

**MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE
COMMUNITY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
HELD ON MONDAY 16 NOVEMBER 2020 AT 3.00PM**

- PRESENT:** Councillors Apel (Chairman), C Hughes (Vice-Chairman), Carter, Gershater, Lishman and Sharp
- EX-OFFICIO:** The Mayor (Councillor Plowman), The Deputy Mayor (Councillor J Hughes) and Councillor Scicluna (Chairman of Finance)
- ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** Town Clerk, Member Services Support Officer, Pam Bushby (Divisional Manager, Communities and Wellbeing – Chichester District Council), Liz Turner (Chairman – Friends of Ravenna), Ash Pal (Chairman – Parklands Residents Association and Chichester Community Network), Paula Chatfield (Acting Chair - Chichester Tree Wardens)

27. APOLOGIES AND RECORD OF ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received from Members of the Committee.

Apologies for absence were received from Graham Pound (Chairman - Friends of Valletta), Julia Sander (Chairman – Friends of Chartres).

Councillor Joy was absent from the meeting.

28. MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE HELD VIRTUALLY ON 7 SEPTEMBER 2020 AND THE SPECIAL MEETING (GRANTS) HELD ON 5 OCTOBER 2020

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting held on the 7 September 2020 and the Special Meeting (Grants) held on 5 October 2020, having been circulated, be approved and signed as a correct record at a later date.

29. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE IN MATTERS ARISING ON THE AGENDA FOR THIS MEETING

The Mayor and Councillors Apel, Lishman and Sharp declared personal interests as Members of Chichester District Council.

30. UPDATE FROM THE PREVIOUS MINUTES

(a) Minute 16(b) – Chichester Tree Summit

The Committee noted that there had been not progress on reorganising the Chichester Tree Summit due to the current pandemic emergency. Mrs Chatfield expressed a wish to discuss with Officers the possibility of some form of tree summit being arranged in an online format. The Town Clerk agreed that this should be possible and that discussions could take place once a clearer idea about the pandemic and lockdowns had emerged.

- (b) **Minute 16(d)** – Chichester City Council Business Plan (2019-2023)
The Town Clerk reminded the Committee that it had been agreed to revisit the Business Plan in January 2021 when it was hoped that full impact of the economic and social effects of the Coronavirus pandemic would be clearer and the Business Plan could be revised accordingly. He advised the Committee that West Sussex County Council and Chichester District Council were currently reviewing services and budgets in light of the pandemic economic situation and that this may result in future discussions about changes in responsibilities for services around the city which would also impact on the business plan.

- (c) **Minute 16(a)** - Floral Displays
The Member Services Support Officer reported that City Council Officers had continued to maintain the Cathedral beds and street planters and that the planting would gradually be changed to winter plants and/or more perennial varieties to reduce the need for ongoing maintenance in the form of replanting.

Members were advised that, during the budgeting process, the Deputy Town Clerk had suggested a significant cut to the Chichester in Bloom budget. This could mean that Officers would continue to maintain the Cathedral beds and street planters while a contractor would be sought to provide the city wide hanging baskets.

- (d) **Minute 16(e)** – Proposal for a friendship link with Speyer, Germany
The Committee noted that it was Speyer's strong wish to continue to seek a Friendship link with Chichester and that they were very much looking forward to physically meeting representatives from Chichester City Council to start to forge that link.

Members agreed that it would be preferable if the friendship started with a physical meeting rather than as an online event.

- (e) **Minute 20** – Discretionary Grants Working Party
The Member Services Support Officer confirmed that a date had yet to be fixed for the first meeting of the working party.

The Chairman asked the members of the working party (consisting of herself, the Mayor and Councillors Scicluna and Lishman) to stay on at the end of the meeting so that a date could be arranged.

