



Chichester City Council

COMMUNITY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Minutes

Date 5 June 2023

Time 5.30pm – 7.32pm

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

PRESENT: Councillors Apel, Chant, J Gershater, Hitchman, Knight, Kondabeka, Squire

EX-OFFICIO: The Mayor (Councillor C Gershater), Deputy Mayor (Councillor Corfield), Councillor Butler (Chairman of Planning & Conservation)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Pramas and Scicluna, The Town Clerk, the Deputy Town Clerk, Member Services Support Officer. Helen Marshall (CEO and Chairman of Chichester BID)

1. **ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR OF THE COMMUNITY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE FOR 2023-2024**

The Mayor opened the meeting and asked for nominations for the Chair of the Community Affairs Committee.

It was proposed by Councillor Chant, seconded by Councillor Kondabeka and unanimously RESOLVED that Councillor Apel be elected as Chairman of the Community Affairs Committee for 2023-2024.

Councillor Apel then took the Chair and asked Committee Members to identify any training needs they might have in the areas covered by the Committee so that suitable training could be arranged.

The Chair then sought nominations for Vice-Chair.

It was proposed by the Deputy Mayor, seconded by the Mayor and RESOLVED that Councillor Loxton be appointed as Vice-Chair of the Community Affairs Committee for 2023-2024.

Councillor Chant abstained from the vote.

2. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

RESOLVED to accept and approve apologies and reasons for absence from the meeting from Councillors Loxton and Quail.

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

The Town Clerk explained that the Dispensations that some Members had applied for would not come in to effect until they had been approved at the next meeting of Full Council on 28 June 2023, so Councillors would need to declare individual interests until that time.

Councillor Kondabeka declared interests as Chairman of the Chichester District Foodbank and member of Voluntary Action Arun and Chichester as well as an interest in St John's Chapel Trust owing to its relationship with the Foodbank.

Councillors Apel, Chant and Corfield declared an interest as Members of Chichester District Council.

Councillor Apel declared interests as a Trustee of Pallant House Gallery and a Trustee of Stonepillow.

Councillor Chant declared a pecuniary interest in the Young People's Shop due to a business relationship with their Kitchen Sink Productions CIC.

Councillor J Gershater declared an interest as a Trustee of Homestart Chichester and District.

Councillor Knight declared an interest as the Welfare Officer for the Friends of Oaklands Park.

4. **MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 13 MARCH 2023 AND THE COMMUNITY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE (DISCRETIONARY GRANTS) MEETING HELD ON 6 APRIL 2023.**

RESOLVED to approve and sign as a correct record the minutes of the Community Affairs Committee meeting held on 13 March 2023 and the Community Affairs Committee (Discretionary Grants) meeting held on 6 April 2023.

5. **UPDATES FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES**

(a) **Coronation of King Charles event (minute 72c refers)**

The Town Clerk gave Members a verbal update and advised them that planning for the event was continuing apace.

She informed the Committee that letters had been sent to local residents and businesses and that stalls were selling well.

Members were further advised that banners and publicity would be going up soon.

(b) **A27 underpass decorative improvements (minute 75 refers)**

The Town Clerk informed Members that she had held a meeting with the Clerk of Fishbourne Parish Council to discuss what could be done.

The Committee was advised that it had been agreed that the City Council's Property Team would pressure wash the walls and treat the weeds on the pavements and approach.

Members were further advised that a response was being awaited from Chichester District Council about whether a community service work group would be able to pick up further work in this area going forward.

In response to a question from Councillor Knight, the Member Services Support Officer advised that several environmentally friendly weedkillers had been tried in the past but had proven ineffective or time prohibitive due to the need to treat more often.

Members were informed that the City Council Property Maintenance Officer was fully qualified in the area of weedkiller spraying and only spot treated when absolutely necessary.

(c) **City floral planting - Cathedral beds and hanging baskets (minute 77 refers)**

The Deputy Town Clerk gave Members a brief verbal summary of the discussions that had been taking place regarding the proposed works at the Cathedral beds.

