by the Westgate Residents Association in line with the kind of event that would have occurred on VE Day 75 years ago.
- ii) A VE Day event organised by the Cathedral, the expectation being that this would be the main focus of the commemoration in Chichester.

The Town Clerk then reported that Chichester District Council had made available small grants to Parish Councils up to the sum of £250 to support commemoration events with the District. He suggested to Members that the City Council could use a grant of this amount for a commemorative tree planting in the City. This was supported by the Committee.

The Town Clerk expressed concern that, with all the focus on VE Day, commemoration of VJ Day would be eclipsed. The Mayor reported to Members that he had received communication from the Far East Prisoners of War Association and suggested that the City Council could investigate a commemorative tree planting for VJ Day as well.

The Committee heard a suggestion from the Town Clerk that, as VJ Day would fall on a Saturday, a suitable commemorative event be held at the Memorial in Litten Gardens. The Mayor expressed his support which was also supported by all Members of the Committee.

Members then discussed the use of the word celebration and how relevant continuing large scale events outside of Remembrance Sunday would be beyond 75 years. It was felt that, with the increased access to historical materials, new generations were keen to explore and understand what had gone before with particular reference to family history.

The Chairman then returned to Agenda Item 4 to continue the updates from the previous minutes.

60 UPDATES FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES – continued from Minute 51

Minute 40 – Chichester City Council Business Plan (2019-2023) review

The Town Clerk reported that, further to Councillor Gershater's offer of help with the Business Plan, he and the Deputy Town Clerk had had a very productive initial meeting with the Councillor.

Councillor Gershater updated the Committee on his progress. He advised it would be necessary to identify the priorities within the items listed in the draft plan and to suggest ways of measuring the success against these priorities. Members were reminded that previous discussions had included mention of an away day to enable focused discussion.

It was agreed that this suggestion would be passed to the Business Plan Working Group to discuss and action.

Minute 40(iii) – Proposal for a Friendship Link with Speyer, Germany

The Mayor and Town Clerk reported on the forthcoming visit to Speyer in April.

Dates originally selected had been changed due to other Mayoral engagements and Speyer had suggested 19th to 22nd April. However, this had to be shortened to 19th to 21st April to enable the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Town Clerk to return for the City Council meeting on Wednesday 22nd April. Additionally, Speyer had requested that, if possible, the Chichester group arrive by Sunday afternoon as this would enable some business to be transacted before a major discussion on the Monday and then a return to the UK on Tuesday.

The Town Clerk had investigated travel options. A train journey from Chichester (via London St Pancras and Paris and then on to Speyer) was possible, but the journey time was nearly 13 hours. The Eurostar connection at London St Pancras was dependent on the first train from Chichester on Sunday to London Victoria and delay to that journey by any engineering works might adversely affect the preferred connections.

It was possible to fly from London Heathrow to Frankfurt and then catch the train from Frankfurt to Speyer; this method of travel would enable an early afternoon arrival to be achieved.

The Town Clerk also reported that, due to the City Council's declared Climate Emergency, he had consulted several internet sites about carbon offsetting if a flight was used. A contribution of £25 (the calculated amount for the flight) could be paid to a number of very worthwhile projects, but the Town Clerk recommended it be paid to the work of the Woodland Trust, the largest woodland conservation charity in the United Kingdom concerned with the creation, protection, and restoration of native woodland heritage.

The Committee agreed that on the grounds of pragmatism and due to the shortened timetable for the visit, a flight to and from Frankfurt and connecting train journey be the method of travel and that a £25 contribution be made to the work of the Woodland Trust.

It was noted that Speyer were keen to come in Chichester in the Summer, but dates had yet to be agreed.

Minute 40(iv) – Proposal from Westgate Residents Association to adopt the disused red BT phone box on the corner of Westgate and Parklands

The Town Clerk reported that no further response from Westgate Residents Association had been forthcoming. The Committee agreed that this matter would no longer be pursued.

Minute 46 – Review of street trading controls in Chichester City Centre

The Chairman advised that this had been discussed at length in Committee and by Chichester District Council. The Town Clerk reported that the changes had been agreed with the exception of Canon Lane following representations from the Cathedral. It was

further reported that there would be no automatic right to trading on the streets added in the extension and that it would only be considered on application by potential traders.

The Mayor informed Members that the discussion at the District Council had also included extending the potential street trading area to the Little London car park for temporary events only. He advised that this was only intended for occasional, temporary markets and that this was expected to go out to public consultation soon.

Members were reminded by the Town Clerk that there was precedent for using the Little London car park in this way as the Cross 500 celebrations had included a very successful two day market in the Little London car park following permission being granted by Chichester District Council.

Councillor Scicluna, as the City Council Member for Chichester Central Ward, expressed her opposition to at least some of the trading street extensions as they included use of residential streets.

Minute 39 – The Future of Rumboldswyke School

The Town Clerk advised that he had forwarded a link to Members for the West Sussex County Council consultation on the future of the school which had now changed from a consultation on the future of the school to a consultation on the school's closure. This consultation started on the 3 February 2020 and was due to close on 16 March 2020.

Members were advised that a public meeting would be held in The Council House on 3 March 2020 at 6pm.

The Committee expressed disappointment that, despite positive interaction with parents and pupils from the school and the subsequent representations; the current position had been reached.

The Mayor asked whether the closure was now in fact a certainty and whether the consultation was actually worth undertaking.

The Chairman asked Councillor Oakley to respond on behalf of West Sussex County Council.

Councillor Oakley advised the Committee that, if a compliant solution for keeping the school open was forthcoming then the consultation would be worth undertaking. He further reported that, to date, no such solution had been proposed which had triggered the statutory consultation.

The Chairman reported that she understood that a possible approach from a local Academy had been received for the take over of the school which would make it viable. Councillor Sharp advised that, in response to a Freedom of Information request, it appeared that the closure of the school had been predetermined as early as June 2019. She further advised that Bishop Luffa Academy had expressed an interest in taking the school over but as the County Council had not issued an Academisation Order, the viability studies could not take place.

The Chairman expressed concern that Councillor Jamie Fitzjohn (West Sussex County Council) had put together evidence to support the school staying open but that this apparently had not been taken in to account and it appeared that only financial considerations had been reviewed.

The Mayor expressed sadness that the school appeared to be heading for closure.

Councillor Oakley responded to the comments and informed the Committee that the possibility of the Bishop Luffa Academy taking over the school had been discussed by the County Council Cabinet but that the Academy had stipulated that this would be on condition that the school would be an “all through” school. He further advised that, as this particular school site was not suitable for this, the Academy had not continued with its interest.

Councillor Sharp stated that it was her understanding that the Academy had felt the site was suitable and expressed surprise about the comments regarding the County Council Cabinet’s discussion.

Councillor Oakley suggested that the upcoming consultation would be the correct place to raise the issues described and present the evidence in support of keeping the school open.

In summary, the Chairman advised that there was nothing further that the Committee could do and she wished all involved good luck in the consultation process.

61 ITEMS FOR INCLUSION ON NEXT AGENDA

- City Council match funding of public donations for tree planting

DATE OF NEXT ORDINARY MEETING: MONDAY 30 MARCH 2020

The meeting closed at 7.14pm