



## CHICHESTER CITY COUNCIL

### NOTES OF THE VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE FINANCE WORKING GROUP HELD ON MONDAY 24 JANUARY 2022 AT 2.00PM

- PRESENT: Councillor Scicluna (Chairman), Councillor Barrie (Vice-Chairman) and Councillors Dignum and Harry
- EX-OFFICIO: The Mayor (Councillor J Hughes), Councillor Apel (Chairman of Community Affairs) and Councillor Plowman (Chairman of Planning and Conservation)
- ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor Corfield, Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk (Responsible Finance Officer), Member Services Support Officer, Jon Evans (iBABS B.V. – meeting management software)

#### 76. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Joy) and Councillor K Hughes were absent.

#### 77. MINUTES OF THE FINANCE WORKING GROUP MEETING HELD ON 25 NOVEMBER 2021.

AGREED that the minutes of the Finance Working Group meeting held on 25 November 2021, having been previously circulated, be approved and signed as a correct record at a later date.

#### 78. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS OF THE WORKING GROUP IN MATTERS ON THE AGENDA FOR THIS MEETING

Councillors Apel, Barrie and Plowman declared an interest as Members of Chichester District Council.

*The Chairman advised the Working Group that she would take agenda item 10 at this point.*

#### 79. IBABS COMMITTEE AND MINUTING SOFTWARE DEMONSTRATION

Mr Evans (iBABS meeting management software company) gave Members a PowerPoint presentation about the iBABS meeting management software followed by a brief demonstration of the system as it would appear when in use by Councillors. *(The Powerpoint presentation is included with these minutes).*

Members asked questions about some of the functions that had been demonstrated. Mr Evans responded to the queries and clarified the points raised.

Councillor Barrie asked about the ability of iBABS to synchronise with her electronic calendars and what advantages it offered over Microsoft Teams.

Mr Evans confirmed that iBABS was able to update other calendars. He also outlined the differences between the system and Teams, advising Members that while Teams was more generic with its setup and document storage, the advantage of iBABS was that any documents and records seen by the user were relevant to them specifically.

In response to questions from Councillor Plowman, Mr Evans assured Members that the iBABS system was very stable, experienced over 99% “up time” and, in the event of failure, their backup systems would take over within 90 seconds. He advised that, even if the central system failed, the agendas and other documents could be viewed locally without Members needing to be online at the time.

He also confirmed that it was possible to manage public access to confidential agenda items should the need arise.

Mr Evans reassured the Working Group that training would be given to allow Councillors to use the system fully and that there would be further training and support available as required.

The Member Services Support Officer was asked to present a short report to the next meeting of the Finance Working Group, summarising the benefits of the system for the City Council as well as outlining the costs involved.

The Chairman thanked Mr Evans for his presentation.

*The meeting returned to the published agenda order.*

#### 80. UPDATE FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

##### a) Minute 62(a) – Speed Indicator Device (SID)

Councillor Plowman advised that he discussed the matter with a member of the Parklands Residents Association (PRA) and that there had apparently been some confusion about the way forward with regards to the purchase of an additional SID.

He also advised that there had been a change in roles at the PRA which meant that no further progress had been made and that the PRA Chairman had agreed to move the matter forward.

The Chairman reminded the Working Group that the original agreement had been that the City Council would purchase a SID and that the PRA would fund raise to purchase a second device.

**Post meeting note:** The Member Services Support Officer supplied details of a past SpaceHive fund raising appeal created by the PRA that had now expired and that had not reached its target.

#### 81. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING TO DECEMBER 2021

The Deputy Town Clerk summarised her report that had been circulated with the agenda.

Members were advised that the report was currently showing a surplus of £41,660 against the budget to the end of December 2021.

The Deputy Town Clerk reported that this was due in part to better than expected room lettings and street naming income.

She highlighted the Cemetery costs variance and advised Members that there had been no charges in Q3. Members were further advised that this could change later in the year as the issuing of cemetery invoices was often delayed.

#### 82. EARMARKED RESERVES

Members were informed that the Council House Reserve had a balance of £58,854.85 following expenditure on heating system improvements and thermostatic radiator valves.

The Deputy Town Clerk reminded Members that, depending on the insurance claim, there may be a need for decorative work in the Council Chamber once works to remedy the subsidence had been completed. She further reminded Members that the potential cost of remedying the damp issues in the Town Clerk's office would also need to be paid from the Council House reserve.

The Save Money Cut Carbon (SMCC) costs were also highlighted with Members being reminded that the balance of the costs, after grants were deducted, would be paid from the Cyclical Maintenance Budget.

