

**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE VIRTUAL EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF  
THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF CHICHESTER HELD  
ON WEDNESDAY 5 MAY 2021 AT 1.15PM**

- PRESENT:** The Mayor (Councillor Plowman)  
Deputy Mayor (Councillor J Hughes)  
Councillors Apel, Barrie, Bell, Dignum, Gershater, Harry,  
C Hughes, K Hughes, Joy, and Scicluna
- APOLOGIES:** Councillors Carter, Gaskin, Lishman and Sharp
- IN ATTENDANCE:** Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk, Mayor's Chaplain,  
Mayoral/Administrative Assistant and Member Services Support Officer
- ABSENT:** Councillor Turbefield

**77 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

As recorded above.

- 78** The Mayor said that he had called this Extraordinary Meeting of the City Council to discuss interim action the City Council might wish to consider following the decision of the Court that local councils must return to physical meetings from 7 May 2021.

The Mayor had asked the Town Clerk to prepare an options paper for discussion - this was appended to the agenda.

The Mayor asked the Town Clerk to address Council and to give the options for consideration. The Town Clerk said that the law now stated that face-to-face meetings should now take place from 7 May 2021.

He also wished to correct his statement that the first meeting of the Council under the resumption of face-to-face meetings was the Planning and Conservation Committee on 27 May 2021; this was in fact the Property Sub-Committee on 10 May 2021.

The Town Clerk explained that an option being adopted by some larger Parish Councils was for business being carried out remotely but that meetings could be titled working groups where the delegation to take action would rest with officers. Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972 permitted this to happen. Notwithstanding 'normal rules' about no public access to Working Parties, the Town Clerk had proposed that the current ability for the press and public to attend Council and Committee meetings continue unchanged. If the Council wished to consider this course of action, he recommended this be for an initial trial period, being aligned as near as possible to the easing of lockdown on 21 June 2021. The Council meeting on 23 June would be an ideal opportunity to do this. Council meetings would still have to be held face-to-face and the Property Manager had carried out the necessary Risk Assessments, both for the use of the building and for face-to-face meetings.

The Mayor was supportive of working groups with delegation to officers. He then invited members to give their views.

Councillor Gershater sought clarification from the Town Clerk regarding hybrid meetings. The Town Clerk said that in this possible scenario, some attendees would have attended physically and some participating virtually. However, the judgement of the Court meant that this option could not now happen.

Concerns were expressed about the safety aspects surrounding Covid-19 of holding face-to-face meetings at this time and members felt that it was inadvisable at the present time. Councillors were also concerned about the arbitrary selection of the date of 7 May by the Government in relation to other easing of lock down dates, notably 17 May and 21 June as well as the uncertainty of the spread of the virus and confusing information about a possible third wave.

The opinion of the Council was that the “working groups” route was the most practicable at this point in time and that this should be given a trial and reviewed at the 23 June Council meeting.

It was therefore proposed, seconded, put to the vote and RESOLVED that all Committees and Sub-Committees be converted to “working groups” until 21 June 2021 to enable remote meetings to continue with appropriate delegation to officers to enable decisions to be implemented. The Town Clerk reminded members that the first face-to-face meeting would be Full Council on 23 June 2021.

The meeting closed at 1.40pm.