

**MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE
COMMUNITY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
HELD ON MONDAY 29 MARCH 2021 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, Deputy Town Clerk, Member Services Support Officer, Councillor Simon Oakley (West Sussex County Council), Liz Turner (Chairman – Friends of Ravenna), Graham Pound (Chairman - Friends of Valletta) and Michael Bevis (Chairman – Friends of Chartres)

The Chairman welcomed Mr Michael Bevis, the new Chair of Friends of Chartres.

53. APOLOGIES AND RECORD OF ABSENCE

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

Apologies for absence were received from Pam Bushby (Divisional Manager, Communities and Wellbeing – Chichester District Council), Helen Marshall (Vice-Chair – Chichester BID), Chris Holgate (Fire Safety Friends of Kursk) and Paula Chatfield (Chichester Tree Wardens)

Councillor Joy was absent from the meeting.

54. MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE HELD VIRTUALLY ON 11 JANUARY 2021

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting held on the 11 January 2021, having been circulated; be approved and signed at a future date as a correct record.

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

Councillor Scicluna declared an interest as the City Council representative on all three Friends associations.

56. UPDATE FROM THE PREVIOUS MINUTES

The Chairman noted that there were no significant updates on the following matters at this time:

- **Minute 42 refers** – Friendship link with Speyer, Germany
No further updates at this point
- **Minute 42 refers** – Wireless internet connectivity in the City Centre
The Member Services Support Officer confirmed that a response was still awaited from the BID's original contractors regarding the WiFi infrastructure in the city centre.

The Chairman raised an issue related to residents' general access to online services with a particular case regarding a constituent's experience with Milk & More. Members were informed that Milk & More no longer accepted any form of payment other than through online banking and that this particular constituent did not have the means to do this or to go out to buy his own milk.

Members agreed that this situation was frustrating. Councillor Scicluna advised that she had had a similar experience and the Mayor also informed the Committee he was aware of some of his neighbours experiencing the same issue.

The Committee were then informed that another local company, Southern Dairies, might be able to help and the Mayor agreed to share the details after the meeting.

- **Minute 42 refers** – Tree summit
No further updates.
- **Minute 42 refers** – Business Plan
The Committee was advised that this was still on hold as a result of Covid19.

Members agreed with the Mayor that further discussion should be postponed until after the new Council year started in May.

The Chairman then moved to more substantive updates from the previous Minutes.

(a) **Minute 42 refers** – City Centre Floral displays

Members were informed that, after a competitive tendering process, a new contract had been awarded to WindowFlowers for the supply of summer hanging baskets and planting for the City Council's street planters. The tender from the company also included winter baskets. Members were advised that this would be reviewed in due course and would be dependent on budget.

The Deputy Town Clerk advised Members that the new successful quote was in line with the much reduced budget. Members were further advised that the new contractors had a significant presence in other areas and that they had won numerous awards for their floral displays.

Members were informed that the terms of the contract, including maintenance, were the same as previously and that ongoing maintenance and watering of the baskets would be undertaken.

Councillor Sharp asked about the new contractor's eco-friendly credentials, their use of local flowers, non-peat composts and pesticides and their presence in, and support for, the local economy.

The Deputy Town Clerk advised that the supplier was based in the south east of England and that they tried to use fewer pesticides and "friendly" compost.

Councillor Carter asked whether the plants being used would be pollinator friendly.

The Deputy Town Clerk informed Members that she had noted the concerns raised and that she would investigate further and pass the information on in due course.

Post meeting note: Officers noted the Committee's concerns about supporting the local economy. To clarify, tenders were requested from three local suppliers, two of whom declined to quote.

It has been confirmed that the supplier, WindowFlowers, grow their own plants for use in the hanging baskets and street planters and so it is unlikely that they would be able to use suppliers local to Chichester.

However, it should be noted that the new contract does not cover planting in the Cathedral beds, Litten Gardens, New Park corner, Northgate underpass, any of the disused burial grounds or the common areas on the City Council's allotment sites.

Officers will continue, where possible, to source all plants locally for these sites.

(b) **Minute 42(b)** - Update on the ongoing response to the Coronavirus pandemic

The Town Clerk deferred to the Mayor for updates on this issue but advised Members that Officers were monitoring the situation and all guidelines and it was hoped that the Council House would be reopening in line with the roadmap later in the year subject to any ongoing changes.

