



Chichester City Council

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Minutes

- Date** 24 October 2023
- Time** 5.30pm – 7.13pm
- Location** The Council Chamber - The Council House • North Street • CHICHESTER • West Sussex • PO19 1LQ
- PRESENT:** Councillors Scicluna (Chairman), Miall (Vice-Chairman), Kondabeka, Loxton, Pramas, Quail and Vivian
- EX-OFFICIO:** The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Corfield), Councillor Apel (Chairman of the Community Affairs Committee), Councillor Butler (Chairman of the Planning and Conservation Committee)
- ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** Councillor Squire, Deputy Town Clerk (Responsible Financial Officer), Council Services and Support Manager, West Sussex County Councillor Simon Oakley (for the public parts of the meeting)
- IN ATTENDANCE VIA ZOOM:** Town Clerk and Paul Roberts and Joe Scott-Soane from Arlingclose Treasury Advisers

43. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

RESOLVED to accept and approve apologies and reasons for absence from the meeting from the Mayor, Councillor C Gershater, and Councillor Moore.

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

No declarations were received.

45. MINUTES OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 5 SEPTEMBER 2023

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 5 September 2023 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

At this point, the Chairman took agenda items 10, 12 and 11

46. PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT 1960

Resolved that the public and press be excluded from the meeting for agenda items 11 and 12 due to the nature of the business to be transacted, namely confidential Annual Awards nominations and business matters with third parties.

47. **CITY COUNCIL INVESTMENTS**

The Deputy Town Clerk introduced the representatives from Arlingclose Treasury Advisers.

The Committee was given an outline of the services that Arlingclose offered to Parish Councils.

Members were informed that the majority of the company's clients were enrolled in the full advice service, giving them daily access to advice on treasury management as well as debt advice and credit rating information.

Members were further informed that the company had recently launched a new service for smaller councils which provided information required for due diligence on share information and appropriate bank and investment opportunities.

The company advised that this latter service was information provision only and that investment decisions remained with the client Council.

They also advised that, in any investment process, it was important to maintain the correct investment profile, balancing the accessibility of the funds against the returns being received.

After answering questions from Councillors, the Chairman thanked the Arlingclose advisers and informed them the City Council would be in touch if they decided to proceed.

48. **CHICHESTER CITY COUNCIL ANNUAL AWARDS 2023**

Councillor Apel, as Chairman of the Community Affairs Committee, advised Members that she had had to leave the Zoom meeting early and thanked Councillor Loxton for stepping in to Chair the remainder of the meeting.

After a short update on how the voting processes had taken place, under the delegated powers of the Finance Committee for Civic and Ceremonial matters it was RESOLVED that the recommendations made at the Annual Awards 2023 Zoom meeting held on 18 October 2023 be accepted and the successful nominees be informed as soon as possible.

The meeting returned to public session.

49. **UPDATES ON ACTIONS FROM THE PREVIOUS MINUTES NOT COVERED ELSEWHERE ON THE AGENDA**

a) **Press release regarding city centre pavements further to FOI request to West Sussex County Council (minute 29b refers)**

The Town Clerk reported that Councillor Pramas had still not received the information requested from West Sussex County Council (WSSCC) further to her Freedom of Information (FOI) request regarding statistics related to the city centre pavements.

Councillor Pramas informed the Committee that she was continuing to work on the background information for the city centre pavements and that she would be bringing forward a paper to Full Council once the work had been completed.

In response to a question from Councillor Quail, Councillor Pramas advised that she would be investigating a suitable complaints procedure for the lack of response to the FOI request.

Councillor Butler suggested that it might be worth investigating a judicial review could be successfully launched on the issue.

b) **Quotations for full structural survey of the Council House (minute 30 refers)**

The Deputy Town Clerk reported that two quotes had been received from contractors for the undertaking of a full building condition survey of the Council House.

She further reported that a third contractor had declined to quote due to other commitments.

Members were informed that the survey had been completed and that the final report was being awaited.

c) **Traffic Issues Working Group to prepare a report and recommendation for the Planning Committee on the benefits of procuring a second SID device (minute 34j refers)**

This item was deferred.

d) **Reimbursement of printing costs to the Parklands Residents Association for Neighbourhood Plan materials (minute 35 refers)**

Noted that payment had been made.

e) **Christmas closure dates to be advised to staff and public (minute 38 refers)**

The Town Clerk reminded the Committee that the City Council offices would be closing for the Christmas period at 12 noon on Friday 22 December 2023 and would reopen on Tuesday 2 January 2024

50. **PROPOSALS FOR CHANGE OF USE OF THE PROPERTY OFFICE/OLD TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE**

The Committee discussed the two proposals for the change of use of the former Property office/Town Clerk's office that had been circulated with the agenda.

The Chairman expressed the opinion that there was a need for a space for Councillors to meet and talk with constituents and proposed that the room be turned in to a Member's room for this purpose.

A wide ranging discussion followed about the use of the room as a community space.