In response to a question from Councillor Barrie, the Deputy Town Clerk clarified that the SMCC grant payment had only been in respect of the equipment costs and not the original SMCC survey fee.

### 83. PUBLIC REALM PROJECTS

The Deputy Town Clerk informed Members that the additional Public Realm spending since the previous report consisted of replacement of three bike racks.

Members discussed the City Council's purchase of the speed indicator device with the Town Clerk advising that consent had just been received to install the device in the St Pancras area. He also advised Members that interest had been received from Orchard Street residents as potential users of the device in the future.

### 84. MINUTES OF THE PROPERTY WORKING GROUP MEETING HELD ON 10 JANUARY 2022

RESOLVED to approve and adopt the minutes of the Property Working Group meeting held on 10 January 2022.

Items to note:

#### a) *Council Chamber – investigation in to signs of recent structural movement*

The Working Group noted that the City Council's insurers have accepted liability for works required to investigate and remedy subsidence under the Council Chamber subject to a £1000 excess to be paid from the Council House Reserve.

#### b) *Damp in the Town Clerk's office*

Members noted the requirement from Chichester District Council to commission a survey by an approved historic building surveyor. It was further noted that an estimate of £720 has been received for this work, to be paid from the Council House Earmarked Reserve.

#### c) *Bognor Road bus stop (minute 44b refers)*

After a short discussion, it was AGREED TO RECOMMEND to Full Council on 23 February 2022 that the Bognor Road bus shelter installation go ahead subject to the availability of S106 funding.

#### d) *West Street project (minute 45b refers)*

The Chairman noted the item and after a short discussion it was AGREED TO RECOMMEND to Full Council on 23 February 2022 that the City Council contribute to the West Street feasibility study in the amount of £3,590.70, to be funded from the Public Ream budget.

## 85. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN UPDATES

### a) Steering Group

The Chairman expressed the opinion that Neighbourhood Plan updates, where requests for finance were included, should be presented to the Working Group as written reports.

Councillor Plowman updated the Working Group regarding recent changes to the Chichester Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and advised Members that he had stepped back a little from the Steering Group to allow the new Chairman and Secretary to settle in to their roles.

He further advised that, further to a recent announcement, the Steering Group were discussing a new housing requirement with Chichester District Council and its implications for the Neighbourhood Plan.

Members discussed the progress of the Neighbourhood Plan and were advised that the PLACE studies that form the basis of the Plan were nearing completion.

### b) Expenditure

The Deputy Town Clerk summarised her report that had been provided with the agenda and advised Members that the current commitment for expenditure on the Neighbourhood Plan stood at £77,182.09 against an approved budget of £70,000.

The Working Group discussed this issue and the Chairman asked how the additional funding should be approved.

Councillor Plowman, as the Chairman of the Planning and Conservation Working Group, suggested that it should be discussed at that meeting with a recommendation being made to the Finance Working Group to approve the additional funds.

The Working Group were informed that £70 had been requested for Microsoft Project software to allow the Steering Group Secretary to undertake detailed planning to support the Neighbourhood Plan going forward.

After a short discussion it was AGREED that the software licence be purchased from the Computer Maintenance Budget at a cost of £70.

## 86. CIVIC AWARDS EVENT – OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

The Chairman reminded Members that, due to restrictions in place at the time, the City Council had not been able to mark the Honorary Freedom for Philip Jackson or the Civic Awards for 2020 in the traditional way and that marking the Civic Awards for 2021 also needed to be considered.

The Deputy Town Clerk summarised her options report that had been included with the agenda with the Assembly Room, Chichester Cathedral and Chichester College being named as possible venues.

Members debated the options and costs that had been outlined with some favouring using the Assembly Room in the Council House and others preferring Chichester Cathedral as a venue.

Concerns were raised about the cost of hiring the cathedral and the Deputy Town Clerk informed Members it would not be possible to provide food at the Cathedral and that the cost of catering an event at the Council House would be likely to be the same or more than the cathedral venue cost.

The Chairman supported the use of the cathedral as a prestigious venue and suggested that, if the cathedral was to be used, attendees could be served with a drink on the way in for them to enjoy during the ceremony.

Members also debated the numbers of invitees and what would or would not be acceptable at each of the suggested venues.

In response to a question from the Mayor about room capacity limits after the lifting of all restrictions on 27 January 2022, the Town Clerk advised the Working Group that there were currently no limits in this respect and it would be a Council decision to support social distancing and limiting numbers to ensure that invitees were happy to attend.

Some Members expressed the opinion that it would be a pity if former Awards recipients were unable to participate as they felt it helped “welcome” the more recent winners in to the group. It was also agreed that it would be preferable to be able to make the event as special as possible in light of the limited celebrations that had been feasible over the previous two years.

