

**NOTES OF THE VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE
FINANCE WORKING GROUP
HELD ON TUESDAY 14 SEPTEMBER 2021 AT 2.00PM**

- PRESENT: Councillors Scicluna, Barrie, Dignum and Harry
- EX-OFFICIO: The Mayor (Councillor J Hughes)
- ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk (Responsible Finance Officer), Finance Assistant

The Chairman advised Members that, due to technical issues with her internet, her connection may not be stable. The Mayor was asked to take over in the event of problems.

The Chairman welcomed the new Finance Assistant, Michelle Carter, and wished her all the best for her time at the City Council.

26. APOLOGIES AND RECORD OF ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Apel, K Hughes and Plowman.

Councillor Joy was absent from the meeting.

27. MINUTES OF THE FINANCE WORKING GROUP MEETING HELD ON 15 JUNE 2021

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting held on 15 June 2021, having been circulated, be approved and signed as a correct record at a later date.

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

No declarations were made.

29. UPDATE FROM THE PREVIOUS MINUTES

(a) **Minute 7(a)** – Speed Indicator Device (SID)

The Town Clerk advised Members that, while there had been no progress on gaining consent to install the SID in locations so far identified; there was positive news regarding community group interest in making use of the SID in their areas.

He further advised that the areas so far included Orchard Street and St Pancras and he expressed the hope that they would take on the responsibility for identifying installation sites and gaining the necessary permissions.

(b) **Minute 7(b)** – Council House exterior works

The Chairman noted that the external works had now been completed and the additional solar panels had been installed.

She further noted that the solar panels had been installed in a way that meant there were not easily visible from ground level.

(c) **Minute 7(d)** – City Council website upgrade

The Chairman noted that the new City Council website had now largely been completed.

(d) **Minute 13** – Internal Audit provision

The Chairman advised Members that this would be discussed under agenda item 16.

Councillor Barrie joined the meeting

(e) **Minute 16** – Update on investments

The Deputy Town Clerk confirmed that, further to previous meetings, it had been agreed that no suitable investments were currently available to the City Council without committing substantial funds over a longer term basis.

The Working Group agreed that the Deputy Town Clerk should keep a watching eye on the investment market and report back if any positive changes developed in the future.

(f) **Minute 18** – Over the Rainbow funding

The Chairman advised that, despite Councillor Plowman's absence, the Working Group were fully aware of the funding that had been granted.

The Mayor confirmed that the updates previously provided by Councillor Plowman were sufficient to satisfy himself and the Working Group about the use being made of the funding.

(g) **Minute 103(f)** – Covid19 Awards

The Chairman noted that nominations had been received and the Mayor confirmed that he would be presenting the certificates at the Over the Rainbow event.

30. **REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING TO JUNE 2021**

The Deputy Town Clerk reported that the monitoring report to 30th June showed a surplus of £4,530.

She explained the major variances to date and said that the monitoring only showed the first quarters expenditure, so no major variances had arisen to date.

The specific variances that were highlighted were:

- Investment income for the first quarter 2021/22 would not be received until July 2021
- Chi in Bloom – despite the budget being reduced for the current year, it was still expected that the floral displays would be achieved within this new budget
- Public Realm – Members were advised that the purchase of the SID had been funded from the Public Realm budget and that the refurbishment of the finger posts would be funded from CIL.
- Casual staff hours had remained low but it was expected that this would increase as bookings picked up and hours were used to cover staff leave.

The Deputy Town Clerk also noted the additional CIL funds that had been received and advised Members that the City Council currently held approximately £200,000 of CIL monies.

31. EARMARKED RESERVES

The Deputy Town Clerk summarised the expenditure on reserves report that had been included with the agenda.

She advised Members that there had been some additional works undertaken on the Council House, including rendering work and painting of the insides of the Council House windows.

Members were also advised that the upgrades to the heating control systems, due to start soon; would also be funded from the Council House reserve.

32. PUBLIC REALM PROJECTS

The Deputy Town Clerk advised that the only expenditure on the Public Realm Budget to the end of June 2021 had been the purchase of the Speed Indicator Device.

33. MINUTES OF THE PROPERTY WORKING GROUP

The Working Group noted the minutes of the Property Working Group meetings that had been held on Monday 5 July 2021 and Wednesday 1 September 2021, that had previously been circulated to Members.

It was RESOLVED that the minutes of the Property Working Group meetings held on 5 July 2021 and 1 September 2021, having been previously circulated, be approved and adopted.

The following items were noted:

- (a) Salix grant funded improvements
- (b) Heating controls upgrade
- (c) Council Chamber subsidence
- (d) Event room hire in the Council House

The Working Group discussed the inclusion of notes from the Property Working Group minutes in the Finance Working Group agenda where they did not include recommendations requiring a decision from the Finance Working Group.

It was agreed to ask the Member Services Support Officer to only include agenda items under the Property Working Group heading where expenditure or other decisions were required by the Finance Working Group.

34. CIL INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN – ADDITIONAL ALLOCATION FOR POTENTIAL PURCHASE OF AN ELECTRIC VAN

The Deputy Town Clerk informed Members that the Property Manager had identified a requirement for a second vehicle for use by Officers when it was not necessary to use the existing large truck.

