

**MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE
FINANCE COMMITTEE
HELD ON TUESDAY 15 SEPTEMBER 2020 AT 2.00PM**

- PRESENT:** Councillors Barrie, Dignum and Scicluna
Councillor Harry connected to the Zoom meeting but experienced technical issues and was not able to participate.
- EX-OFFICIO:** The Mayor (Councillor Plowman)
Deputy Mayor (Councillor J Hughes)
Councillor Apel
- APOLOGIES:** Councillor K Hughes
- ALSO PRESENT:** Catherine Cannon – Trustee, Chichester Canal Trust
- IN ATTENDANCE:** Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk (Responsible Financial Officer), Pand
Member Services Support Officer

43. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

As recorded above

**44. MINUTES OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETINGS HELD ON 9 JUNE 2020
AND 30 JULY 2020**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meetings of the Finance Committee held on 9 June 2020 and 30 July 2020, having been circulated, were approved and be signed as a correct record at a later date.

**MINUTES OF THE PROPERTY SUB-COMMITTEES HELD ON 7 JANUARY 2020
AND 23 JUNE 2020**

RESOLVED that the Committee acknowledge the Minutes of the Meetings of the Property Sub-Committee held on 7 January 2020 and 23 June 2020. These having been circulated previously.

**45. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE IN
MATTERS ON THE AGENDA FOR THIS MEETING**

The Mayor and Councillors Apel, Barrie and Dignum declared a personal interest as Members of Chichester District Council.

At this point the Chairman moved to take Agenda item 9 out of order to allow the Chichester Canal Trust Trustee to leave the meeting before items of internal interest were discussed.

**46. REQUEST FROM CHICHESTER CANAL TRUST FOR CIL FUNDING FOR
CHICHESTER CANAL PROJECTS**

Councillor Apel declared a personal interest as a Friend of the Chichester Canal Trust.

The Chairman welcomed Catherine Cannon, one of the Trustees of the Chichester Canal Trust.

Mrs Cannon gave a short and informative presentation to the Committee, outlining the background to the Canal Trust and some of its outreach and leisure activities.

Members were advised that the Trust had initiated a project to undertake essential repairs and that the estimated cost of the project would be £200,000. Mrs Cannon asked the Committee to consider approving funding from the City Council's Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) allowance.

The Chairman advised Members and Mrs Cannon that the City Council could only consider funding aspects of the work that fell within the City's Parish boundary.

Members thanked Mrs Cannon and stated how impressed they were with the work of the Canal Trust and its contribution to life in the City.

The Committee discussed the options available from the City Council's funding streams. It was felt that the CIL funding would be the most appropriate. Concern was raised that CIL funding was usually allocated to projects with a lead organisation as a partner. Members suggested that the Trust should discuss this aspect of the project with West Sussex County Council as the owner of the Canal.

Members also suggested to Mrs Cannon that the Trust should seek funding through West Sussex County Council and Chichester District Council.

Following further discussion, the Committee RECOMMENDED to Full Council on 23 September 2020 that the City Council's CIL infrastructure plan be amended to include a £10,000 allocation for the Canal Trust ON CONDITION that funding applications were successful from other sources.

47. UPDATE FROM THE PREVIOUS MINUTES

The Chairman noted that there were no significant updates to the following previous Minutes:

- o **Minute 7(b)** – Chichester City Council Standing Orders Review
- o **Minute 7(c)** – Chichester City Council Business Plan
- o **Minute 18** – Credit card machine replacement options
- o **Minute 20** – Agenda and Minuting Software
- o **Minute 21** – Council House telephone system upgrade
- o **Minute 35** – Council House exterior works
- o **Minute 36** – Council House Portico

The Chairman requested that under Minute 7(b) (Chichester City Council Standing Orders Review), a clause be added to the Standing Orders that all Agenda items proposed for Committees should be submitted to the appropriate Committee Chairman prior to being added to the final Agenda.

Councillor Apel supported this request.

The Member Services Support Officer confirmed that this request was under active discussion with the Town Clerk.

(a) **Minute 7(a) and 33** – The Market House

The Deputy Town Clerk confirmed to the Committee that no response had been received from Orion Developments (Southern) Ltd regarding the City Council's

confirmation of the Market House lease extension offer and the three month deadline for acceptance would terminate on 30 October 2020.

