



Chichester City Council

PROPERTY SUB-COMMITTEE

Minutes

Date 3 April 2023

Time 10.30am – 11.5am

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

PRESENT: Councillor Scicluna (Chairman) and Councillors Dignum, Plowman and Quail

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Town Clerk Designate, Deputy Town Clerk, Acting Property Manager, Member Services Support Officer

50. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

RESOLVED to accept and approve apologies and reasons for absence from the meeting from Councillor J Hughes.

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

Councillors Plowman and Scicluna declared an interest as members of the Murray Club.

Councillors Scicluna and Plowman declared interests as the City Council and District Council representatives on the Chichester Conservation Area Advisory Committee, respectively.

52. **MINUTES OF THE PROPERTY SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 23 FEBRUARY 2023**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Property Sub-Committee meeting held on 23 February 2023 be approved and signed as a correct record.

53. **COUNCIL HOUSE**

a) **Mayor's carpark**

After a brief summary of the plans for the Mayor's carpark, the Acting Property Manager advised that he hoped that work would be commencing on 11 April 2023

b) **Redecoration works**

The Acting Property Manager reiterated his previous point that a condition survey should be undertaken of the foyer, main staircase, landing and Assembly Room.

The Chairman highlighted the condition of parts of the Council Chamber ceiling and suggested this could be resolved without the need to disturb or redo the high level gilding around the room.

c) **Crush Bar ceiling**

Councillors were reminded that the tiles in the Crush Bar (from the back stairs to the upstand in front of the bar) had suffered damage over the years and were in need of replacement.

He informed Members that he had sought quotes for the work and had so far received one quote in the amount of £1,224 + VAT.

Members discussed the issue and AGREED to delegate the decision of which contractor to appoint to Officers if the agreed quote was below £1,500 + VAT.

Members further AGREED that the sole respondent previously mentioned be appointed if no additional quotes were received with the outcome being reported to the Finance Committee meeting being held on 11 April 2023.

d) **Battery storage of solar energy**

Members were reminded that there was currently insufficient solar generation capacity at the Council House to justify purchase of a battery storage system.

It was AGREED that further work on the battery system be deferred until sufficient solar capacity had been installed and that investigations should continue in to the possibility of more solar panels being added to the Assembly Room roof.

e) **Electrical Installation Condition Report**

The Sub-Committee noted that the Electrical Installation Condition Report had been completed.

f) **Council Chamber chandelier**

The Acting Property Manager reminded Members that the decision had previously been taken not to restore the Council Chamber chandelier. He further reminded them that a piece of work had been agreed to upgrade the lamps in the chandelier and reinstate the dimmer switches to give flexibility to the lighting in the room.

Members discussed the issue and agreed that, with the possibility of a return to evening meetings, this work should be a priority and completed as soon as possible.

The Chairman reminded Members that she had favoured restoring the chandelier.

g) **Copper roof**

The Sub-Committee noted that the leak in the copper roof had been repaired.

h) **Façade lighting**

The Acting Property Manager reminded Members that the Council House and Market Cross lighting would be set to display a rotating rainbow colour scheme on the evening of Chichester Pride, 27 May 2023.

i) **CCTV**

The Acting Property Manager informed the Sub-Committee that he felt that the current CCTV system was deteriorating and in need of upgrading with more up-to-date equipment.

He also informed them that he had approached five contractors for quotes for the work but, to date, had only received one quote in the sum of £5,162 + VAT.

Members expressed concern about the cost and agreed to defer the matter to the next meeting and review the situation once more of the quotes had been received.

j) **Portico enclosure**

Members were advised that an exploratory meeting had taken place with the architect Richard Meynell regarding a project to enclose the portico and were reminded of the positive benefits that such a project could produce such as increased community space and insulating the Council Chamber above.

The Chairman reminded Members that the previous attempt to move forward on a similar project had been withdrawn due to issues created by a lack of public engagement.

The Deputy Mayor suggested that part of the project should be a public meeting to inform residents and interested individuals about the purpose of the project and that selling points could be city centre revitalisation and provision of a new community space.