The Committee agreed that there were a number of issues that needed to be considered further, including access issues and safeguarding, before a decision could be made on its future use.

The Committee asked the Business Plan Working Group to further consider the concerns raised as well as the wider issue of the use of the other spaces that may be available in the Council House, namely the cloakroom and the current Property workroom on the first floor.

51. **DRAFT CITY COUNCIL BUDGET 2024/2025**

The Deputy Town Clerk summarised the draft City Council budget (2024/2025).

She highlighted some of the items that had been included in her report and advised that it included budget items that had been identified in the business plan and that were potentially deliverable in 2024/2025.

Members were advised that, while these items had been budgeted for, it did not mean that the funds would definitely be spent if the business plan timetable slipped or the City Council's priorities changed.

Members were further advised that the increase in the draft budget over 2023/2024 represented a rise of 8.95% in the City Council's precept demand. Taking in to account an estimated rise in the tax base of 4%, this would mean an actual rise of 4.26% in the precept demand, or £2.73/annum per band D property.

The Deputy Town Clerk also highlighted other items in her report, including the expected pay award, the increase in the Discretionary Grant budget, the Public Realm budget, changes to the BID city centre patrols service and cost increases in the support for the public conveniences in Priory Park and the Community Warden service.

She also summarised the City Council's income streams and the rationale behind the figures in the draft budget.

Members were informed that previous changes to the energy costs budget meant that the amounts indicated were expected to be sufficient for the City Council's energy charges going forward. They were also informed that new, 100% green, energy contracts had been signed recently following the expiration of the previous fixed deals.

A discussion followed based on the Deputy Town Clerk's comments during which Members were informed that a revised budget for 2024/2025 would be presented to the Finance Committee in November for final approval and recommendation to Full Council in December.

The Committee considered the projects that had been mentioned and others that may be appropriate for funding from the City Council's Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) allocation and the Deputy Town Clerk was asked to present a CIL statement and update at the November meeting of the Committee.

52. LITTEN GARDENS WAR MEMORIAL

The Council Services and Support Manager reported that a letter had been received from a relative of one of those named on the war memorial, advising that his name had been incorrectly transcribed as J A Walters, when it should have read J A Waters.

Members were informed that a quote of £750 + VAT had been received from a local contractor to undertake the necessary adjustments.

RESOLVED to delegate authority to the Town Clerk to proceed with the work as quoted.

53. COUNCILLOR ACCESS TO CITY COUNCIL EMAILS AND DOCUMENTS ON PERSONAL DEVICES

Members were informed that, further to requests from some Councillors, Officers had undertaken a preliminary investigation in to allowing Councillors to access their emails via their personal phones and laptops (otherwise known as Bring Your Own Device – BYOD).

The Council Services and Support Manager summarised the requirements of such a setup, including the requirement of the Data Protection regulations to protect the City Council's data and separate it from the personal data held on such devices.

He advised the Committee that, while he understood the general principles of such a setup, the practical implementation and management of BYOD would be outside of his particular skill set and therefore would require an external contractor to implement and look after it.

The costs that had been included in his report were summarised and Members were informed that, with the assumption of a five year life-of-project, the total cost indicated would require tendering the project through the Government's contract finder service.

Members discussed the issues raised and noted that some of the Councillors who had asked for a BYOD environment were not present at the meeting.

The Committee then RESOLVED that the item would be deferred to the meeting of Full Council being held on 20 December 2023 for a final decision.

54. ARCHIVING OF CITY COUNCIL RECORDS FOR DEPOSIT AT THE RECORDS OFFICE AND/OR NOVIUM MUSEUM

The Town Clerk explained that the proposal was to work with the Novium museum and West Sussex County Records Office to submit a funding bid for the extra resource that would be required to pay for an Officer to fully assess, catalogue, index and digitise the significant collection of papers and other materials currently being stored in the Council House.

She also explained that the reasoning for the project was that the photographs and other records were currently unavailable publicly so the aim was that the materials would be made available online for access by all.

The Council Services and Support Manager explained that it was not the intention to produce an archive that would be kept at the Council House, but to put together a meaningful collection of materials and accompanying electronic records for transfer to the Records Office and/or museum for correct storage and addition to their databases.

After a short further discussion, the Committee RESOLVED that the Clerk should seek support from the Novium and Records Office, obtain quotes for the work and then explore possible funding sources with a view to securing grant funding.

Councillor Quail, as a qualified Archivist and former Museums Service manager, agreed to assist with the assessment of the materials and scoping of the required work.

55. ITEMS FOR INCLUSION ON THE NEXT AGENDA

- City Council budget – 2024/2025 – approval
- CIL update
- Approval of the Draft Business Plan for public consultation

56. DATE OF NEXT ORDINARY MEETING

DATE OF NEXT ORDINARY MEETING: TUESDAY 21 NOVEMBER 2023

The meeting closed at 7.13pm

ACTIONS ARISING FROM THIS MEETING

Minute ref.	Agreed action	Assigned for action to
51	Update on the Community Infrastructure Levy funds and projects	Deputy Town Clerk