- (b) **Minute 16(b) and 40** – Chichester Rugby Club New Homes Bonus
The Deputy Town Clerk reminded Members about the history behind the original grant application by the Rugby Club and what had happened since the Club had submitted a claim for the grant to be paid.

Members were informed that the Rugby Club had not responded to requests for clarification regarding some aspects of the claim and that chaser emails had also gone unanswered.

The Deputy Town Clerk reminded the Committee that, following a discussion with Chichester District Council, it had been resolved by the Committee that the amount of the original grant to the Rugby Club be reallocated to another qualifying project (**Minute 40 refers**).

The Committee was then advised that following that resolution the Rugby Club had contacted the Deputy Town Clerk to provide some extra information and to re-request payment of the grant funds.

Members discussed the matter as described. Concern was expressed that the work specified in the original grant application had been altered and different contractors had been used for the work without application being made to the City Council for a variation in the original specification of work.

Following this discussion, it was RESOLVED to reaffirm the resolution of the Special Meeting of Finance held on 30 July 2020 (**Minute 40**) that the application for reimbursement from the Rugby Club be declined and the New Homes Bonus funds be reallocated to an alternative project as previously Minuted and agreed with Chichester District Council.

- (c) **Minutes 19 and 34** – Website upgrade project
The Member Services Support Officer gave a brief update on the progress of this project.

Members were advised that the order had been placed with VoxIT for the development of the new website and that active and positive discussions had been taking place about the City Council's requirements. Members were further advised that initial drafts of the new website "look" were expected imminently.

- (d) **Minute 37** – Council House Energy and Water Audit
The Member Services Support Officer reported that the Property Manager had placed the order for this Audit and that the contractors had been on site the previous day to begin their assessment of the energy and water use within the Council House.

Members were reminded that at the end of the Audit, the City Council would be presented with recommendations and suggestions for changes that could be made to the Council House to ensure that water and energy were being used in an ecologically and economically efficient way.

- (e) **Minute 38** – Litten Gardens paving
The Member Services Support Officer reported that the Property Manager had advised that the quote for £5,000 had been confirmed and that the order had been placed for the replacement of the crazy paving path and the York stone entrance paving at Litten Gardens.

Members were advised that the work had commenced on Wednesday 9th September and was due to be completed in the next few days.

- (f) **Minute 39** – St James Property Team Maintenance Compound
The Member Services Support Officer reported that the concrete standings for the new Property Team cabin had been installed and that the cabin was due to be delivered on Friday 18 September 2020.

Members were advised that this would now enable the Property Team to order and install the solar electricity solution that had previously been approved.

- (g) **Minute 41** – Councillor Expenditure Reimbursement
The Member Services Support Officer reported that most Members had now responded to the options for the ongoing provision of Agendas, Minutes and other paperwork.

He confirmed that physical copies would now go out for Council and all Committees as requested and that those Members who had requested the supply of printer ink and paper would be receiving them shortly.

- (h) **Minute 42** – Chichester District Council High Street Recovery Group
The Chairman confirmed that she had attended a meeting of the Recovery Group and had been encouraged by how positive the meeting had been and how constructive the ideas presented had seemed.

The Chairman outlined some of the areas that had been discussed including how the empty shops could be utilised or made to look more attractive and how visitors could be encouraged to return to Chichester.

Councillor Dignum informed the Committee that, in his role as District Council Cabinet Member for Growth, Place and Regeneration, he had recently been in discussions about the West Street Plaza project which, he advised, was considered one of the big regeneration projects (along with the Southern Gateway) that would help Chichester recover in the post Covid era.

The Committee was further advised that, as Plaza project proceeded, there would be the possibility of partnership working involving joint funding of a feasibility study.

Members discussed various issues around this subject and how important it would be in any recovery plan to expand what Chichester had to offer beyond pure retail. Councillor Dignum informed the Committee that upcoming changes to planning regulations may make it easier for empty units to be utilised in different ways and that the District Council was considering changes to the high street balance between retail outlets and food and drink establishments.

48. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING TO JULY 2020

A copy of the Revenue Budget Monitoring Report to 30 July 2020 had been circulated to all Members with the Agenda.

