



## CHICHESTER CITY COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF CHICHESTER HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, THE COUNCIL HOUSE, NORTH STREET, CHICHESTER ON MONDAY 21 MARCH 2022 AT 2.15PM

PRESENT: The Mayor (Councillor J Hughes)  
Councillors Apel, Corfield, Gershater, Harry, C Hughes, K Hughes, Lishman and Scicluna

IN ATTENDANCE: Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk, Member Services Support Officer

ATTENDED VIA ZOOM: Councillors Carter and Sharp and a member of the press

#### 77. APOLOGIES AND RECORD OF ABSENCE

Apologies with supporting reasons were received from the Deputy Mayor (Councillor Joy), Councillors Dignum, Plowman and Quail.

Apologies with no supporting reason were received from Councillor Bell.

Late apologies were received from Councillor Gaskin.

Councillor Barrie was absent from the meeting.

#### 78. NOTICE OF MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR APEL

The Mayor asked Councillor Apel to introduce the Notice of Motion.

*Chichester City Council stands in solidarity with the people of Ukraine and condemns the Russian invasion of their country. We call on the UK government to put in place stringent and effective sanctions against the Russian state.*

*We call on the UK government to open our borders and waive visa requirements for Ukrainian refugees seeking sanctuary, making it safe and legal for them to travel to this country.*

*To press principal authorities to plan for housing for refugee families from Ukraine.*

*That the Member of Parliament for Chichester be notified of this Motion and her views sought.*

Councillor Apel outlined the reasons for her Notice of Motion and expressed the opinion that the current actions of the UK Government were not sufficient and that the City Council should lend its support to helping improve the situations faced by Ukrainian refugees.

The Mayor and Councillor K Hughes expressed their agreement with and support for the comments made by Councillor Apel.

Councillor K Hughes also suggested that greater awareness of other cross border incursions should be maintained.

Councillor Sharp, via Zoom, expressed her support for the Notice of Motion. She advised Members that, while processes had been put in place to allow UK residents to offer support to Ukrainian refugees; the system was not fully implemented and could cause confusion.

Councillor Gershater advised Members that the Chichester Community Network had met recently and had been discussing how the Network could provide support to the refugees.

After a short further debate, it was proposed, seconded and RESOLVED that the City Council should adopt the Notice of Motion as stated and that the measures as outlined in the Notice be actioned.

## 79. CONTRIBUTIONS TO CHARITABLE CAUSES

The Town Clerk outlined the legal background governing the ability of local authorities to make charitable donations.

He advised Members that, while the Local Government Act (1972) allowed for donations to be made to charities operating within the UK, it did not allow for local authorities to provide funds for work by charities outside the UK.

He further advised that there had recently been a national discussion about whether the General Power of Competence, as held by the City Council, would permit donations to be made regardless of where the charity operated.

Members were informed that the most recent advice from the National Association of Local Councils had been that the General Power of Competence did permit donations of this nature to be made.

The Town Clerk expressed the opinion that, further to Councillor K Hughes' earlier comments, giving to a national charity could raise concerns about whether funds should be going to other refugee/disaster campaigns.

He advised that other local authorities had indicated that they were delaying making charitable contributions in support of Ukrainian refugees until it was clearer what support charities would need for UK based initiatives.

The Mayor expressed support for delaying a charitable donation until it was clearer what support the City Council could give for refugees arriving in the Chichester area.

In response to a comment by Councillor Apel, the Town Clerk advised Members that it was still acceptable for Councillors to promote awareness of the issue and charitable efforts by individuals and other organisations.

Councillor Sharp agreed with the comments made by the Town Clerk about equitable treatment of other worthy causes. She also supported the principle of the City Council providing appropriate, targeted support locally for those affected by the situation in Ukraine.

Councillor Scicluna also expressed her support for the comments being made and suggested that the City Council could be a collection point for donations.

The Town Clerk advised Members that it would be more appropriate for the City Council to signpost charities for private individuals to donate to rather than to accept donations in the way suggested.

Councillor K Hughes asked that the actions resulting from the previously agreed Notice of Motion also include mention of the responsibility of national government to support refugees rather than the burden falling fully on local authorities.

After a short further discussion it was proposed, seconded and RESOLVED that the City Council would defer a decision on providing charitable contributions until such time as support was required for refugees arriving in the Chichester area.

#### 80. FRIENDSHIP LINK WITH KURSK

The Town Clerk summarised his explanatory note that had been included with the agenda.

He reminded Members that the friendship link had been in place since 2006 and that it had been the result of an initiative by the Fire Safety Friends of Kursk. He also reminded Councillors that one of the aims of this organisation was to promote friendly international relations.

The Town Clerk informed Members that he had been in touch with Chris Holgate of the Fire Safety Friends of Kursk and that he had been advised that messages had been received from Kursk in support of maintaining the link.

He also informed Members that, while some larger cities had now severed their links with Russian cities as a result of the conflict, there were three options available to the City Council – take no action, sever the link entirely, or put the link in to abeyance while the conflict continued.

Members were reminded that, over the past few months, efforts had been ongoing to arrange a video link with Kursk to help develop the friendship. The Town Clerk advised that it was unknown why this had not progressed but that messages had been received reminding those in the UK that there were ordinary citizens in Kursk who were not involved in the conflict.

Councillor Scicluna expressed her sadness about the current situation but also endorsed putting the friendship link in abeyance

Councillor Apel reminded Members that the proposal had been for a suspension of the link. She also advised that the Fire Safety Friends of Kursk had expressed unhappiness that this was being proposed but accepted that it was a discussion that the City Council had to have in light of what was happening in Ukraine.

Councillor Gershater suggested that the link could provide a channel for news to arrive in Kursk from outside the Russian Federation but expressed concerns about whether this would be allowed to happen.

After a short further debate it was proposed, seconded and RESOLVED to put the friendship link with Kursk in to abeyance for a period of six months with the situation being reviewed at that time.

The meeting closed at 2.47pm