



**NOTES OF THE VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE PROPERTY WORKING GROUP  
HELD ON MONDAY 10 MAY AT 2.00PM**

- PRESENT:** Councillor Scicluna (Chairman), the Mayor (Councillor J Hughes), and Councillors Dignum and Plowman
- IN ATTENDANCE:** Councillor Gaskin, The Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk, Property Manager and Member Services Support Officer

**NOTES**

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Apel.

2. MINUTES OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 24 MARCH 2021

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Property Sub-Committee meeting held on Wednesday 24 March 2021, having been printed and circulated, be approved and signed by the Chairman at a later date.

The Property Manager's Report had been circulated to all Members with the Agenda in connection with the Agenda items 2 to 7.

3. COUNCIL HOUSE

(a) Exterior building repairs

The Property Manager reported that the work to the exterior of the Council House had now been largely completed and that the only originally planned work remaining, the low roof above the Town Clerk's, would be undertaken once the scaffolding had been fully removed.

Members were advised that the remaining scaffolding would be retained to allow some additional repair work to take place and for the installation of the additional solar panel array on the Assembly Room roof.

The Property Manager informed Members that the total cost of the project was £53,134 which represented an underspend of £33,976 on the original estimate.

The Property Manager responded to a question from the Chairman by advising that the additional cost of the scaffolding would be covered by funding from the solar panel project.

(b) Portico

The working group was advised that the application for Listed Building Consent for works to the Portico had now been withdrawn.

Councillor Gaskin asked whether the concerns that had been raised had been the cause of the withdrawal and whether those concerns would be taken in to account in the future.

The Chairman advised that it was felt that Members needed to do more to explain the project and the reasons behind it to local residents.

The Town Clerk reassured Councillor Gaskin that the concerns of the objectors would be borne in mind but that it was also important to canvass the regular users of the building for their thoughts on the project as a usable space for their use.

After a short further discussion, Members agreed that the project was still a good one but that it was appropriate for it to be delayed while concerns that had been raised were addressed.

(c) Salix grant funded energy improvements

The Property Manager advised that Listed Building Consent was awaited for the installation of the additional solar panel array as part of the Salix funded improvement project. He further advised that he would be requesting an update from the Historic Buildings Officer as well as confirmation that works could proceed pending the formal decision on the Listed Building Consent.

Members were advised that, in parallel with the works on the solar panels, the installation of low energy hand dryers and additional LED lighting would also commence shortly.

(d) Carbon Neutral Strategy

Councillor Plowman informed Members that he thought it was important that work progressed quickly on the City Council's Carbon Neutral Strategy.

He also told Members he felt that any reports on the strategy should include consideration of the proposed portico plan and the effects that the plan would have on heating and energy use in the Council Chamber located above the portico.

The Property Manager informed Members that Phase 2 of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme had been launched on 7 April 2021 and that this phase would be focussed on decarbonising heat.

Members were advised that it was intended that the strategy would focus on using grant funding to replace the current gas fired boilers and heating controls with a low or no carbon alternative. Members were further advised that the strategy document would also include issues around insulation and review the rest of the council's activities with the aim of developing a roadmap towards carbon neutrality.

Members agreed with the proposed commissioning of the phase 2 report as outlined in the Property Manager's report. The working group instructed the Town Clerk to proceed under delegated authority at a cost of £3,500 to be funded from the Council House Reserve.

(e) Proposal to install Vincent Gray statues in the niches façade of the Council House

Members agreed that while the proposal, as outlined in the Property Manager's report, had merit; the current social and economic climate meant that it could be felt to be an inappropriate use of Council funds and therefore it should be deferred to a later date.

Members also agreed that any future decision on the proposal should be made after consultation with residents about whether it should proceed.

The Mayor agreed with the Members' opinions and expressed his support for the project. He also asked the Property Manager to confirm the costs given in his report.

The Property Manager informed the Members that the indicated cost was per statue.

4. ALLOTMENTS

(a) Durnford Close

The Property Manager reported that Hyde Housing had now formally acknowledged the termination of the City Council's lease and that they would honour the agreements with the existing allotment tenants as well as take on the allotment waiting list for the site.