The Mayor reported that he had recently had a behind-the-scenes visit to the Westgate vaccination centre. He further reported he had been very impressed with the facility as well as the attitude of the staff and the friendly atmosphere that had been created.

Members were informed that, to date, approximately 30,000 vaccinations had taken place at that facility. They were further informed that the facility was currently closed for a week long evaluation but that the staff would be visiting local care homes to administer second jabs to homebound residents.

The Mayor advised that, once this evaluation had been completed, vaccines would start to be offered to the next tranche, the under 50s, as the top nine tranches had been largely completed.

He further advised that, for those with transport difficulties who had to travel to Tangmere or Selsey, the NHS had put in place free transport which included the ability to take wheelchairs if required.

The Mayor informed Members that the contact number for the NHS transport scheme would feature in his upcoming Open Letter and that he would also send the details to Councillors after the meeting.

In response to a question from the Chairman, the Mayor advised that he thought that the Westgate Centre had been using the AstraZeneca vaccine due to the storage requirements for the Pfizer vaccine. He further advised that the centre may be moving to the Moderna vaccine once the jabs started to be offered to the under 50s.

(c) **Minute 42(c)** - City Council purchase of a Speed Indicator Device.

The Deputy Town Clerk advised Members that the matter was in hand and the order would be placed shortly.

(d) **Minute 46** - Discretionary Grants

The Deputy Town Clerk reported that the applications for Discretionary Grants had closed on the 19 March 2021 and that 17 applications had been received.

She advised that she was currently reviewing the applications and the details would be sent to Councillors in due course.

Councillor Carter asked for clarification about a Grant application she had been involved with. The Town Clerk advised that, while she could contribute to the discussion about the application, she would not be permitted to vote on the decision.

(e) **Minute 49** – Footpath between new Lidl store and Story Road

The Mayor informed the Committee that he had been in touch with the Manager of the Lidl store and had been referred to head office for further discussion.

Members were advised that the request had been treated in a positive way and that the company had asked for further information regarding the work involved.

Councillor C Hughes thanked the Mayor for his efforts in this matter.

(f) **Minute 50** – Planned events for 2021 and beyond

The Chairman advised the Committee that she would take discussion on this subject under Agenda Item 11.

(g) **Minute 51** – Postal deliveries in the Chichester area

The Chairman advised that, from her point of view, postal deliveries had now returned to near normal following problems experienced over Christmas and the New Year.

Members agreed that this issue now appeared to be resolving itself.

57. POLICING AND SECURITY IN THE CITY

(a) Community Wardens

Members were advised that Pam Bushby (Divisional Manager – Communities and Wellbeing, Chichester District Council) had been unable to attend the meeting on this occasion.

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

Councillor Lishman highlighted the report from Chichester East and in particular the news that Brian and Edith Clear would soon be retiring from their roles running the Swanfield Community Centre.

The Mayor agreed to write to Mr and Mrs Clear on behalf of the City Council, thanking them for their years of service and support for the Swanfield community.

Councillor C Hughes advised Members that, speaking as a member of the new SPRING (Swanfield Park Residents Involvement Group) committee, she had no

specific updates on the replacements for Mr and Mrs Clear but that the Committee were working on it.

(b) Chichester BID Rangers report

The Member Services Support Officer informed Members that BID had been experiencing significant personnel changes over recent weeks. He advised that, as per the first lockdown, the Rangers had been largely stood down with the intention of transferring their hours to supporting the city centre once the current lockdown started to ease.

Members were also informed that the new Vice-Chair of Bid, Helen Marshall, was hoping to attend the next Community Affairs Committee meeting in June to present her report to Members in person.

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

(a) Friends of Chartres

The Chairman noted the report from the Friends of Chartres

Mr Bevis introduced himself as the new Chairman of the Friends of Chartres. He advised Members that he had nothing further to add except that the Friends association was currently waiting to see if it would be possible for visits to and from Chartres could recommence in the autumn.

He further confirmed that regular communication had been taking place with Chartres via Zoom which had been a positive development during the pandemic period.

(b) Friends of Ravenna

Mrs Turner, as Chairman of the Friends of Ravenna, presented her report outlining the current activities of the Friends.