The Working Group discussed the inclusion of the Freedom Ceremony celebration for Phillip Jackson with the 2020 and 2021 Civic Award ceremonies. Members agreed that Mr Jackson’s connection with the cathedral would make it the appropriate venue for the event.

Members were advised that, as the Freedom Ceremony had already taken place, it had been deemed appropriate to include the Freedom as well so that all the ceremonies could be marked in one special event.

The Town Clerk advised the Working Group that some Members had expressed concerns about attending events in the cathedral and that he felt these views should be considered in the discussion.

In response, the Chairman reminded Members that the cathedral, as well as being a place of worship, was often used for other events, including concerts, art exhibitions and political hustings; which meant that it was a community space where everyone could feel welcome.

The Deputy Town Clerk clarified the costs that had been presented and confirmed that the Cathedral was available on the proposed date of 1 March 2022.

After a short further discussion, it was proposed, seconded and AGREED to organise a joint event as discussed and to use the cathedral as the venue. It was also AGREED that the Deputy Town Clerk contact the cathedral to discuss the proposal to serve drinks to attendees as they arrived.

## 87. STAFFING

### a) Confirmation of new post assessments by South East Employers

The Deputy Town Clerk confirmed that the new job descriptions had been assessed by South East Employers and that the recommended pay scales would be as follows:

- Mayor’s Secretary – FTE £23,080 (SP14) to £24,491 (SP17)
- Committee and Community Officer – FTE £25,991 (SP20) to £27,741 (SP23)

Members were advised that, assuming the new Officers were appointed at the bottom of each scale, this would represent an additional £2,600 above the estimated cost that had been included in the budget for 2022-2023.

The Deputy Town Clerk informed the Working Group that she was confident that this amount could be absorbed within the budget that had been agreed.

b) Update on recruitment progress

The Town Clerk informed Members that interviews for the two vacancies had been held the previous week.

He also informed Members that an offer had been made to the preferred candidate for the Mayor's Secretary while the interviews for the Committee and Community post would be completed on Wednesday 26 January following the need to postpone one of the candidates due to a positive Covid test.

The Mayor thanked the Officers for the update and for the progress made.

88. ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

The Town Clerk summarised his report that had been circulated with the agenda with particular emphasis on the regulations that govern Annual Parish Meetings.

Members were reminded that the Annual Parish Meeting was not a Council meeting and was not the same as the Annual Meeting of Council.

The Town Clerk also reminded Members that the City Council did not have to convene an Annual Parish Meeting but that one could be convened by either two elected Members of the Council OR six local government electors from the Parish.

The Working Group discussed the history of the Annual Parish Meetings as experienced by Chichester City Council, and the very low attendance by electors.

The Chairman expressed the opinion that with wider availability of technology it was easier for electors to participate in local council processes which made larger public events, such as the Annual Parish Meeting, less necessary.

The Working Group discussed whether the Annual Parish Meeting would be better attended if a bigger headline topic could be presented to generate interest.

Councillor Plowman suggested that convening an Annual Parish Meeting would give electors a chance to gather and to catch up and find out what the Council had been doing. He also suggested that a suitable topic could be the Neighbourhood Plan with the opportunity being taken to broaden the publicity and make more people aware of what this involved.

Councillor Apel expressed the opinion that, subject to the readiness of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, an event solely focussed on publicising the Plan would be more appropriate.

The Chairman agreed, suggesting that a Neighbourhood Plan public meeting would be more appropriate when the new Steering Group had had time to settle in.

After a short further discussion, the Mayor as Chairman of the City Council, and the Working Group; AGREED that he would not be convening an Annual Parish Meeting.

The Town Clerk reiterated his earlier comments about how an Annual Parish Meeting could be convened and reminded Members that it would be the responsibility of those convening such a meeting to undertake all the arrangements connected with it.

89. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION ONLY

- a) MONTHLY RECONCILIATION WITH EVIDENCE OF BANK STATEMENTS TO END OF DECEMBER 2021

RESOLVED to note the monthly reconciliation with evidence of bank statements to the end of December 2021

- b) LIST OF PAYMENTS MADE FOR NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER 2021

RESOLVED to note the payments made for November and December 2021.

- c) LIST OF BARCLAYCARD PAYMENTS FOR NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER 2021

RESOLVED to note the Barclaycard payments for November and December 2021

90. ITEMS FOR INCLUSION ON NEXT AGENDA

- Neighbourhood Plan budget update
- iBABS meeting software – proposal and costs

DATE OF NEXT ORDINARY MEETING: TUESDAY 5 APRIL 2022

The meeting closed at 3.17pm