Post meeting note: The time of the first meeting of the working group was agreed as Friday 20 November 2020 at 4.00pm

- (f) **Minute 21** – Actions taken in response to the second wave of the Coronavirus pandemic
The Chairman welcomed Ash Pal (Chairman – Parklands Residents Association and Chichester Community Network) and asked that he and the Mayor update the Committee on what was happening to support the community in Chichester during the second wave of the Coronavirus pandemic and the related lockdown.

Mr Pal updated the Committee on the work that the Chichester Community Network (CCN) had been undertaking to support the community in Chichester.

The Committee were reminded that the CCN was made up of a broad spectrum of about 30 organisations including Residents Associations and local churches, charities and community groups.

Members were informed that the CCN had been planning for a winter under the pandemic throughout the summer in anticipation of a second lockdown and with the expectation that any further lockdown would be harder on the community than the first.

Mr Pal reported that the problems arising during the current lockdown were different to those experienced earlier in the year as financial protections were withdrawn or reduced and jobs were lost. He highlighted the difficulties experienced by residents whose jobs within the Gatwick area had been lost due to the difficulties in the travel industry.

The Committee were advised that these difficulties were becoming more obvious to services such as the Mayor's Hardship Fund. The Committee were further advised that the CCN expected to see more serious issues around people being able to feed themselves and that they had started to work with UK Harvest and to develop additional support systems such as the Chichester Restaurant.

Difficulties surrounding residents' mental health had also become more evident. Mr Pal reported that the CCN had recently heard from several organisations, including The Richmond Fellowship; that increased levels of anxiety and difficulties around anger management were becoming more apparent. He informed Members that the CCN had been able to pick up some skills, including grounding techniques, to help those affected cope better with their difficulties.

Mr Pal informed Members that the most challenging and difficult conversations had taken place with representatives of Chichester Harbour Rotary and The Refuge about child welfare, anxiety and mental issues as well as family homelessness. He noted that these issues did not often reach CCN and that some very strong and supportive local charities had been providing this assistance directly.

Mr Pal then summarised the support that the CCN hoped to provide to residents in the city, covering the areas of mental wellbeing, through a phone a friend style of service; and food and feeding the hungry. He also further highlighted the importance of the Mayor's Hardship Fund and advised Members that the CCN was aiming to significantly increase the resources available to the Fund to help it provide for an anticipated surge in demand for support.

The Members were then advised that the CCN was seeking support from other organisations to provide storage space and a public point of contact for charities, such as the Chichester Harbour Rotary, who had either run out of room or who did not have the capacity to receive donations direct from the public. Members were further advised that UK Harvest were looking for space to set up a Nourish Hub to be able to provide information and training to residents to enable those in difficulty to be able to feed themselves properly.

The Mayor thanked Mr Pal and the CCN for their work in ensuring that support was available for those who might otherwise not receive it. He also reinforced Mr Pal's points about the value of forward planning and being able to meet challenges that may not have already been identified.

The Mayor highlighted the importance of joined up working and how well referral systems and other connected support had developed since the first lockdown. He also emphasised the importance of providing strong support to families given the increase in family breakups since March and particularly the difficulties experienced by young families in the city.

The Chairman suggested that CCN contact Goodwood who may be able to provide space given their inability to run their usual events.

Councillor Sharp highlighted the difficulty being experienced finding space for the organisations that had been mentioned against the backdrop of a significant number of empty shops within Chichester city centre.

The Chairman asked Ms Bushby (Chichester District Council) to update the Committee on the street homeless issue. The Committee were advised that a large proportion of the individuals who had been homeless during the first lockdown had now been housed with only a small number returning to the street. Members were further advised that no directive had been received from central Government to accommodate the street homeless during the second lockdown. However, Ms Bushby reported that Chichester District Council had decided to offer accommodation to the homeless across the District during the second lockdown.

Councillor Lishman asked for clarification of the area covered by the Chichester Harbour Rotary and also what was happening with the street homeless.