The Deputy Town Clerk advised that this report was currently showing a projected deficit of £22,458 against the budget at this point.

She further advised Members that this was lower than expected given the current Covid-19 pandemic situation and the long lockdown over the summer period that had seriously impacted Council House income, namely from room booking cancellations.

The Deputy Town Clerk reported that some of the deficit in income was being offset by underspends in other areas such as the City centre planting and Casual Facilities Officers budgets.

The Committee's attention was also drawn to the initial contribution of £5,000 to the Mayor's Hardship Fund. The Mayor thanked the Committee for the support given to the Fund and gave Members a brief outline of the current financial standing of the Hardship Fund.

The Mayor advised the Committee that there were currently sufficient funds and ongoing donations to meet the needs of the Hardship Fund at the present time. However, the Mayor stressed that if the expected second Covid-19 wave arrived the funding situation would need to be reviewed if the Fund was unable to meet the needs of the applicants from the public donations.

49. UPDATE ON INVESTMENTS

The Deputy Town Clerk summarised the review of investments report that had been circulated with the Agenda.

She highlighted the falling income being received from the two investment funds and advised Members that this would mean an expected shortfall on investment income of between £4,000 and £5,000.

Members were also advised that a recent change in the terms governing the Property Fund meant that a notice period of 90 days now applied for drawing funds from that investment. Members were further advised that the Public Sector Deposit Fund remained instant access.

The Deputy Town Clerk recommended to Members that, despite the falling returns, the balances remained invested as the income still represented a significant sum for the City Council.

The Mayor suggested that, given the falling income from the investments and the prevailing economic situation, it might be advisable to review the investments so that the Committee could be satisfied that the funds were receiving the best possible return.

After further discussion, the Committee RESOLVED to ask the Deputy Town Clerk to investigate a review of the City Council's investments and report back to the Committee at a later meeting.

The Mayor and Town Clerk offered to investigate possible contacts for advisers for this review.

50. EARMARKED RESERVES

A copy of the Expenditure on Reserves report had been circulated to the Committee with the Agenda.

The Deputy Town Clerk explained the movements of funds in the Allotment Improvement and Council House Reserves.

The Members were advised that, while the remaining balance in the Council House Reserve appeared to be very low, the contingencies within the External Works project meant that the final bill for the renovations may not be as high as the amount committed. Members were further advised that any underspend would be returned to the Reserve as appropriate.

51. PUBLIC REALM PROJECTS

A copy of the Public Realm Budget report had been circulated to all Members with the Agenda

The Deputy Town Clerk summarised the report and current balances and highlighted the differences between actual and committed expenditure.

The Mayor highlighted the possibility that the Public Realm budget may be needed to help with projects over the Christmas period including the Rotary tree and the street lights.

The Chairman agreed to add an item to the Agenda for the next meeting to discuss Christmas activities in the City.

52. CITY COUNCIL OFFICE CLOSURE FOR CHRISTMAS PERIOD

The Committee considered the options for Christmas closure of the City Council offices and it was RESOLVED that the Council House would close at 12pm on Thursday 24 December 2020 and reopen on Monday 4 January 2021.

The Town Clerk advised that during the closedown period Councillors would be provided with emergency contact details, a public notice would be displayed on the Ward Notice Boards and the City Council website would also be updated.

Councillor Apel asked about the availability of the emergency telephone number as she had struggled to contact the Council on the general landline. The Member Services Support Officer advised Members that the current telephone system had been set up to divert these calls to the City Council's mobile but that due to the age of the system it was not possible to set up more than a basic divert.

The Chairman requested that this be investigated. The Town Clerk agreed and asked the Deputy Town Clerk and Member Services Support Officer to review the situation as soon as possible.

53. CHICHESTER STREET NAMING BOOK

The Town Clerk reported that work on the new edition of Street Names of Chichester had been progressing very well and that the updates to the previous edition of the book had almost been completed.

The Chairman advised Members that she had been assisting with the work on the new edition and that she had found it a thoroughly enjoyable and interesting project.

Members discussed how and when the new edition should be published and how many copies would be purchased for resale.

