



CHICHESTER CITY COUNCIL

NOTES OF THE VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE PROPERTY WORKING GROUP HELD ON MONDAY 8 NOVEMBER 2021

- PRESENT: The Mayor (Councillor J Hughes), Councillor Scicluna (Chairman) and Councillors Bell, Plowman and Quail
- ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Gaskin
- IN ATTENDANCE: Property Manager and Member Services Support Officer and Andrew Towch and Terry Sutton (Save Money Cut Carbon)

The Chairman experienced technical difficulties during the meeting which meant internet connection was lost several times. The Mayor chaired the meeting during the Chairman's absences.

The Chairman welcomed Andrew Towch and Terry Sutton from Save Money Cut Carbon.

28. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Dignum.

29. MINUTES OF THE WORKING GROUP MEETING HELD ON 1 SEPTEMBER 2021

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Property Working Group meeting held on Monday 1 September 2021, having been printed and circulated, be approved and signed by the Chairman at a later date.

30. COUNCIL HOUSE

a) Carbon neutral strategy

The Property Manager introduced Andrew Towch and Terry Sutton from Save Money Cut Carbon.

Members were advised that the Property Manager had been working with Save Money Cut Carbon to develop a carbon roadmap which would encompass all the City Council's properties and activities, including the Council House, street lighting, the Market Cross, transportation and the allotments.

Members were further advised that the project was looking at the City Council's total carbon footprint and what could be done to meet the City Council's target of becoming carbon neutral.

The Property Manager reminded Members that a report had been included with the agenda outlining the work that he and Save Money Cut Carbon had been undertaking.

Mr Sutton gave a synopsis of that work and highlighted the additional challenges for the Council when considering older and listed buildings.

The Working Group were informed that this work would form the basis of a phased plan to be worked on by the City Council.

Mr Towch reminded Members that Save Money Cut Carbon had already been working with the City Council for approximately 18 months with the result that work had already been undertaken to cut the City Council's carbon footprint.

Members were further reminded that, to date, this had included upgrading the lighting to low energy LED lights and extending the solar panels on the roof.

Mr Towch then summarised the approach that had been taken when producing the carbon footprint report and informed Members that it looked at what the City Council consumed, including in terms of electricity and gas.

Members were advised that the study covered just the Council's activities and had not incorporated the carbon footprints of services and supplies that were bought in day to day.

As a result of the study, the Working Group was informed that Save Money Cut Carbon had estimated that the City Council produced 35 tonnes of Carbon Dioxide emissions per year, of which approximately 90% was associated with the Council House. The Working Group was further informed that this meant the focus of the roadmap was reducing the emissions produced through the use of the Council House.

Mr Towch reported that approximately 70% of the Council House emissions were associated with the gas heating system.

He further reported that, despite the increase in news coverage about air source heat pumps, he did not consider this appropriate for the Council House due to the currently installed wet heating system and the age and layout of the building. He also advised Members that this may change in the future as technology improved and prices dropped.

The Working Group was informed that alternative fuel sources had also been looked at, such as liquid biofuels and hydrogen. The Working Group was further informed that, while these fuels had positive benefits, they were both inherently more expensive which would require a positive commitment to spend to save carbon rather than try to achieve a financial saving at the same time.

Mr Towch expressed the opinion that hydrogen may prove to be the way forward in the future due to the ability to use the existing gas network to deliver the fuel to properties.

He then advised Members that, for a 10 to 20 year time frame, replacing the current boilers with more efficient models and improving the control systems; would represent the most positive step forward given the current availability of alternatives.

Councillor Quail informed the Working Group that she had previously been involved with a project to install air source heat pumps in a smaller historical building and she expressed the hope that, as technology improved, it may become viable for the Council House.

Mr Sutton responded that the main issue with the Council House and air source heat pumps was the low operating temperature which requires more and larger radiators to provide similar heat output to traditional gas boilers. Air source/ground

source heat pumps are better suited to new buildings with underfloor heating systems, which are designed to operate at lower flow temperatures.

The Property Manager then summarised the actions to date that had been taken to improve the heating of the Council House.

He advised Members that the current system relied on up to three boilers heating the radiators, depending on the demand for heat, with the water circulating at between 70 and 90 degrees centigrade whereas heat pumps generally heated to 40 to 50 degrees centigrade.

He further advised that the system they were working with had had zonal control removed which made it difficult to manage temperatures in different parts of the building.

Members were informed that the most recent work that had been undertaken had involved installing a new control system that balanced the water temperature in the system with the outside temperature with the water temperature increasing as the outside temperature dropped.