The Mayor informed the Committee that the Chichester Harbour Rotary and The Refuge covered a wide area encompassing Chichester, Bognor and part of Arun and that they had seen a doubling of demand for their services over the pandemic period. He also reported that the areas within Chichester that had been hit hardest were in the East and West of the city and that the applicants to the Mayor's Hardship Fund had largely been from these areas.

Councillor Gershater added his thanks for the work of Mr Pal and the CCN, stating he thought that they were making a difference to peoples' lives which was most important during difficult times.

Councillor Gershater went on to advise the Committee that the issues around mass testing for Coronavirus would likely be something that all local authorities would have to take on board before the end of 2020. He then summarised the problems with mass testing and issues around those tests that gave false negative results.

Councillor Carter also added her thanks for the work of the CCN and informed the Committee that she had found the CCN meetings to be very informative and useful for discovering more about the work of Chichester based charities. She suggested that Councillor Lishman, as a Member for East Ward, would benefit from attending the regular CCN meetings.

Ms Bushby suggested that Mr Pal and the CCN could contact Voluntary Action Arun and Chichester who had just set up a food support network which included UK Harvest and Chichester Food Bank.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their efforts and for updating the Committee.

31. POLICING AND SECURITY IN THE CITY

(a) Community Wardens Report

Pam Bushby (Divisional Manager, Communities and Wellbeing, Chichester District Council) advised the Committee that a new PCSO, Scott Wren, had been recruited and assigned to the city centre. She advised that he had already been working with the Wardens and that it was looking very positive for a good working relationship.

Ms Bushby introduced the reports from the Wardens that had been distributed to Members and advised that, due to one of the Wardens being on leave, there was no report from Chichester East this time.

Ms Bushby drew the Committee's attention to the wide range of issues that the Wardens were involved with and highlighted the Wednesday and Saturday markets in particular. She reported that, further to a District Council decision, the markets had proceeded on an essential goods basis and that the Wardens were providing support to ensure compliance with the current restrictions.

Members were advised that there had been an increase in anti-social behaviour at the Avenue de Chartres car park and that a problem profile had been developed. Issues being encountered included vandalism, graffiti and criminal damage to District Council property and the CCTV system.

Members were also advised that, with the problem profile in place, the police and other agencies would maintain a focus on the area with the aim of reducing or stopping further criminal and anti-social behaviours.

Ms Bushby updated Members about the District Council's Covid Recovery Grants which had been introduced to support local organisations and businesses through the economic problems caused by the lockdowns. Members were informed that there had originally been two types of Grant aimed at community support and business support. Members were further informed that, even after an extension of the Grant closing date, the funds were still under spent so both Grants had now been merged and the closing date had been extended with Grants available on a first come, first served basis.

Further to a pre-meeting request, Ms Bushby informed Members of upcoming changes to the monitoring of the CCTV system within the city. Members were advised that Chichester District was unique in West Sussex in having its own CCTV monitoring centre with other areas relying on monitoring by West Sussex Police on a 24/7 basis. The current CCTV monitoring service had been contracted out at significant cost to the District Council and it had been decided to terminate this contract on its expiry in March 2021 and transfer the monitoring to West Sussex Police.

Ms Bushby advised the Committee that West Sussex Police had responded to concerns about a drop in the level of CCTV monitoring by assuring the District Council that monitoring would be just as comprehensive under the new system and, in fact, would be more extensive given the 24/7 coverage offered by the Police. Members were assured by Ms Bushby that a combination of increased presence of the PCSOs in the city and more use of the ChiBAC (Chichester Businesses Against Crime) radios; would mean that the Police monitoring would be able to respond quickly to any incidents.

Councillor Carter informed the Committee about recent incidents involving cars driving along North Street. Ms Bushby advised Members that this was indeed illegal and that the only vehicles permitted along North Street were for deliveries or to undertake work and only during specified times. She also advised Members that any incidents of anti-social driving should be reported to Operation Crackdown, part of the Safer Sussex Partnership. Multiple reports for the same vehicle would then result in contact being made with the registered keeper of the vehicle.