Mrs Turner expressed her agreement with Mr Bevis that Zoom had enabled them to keep more regular contact with the Friends of Ravenna which had helped to deepen the contacts. She advised that, as the situation in Italy was far from ideal and visits were unlikely until 2022; the ability to keep the channels open via Zoom was one positive aspect especially in light of low member numbers for the Friends of Chichester in Ravenna.

(c) Friends of Valletta

Mr Pound, as Chairman of the Friends of Valletta, presented his report outlining the current activities of the Friends.

Members were advised that, despite the Friends of Valletta being late adopters of the Zoom platform; they had been very pleased with the results and had arranged to have bi-monthly Zoom meetings with their opposite numbers in Valletta.

Mr Pound advised that the Zoom talks that had been arranged had been very popular and had encouraged new people to join the group.

Councillor Scicluna reported that, as the Friends of Chichester in Valletta spoke

English, this had made it much easier to arrange talks from Maltese contributors.

Mrs Turner asked whether, if the June target in the Covid19 roadmap was achieved, the City Council be accepting bookings for the rooms at the Council House without the current social distancing restrictions.

The Town Clerk clarified that the City Council would be making facilities available according to the Government guidelines and regulations but that, in his opinion, he did not see the requirement for social distancing and face masks being removed in the near future.

Further to a question from Councillor Gershater, the Town Clerk assured Members that he was in regular contact with Speyer and that it remained their wish to develop the Friendship link once travel and in-person meetings were possible. The Mayor expressed his support for this approach.

59. CHICHESTER TREE WARDENS

The Chairman noted the apology for absence from the Chair of Chichester Tree Wardens.

Members were directed to the report that had been submitted on behalf of the Tree Wardens and circulated with the Agenda, the contents of which were noted.

Councillor Carter raised concerns about the effectiveness of the Tree Preservation Order (TPO) system. She highlighted the particular case of an oak tree in Parklands that had been marked to be saved but now was not, despite the presence of a TPO.

Councillor Carter also raised the case of memorial trees with TPOs at the former St Wilfrids Hospice site that developers had been ripping up. It was suggested that these companies were paying any subsequent fines that were imposed rather than making efforts to respect the TPOs that were in place.

The Committee expressed concerns about the apparent failure of the TPO system. The Mayor informed Members that he would be taking this issue up with the relevant Officers so see if there was anything that could be done.

The Town Clerk reminded the Committee about his earlier career experience managing TPOs.

Members were advised that while TPOs did not mean that the tree could not be removed or cut back at all, they meant that permission should be sought before any work on those trees was undertaken.

The Town Clerk asked Members to supply him with specific examples of where they felt TPOs had been abused. He advised the Committee that he would pass these to the City Council's Planning Adviser and ask her to make representations to Chichester District Councils Tree Officer.

The Mayor suggested that, in the short term, the City Council's Planning and Conservation Committee should start looking at applications involving TPOs again to allow the Committee to note and comment on any applications of concern.

The Chairman suggested that the Mayor and Councillor Scicluna could also raise awareness of the issue in their roles as members of the Chichester Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CCAAC).

Councillor Sharp agreed that it was important that general awareness was raised on the issue of trees so that residents were aware of what was happening and why.

Councillor Sharp commented on the Tree Wardens report regarding the fundraising that had taken place in 2020 to plant new trees in three areas around the city.

She also asked whether, with a new tree project Officer at the District Council, was it appropriate for local residents to be asked to fund additional trees when Government funding could be available for the same purpose.

The Chairman asked Councillor Sharp to clarify the situation with regards to Government funding and report back to the next Community Affairs Committee.

Councillor Scicluna expressed regret that, despite the TPO and objections raised by the CCAAC, the oak tree at Oswald Court had been felled.

60. FIRE SAFETY FRIENDS OF KURSK

The Town Clerk informed Members that Mr Holgate had recently experienced a period of ill health but was now recovering well and was in good spirits.

Members noted the contents of the report that had been submitted on behalf of the Fire Safety Friends of Kursk.

The Chairman asked the Town Clerk to pass on the Committee's good wishes and thanks to Mr Holgate.

61. WEST SUSSEX ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS (WSALC) – UPDATE ON CHANGES TO BOARD AND STRUCTURE

Members were given a brief outline of recent issues at WSALC.

The Town Clerk advised Members that, following the recent period of upheaval at WSALC, and in response to overwhelming action by the Member Councils; a new board had been appointed which was taking action to stabilise the organisation and put in place new structures for the Association's future.