The Property Manager explained that the current boilers were quite old and approximately 70% efficient as well as not being designed for the type of temperature modulation that he had previously explained.

He also explained that modern condensing boilers could achieve 98% efficiency and were compatible with the modulating control system that had been installed.

Members were advised that, even with the current boilers, the new control system had shown a reduction in the gas being consumed.

The Property Manager recommended that the City Council move to installing more efficient boilers which would help achieve a significant cut to the Council House carbon emissions. He highlighted one particular brand of boiler and advised the Working Group that the move to more efficient boilers would represent an investment of £15,000 to £16,000 with the cost savings allowing for a steady payback over the life of the boilers.

Members discussed the report and the comments that had been made.

Councillor Plowman commended the detail in the report and suggested that hydrogen looked like the most suitable alternative in the future.

He asked whether there was a way to start the process of moving to the hydrogen supply in a phased way through the building while the technology developed.

The Property Manager advised that, in order to move to hydrogen supply at the current time, a large on site storage facility would be required with all the associated risks of storing an explosive gas.

Members were informed that some models of boiler could be supplied as hydrogen ready which would prepare the Council in the event that the gas network moved over to that form of supply in the life of the boilers. He further informed Members that the heating industry held a firm belief that hydrogen technology had a promising future.

Mr Towch reported that trials were currently underway at a test site where the hydrogen content was being increased in the natural gas system to test the viability

of using the gas network in this way. He advised the Working Group that a much older technology, Town Gas, had contained 50% hydrogen so future advancement in this area looked positive.

He further expressed the opinion that the widespread move to electrically powered vehicles, heat pumps and other initiatives would require a prohibitively expensive upgrade to the National Grid which made hydrogen initiatives a more natural progression. However, he also expressed concerns that hydrogen production could be problematic as it was either a product of the petrochemical industry (blue hydrogen) or required large amounts of electricity in production by electrolysis (green hydrogen).

Councillor Gaskin highlighted the current debate between green and blue hydrogen and expressed her support for any boiler upgrade to incorporate hydrogen-ready equipment if possible but definitely the more efficient gas boilers that had been proposed.

The Property Manager voiced his agreement. He advised that he would be investigating improving the insulation of the building and informed Members that the newer parts of the building including the back offices were already relatively well insulated and included double glazing.

He further informed Members that some of the main concerns lay in the older parts of the building with the ill-fitting single glazed sash windows and poorly insulated Council Chamber floor, as well as the building's Grade 2* listing being particularly challenging.

Mr Sutton agreed with the Property Manager that the building itself was a challenge and also supported the proposed heating works as a good start to the process.

b) Proposal to upgrade heating controls to reduce energy use

The Working Group agreed that this had already been discussed in the previous item.

Mr Towch left the meeting.

c) Council Chamber – investigation into signs of recent structural movement

The Property Manager reported that the structural engineers, Archibald-Shaw, had been undertaking work to assess issues with the Council Chamber and possible subsidence.

He further reported that Archibald-Shaw were in the process of obtaining quotes from companies to dig trial holes to investigate what was happening to the building and whether the slot drain in North Street had contributed to washout of the Council Chamber foundations.

Members were advised that the quotes were expected within the next few days.

Councillor Quail asked how urgent the work was and expressed concerns about a possible collapse of part of the building.

The Property Manager assured Members that the cause of the movement had not been confirmed but that the structural engineer did not consider imminent collapse to be likely and that the movement appeared to have been happening over an extended period of time.

He advised Members that some of the cracking and decorative damage in the Council Chamber was related to the issues with the heating and the wide range of temperatures experienced in the room, rather than through subsidence.

The Mayor asked whether the cracks in the Council Chamber were being monitored.

The Property Manager confirmed that this was the case and that if the movement became more serious then the response would be ramped up accordingly.

Councillor Bell suggested that, bearing in mind local reactions to the City Council's proposed portico project, consideration be given to a communications strategy to inform local residents and others that any holes being dug in front of the Council House were for the investigation of subsidence and not a clandestine attempt to undertake other works.

The Working Group agreed this would be a good idea.

d) Damp in Town Clerk's office

The Property Manager informed the Working Group that evidence of rising damp had been discovered in the Town Clerk's office.

He further informed Members that this had now been investigated and that a specialist contractor, DB Damp Proofing Services, had been engaged to install a liquid damp proof course in the affected area as well as a damp proof course up to a metre in height to hold back any further damp.

The Working Group was advised that this would cost £1,670 and that Listed Building Consent had been sought to enable to work to proceed as quickly as possible.