Councillor Dignum expressed the opinion that the Council should be clear on the reasons behind the project and the Deputy Town Clerk emphasised that there had to be a clear purpose identified for the space for a Planning Application of this nature to succeed.

Members also discussed the possibility of the enclosed portico as a tourism point and exhibition space.

k) **Old Courtroom roof light**

The Acting Property Manager reminded Members that the current roof light in the Old Courtroom was single glazed and suffered from significant heat loss.

He informed the Sub-Committee that architect Richard Meynell was advising on a design for a wooden framed double or triple glazed replacement and that the project was to be funded from the City Council's £200,000 CIL energy efficiency allocation.

The Sub-Committee also asked that Mr Meynell consider options to help improve the poor acoustics in the room.

Members agreed that the acoustic issue be taken to the next Sub-Committee meeting.

l) **Secondary glazing**

Members were reminded that the original intention had been to install secondary glazing to the majority of the windows in the Council House.

The were advised that architect Richard Meynell had been asked to suggest solutions based on the use of wooden frames to best match the existing windows rather than the metal and plastic solutions previously proposed.

The Chairman reminded the Sub-Committee that this was also to be funded from the CIL energy efficiency allocation.

It was AGREED that the discussions should continue with any proposals being brought to the next meeting of the Sub-Committee.

m) **Murray cabinet**

The Acting Property Manager summarised the issues that had been experienced with the lock on the Murray display cabinet.

He assured Members that the artefacts had been removed and placed in the City Council's safe as a precaution while the cabinet was repaired.

Members were advised that, due to the distance that the original supplier had to travel to make repairs, a more local solution was being sought that would, hopefully, be more reliable and easier to maintain.

The Deputy Mayor expressed disappointment about the quality of the cabinet given it's initial cost and, in response to a question from Councillor Quail, he advised that the cabinet had only been installed in 2016.

n) **Fire alarm panel**

The Acting Property Manager summarised his report and explained the problems that were being experienced with the current fire alarm panel.

He expressed the opinion that the panel needed to be replaced and would benefit from being upgraded to a more modern system that allowed for greater flexibility when being operated.

In response to Member concerns about this problem causing issues with the Council's insurance, the Acting Property Manager assured Members that the fire alarm was operational but there were issues being experienced.

The Acting Property Manager advised that he had requested quotes from three companies to date with sums in the amount of £3,681.21+VAT (with £650 per year annual support) and £3,994+VAT (with £405 per year support) having been received.

The Sub-Committee AGREED that the matter needed to be resolved as a matter of urgency and further AGREED to delegate authority to proceed to the Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk and Acting Property Manager with the outcomes being reported to the Finance Committee as appropriate.

o) **Council Chamber acoustics**

Members agreed that issues of meeting attendees struggling to hear what was being discussed were experienced on a regular basis.

The Member Services Support Officer reminded the Sub-Committee that, during the COVID pandemic, investigations had taken place in to providing desk based microphones for meeting attendees to try to overcome these problems.

He also reminded them that the system that had been borrowed from Chichester District Council would have cost approximately £15,000 but wired solutions were available for £2,000 to £3,000.

The Deputy Mayor commented that he had recently used a portable hearing aid loop during a presentation he had given recently and it was AGREED that the Member Services Support Officer should investigate this option and report back to the next meeting.

54. **ALLOTMENTS**

a) **Update**

The Deputy Mayor and Councillor Quail declared an interest as City Council allotment holders.

Members noted the allotments update included with the Acting Property Manager's report.

b) **Water leaks**

i) **Kingsham Avenue**

Members were advised that the leak at Kingsham Avenue allotments had been located and repaired in house.

ii) **Roman Amphitheatre**

Members were advised that a leak had been discovered at the Roman Amphitheatre allotments but that it had been located and repaired in house.

The Acting Property Manager informed the Sub-Committee that further leaks had been identified at the Blackberry Lane and St Pauls allotment sites and that these had been located and repaired.

The Deputy Mayor commented on the recent trend he had noticed where allotment holders were letting others work part of their plot to make sure they were properly maintained.