Members were advised that GDPR consent had been sought from all those affected so that their details could be transferred to Hyde Housing at the appropriate time.

The working group were informed that the contract for the water supply to the site would also be transferred to Hyde Housing.

5. DISUSED BURIAL GROUNDS

(a) St Bartholomews

The Chairman summarised the information given in the Property Manager's report.

The Property Manager advised members that he had been notified of the proposed sale of St Bartholomews church and churchyard to a commercial concern for use as a dance studio. He further advised that there was a deadline of 27 May 2021 representations about the proposal to be made.

The working group were informed by the Property Manager that he felt it would be inappropriate for the City Council to be liable for the cost of maintenance of privately held property. He also informed members that these costs were largely unknown due to the condition of the retaining walls around the churchyard.

Members discussed the matter and agreed with the Property Manager that it would not be appropriate for the City Council to continue to pay for the maintenance of the churchyard.

The Town Clerk advised that he was not aware of a previous situation where the Church Commissioners had refused to release a parish council from its

responsibilities in the event of the sale of a disused churchyard and that advice would need to be sought in the event of this happening.

Members were reminded of the presence of a small war memorial tablet on the St Bartholomews site that had recently been refurbished. The Town Clerk advised that assurances would be needed that this would be protected and maintained if the sale were to be completed.

The working group agreed the Officer recommendation and asked the Property Manager to respond to the Church Commissioners on behalf of the City Council stating that they supported the draft proposal to dispose of the church and churchyard on condition that the Parish be released from its churchyard maintenance obligations under section 215 of the Local Government Act 1972.

**6. BUS STOPS/SHELTERS**

The Property Manager advised that the new shelters along the Lavant Road had been installed on 22-24 February 2021 and that the completion certificates had been passed to West Sussex County Council so that the Real Time Passenger Information boards could be installed.

Members were further advised that, in the case of these new shelters, the City Council had agreed a quarterly cleaning and maintenance schedule with the suppliers, GW Shelters.

The working group were reminded that the City Council bus shelters in Market Avenue were still subject to the Chichester District Council maintenance contracts but that this may have to be reviewed in the future.

**7. PUBLIC REALM PROJECTS**

**(a) Wayfinding (finger posts)**

The Property Manager reported that the existing finials and fingers had now been removed and that the refurbishment work to the posts was proceeding well.

He advised Members that he was still awaiting a supply date for the new fingers from Leander Architectural but it was hoped that the work would be completed by the middle of June.

**(b) Precinct paving**

The Property Manager informed Members that, following discussions with the Highways Manager at the County Council, it had been made clear that the size and complexity of the project meant that it should be led by the County Highways team and that Chichester District Council would be a more appropriate partner. Members were also informed that the Highways Manager had given reassurance that the City Council was seen as having a very valued contribution to make to the project.

Members were advised that West Sussex County Council had now produced an amended report that had been passed to their Growth Team for inclusion in the Chichester Growth Deal review.

Members were further advised that West Sussex County Council had asked both the City Council and Chichester District Council to explore potential funding streams that could be used for the precinct resurfacing project.

The Chairman stressed that it was important that the work should proceed as soon as possible in light of the ongoing issues with personal injuries being experienced and the possible negative impact on visitor numbers to the City.

Councillor Plowman agreed with the Chairman and expressed his frustration that the project had been in the public domain for many years with seemingly nothing being done to progress the work.

Councillor Dignum advised the working group that he felt there may be some flexibility within the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding streams but that there was no specific funding allocation for the resurfacing works.

Members discussed the issues arising and also whether there were lower cost alternatives to the County Council report that could be actioned more rapidly.

The Property Manager informed the working group that, following consultation on the initial County Council document, the option to use a lower cost tarmac solution had now been included in the options report.

The working group were reminded about previous discussions regarding reuse of the existing York stone in the pedestrian areas as well as proposed measures to protect these areas from heavy vehicle traffic.