In response to the previous points and potential costs, Councillor Plowman reported that the limits on grants under the New Homes Bonus scheme had been discussed by Chichester District Council's Cabinet and that it had been confirmed that these limits no longer applied.

He suggested that it might be appropriate for any future allocations under this scheme to be used by the City Council to help fund the carbon reduction strategy.

31. ALLOTMENTS – UPDATE

The Property Manager informed the Working Group that there were currently 265 people on the waiting list for an allotment and that there were currently no vacant plots.

He also informed the Working Group that the plots that were currently being designated as contaminated were going to be brought back in to use by adding a condition to the lease that tenants install raised beds on the plot, lined them and filled them with soil brought on to site.

Members were advised that bringing these plots back in to use would increase plot availability and help reduce the maintenance workload for the Property team. They were also advised that, as the tenant would need to invest in the raised beds, the plots would be rent free for the first year.

The Property Manager reported that, as the lease had now ended, the Durnford allotment site had now reverted to Hyde-Martlett. He also reported that the City

Council's fittings had been removed, that the water had been turned off and that the water account was being transferred to the new landlords at Hyde.

The Mayor asked whether the use of the raised beds would allow the plots to be let to disabled gardeners who wanted an allotment.

The Property Manager confirmed that this could be possible. He clarified that the City Council would not be installing the raised beds as that would be the tenants' responsibility. He also reminded Members that raised beds on a contaminated plot had previously been offered at the Blackberry Lane site

Councillor Quail asked about the contamination itself.

Members were informed that the plots in question had previously been tested some years ago and found to contain levels of heavy metals. They were also informed that, while the levels were not high, the precaution had been taken to take the allotments out of service and that this issue would be overcome by the installation of raised beds.

Councillor Plowman confirmed that the City Council had taken the plots out of service as a precaution and to avoid any issues if allotment tenants had been affected by the contamination.

Councillor Gaskin advised the Working Group that she had recently been asked to draw up a short report on the subject of the allotments and the allotment rules.

The Mayor informed Councillor Gaskin that he had seen the report and there were points that he didn't agree with. He asked the Property Manager to respond.

The Property Manager raised a point of order and advised the Working Group that the report had arrived too late to be included on the agenda being discussed.

He also advised that he wanted to be able to respond fully to the report and suggested that the report be discussed at the next Property Working Group meeting.

It was agreed that the report would be discussed at the next Property Working Group meeting.

Mr Sutton left the meeting.

32. BUS STOPS/SHELTERS – SWANFIELD DRIVE

The Mayor reminded the Working Group of the background to this project and his views on this subject. He also reported that the local residents felt strongly that the bus stop should stay where it was and that the shelter should be added at that location.

The Property Manager clarified his proposal and informed Members that the suggestion was to install the bus shelter at a different stop, further along Swanfield Drive. He reported that this was likely to experience fewer issues with the land ownership than was being experienced at the community centre stop.

He also advised that the proposed location was on West Sussex County Council Highways land and that the Highways department were supportive of this location due to better visibility for passengers and bus drivers.

The Mayor expressed the opinion that he felt that this was not an acceptable alternative and that, given the ten months that had elapsed since the District Council

and A2 Dominion had started working on an agreement; an easy way out was being sought.

Councillor Plowman expressed his support for the Mayor's position and asked whether there was further information about how many passengers were using the bus stops being discussed.

The Mayor informed the Working Group that the bus stop's proximity to the community centre meant that it was well used by residents.

He also informed Members that the alternative location being discussed was overlooked by flats and that the passengers could shelter in doorways until the buses arrived.

Councillor Bell expressed his support for the Mayor's viewpoint and advised Members that he would discuss the issue with Chichester District Council's Estates Department.

He also expressed the opinion that the current usage figures for the bus stops were not relevant as the drive to take cars off the road could see higher usage of public transport.

In response to a question from Councillor Bell, the Property Manager reported that other designs for bus shelters that would not require the land purchase had been evaluated and rejected as the pavement was too narrow and there was potential for buses turning in to Swanfield Drive from Bradshaw Road to clip the proposed alternative bus shelters.

33. PUBLIC REALM PROJECTS

a) Wayfinding (finger) posts

The Property Manager confirmed that, while the fingers were now all installed and correctly aligned; staffing issues at the contractor due to Covid19 had meant that the finials had not yet been installed.

He advised Members that he expected the finials to be installed within the next week.

b) Precinct paving

The Property Manager reported that the issue of the poor condition of the city centre paving was now receiving more attention from West Sussex County Council Highways.

