



Chichester City Council

## COMMUNITY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

### Minutes

**Date** 13 March 2023

**Time** 3.00pm – 4.03pm

**Location** The Council Chamber - The Council House • North Street • CHICHESTER • West Sussex • PO19 1LQ

**PRESENT:** Councillor Apel (Chairman), Councillor C Hughes (Vice-Chairman) and Councillors Gershater, Carter and Lishman

**EX-OFFICIO:** The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Plowman), Councillor Quail (Chairman of Planning & Conservation) and Councillor Scicluna (Chairman of Finance)

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** Deputy Town Clerk, Member Services Support Officer, Front of House Supervisor, Helen Marshall (Chairman and CEO of Chichester BID), Rev Jacky Storey (Chairman of Friends of Ravenna), Jenny Cole (Chichester Tree Wardens), West Sussex County Councillor Simon Oakley

**IN ATTENDANCE:** A member of the public, Lynsey Unsted, to present on the A27 Underpass item

**VIA ZOOM:**

#### 68. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

RESOLVED to accept and approve apologies and reasons for absence from the meeting from the Mayor (Councillor Joy), Councillor Sharp, Pam Bushby (Divisional Manager, Communities and Wellbeing, Chichester District Council), Graham Pound (Chairman, Friends of Valletta) and Paula Chatfield (Chichester Tree Wardens)

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

The Deputy Mayor and Councillors Apel and Lishman declared an interest as Members of Chichester District Council.

Councillor Scicluna declared an interest as the City Council representative on all three Twinning Associations.

#### 70. MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 16 JANUARY 2023.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2023, having been circulated; be approved and signed as a correct record.

#### 71. CHICHESTER TREE WARDENS

The Chairman welcomed Jenny Cole, who was attending the meeting as Paula Chatfield was unable to be present.

Members were informed that progress had been made with Hyde Housing and that the Tree Wardens were in conversation with the Housing Association which had resulted in the planting of five Cherry Trees along Cherry Orchard Road.

Ms Cole thanked Councillor Sharp for her efforts in facilitating this.

The Deputy Mayor commented on the amount of tree planting that was taking place and asked whether the necessary support was in place to co-ordinate the various groups' efforts.

Ms Cole listed some of the organisations that had been planting trees including West Sussex County Council and Chichester District Council. She also noted that a new oak tree had been planted along Whyke Road by persons unknown.

In response to a question from Councillor Lishman about the availability of free trees for people to plant in their gardens, Ms Cole advised that this would be a possibility in the autumn during bare root season via a contact in Southbourne.

She noted that trees planted on the highway or in other open spaces required someone to be responsible for watering them to avoid a repeat of trees dying due to lack of rainfall as had happened in Spring 2022.

Councillor Cherry Hughes noted that a lot of trees that had been planted around the Lidl store had died due to lack of watering. Ms Cole explained that this could be due to the previous Landscape Architect who had looked after them going out of business.

Members discussed the issue around tree planting near the new Lidl store and the concerns about a lack of a Tree Warden in the area to look after the trees there.

It was agreed that the Committee Chairman would write to the manager of the Lidl store outlining the City Council's concerns about the tree planting and asking whether they would be willing to support tree care in the area given the importance local residents placed on the issue.

Councillor Carter suggested that local Residents Associations could be approached to ask whether any members would be interested in volunteering as a Tree Warden.

## 72. **UPDATES FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES**

### a) **Speyer Twinning link**

Members agreed that the visit had been a tremendous success and were informed that the Mayor of Speyer had expressed her thanks and had said that the Twinning ceremony and civic reception had been a particular highlight.

The Committee was advised that a large party of members of the Friends of Chichester in Speyer would be visiting in early August and Councillor Gershter informed Members that he was liaising with the group on the arrangements for the visit.

The Committee thanked the Deputy Town Clerk and the other Officers for their hard work in making the event such a success.

It was noted that the first meeting of the Friends of Speyer in Chichester would be taking place on 15 March 2023.

**b) City Centre Task Force**

Members were informed that the Task Force was up and running with volunteer groups making good progress in some areas of the city.

The West Walls Residents Association and Rotary Clubs were noted as having been particularly active and Members were advised that there would be a further meeting of the Task Force Steering Group on Wednesday 22 March 2023.

The Deputy Mayor advised Members that another part of the project was to replace all the publicly displayed maps around the city with new, updated versions.

He also reported that an electrical substation near the railway had had a large amount of graffiti cleaned off it.

In response to a comment by Councillor Quail about graffiti in the underpass under the Via Ravenna, Members were informed that Chichester College had been tasked with cleaning this up as part of their involvement in the Task Force.