He reported that a new training company had been retained and that WSALC was talking to its equivalent organisation in East Sussex about forming a new Sussex-wide umbrella association.

At this point, the Chairman informed the Committee that she intended to take agenda items 10 and 11 in reverse order.

62. OVER THE RAINBOW GALA/PRIORY PARK EVENT PROPOSAL

The Chairman noted the Town Clerk's report and briefly reminded the Committee about the purpose of the Over the Rainbow event. She also raised concerns about any such events being permitted in 2021.

The Mayor clarified that, currently, it was hoped that the event would be permitted if the Government road map did not change.

He advised the Committee that, following discussions with City Council Officers, an event contained within Priory Park itself could be a more practical way forward.

Members were further advised that, following wider discussions with the community in Chichester, it was felt there was a need to say thank you to those who had

supported the community in Chichester as well as a wish to get together as a community to make the event a special one.

The Mayor informed the Committee that the current ideas revolved around an event in Priory Park on Thursday 30 September 2021 with a preferred time of afternoon/early evening. He also informed Members that other events were being booked in Priory Park which indicated a wish for normal activity to resume.

The proposals for running the event and for activities on the day included:

- Stewarding by the Rotary Clubs of Chichester.
- The event to start with a parade involving frontline workers around the Park.
- A live band to encourage a joyful atmosphere.
- The Over the Rainbow section to involve local school children holding aloft coloured pieces of card, arranged in the pattern of a rainbow.
- Performance from a live community choir.
- Competition for local people to write a special anthem or song to be performed during the event.
- Possibility to present the City Council Covid19 Civic Awards.
- Food, to be provided by UK Harvest.
- "Shine a light" and applause for the NHS as the sun sets.

The Mayor clarified that he felt it was important to hold this event on the date specified rather than risk clashing with other events in 2022 should the proposed Over the Rainbow event be delayed.

Following a question from the Chairman, the Mayor further clarified that it was now proposed that the event should be organised under the umbrella of the Rotary Clubs of Chichester with expertise being drawn from Chichester City Council Officers.

Members of the Committee, as well as the Mayor elect, were encouraged to get involved alongside the organisations who had started to become involved with the plans

Councillor Scicluna expressed strong support for the event in principle but also raised concerns about City Council involvement and financial commitments given the prevailing legal and Government advice on events and the possibility of short notice cancellations.

The Town Clerk advised Members that, given the proposal to manage the event through an external Committee, effectively giving the City Council an advisory role; there would not be any requirement to form a separate Sub-Committee within the City Council. He also advised Members that this would allow greater flexibility for organisers making arrangements outside the legal constraints of the City Council's Committee structure.

The Town Clerk further suggested that Officers could provide support and contacts for the organisers and that, as an external organisation, there was the possibility of an approach to the City Council for some form of Grant funding in support of the event.

The Deputy Mayor offered his support for the arrangements being made by a committee external to the City Council with the flexibility this allowed.

Councillor Gershater also offered his support for the idea and asked that the definition of key workers be expanded beyond the accepted meaning to include all workers who had been working during the pandemic to keep local services and the local economy running.

The Chairman summarised the discussion and confirmed that a Sub-Committee would not be formed for this particular event but if City Councillors wished to get involved with organising the event then that would be a positive step.

The Mayor then summarised that he felt that the planning should commence as soon as possible so that everything would be in place to allow the event to proceed on the proposed date or on a date to be confirmed if Government guidelines changed in the meantime.

The Chairman asked the Mayor to give a brief update on the progress of the event arrangements to future Community Affairs Committee meetings.

63. FORMATION OF AN EVENTS SUB-COMMITTEE

In light of the previous discussion, it was agreed that the formation of an Events Sub-Committee would be deferred to the next Community Affairs Committee in June 2021. At that point, the Committee would look to form a Sub-Committee with the purpose of planning events for 2022 and beyond, including the marking of the Platinum Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II.

64. ITEMS FOR INCLUSION ON THE NEXT AGENDA

- Formation of an Events Sub-Committee
- Invitation to Chichester District Council to update the City Council on the proposed 2022 Festival
- Tree planting to be linked to the proposed Over the Rainbow event

DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING: MONDAY 12 APRIL 2021 (DISCRETIONARY GRANTS)

DATE OF NEXT ORDINARY MEETING: MONDAY 7 JUNE 2021

The meeting closed at 4.03pm