The Committee was also given some background about the responsibilities that applied in that area and were advised that the beds were leased by West Sussex County Council on land owned by the Cathedral and that the City Council undertook maintenance of the beds under licence from the County Council.

The Deputy Town Clerk informed Members that she had received an indicative quote from a local contractor of £24,000 but that the City Council had only previously agreed to allocate £12,000 for the project.

In response to a question from Councillor Chant, Members were advised that the County Council paid the City Council £50 per annum for the upkeep of the flowerbeds.

The Town Clerk, in response to a suggestion from Councillor Butler, advised that she was uncertain whether the County Council would permit local businesses to sponsor the flowerbed maintenance.

The Mayor expressed the opinion that, where sponsorship had been put in place at various roundabouts around the city, it had not proven successful so he would be reluctant to pursue a similar approach with the cathedral beds due to their high profile position.

Councillor Scicluna agreed with the Mayor's comments and emphasised how important the appearance of the flower beds was, particularly for those visitors arriving by bus.

Councillor Pramas suggested that contact be made with repurposing companies with the aim of reusing surplus plants in the flowerbeds.

Councillor Chant proposed that additional quotes for the work be sought.

The Committee AGREED and asked Officers to seek additional quotes for the work on the Cathedral beds and report their findings to the next meeting.

6. POLICING AND SECURITY IN THE CITY

(a) Community Wardens

Councillor Vivian expressed concern about the apparent lack of a Police presence in the city centre as well as their absence from City Council meetings.

The Committee agreed with the Chair that both the Police and the Community Wardens should be invited to the next Community Affairs Committee meeting in September 2023.

The Mayor proposed the creation of community surgeries in each ward so that residents could raise their concerns that could then be discussed by the Committee. He further suggested that Councillors in each ward to run additional surgeries and that feedback from these surgeries could become a standing agenda item for future meetings.

The Chair urged Committee Members to make contact with and, if possible attend meetings of, the Residents Associations in their wards as they could be a valuable source of information.

The Town Clerk agreed to try to encourage West Sussex Police to attend future meetings of the Committee.

(b) BID Rangers

Ms Marshall, Chair and CEO of Chichester BID, congratulated Members on their election to the City Council.

She advised that there were no formal updates on the BID Rangers activities at this time as they were currently stood down (see also minute 8 below).

Members were further informed that Sussex Police had committed additional resources of two to three hours per day to the city centre to address Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) since the suspension of the BID Rangers service; but that this was time limited and due to finish at the end of June 2023.

Ms Marshall reported that incidents of ASB, shoplifting and street drinking were expected to increase as the summer progressed and the Police presence reduced.

She further reported that discussions with Sussex Police had been positive and that the local Police Commander was now more aware of the issues in the city centre and taking them seriously.

Councillor Vivian agreed with Ms Marshall's comments and expressed the opinion that there appeared to be blurred lines between the mandates of the Police, Rangers and Wardens making it difficult to understand who was responsible for what, sometimes resulting in issues falling between "between the cracks".

Ms Marshall responded that this was an ongoing conversation with the Police who seemed to be open to working more closely with the relevant organisations to try and resolve the issues being raised.

7. TO NOTE REPORTS RECEIVED FROM THE FOLLOWING:

(a) **Friends of Chartres, Ravenna, Speyer and Valletta**

Councillor Scicluna highlighted a number of items in the reports that had been submitted by the Friends associations and circulated with the agenda.

- Friends of Chartres – the recent, successful, visit from the Friends of Chichester in Chartres.
- Friends of Ravenna – the AGM would be taking place on 12 June 2023 and visit to Chichester by the Ravennatti was being planned for October.
- Friends of Speyer – in the process of setting up their committee, structure and annual meeting.
- Friends of Valletta – a reminder about the performance of Star of Strait Street taking place in the Assembly Room on 19 June 2023.

Councillor Scicluna also mentioned the upcoming Four Cities event on 26 June 2023 with an author talk to be attended by writer Simon Brett.