He also reported that he had had meetings with Highways and the District Council Growth team on this subject and that he had passed over information he had previously gathered with proposed solutions, specifications and pricing for the resurfacing project.

The Property Manager highlighted the MacRebur product that he had mentioned in his report. He informed Members that this product represented a lower carbon additive to the Tarmac mix, utilised recycled materials and produced a harder wearing surface.

He emphasised there was a need for sensitivity to the surrounding buildings when the surface type was being considered but expressed the opinion that this was not an insurmountable issue.

He also advised that there was an increasing consensus that something needed to be done sooner rather than later and that it was becoming necessary that a solution should be put in place for the short to medium term while funding for the “Rolls Royce” solution was sought.

Councillor Plowman reported that this project was now the number one priority for the Growth Board who felt it was important to get something done. He expressed support for the use of the MacRebur product given its more eco-aware nature and advised Members he felt it was vital that the work went ahead to provide the city centre with the facility to host more markets and other events.

c) Lidl to Story Road link

The Property Manager gave some background to this item and summarised the information he had provided in his report.

He advised the Working Group that, at this point in time, there was nothing permanent that the City Council could do given difficulties with identifying land ownership.

He further advised that the suggestion was that this should be tackled as part of the longer term path and cycle way route planned for the area in the future.

The Property Manager proposed that the City Council could, as a short term measure and at minimal cost, add additional aggregate to the path to try to firm up and level the surface.

The Working Group AGREED that the Property Manager should proceed with the plan to add additional aggregate to the path as a short term measure.

34. WEST STREET MEMORIAL GARDEN

The Property Manager summarised the progress made as stated in his report.

Councillor Bell expressed his strong support for the City Council assuming responsibility for the memorial garden and reminded the Working Group that the local residents had worked hard to ensure that the space was well maintained.

35. BOARD OF TOWN CLERKS

The Property Manager drew the Working Group’s attention to his report and advised that he had received quotes of £275 for the production of the board and £350 for the painting of the board and sign writing of the names. He also advised them that there would be sufficient space remaining on the board for it to be future-proof.

Councillor Plowman reminded Members that he would be paying for the board itself as his gift to the City Council as outgoing Mayor.

The Working Group agreed that this represented exceptional value for money and that the project should proceed.

36. ELECTRIC VAN

Members were informed that the Property Manager’s report illustrated the types of electric vehicle that could be available within the budget of £15,000 that had been identified.

The Property Manager advised Members that his research was focussing both on vans that would be big enough to carry the tools used by the Property team; as well as those with viable batteries given that the vehicles were generally built around the battery and that battery replacement was expensive.

He further advised that some second hand electric vans came with a leasing option for the battery. This would mean that, for a relatively small monthly fee, the battery would be replaced in the event of fault or failure.

The Working Group strongly supported the proposal to use a battery leasing scheme once a suitable van had been identified.

At this point the Mayor took the supplementary agenda item.

37. TO DISCUSS THE LOAN OF MATERIALS PERTAINING TO ADMIRAL SIR GEORGE MURRAY, INCLUDING PAINTINGS AND ARTEFACTS, FROM THE MURRAY FAMILY TO CHICHESTER CITY COUNCIL

Councillor Plowman clarified that this item referred to two paintings and a sea chest that had been donated to the City Council by Ian Murray, a descendant of Admiral Murray, prior to his moving abroad.

He further suggested that the paintings should be hung on the walls of the Council House and that the chest could be used in the Mayor's Parlour.

Councillor Quail asked whether the City Council maintained an inventory of the paintings, artefacts and other items in its possession.

The Property Manager confirmed that the City Council's insurance schedule included a full inventory of the items as well as photographs and valuations.

Councillor Plowman suggested the formation of a "Hanging Committee" to review the paintings currently on display in the Council House and to decide where the recently donated Murray pictures could be sited.

Councillor Quail, citing her previous experience in Museums and Archives, asked for confirmation of whether the items being discussed were a gift to the City Council or a loan. She expressed the strong opinion that artefacts that were loaned could sometimes be difficult to manage.

Councillor Plowman confirmed that the recently donated items along with the existing Murray items had been given as gifts to the City Council.

After a short discussion, it was agreed that the "Hanging Committee" would consist of Councillors Scicluna, Plowman and Quail and would also include the Property Manager.

The meeting returned to the main agenda.

38. ITEMS TO BE INCLUDED ON AGENDA FOR NEXT MEETING

- Council Chamber structural report from Archibald-Shaw
- Allotments – report from Councillor Gaskin
- Precinct paving
- Swanfield Drive bus shelter

39. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 10 January 2022 – 10.00am

The meeting closed at 11.21am