Councillor Lishman reported to Members that an increase in problem traffic in and around the city centre had been noted since the closure of the bottom of South Street for sewer works. This had resulted in drivers relying on satnavs for

alternative routes with those devices not necessarily advising appropriate ways around the closure. She also advised that the Community Wardens had been intercepting drivers in East Street who had been using the road outside of permitted hours.

The Chairman asked Ms Bushby to pass on the Committee's thanks to the Police and the Wardens for all the work they had been undertaking.

(b) Community Warden Reports

The Committee noted the reports that had been circulated to all Members prior to the Meeting.

Councillor Sharp left the meeting

(c) Chichester BID Rangers report

The Member Services Support Officer briefly presented the report from Jeanette Hockley of Chichester BID, which had been circulated to Member; who had advised that she was unable to attend on this occasion.

Members were asked to note that BID had advised that a majority of the hours for the Rangers would be transferred from November to December. This had been decided due to Chichester being quiet during the second lockdown and with an anticipated increase in activity at the end of the lockdown in December. It had also been felt that there were sufficient alternative resources in the city centre (Community Wardens, Police, ChiBAC and COVID Officers) and that the Rangers' resources would be better used after the end of lockdown.

The Mayor asked for clarity on the significant rise in the "other" activities listed in the top line Ranger data that had been provided. Councillor Lishman highlighted the email from the BID Operations Manager stating that the "other" figure in October 2020 had shown an increase due to the Rangers assisting with the delivery of printed newsletters to businesses. The Member Services Support Officer agreed to contact BID for further clarification.

The Chairman asked the Member Services Support Officer to pass on her thanks to BID for starting to get the Christmas illuminations switched on to help cheer up the city centre during the darker evenings.

32. REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES OF FRIENDS OF CHARTRES, RAVENNA AND VALLETTA

(a) Friends of Ravenna

Mrs Turner, as Chairman of the Friends of Ravenna, presented her report outlining the current activities of the Friends and how the organisations had been thinking of innovative ways to operate under the Covid-19 restrictions.

Mrs Turner advised that she did not have anything to add to the report but informed Members that the Friends of Ravenna were very pleased with how well their member numbers were doing with some departures being balanced by new members joining. The Friends had also been pleased that attendance at their Zoom meetings had been rising as the series of talks had progressed.

(b) Friends of Valletta

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

Councillor Scicluna, on behalf of the Friends of Valletta, advised Members that she had continued to send out monthly newsletters. She further advised that the Government of Valletta would shortly be installing 130 electric vehicle charging points across the country to compliment the existing network of electric taxis.

The Mayor congratulated Councillor Scicluna on the latest newsletter that had been circulated.

(c) Friends of Chartres

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

33. CHICHESTER TREE WARDENS

The Chairman asked Mrs Chatfield (Chichester Tree Wardens) to present a short verbal report to the Committee about the activities of the Tree Wardens.

Mrs Chatfield advised the Committee that, further a successful round of fund raising over the summer for new street trees, West Sussex County Council had started the process of planting the trees in the designated locations. Members were further advised that, as part of the service, residents near to the trees had received information cards about the trees which included a request to assist with the watering of the tree to help it establish itself. Mrs Chatfield reported that this had generated a feel good factor and that a total of 70 trees would be planted in the Whyke and Parklands areas.

The Committee were advised that Chichester District Council had recently advertised for a "Trees Outside Woods Officer" whose responsibility it would be to work with relevant local and national organisations to progress tree planting projects.

Mrs Chatfield also informed Councillors that the My Favourite Tree competition poster had been picked up nationally on social media and it was her hope that the competition could be reinvigorated.

Mrs Chatfield reported that the Tree Wardens had received several contacts from members of the public in relation to recent work the City Council had undertaken to reduce and tidy up the Beech hedging along the boundary of the Whyke allotments. Concerns had been raised that the hedge was being removed but the contacts had been reassured that the intention of the work was to tidy and restore the hedge to a more manageable condition.