(b) **Chichester Tree Wardens**

Members noted the report that had been circulated with the agenda.

The Town Clerk informed Members that the Chichester Tree Wardens would be having a stall at the Chichester Gala and would welcome visits from City Councillors to talk about their work.

In response to a question from Councillor Vivian about the District Council's tree scheme, the Town Clerk advised that it would be difficult for the City Council to participate in the scheme due to the lack of large areas of open space. However, she advised that plans were being made to create new wildlife habitat where possible, in particular at Brewery Field.

The Mayor asked about the creation of bee-friendly and pollinator friendly areas of planting and the Town Clerk confirmed that this was the intention with the Brewery Field proposal.

Councillor Chant reported that Chichester District and West Sussex County Councillors were trying to create areas for pollinators by leaving areas such as roadside verges unmown.

Councillor Scicluna highlighted the pollinator friendly planting along the North Walls embankment.

Councillor Butler supported the points being made and suggested that local residents should be encouraged to create such areas in their gardens.

The Mayor informed Members that this would likely be included in the City Council's new Business Plan.

(c) **UK Harvest visit**

Councillor Chant summarised their report that had been circulated with the agenda.

They asked that the Committee consider ways to support food initiatives across the city, including a community café, and ways to help residents reduce waste and to support those residents in food poverty.

8. CHICHESTER BID RANGERS REPLACEMENT

Helen Marshall, CEO and Chairman of Chichester BID, explained some of the background to the BID Rangers service.

She reminded Members that, as a voted for service within the lifetime of the current BID administration, it could not be withdrawn as it was funded by the BID levy payers. She also advised that the service was strongly supported by the businesses in the city centre with 65% of levy payers having a positive view of the Rangers and 92% saying they should be a visible presence.

Members were informed that, following the well publicised incident that had occurred earlier in the year and the suspension of the Rangers service, a comprehensive review of the Rangers had been undertaken and the proposal for the replacement of the service (that had been circulated with the agenda) had been developed with a proposed name for the service of Chichester BID City Ambassadors.

Ms Marshall outlined the main elements of the proposal and advised that the key stakeholders who had been consulted about the changes, the Police, BID levy payers and other stakeholders; were largely supportive of the plans.

The Committee were advised that the service would now take on a role more focused on the promotion of the city and assisting visitors to the city and that it would not include any enforcement role. The role would include meeting and greeting, directing, reporting crime and being an interface with the businesses in the city centre.

The Chair expressed concerns about the effects that social media was having locally and Ms Marshall advised that, in this case, it had had a positive effect by focussing Police attention on what was happening in Chichester.

In response to a suggestion from the Mayor about “meet and greet” services provided in other cities, Ms Marshall advised that this model had been looked at but that Chichester BID had decided to retain the business focus of the service and also to retain some element of crime prevention as this had been requested by BID levy payers who, ultimately, funded it.

Councillor Kondabeka expressed the opinion that it was very important that the communication of the changes to the service was well managed.

The Committee thanked Ms Marshall and expressed their full support for the proposed replacement of the BID Rangers with the Chichester BID City Ambassadors.

9. RAVENNA FUND RAISING EVENT

The Town Clerk gave some background to the item and Councillor Scicluna gave an overview of the issues being experienced in Ravenna and the hardship being faced by residents following heavy flooding in May.

The Town Clerk also advised that it was not possible for the City Council to provide direct funding to the Ravenna appeal but, with the Committee’s agreement, support in kind could be made available by offering free hire of the Assembly Room to the Friends of Ravenna to organise a fund raising event.

RESOLVED to provide a free hire of the Assembly Room to host a fund raising event to support victims of the recent flooding in Ravenna and the surround area. Committee AGREED that the Town Clerk should contact the Friends of Ravenna to advise them of the offer and invite them to arrange a suitable event. It was also AGREED that this decision should be ratified at the Finance Committee meeting being held on 13 June 2023.

10. MEETING START TIMES

Members discussed the issues around arranging Committee meeting times and balancing this with work and social lives.