The Member Services Support Officer informed Members that there was a formal arrangement whereby allotment plot holders could nominate a co-worker which would be recorded on the allotment management system. He also confirmed that formal splitting of plots was at the discretion of the City Council.

The Sub-Committee also discussed the level of rents being charged with some feeling that they were too low. They also discussed whether there was any formal control over the rents that were charged.

Members agreed that the rent levels should be reviewed for appropriateness and benchmarked against other local providers.

Post meeting note: The Member Services Support Officer provided the Sub-Committee with a statement regarding the charging of allotment rent:

“Rent

The maximum amount of rent which can be charged for an allotment garden tenancy is such rent “as a tenant may reasonably be expected to pay for the land if let for such use on the terms (other than the terms as to rent) on which it is in fact let” (section 10(1), Allotments Act 1950). This obscure phrase was applied by a court in 1981 to refuse a council permission to raise its rent from 30p a rod to £1 a rod. The author is not aware of any later judicial interpretation (and would like to hear from readers about any such case).

In practice, rents for allotment gardens are low, ranging from perhaps £1 a year to £50 per year per plot. Many councils run their allotments at a loss.

The rent is commonly fixed by the tenancy agreement, which means that it cannot be altered without the consent of the tenant. This in turn means that it may be necessary to give a tenant notice to quit in order to increase the rent. However, there is nothing to prevent a tenancy agreement including a rent review clause allowing an alteration of rent after a period of notice. In one case, for example, the agreement provides that the rent may be increased after giving 12 months’ notice to the tenant.”

c) Electric ride on mower

Members were reminded of the request from the Property Maintenance Officer for the purchase of an electric ride on mower to enable him to mow the large areas of grass that are the City Council’s responsibility more efficiently.

Members were further reminded that the Sub-Committee had been agreeable to this at the previous meeting (minute 44c refers) but had asked whether it would be capable of taking over the mowing of Brewery Field.

The Acting Property Manager confirmed that, with an adjustment to the original specification, this would be possible and would save the City Council money currently being spent on a contractor to undertake the work.

After a short further discussion, it was RECOMMENDED to the Finance Committee on 11 April 2023 that an electric ride on mower be purchased as specified for the sum of £10,503.00 to be paid from the City Council’s CIL allocation.

55. BUS STOPS/SHELTERS

a) Swanfield Drive

Members were advised that this matter was currently with the City Council’s solicitor and that it was hoped that the purchase of the land would be completed soon.

b) Bognor Road

The Acting Property Manager reported that the bus shelter was due to be installed on 25-26 May 2023.

He recorded his thanks to the Member Services Support Officer for his help with progressing this project.

c) **Broyle Road**

Members were advised that the vandalised glass panels had now been replaced with metal panels as per the minutes of the previous meeting (minute 45c refers).

56. **PUBLIC REALM PROJECTS**

a) **Murray sculpture**

The Sub-Committee was advised that repairs to the statue had been completed by the sculptor, Vincent Gray, and that the Sussex Heritage Trust plaque had been installed on the plinth.

The Deputy Mayor informed Members that, following an assessment by the sculptor, it had been recommended that the resin swords should be cast in bronze and bolted to the statue's framework to prevent further damage being done.

In response to concerns being raised about the bronze potentially being a target for theft, Members were advised that the amount of bronze involved was very small and of little value.

After a short debate, it was agreed that the Acting Property Manager should investigate the feasibility of the proposal and report back to the next meeting.

b) **Cycle racks**

The Acting Property Manager summarised the information in his report.

He recommended that bicycle racks in a bright galvanised finish be investigated as a compromise between stainless steel, which was difficult to repair in house, and the dull grey standard galvanised finish.

He also recommended that the installation should be phased with the most popular locations being identified for initial changeover.

Members were advised that an estimate of the cost to replace the racks in North and West Streets would be in the sum of £3,544+VAT with the installation being undertaken in house.

The Sub-Committee discussed the matter and asked the Acting Property Manager to provide costs for the replacement of the racks in East Street as well.

They also discussed the current locations of the racks and suggested relocating them to the entrances to the precinct to try to deter cycling through the pedestrianised area.

