



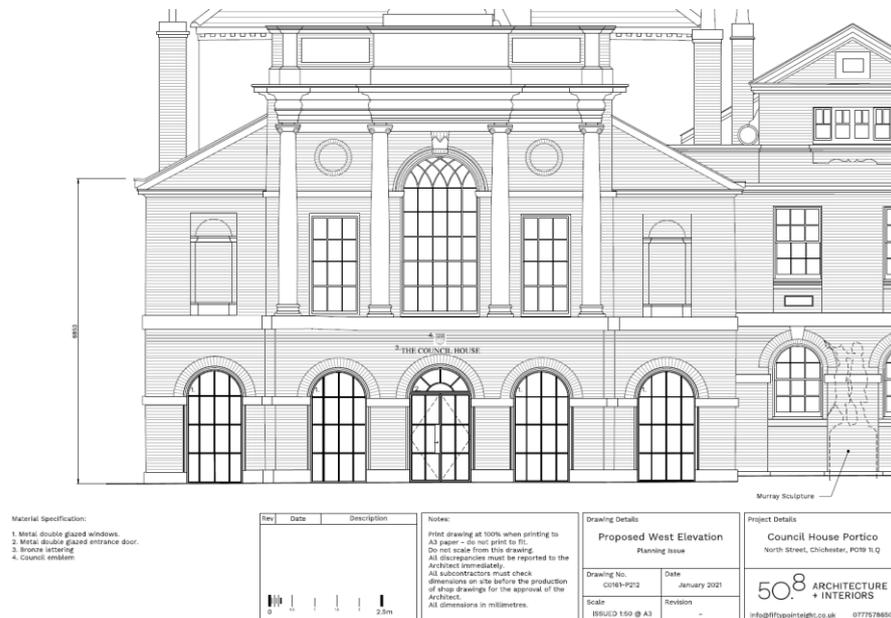
CHICHESTER CITY COUNCIL

REPORT OF THE PROPERTY MANAGER

PROPERTY SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING – 24th MARCH 2021

COUNCIL HOUSE

- a) **Exterior Building repairs** – work has been delayed by adverse weather conditions and is now anticipated to be completed at the end of March. A new roof light above the stairs to the flat has been installed and new windows fitted to the side elevation above the Mayor's Parlour and to the rear of the plant room. The majority of the external joinery has now been repaired and repainted and the majority of the roof and chimney repairs completed. The project is still on budget.
- b) **Portico** – FiftyPoint8 Architects has submitted a Listed Building Consent application and a decision is awaited.



- c) **Salix Grant Funded Improvements** – a grant of £8,884 was awarded at the beginning of March so the solar installation, hand drier and lighting replacement works can now go ahead, subject to obtaining Listed Building Consent. An application has been made and the Property Manager is in close consultation with the Historic Buildings Officer, who has indicated that Listed Building Consent will be granted.

ALLOTMENTS

- a) **Update** – the annual rent invoices were sent out at the end of February and most have now been paid.
- b) **Durnford Close** – Hyde has still not provided a formal response to our notice of lease termination, despite the personal intervention of Cllr Apel.

LITTEN GARDENS

- a) **Paving** – the existing crazy paving and utility slabs around the war memorial has been replaced with Breedon compacted gravel by Crown Civil Engineering at the cost of £5,876.00.



BUS STOPS/SHELTERS

- a) **RTI bus shelters** – the new shelters were installed on 22-24th February.



PUBLIC REALM PROJECTS

- a) **Wayfinding (finger posts)** – an order has been sent to Leander Architectural and the new post and replacement fingers are now in production, with a lead time of 12-13 weeks. The existing fingers are being removed and the existing posts and finials are being refurbished ready to accept the new fingers. It is anticipated that the new fingers will be in place on the refurbished posts by the end of May/beginning of June. This will hopefully coincide with a return of visitors to Chichester and enhance their experience.
- b) **Precinct Paving** – an update from WSCC is still awaited after the previous Stakeholder meeting. They are investigating more affordable options, such as tarmac to replace the clay brick section.
- c) **Murray Sculpture** – the concrete foundation has been constructed by the maintenance team and the plinth and sculpture is being installed week commencing 22nd March. It will be fenced off and covered ready for unveiling on Saturday 3rd April 2021.
- d) **Banks of Lavant and Walls Walk** – the Property Manager has met with CDC colleagues to discuss the maintenance of the banks of the River Lavant and the banks of Walls Walk. It was explained that the 'wild' appearance is deliberate and in line with a policy to create biodiversity, as detailed below;

As discussed we changed our mowing regime on some of our sites around ten years ago. At that time there was much talk within the horticultural industry of the importance of supporting biodiversity. Since then this has been reinforced by

national and local policies. Most recent examples include CDC's climate emergency action plan and the pollinator action plan produced by WSCC.

Our challenge has been to achieve the balance between well maintained sites while allowing wildlife back in. To achieve this we have replaced bedding with sustainable pollinating plants and relaxed the mowing regime and allowed areas to naturalise where sensible to do so.

Such an approach can divide opinion as a naturalised area can appear to be neglected - despite this not being the case. Thankfully though our approach has been applauded by residents and some on North and East Walls have even planted wild flowers to enhance the habitat. For these reasons increasing the mowing regime would undo this good work and draw criticism from those that have worked hard to improve the wildlife offer in the city centre.

It was agreed that some improvements can be made, such as to tidy some of the path edges where a build-up of winter leaf mulch has accumulated. It is the Property Manager's recommendation that CDC continue to maintain these areas in line with national and local environmental policy. There is potential scope for more partnership working, where our maintenance team works along with the CDC External Works team in designated areas to provide an uplift in maintenance standards, although any additional responsibilities for our maintenance team will require a corresponding uplift in staff and equipment.

- e) **East Street temporary footpath widening** – the High Street Recovery & Transformation Group has proposed that the barriers currently being used to protect the suspended parking bays outside TK Maxx and H&M in East Street should be replaced with planters. This follows several complaints about the existing red and white barriers being unsightly. The parking suspension expires 30th June so any planters put in place would only be temporary and would need to be removed at the end of June. This would be an expensive project for a short-term benefit and creates the associated problem of watering and maintenance. In principle, any planters could be added to the City Council watering schedule, although there would be a cost in terms of labour and water charges.

PROPERTY TEAM REVIEW

- a) **Staffing** – our maintenance team is very busy and fully occupied with the current regular workload, with very little scope to undertake additional regular duties. In order to expand our offer, we would need to recruit additional skilled team members. The most urgent need would be for an assistant to Stephen Holman for grounds maintenance and allotment tasks. This would free up Stephen Hawkins to undertake more building maintenance tasks, which would better utilise his skill set. Additionally, it would be very beneficial to recruit a maintenance operative with painting and decorating skill and experience.
If the workload is expanded any further it would also be necessary for consideration to be given to appointing a part-time administrative assistant to the Property Manager.
- b) **Equipment** – the lawn mowers are just about coping with the current usage, although they are in constant need of service and repair. If any additional grounds maintenance responsibility is taken on, it will be necessary to obtain a compact Lawn Tractor with grass cutting attachments. This will need to be road legal, to facilitate easy travel between sites. A quote has been obtained from Acacia Rental (they currently supply equipment to CDC and Selsey Town Council) to lease a suitable machine with full maintenance. The cost would be £495.00 per month, based on a 2-year lease option. This would include all day-to-day maintenance and servicing. To purchase this machine would cost around £24k.

Peter Roberts
Property Manager