The Town Clerk reminded Members that, in order to attend evening meetings, Officers would need to take time back elsewhere during the week, as well as their leave entitlement; which could have a knock on effect on the on the availability of office support during normal office hours.

Councillor Pramas suggested meetings might be possible earlier in the mornings and the Mayor advised that the issue would be included in the business plan.

The Chair proposed, and it was AGREED, that the meeting time should remain at 5.30pm with this decision being revisited at the September meeting of the Committee once the new Councillors had settled in to their roles.

11. MEMBERSHIP OF OUTSIDE BODIES

Members discussed the draft list that had been circulated prior to the meeting.

Additional appointments were agreed and it was RESOLVED that the Member Services Support Officer should circulate the revised list after the meeting.

Post meeting note: In response to Councillor questions about the purpose of the Outside Bodies, the Member Services Support Officer circulated a series of links to information relating to the various organisations on the list.

12. GREEN SPACES FIRE WARDENS VOLUNTEERS

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

She explained the concept of setting up a group of volunteer fire wardens to monitor the key green spaces in the city to help prevent wildfires from spreading during hotter and drier summers.

Members were advised that the proposal had strong backing from West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service and that one of the local Police Community Support Officers had asked to be involved.

The Deputy Mayor asked for permission to arrange a public meeting to promote the proposal as well as a pitch at the City Council Gala in July.

Councillor volunteers from each ward were also asked to represent their communities on the group.

RESOLVED to support the proposal to establish a Green Spaces Fire Warden scheme and hold a public meeting at the Council House to seek volunteers.

13. PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH A CITY COUNCIL HYGEINE BANK

Councillor Chant summarised their report that had been included with the agenda and outlined the principles of the scheme they were proposing.

They proposed that a hygiene bank be established at the Council House for the provision of appropriate products for those in hygiene poverty.

Members discussed the proposal and several Councillors expressed concerns that there was a risk that products might be taken by those who were not in genuine need or that a small number of individuals might take more than necessary.

Concerns were also expressed about the availability of Officer time to support such an initiative.

The Town Clerk summarised her experience of providing a similar facility in Bracklesham and the Members Services Support Officer related the concerns to the provision of an “honesty rail” for coats and warm clothes that had previously been set up in the Council House portico.

Councillor Kondabeka reported that the Chichester District Foodbank also provided similar products and that research would be required to capture those in need who did not attend the Foodbank.

After a short further discussion it was suggested that a pilot project be run for a limited period of time to assess the practicalities of time and delivery as well as the level of demand.

AGREED that Councillor Chant would make contact with the Hygiene Bank charity to invite them to send a representative to the next meeting of the Committee to discuss the practicalities of how a pilot project might work in Chichester.

14. DISCRETIONARY GRANTS – SECOND ROUND

Councillors noted that the remaining Discretionary Grants budget for 2023-2024 stood at £8,953.63.

Councillor Scicluna proposed that, in light of the relatively small amount of money available, only applications for grants up to £500 be accepted this time. She also expressed the opinion that, for smaller charities, even £500 would make a big difference.

In response to comments from Councillor Kondabeka, Members discussed the balance between available funds, the size of potential grants and the costs to larger charities of assembling bids and whether this might be putting off some organisations from applying.

Members were reminded that, historically, the Grants were intended to help fund specific projects rather than providing support for ongoing running costs.

The Mayor suggested that time limited organisational funding could be considered in the future and the Chair suggested that the Discretionary Grant Working Group could be reconvened to discuss the Grant application criteria going forward.

After a short further discussion it was RESOLVED to proceed with a second round of Grant applications in the Autumn and that the applications be limited to the small Grant category of amounts up to £500.

15. ITEMS FOR THE NEXT AGENDA

- Business Plan
- Supporting inclusion and diversity for the LGBTQ+ community
- Fire Wardens update

16. DATE OF NEXT ORDINARY MEETING

DATE OF NEXT ORDINARY MEETING: 4 SEPTEMBER 2023

The meeting closed at 7.32pm