Members were also advised that the Tree Wardens had been receiving questions about Oaklands Park and the history of the park and its trees. Mrs Chatfield further advised that it was hoped that this would trigger the creation of materials that would help the public better understand these aspects of the park.

The Committee were informed that Chichester Free School had been applying for orchard and hedgerow bundles to support the creation of an "outside sunny space" and that Kingsham School had sought support from the Tree Wardens to extend their Forest School area.

Mrs Chatfield highlighted the recent publication of the Chichester Green Space report that had been commissioned as part of the Neighbourhood Plan process and also went on to recommend Councillors take advantage of a walk through Summersdale Copse which was currently enjoying an interesting natural display of fungi.

The Chairman thanked Mrs Chatfield for her work and verbal report.

34. SPIRIT FM CHANGES AND POSSIBLE REPLACEMENT COMMUNITY RADIO SERVICES

The Chairman advised the Committee that she, among many others, had written to the new owners of Spirit FM, Bauer Media, asking them to rethink plans for the station.

The Mayor reported that the Spirit FM presenters and staff had lost their jobs during the takeover and the focus on local news had also been lost.

He further reported that the former presenters and staff were coming together to launch a new local radio station called V2 Radio that would broadcast to the same area that Spirit FM had previously covered.

Members were advised that the newly formed company was in the process of raising funds to be able to set up the new station and to begin broadcasting. The Committee were further advised by the Mayor that it was hoped that the new station would be broadcasting within a month.

In response to a question from Councillor Lishman, the Mayor reported that it was his belief that the new radio station would be run as a commercial enterprise and be supported through a mixture of advertising and sponsored programmes. He also advised the Committee that he was not aware that the new company had applied for funding beyond the CrowdFunding appeal.

The Mayor suggested that, to show the City Council's support and in acknowledgement of the strong support that Spirit FM had given local events in the past; a letter should be sent to the new radio station congratulating them on their work.

The Committee agreed with this suggestion and asked the Mayor to write to V2 Radio on behalf of the Community Affairs Committee and the City Council.

Post meeting note: Further information can be found by following this link:

<https://www.v2radio.co.uk/>

At the time of writing (25 November 2020), the CrowdFunding appeal had closed and the target had been significantly exceeded.

35. SPEEDING AROUND THE CITY

The Town Clerk updated Members on two relevant issues that had arisen in recent meetings involving City Councillors.

Firstly, Members were advised about a recent meeting called by the Mayor with representatives of the National Farmers Union (NFU) and some of their local members regarding issues of tractors and other agricultural vehicles travelling through Chichester and the speeds and quality of the driving being witnessed.

The Mayor reported that the meeting had been a positive occasion with both sides being able to communicate and share understanding about the issues on both sides. He further reported that the NFU and its members had appeared to take the concerns on board and that he had recently witnessed a tractor in the city carrying the correct branding and other labels.

Members were informed that the NFU members had suffered abuse from other road users and had made the suggestion to West Sussex County Council that the provision of more laybys on the affected roads may help by allowing the agricultural vehicles to pull over occasionally therefore letting any vehicles behind them pass.

The Mayor further reported that an outstanding action for him in the new year would be to make checks with the local farmers that the agreed information was being correctly displayed on their vehicles.

The Chairman highlighted the concerns of the NFU members about the lack of progress on improvements to the A27 which often forced them to use the smaller back roads and the city centre roads to be able to get to their destinations.

Councillor C Hughes also advised the Committee that the NFU members had admitted during their meeting that the recent closure of Pook Lane for water works had forced more agricultural vehicles through the city than usual. It was hoped that this number would reduce now that Pook Lane had reopened.

Councillor Lishman supported the dialogue with farmers but also expressed concerns about the safety of individuals, especially students after enjoying a night at the Students' Union; when crossing Spitalfield Lane near its junction with College Lane. She advised Members that, even though it appeared that the tractors were travelling at times to avoid heavy traffic; the fact that this now involved late evening journeys presented a risk to the pedestrians she had mentioned.