Members discussed the condition of some of the shops in the city centre and also the presence of A-boards and the new powers the District Council had to control the display of estate agent signs.

Councillor Scicluna commented on the new window mounted estate agent signs that had been displayed in some premises.

Councillor Lishman spoke in support of controlled use of A-boards for shops down the side streets to be able to advertise their presence.

Members discussed the issue of A-boards, their appearance and the associated safety issues and Ms Marshall advised the Committee that to overcome a shortage of resources in the enforcing of A-board removal, BID was working with the District Council on a scheme that aimed to replace the A-boards with fixed signage, pointing visitors to the city centre towards the side road businesses.

The Deputy Town Clerk informed Members that she would be chasing up some of the volunteer groups and would report progress to the meeting on the 22 March 2023.

**c) Coronation of King Charles event**

The Front of House Supervisor gave Members a short update on the plans for the Coronation themed Gala that the City Council would be holding in Priory Park on Saturday 1 July 2023.

Members were informed that there would not be a large parade as had been organised for the Platinum Jubilee Gala in 2022 but advised that she had been approached by Rotary with the idea of organising a "Childrens Parade", themed around royalty and the Coronation.

She further advised that a route for the parade was being designed so that there would be no requirement for road closures and the parade would hopefully also attract visitors to the main event in Priory Park as it progressed through the city centre.

The Committee was informed that initial discussions had taken place with potential stall holders and traders and that the opening times for the main Gala would likely be 10am to 5pm.

Councillor Cherry Hughes commented on the low number of food stalls that had been at the Platinum Jubilee event which had resulted in very long queues forming.

The Deputy Mayor suggested that the additional Bank Holiday on 8 May 2023 was likely to be designated as a community day and that this could suitably be used by the City Centre Task Force to undertake a rapid refresh around the city centre.

The Front of House Supervisor informed Members that a Coronation pin badge carrying the King's cypher had been ordered and these would go on sale soon priced at £4 each.

The Deputy Town Clerk advised Members that Chichester District Council had indicated the possibility of grants to support Coronation themed events but that she had yet to receive confirmation about whether the City Council Gala qualified as it was not being held on the Coronation weekend.

She also mentioned alternatives, such as a tree planting or a memorial, which could be considered if the Gala did not qualify for a Grant.

### **73. POLICING AND SECURITY IN THE CITY**

#### **a) Community Wardens**

Members noted the reports from the Community Wardens that had been circulated with the agenda and agreed that the work of the Community Wardens was invaluable.

The Chairman commented on the increased crime levels being noted in the reports and noted a recent spate of break-ins to cars being experienced at the Minerva Heights development.

Councillor Cherry Hughes advised Members that there had recently been an increase in random door kicking incidents, one of which had resulted in the door being kicked off its hinges.

Councillor Lishman commented on reports she had received from staff at a local Co-operative store about crime levels and a standing instruction from the company that staff should not risk physical harm intervening in criminal incidents.

#### **b) BID Rangers**

The Chairman of Chichester BID, Helen Marshall, agreed with the comments being made by Members about crime levels and reported that the BID Rangers had been subjected to abuse and assault, including them being followed back to their vehicles while being harassed.

Members discussed the issue of a lack of a Police presence in the City Centre with Ms Marshall responding that BID was in contact with the relevant Police Officer and that new PCSOs would be deployed soon. She advised that the Police were responding to 999 calls but that a lot of incidents did not warrant such calls and were being made to the lower priority 101 number.

She also advised Members of the importance of logging all incidents and of the issue of lack of CCTV coverage in some of the premises in the city centre and the problems this caused with providing the Police with the necessary evidence they would need to take action.

Members were informed that some businesses calculated the cost of the thefts and either added it to their profit margins or decided it was less of a cost than installing CCTV or employing security guards.

On a wider note, Ms Marshall reported that trading conditions in the city were very tough and it was anticipated that there may be further closures of businesses in Chichester due to the prevailing economic problems.

Members agreed with Councillor Carter who suggested recognising the work of the BID Rangers in some way.

74. **REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES OF THE FRIENDS OF CHARTRES, RAVENNA AND VALLETTA**

a) **Friends of Ravenna**

The Chairman of Friends of Ravenna, Rev Jacky Storey, summarised her report to Members that had been circulated with the agenda.

She commented that the Deputy Mayor of Ravenna had attended the recent Chichester-Speyer Twinning visit and had greatly enjoyed her time at the events.

Members were advised that talks were ongoing to deepen the Friendship link between Chichester and Ravenna with possible events including a musical exchange if suitable funding could be put in place.

The Chairman suggested that the Friends of Ravenna could investigate applying for a City Council Discretionary Grant for this purpose.