The Committee asked Officers to obtain quotes for the printing of the book with the University of Chichester being highlighted as a possible contractor for the work.

The Chairman, on behalf of the Committee, wished to record a vote of thanks to David Wilson for his hard work on the new edition of the Street Names of Chichester book.

54. COMMUNITY WARDENS – CHICHESTER DISTRICT COUNCIL PROPOSAL TO CHANGE FUNDING STRUCTURE

A letter from Chichester District Council proposing funding changes to the Community Wardens service had been circulated to all Members with the Agenda.

The Town Clerk advised Members that, due to the difficult financial situation being experienced by the District Council, it had been proposed that the remaining costs for the Senior Community, in the sum of £25,000; be shared among the other funding partners as outlined in the letter.

Members were informed that this proposal would mean the contribution from the City Council would rise by £8,500 per annum. Including the 2% annual inflation charge this would mean a contribution for 2021/22 of £51,109.

Post meeting update: The Deputy Town Clerk asked the District Council for clarification regarding the figures. The District responded with slightly revised figures on 16 September 2020.

| | |
|--|--------|
| Additional contribution before inflation increase: | £8250 |
| Total 2021/2022 contribution after inflation: | £50863 |
| Increase on 2020/2021 contribution: | £9247 |

The Committee expressed their strong support for the Community Wardens service and the positive impact they had had on the City in terms of atmosphere and levels of crime. Members also expressed disappointment that the District Council were calling on the smaller Parish Councils for extra funds given that they had been in receipt of Central Government grants during the lockdown period whereas the Parish Councils had not.

The Town Clerk suggested that, in order to meet this amount, the Committee could look at reducing its contributions to other services within Chichester. He advised Members that a possible compromise could be to reduce or cancel completely the contribution to the upkeep of the public toilets in Priory Park.

Councillor Dignum informed Members that it was his opinion that, as the amount being asked for was relatively small, the City Council could fund it by increasing its precept. He also stated that, unlike the County and District Councils whose precept increases were capped; the City Council could raise its precept sufficiently to fund this request.

It was pointed out that the present agreement between the City Council and the District Council for the funding contribution to the Community Wardens was still only in its second year of a three year agreement, so it was felt that the District Council's request was somewhat early in relation to this.

The Mayor proposed and it was seconded and resolved to RECOMMEND to Full Council on the 23 September 2020 that the City Council respond to the District Council to the effect that if the request for increased funding for the Community Wardens were to proceed then the City Council would look to reduce its contribution to the funding of the public toilets in Priory Park in an equal amount.

55. CIVIC AWARDS AND COVID-19 AWARDS

The Town Clerk outlined the issues surrounding the potential Civic Awards ceremony with regards to the restrictions currently and potentially in place on social gatherings at the time the event would be happening.

Members were reminded that the Assembly Room no longer had the capacity for large awards events given the social distancing restrictions and that a fully catered event, as in previous years, would not be feasible.

It was suggested that, in order to be able to arrange an event that would be nonetheless memorable, the City Council should investigate using Chichester Cathedral as an alternative venue.

The Committee was advised that informal contact had been made with the Cathedral with regards to holding a Civic Awards event. Members were further advised that the Cathedral authorities would be open to hosting an event of this type at a cost of £1,000.

The Mayor agreed with the Town Clerk's suggestion and suggested to Members that the Officers be asked to make the arrangements on this basis.

The Town Clerk advised Members that some of the Civic Award nominations already received may be for activities related to the Covid-19 pandemic. He further advised that the Mayor had suggested an entirely separate set of awards specifically aimed at people who had gone above and beyond during the pandemic to help and support individuals and communities within Chichester.

Members were informed that the City Council's contractor, Fattorini, had designed a new medallion specifically for Covid awards that could be tailored with the City Council's logo and wording.

The Mayor reminded Members that Civic Awards were generally intended for people who had worked for the benefit of the community over a number of years. He informed the Committee that the intention of the Covid awards was to honour those individuals and groups that had stepped up over a shorter period of time specifically to support others affected by the Covid pandemic.

Members agreed with the Mayor that the Covid awards would need to be considered and distributed entirely separately from the usual Civic Awards.

The Town Clerk clarified that the nomination process for the Covid awards could start after the closing date for the Civic Awards on 25 September 2020 with the ceremony being held within the current Mayoralty.