Tasks including small scale maintenance, planting and delivering were identified.

Members were advised that, in line with the City Council's declared climate emergency, the Property Manager had suggested the purchase of a small electric van to achieve this.

The Deputy Town Clerk suggested to Members that an additional requirement could be added to the CIL Infrastructure Plan for the purpose of purchasing an electric van up to the amount of £15,000.

The Working Group was advised that the Property Manager would continue to work to identify a suitable vehicle and its associated costs and would submit his proposals to the Property Working Group in due course.

They were further advised that, at the current time, they were only being asked to earmark the funds within the City Council's CIL allocation.

The Mayor asked about the likely projected cost of the vehicle. The Deputy Town Clerk informed the Working Group that suitable second hand vehicles had been identified within the proposed CIL allocation.

Councillor Barrie advised Members that, while it was important to show that the City Council was setting a good example with the purchase of an electric van, it was also important that the purchase took in to account the battery life and other considerations when a second hand electric vehicle was purchased.

The Chairman asked about the location of a potential charging point. The Town Clerk advised that the location was still under consideration.

The Mayor asked about the possibility of using the solar panel installation at the St James compound to charge the proposed new vehicle. The Deputy Town Clerk informed the Working Group that she had had this thought and would ask the Property Manager about the possibility.

After a short further discussion, it was AGREED TO RECOMMEND to Full Council on Wednesday 29 September 2021 that the City Council's CIL Infrastructure Plan be amended to include an allocation for the purchase of an electric vehicle in the sum of £15,000.

35. 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 Friday 24 December 2021 and reopen on Tuesday 4 January 2022.

The Chairman noted that emergency contact details would be provided in case of a need to contact the council during the closed period.

36. REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY 2021

The Deputy Town Clerk advised that the City Council Officers would start the formal planning for Remembrance Sunday shortly and that it was anticipated that it would be a traditional, full event including the parade. She further advised that this would be subject to any changes in national guidance caused by the ongoing Covid19 pandemic.

The Mayor and the Chairman expressed their hopes that the Remembrance Day commemoration would return to normal and felt it was good news that it was being planned in this way.

The Town Clerk reminded Members that the event would also be a chance to mark the 100th anniversary of the unveiling of the War Memorial (July 2021) and the 100th anniversary of the Royal British Legion (Chichester branch). He also advised that the Royal Military Police would be involved and that it was hoped that the Royal Sussex Regiment World War 1 re-enactment group would attend.

37. VOLUNTEERING CHARTER

The Deputy Town Clerk advised Members that, currently, the City Council did not have a formal policy and application form for taking on volunteers.

Members were directed to the documents that had been included with the agenda supporting papers.

The Deputy Town Clerk informed Members that by having these documents in place it would ensure that volunteers working on City Council projects were correctly covered by the City Council's insurance.

Members were further informed that, currently, the City Council had volunteers working on the St Martins Garden and assisting with the Property Maintenance Officers.

The Chairman expressed support for the policy and suggested that it could encourage others to come forward to volunteer.

38. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION ONLY

(a) MONTHLY RECONCILIATION WITH EVIDENCE OF BANK STATEMENTS TO END JUNE 2021

RESOLVED to note the monthly reconciliation with evidence of Bank Statements to end June 2021

(b) LIST OF CHEQUES PAID FOR APRIL, MAY AND JUNE 2021

The Mayor asked for clarification regarding a transaction on the Imprest Account payments for the 28 June 2021. The payment was to Chichester Enterprises Limited in the sum of £305 for the printing of the Covid Chronicles book.

The Deputy Town Clerk explained that the cost was for the recent publication of the former Mayor's Covid Chronicles book and that the intention was that the sales of the book would cover the initial cost to the City Council with any profits being donated to the Second Chance charity, the successor to the Mayor's Hardship Fund.

It was then RESOLVED to note the cheques paid for April, May and June 2021

(c) LIST OF BARCLAYCARD PAYMENTS FOR APRIL, MAY AND JUNE 2021

RESOLVED to note the Barclaycard payments for April, May and June 2021

39. ITEMS FOR INCLUSION ON THE NEXT AGENDA

- City Council budget

40. PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS ACT 1960)

RESOLVED that, in the view of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, the public (including the Press) be excluded from the meeting because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, namely staffing matters

41. REVIEW OF INTERNAL AUDIT

The Chairman directed the Working Group to the report by the Deputy Town Clerk that had been included with the agenda.

The Deputy Town Clerk advised Members that she had been investigating alternative arrangements as requested by the Working Group and that a possible provider had been identified who could provide the necessary service at a lower cost.

She also recommended that the alternative provider be held in reserve pending any changes in circumstances of the current Internal Audit provision.

The Working Group agreed that this would be the best way forward.

42. STAFFING UPDATE

(a) The Deputy Town Clerk introduced the new Finance Assistant and advised Members that she brought with her a strong background in local authority finance.

(b) The Town Clerk reported that the Deputy Town Clerk had recently passed a set of exams and was now qualified to provide detailed help and support on the Local Government Pension Scheme.

The Working Group and Town Clerk offered their congratulations to the Deputy Town Clerk.

DATE OF NEXT ORDINARY MEETING: TUESDAY 19 OCTOBER 2021

The meeting closed at 2.31pm