Rev Storey updated Members, informing them that the Friends of Chichester in Ravenna had now elected a new President. She expressed the hope that this would mean more contact and a visit from the Ravennati in the near future.

Reference was also made about a previously mentioned project involving mosaics across Europe (Community Affairs meeting, 14 November 2022, minute 46a refers) and that her discussions with Fishbourne Roman Palace were ongoing.

Rev Storey reported that the sculptor, Philip Jackson, a Freedom Holder in the City of Chichester, would be gifting a statue of Dante to the town of Midhurst and it was hoped that the Deputy Mayor of Ravenna and a group of the Ravennati would be able to attend the unveiling.

b) **Friends of Chartres**

Councillor Scicluna, as Chairman of the Friends of Chartres, summarised her report that had been circulated with the agenda.

She informed Members that a visit from a large group from Chartres was expected at the end of April. She also reminded members that the Friendship had existed for 64 years and it was pleasing to see it remained popular.

c) **Friends of Valletta**

Councillor Scicluna, standing in for the Chairman of the Friends of Valletta, noted the report that the Chairman had submitted.

She commented on the Zoom presentation that had taken place on 9 March 2023 about the future of Valletta's heritage and noted that it had been watched all over the world.

Members were reminded about the forthcoming musical production visiting from Malta, the Star of Strait Street, that would be performed in the Assembly Room on 19 June 2023 during the Festival of Chichester.

#### **75. A27 UNDERPASS DECORATIVE IMPROVEMENTS**

The Chairman welcomed Chichester resident and businesswoman Lynsey Unsted who joined the meeting via Zoom and gave a short verbal presentation about the poor condition of the A27 underpass at the end of Fishbourne Road East.

She explained that she walked through it regularly to the school in Fishbourne, had experienced anti-social behaviour there and how uninspiring it was with peeling paint and tiles falling off the walls which would likely have a direct impact on the mental health of the users of the underpass.

Ms Unsted expressed the hope that there would be interest from the City Council in helping to regenerate the area to make it more welcoming to users and give some pride back to the area.

She also explained that, as the underpass was partly in Chichester Parish and partly in Fishbourne Parish, she had been discussing the matter with Fishbourne Parish Council and suggested there was an opportunity for joint working on a project to improve the area.

Referencing the other two underpasses in Chichester (under the Via Ravenna near Waitrose and under Oaklands Way), she suggested some form of highly visual, bright graphic designs themed around the activities taking place through the underpass (walking, cycling) or links to the city's Roman heritage could be installed, possibly involving children from local schools.

Members discussed the background to the designs in the two underpasses that had been mentioned.

The Committee were supportive of the ideas being proposed .

The Deputy Mayor suggested raising the topic at the City Task Force meeting on the 22 March 2023.

Ms Unsted emphasised the importance of community engagement. She thanked the Committee and passed on the contact details of the Councillors and Officers at Fishbourne Parish Council who she had been liaising with.

The Deputy Town Clerk informed Members that the Fishbourne Town Clerk had been in touch with the City Council's Town Clerk on this subject.

The Committee discussed the potential cost of the project and it was agreed that a meeting between the Chairman and Officers would be arranged soon to discuss the matter further.

#### **76. CITY COUNCIL LINKS WITH CHICHESTER CARE HOMES**

The Deputy Mayor summarised his thoughts on this topic and advised Members that the members of Rotary had started approaching care homes in the city with a view to building links and supporting them in activities.

Councillor Scicluna informed the Committee that she had previously given talks on the history of Chichester in local care homes and felt that this kind of interaction was important.

Members had a short discussion on the subject and agreed that it was more appropriate that relevant social groups and voluntary organisations develop connections with care homes rather than the City Council.

**77. CITY FLORAL PLANTING – CATHEDRAL BEDS AND HANGING BASKETS**

The Deputy Town Clerk reminded Members that Full Council had approved the use of up to £12,000 of the City Council's CIL funds to undertake a relandscaping and tidy up of the Cathedral beds (Meeting of Council, 22 February 2023, minute 75 refers).

She advised Members that the matter was in hand and she would report further at future meetings.

**78. ITEMS FOR THE NEXT AGENDA**

Members noted that, apart from the Discretionary Grants meeting being held on 6 April 2023, there were no further scheduled meetings of the Community Affairs Committee before the Local Elections being held on 4 May 2023.

It was agreed that it would be left to the new administration to decide the content of the June meeting.

**79. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

DATE OF NEXT MEETING (DISCRETIONARY GRANTS): THURSDAY 6 APRIL 2023

DATE OF NEXT ORDINARY MEETING: MONDAY 5 JUNE 2023

The meeting closed at 4.03pm