The Mayor advised Members that one of the outcomes of the discussion with the NFU had been a commitment to provide awareness training to their drivers and contractors, who may not be familiar with the local area and roads, to ensure that they were aware of the particular challenges and hazards presented by the roads they were using.

On the second point being raised, the Town Clerk informed Members that, on the recommendation of the Community Affairs Committee, the Finance Committee had agreed to purchase a Speed Indicator Device (SID), as specified by the Parklands Residents Association; for use by community groups within the city. He proposed that the next step would be to schedule a Zoom meeting with interested parties to discuss the management of the loan of the SID to these groups.

The Mayor advised the Committee that a new campaign was being set up to focus on the noise levels being generated by traffic on the A27 and other local roads. He said that a new group was being formed to cover the city and that people were welcome to join in to support these efforts.

Post meeting note: The subject of the A27 and road noise had already been discussed at the City Council Planning and Conservation Committee meeting held on Thursday 12 November 2020.

36. WIRELESS INTERNET CONNECTIVITY IN THE CITY CENTRE

The Member Services Support Officer gave the Committee a brief background about the challenges faced in the city centre with regards to internet and WiFi connectivity.

He reminded the Committee that there had been a trial of a free public WiFi service managed by Chichester BID a few years previously.

Members were advised that Chichester BID had kindly supplied the background paperwork for the project and indicated the costs that had been incurred at the time.

Members were further advised that the feedback report from the original system supplier had indicated a relatively rapid increase in the data used during the trial which had been attributed in part to local businesses and residents utilising the service rather than their own installed broadband.

The Committee were informed that BID had offered the use of the installed WiFi infrastructure to the City Council for a similar project at no cost to the City Council. Members were also informed that the likely cost to the City Council, if they chose to proceed; would be connecting a suitable Internet Service Provider (ISP) to the WiFi transmitters and funding any rental charges that this would incur.

Councillor Lishman reported that she had been made aware of a service in Portsmouth that allowed residents and visitors to go online to find information, allowed homeless people to charge their devices and also acted as WiFi hotspots around the city and particularly in the more deprived areas.

The Member Services Support Officer responded that he was aware of previous attempts by Portsmouth City Council to provide services of this nature but was not aware of this current iteration.

Councillor Gershater asked whether there was any further information about the Gigabyte project. The Member Services Support Officer clarified for Members that this was the West Sussex County Council project to connect all their buildings to a gigabit fibre optic data network with a view to extending it to other local authority buildings in the future, including the District and City Councils.

Members were advised that contact had been made with the Gigabyte project office at the County Council but that it would be unlikely that the City Council would be able to benefit from this any time soon. Members were further advised that, despite this, Virgin Media and City Fibre had both been laying high speed data networks around the city so it was something that was being monitored.

The Member Services Support Officer further clarified that the WiFi position would be helped by being able to connect the transmitters to a fast data connection and that it was the cables under the ground that would enable a fast and efficient WiFi service to be provided.

Councillor Gershater emphasised that it was his belief that the provision of fast data connections would assist in the recovery from the Covid19 pandemic and he expressed the belief that the City Council should be applying pressure to ensure that the infrastructure was installed as soon as possible to allow this to happen.

Members were supportive of the Member Services Support Officer continuing to research the practical and cost implications of the City Council reconnecting the free WiFi service as outlined in his verbal report.

37. CHANGES TO CCTV MONITORING STRUCTURE

Members of the Committee agreed that the explanation given by Ms Bushby in her report under Policing and Security in the City had given them a clear idea of the upcoming changes to CCTV monitoring.

38. ITEMS FOR INCLUSION ON THE NEXT AGENDA

- Wireless internet connectivity in the city centre

DATE OF NEXT ORDINARY MEETING: MONDAY 11 JANUARY 2021

The meeting closed at 4.08pm