Councillor Dignum agreed to discuss the mixed tarmac and York stone proposal with Officers at the District Council with a view to presenting this to the Growth Deal meeting being held between West Sussex County Council and the District Council at the end of June.

(c) Murray sculpture

Members were advised that the sculpture had been successfully unveiled on Saturday 3 April 2021.

Councillor Plowman expressed his warm thanks to the Property Manager and his team for all the work that had been undertaken to get the statue installed on time. He also informed the working group that it was his understanding that visitors had been coming into the city to see the sculpture as a result of the publicity surrounding the unveiling.

The Deputy Town Clerk informed Members that the full amount of Section 106 funding in respect of the Murray sculpture had now been received from Chichester District Council.

(d) Banks of the River Lavant and Walls Walk

The Chairman informed the working group that she had been making efforts to respond to comments and complaints about the condition of the banks of the Lavant and the Walls Walk by informing people about the attempts to make the areas more attractive to wildlife and pollinators.

The Property Manager reported that, as requested at the meeting on 24 March, he had contacted Chichester District Council to ask that interpretation boards be installed along these routes to explain the rationale for the current mowing and

maintenance regime. He further reported that the suggestion had been warmly received by the District Council.

Members discussed the issue and concerns were raised about too many interpretation boards being installed. Councillor Gaskin asked whether it would be possible to add the relevant information to the existing boards to prevent the routes becoming cluttered.

**8. SEAT AT JUNCTION OF YORK ROAD AND BOGNOR ROAD**

Members were informed that the Property Manager had been contacted by Chichester Greyfriars Housing association. They had reported that the bench located where Royal Close meets York Road was rotten and in serious need of repair, especially in light of the need of the elderly local residents to use the seat while waiting for buses. Members were further informed that, currently, the seat was not on the City Council's asset list.

The Property Manager advised that if the working group agreed to add the seat to the City Council asset list, the likely cost of the work would be £500-£600.

The working group discussed the issue and expressed disappointment that West Sussex County Council and Chichester District Council had, once again, both denied responsibility for the seat.

The Mayor asked for clarification of the costs involved and expressed his support for the work to proceed.

Members agreed to adding the bench to the City Council's asset list and asked the Property Manager to proceed with the work at an estimated cost of £500-£600 to be paid from the West Sussex County Council Benches Fund.

**9. PRIORY PARK – DISCUSSION RELATING TO FUTURE MANAGEMENT**

Councillor Plowman reminded the working group that the current (old) Business Plan expressed an ambition that the City Council look to assess the possibility of assuming control and management of Priory Park, among other assets in the City.

He asked Members whether this was still an aspiration and whether there was support from Councillors for this kind of discussion to proceed.

The Chairman expressed support in principle for some discussions to take place with no commitment to proceed on the basis of these discussions.

She also reminded Members that, if the City Council were to proceed to taking on Priory Park, this would have significant implications for the Property Team with a very large increase in resources and financing being required.

Councillor Plowman advised the working group that previous discussions had taken place on the basis of little information and that, if a data gathering exercise were to take place, the working group and the wider City Council would be able to have a more informed discussion.

The Property Manager expressed his understanding for the feelings being expressed but advised Members that taking on an asset the size of Priory Park would fundamentally change the nature of the City Council due to the sizeable increase in workload across the board. He also highlighted his concerns about the

disparate ownership of the assets contained within Priory Park, namely the Guildhall, the toilets, Fenwicks Café and the City Walls.

The Town Clerk advised Members that, as part of the fact finding, discussions could possibly look beyond Priory Park and encompass the wider green spaces within the parish boundaries.

The working group agreed to ask Officers to undertake information gathering regarding the costs and other resource implications of adding Priory Park to the City Council's assets and functions, with the intention of this exercise informing future City Council discussion on the issue. Members emphasised that this exercise should not include commitment of any kind from the City Council to take on Priory Park at this time

10. ITEMS TO BE INCLUDED ON THE NEXT AGENDA

- Proposal to add a Board of Clerks at the Council House

Date of next meeting – Monday 5 July 2021 at 2pm

The meeting closed at 2.51pm