After a brief further discussion it was RESOLVED that Officers should continue to arrange the Civic Awards ceremony at the Cathedral on a date to be confirmed once numbers of attendees had been confirmed.

It was RECOMMENDED to Full Council on 23 September 2020 that a new one-off category of award be created, namely the Covid-19 Award to honour individuals and groups that had gone above and beyond to support others during the pandemic. It was further RECOMMENDED to Full Council that the nomination process commenced after the closure of the Civic Award nominations and with an Awards ceremony to be held within the current Mayoralty.

56. REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY 2020 – COVID-19 ERA ARRANGEMENTS

The Town Clerk advised Members that, with the current restrictions on social gatherings, the City Council would not be able to hold a Remembrance Sunday event in the same way as previous years.

Members were reassured by the Town Clerk that there would be an act of Remembrance at the Memorial even if the restrictions in place at the time meant

that the Mayor would lay a wreath on behalf of the City Council with no others present.

The Town Clerk suggested to Members that an alternative would be to follow the style of ceremony observed for VJ Day in August 2020 with the Chaplain, standard bearers, last post, reveille and wreath laying. He further suggested that if others wished to lay wreaths, then this could be encouraged after the formal Remembrance ceremony had taken place to allow social distancing to be observed.

Members were advised that the Town Clerk, together with City Council Officers; would present the Committee with a series of suggestions for Remembrance Sunday over the next couple of weeks. Members were also advised that, in the Town Clerk's opinion, the current rules and guidelines meant that the military and civic parades could not happen.

The Town Clerk informed Members that he felt that some of the usual organisations that attended would withdraw due to health concerns. He also expressed concerns that it would be difficult to manage the size of the attendance by members of the public as it would create a bad impression if the City Council asked them not to attend.

Members were supportive of basing the Remembrance commemoration on the August VJ Days. The Committee also felt that the Mayor could communicate with the people of Chichester and ask for consideration and common sense on the day to try to avoid large crowds and to encourage the public to spread their acts of remembrance over the course of the day rather than focussing on the two minute silence itself. All Members agreed that this would have to be handled very sensitively due to the nature of the event itself and the need to balance inclusivity with Covid-19 concerns.

57. CHANGES IN THE PATTERN OF WORK – SIX MONTHS ON

The Town Clerk summarised his report for Members and highlighted the work undertaken to enable City Council Officers to work from home.

Members were advised that, despite the changes to working practices and the upheaval of the Covid-19 pandemic; the City Council had continued to operate effectively with business transacted in as close to a normal way as possible. Members were further advised that the Officers had developed an informal pattern of working and attending the office to enable this to happen.

The Town Clerk suggested to the Committee that a working group be created in the new year to review the City Council's working arrangements and formalise the office and working from home balance. He told Members that the basis of this could be a report from each Officer to outline their thoughts and achievements during the lockdown period and that a more formal policy could be developed from this.

The Committee was advised that the building would be reopening on 1 October 2020 to enable Cards for Good Causes to trade but that general arrangements for other visitors to the building would be guided by the Covid regulations in force at the time.

The Mayor and the Town Clerk thanked Members and Officers for the efforts and support during the previous few months.

Councillor Apel left the meeting.

58. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION ONLY

- a. MONTHLY RECONCILIATION WITH EVIDENCE OF BANK STATEMENTS TO END OF JULY 2020

RESOLVED to note the monthly reconciliation with evidence of Bank Statements to the end of July 2020

- b. LIST OF CHEQUES PAID FOR APRIL, MAY, JUNE AND JULY 2020

RESOLVED to note the cheques paid for April, May, June and July 2020

- c. LIST OF BARCLAYCARD PAYMENTS FOR APRIL, MAY, JUNE AND JULY 2020

RESOLVED to note the Barclaycard payments for April, May, June and July 2020

59. ITEMS FOR INCLUSION ON THE NEXT AGENDA

- Changes in the pattern of working and home working
- Christmas activities in Chichester City Centre

The meeting closed at 4.00pm

DATE OF THE NEXT ORDINARY MEETING: TUESDAY 20 OCTOBER 2020 AT 2PM