The Acting Property Manager agreed to discuss the matter with West Sussex County Council Highways Officers and report his findings as well as his further proposals to the next meeting.

c) **Speed Indicator Devices (SIDs)**

The Acting Property Manager advised Members that the SID was currently installed in St Pauls Road for outbound traffic.

Members commented that they did not think the device was working and also that they felt it was in the wrong place due to the proximity of parked vehicles which forced traffic to slow down on the approach to the SID.

The Acting Property Manager confirmed that the location had been agreed between the previous Property Manager and West Sussex County Highways.

Members also discussed possible alternative locations for the SID on St Pauls road with the bridge over Centurion Way being mentioned.

The Sub-Committee asked the Acting Property Manager to discuss the issue with the County Council and report back to the next meeting.

d) **Parish Boundary Signs**

Members were reminded that the entrance to the city on Terminus Road at the Fishbourne roundabout end did not currently include a Parish boundary sign.

They were further reminded that the City Council had a spare sign and that it had been agreed to repurpose this sign with the new boundary sign design and install it at that location.

The Acting Property Manager reported that he was currently in discussion with West Sussex County Highways about the location and necessary permission and that the sign would be installed by the Property Maintenance team once agreement had been reached.

The Deputy Mayor commented on the fresh look of the new Parish boundary signs and thanked the Acting Property Manager and Member Services Support Officer for their efforts.

e) **Railway Station waiting rooms**

Members were advised that the prints and frames had been delivered to the Railway Station and that they were awaiting installation and the addition of descriptive cards by the photographer.

The Deputy Town Clerk reported that the Section 106 funds had yet to arrive from Chichester District Council.

The Deputy Mayor thanked the Officers for their efforts in getting the project completed.

f) **Cathedral beds**

The Deputy Town Clerk reminded the Sub-Committee that a project was being started to renovate the Cathedral beds in West Street as well as to undertake repairs to the retaining walls and capstones.

In response to concerns expressed by Members, the Deputy Town Clerk confirmed that the City Council's responsibility was solely the upkeep of the flower beds but that without action from the City Council it was unlikely that repairs to the walls would happen.

Members discussed the timing of the works and it was agreed that it was unlikely that it would be completed before the Coronation.

Councillor Quail expressed concerns about the work happening during the Coronation and it was agreed that volunteer group be approached and asked to undertake a tidy up of the flower beds prior to the Coronation celebrations.

The Deputy Mayor linked the project to the City Centre Task Force and proposed that the University of Chichester might also be willing to get involved.

The Sub-Committee asked Officers to put together a formal proposal for the works, to be presented at the next meeting.

f) **City Centre Task Force**

Members noted the update from the Acting Property Manager and it was agreed that, overall, the project had been a success.

The Acting Property Manager reported that, as requested at the previous meeting, he had undertaken an inspection of the twitten between East Street and the Oxmarket Gallery and could inform Members that the works required there included weeding and were similar to other areas of the city.

Members discussed the project and noted that the city maps located around the city were being updated, out of date signs and estate agent boards were being removed and that BID had received a positive response from landlords to their request to spruce their buildings up.

Councillors Dignum and Quail left the meeting

57. **BREWERY FIELD**

Members noted that, in response to a request from a member of the public, wood chippings had been delivered to site and laid on the muddy areas by the entrance gate and under one of the benches.

58. **ITEMS FOR INCLUSION ON THE NEXT AGENDA**

- Council House redecoration works
- Crush Bar ceiling – update on progress of works
- Additional solar panels on the Assembly Room roof
- Council Chamber chandelier – lamp upgrade
- CCTV – review of quotes received
- Portico enclosure – update
- Old Courtroom – rooflight and acoustic issues
- Council House secondary glazing – update
- Murray cabinet – update
- Fire Alarm panel – update
- Council Chamber acoustics and meeting acoustics problems
- Murray sculpture – proposal to change swords to bronze replacements
- Cycle racks – update
- Speed Indicator Device – update on additional locations in St Pauls Road
- Parish boundary sign – Terminus Road – update
- Cathedral beds – update on project proposals and specification

59. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

To be confirmed

The meeting closed at 11.53am