



Chichester City Council

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Minutes

- Date** 11 December 2023
- Time** 4.30pm – 6.04pm
- Location** The Council Chamber - The Council House • North Street • CHICHESTER • West Sussex • PO19 1LQ
- PRESENT:** Councillors Scicluna (Chairman), Kondabeka, Loxton, Moore, Pramas, Quail and Vivian
- EX-OFFICIO:** The Mayor (Councillor C Gershater), Councillor Apel (Chairman of the Community Affairs Committee), Councillor Butler (Chairman of the Planning and Conservation Committee)
- ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** Councillor McHale, Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk (Responsible Financial Officer), Council Services and Support Manager, Property Maintenance Manager, West Sussex County Councillor Simon Oakley (for the public parts of the meeting)
- IN ATTENDANCE VIA TEAMS/ ZOOM:** Robert Bebington (Robert Bebington and Company) for the Market House item via Teams, Councillor Pramas via Zoom

57. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

RESOLVED to accept and approve apologies and reasons for absence from the meeting from the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Corfield, and Councillor Miall.

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

Councillor Vivian declared an interest as the City Council's representative at Chichester BID.

59. MINUTES OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 24 OCTOBER 2023

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 24 October 2023 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

At this point, the Chairman took agenda items 16 to 19

60. PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT 1960

Resolved that the public and press be excluded from the meeting for agenda items 17 to 19 due to the nature of the business to be transacted, namely confidential business and personnel matters.

61. THE MARKET HOUSE

Mr Robert Bebington, of Robert Bebington and Company, gave Members an update on the proposals to reconfigure the units and change some of the leases in the Market House.

After Mr Bebington had answered questions from Members, the Chairman thanked him for his report and Mr Bebington left the meeting.

The Deputy Town Clerk explained more of the background relating to what had been reported and Members noted the updates.

The Committee AGREED they were unable to comment at this stage and requested that in future any additional information be submitted in writing, including any impact on the rental income, so that they were able to decide on any future proposal.

62. TOWN CLERK

The Chairman confirmed that, at a meeting between the Town Clerk and selected members of the Personnel Sub-Committee, the Town Clerk had been confirmed in post following a successful six month probationary period and appraisal by the Sub-Committee.

Members welcomed the news and congratulated the Town Clerk.

63. DECISION ON CITY COUNCIL INVESTMENTS

The Deputy Town Clerk summarised her report that had been circulated prior to the meeting and also reminded Members about the presentation that had been given by the investment advisers at the Finance Committee meeting held on 24 October 2023.

Members were reminded that, as custodians of public funds, they had a duty to manage the funds responsibly to ensure no losses were incurred and the funds were available for their intended purpose of improving the city and helping its residents and visitors.

The Deputy Clerk had recommended that a further proposal be brought back to the committee for the consultants to prepare a one-off recommendation on potential investments following a review of current cash and investment holding. Committee to make a final decision once the costs for this work are known.

The Deputy Clerk to report back to the committee at the February meeting.

Councillor Pramas joined the meeting via Zoom.

The meeting returned to the published agenda order in public session.

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

a) Update on the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds and projects (minute 51 refers)

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

Members noted the outstanding sums, the deadlines for spending these amounts and that any unspent monies would need to be returned to the relevant developers.

b) **Decision on City Council investments (Finance Committee meeting, 24 October 2023, minute 47 refers)**

Discussed and agreed under minute 63.

65. **REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING TO END SEPTEMBER 2023**

The Deputy Town Clerk summarised the report that had been circulated with the agenda.

She highlighted the current large underspend and noted some of the budgets that might absorb some of this including the pay rises.

She also noted the large underspend on the Public Realm budget and advised that some of this was due to the standing down of the Chichester BID Rangers resulting in a lower contribution from the City Council. Members were informed that any surplus on this budget could be carried forward to the 2024/2025 budget.

Other areas that were noted included the small remaining Discretionary Grants budget as well as the higher than budgeted returns on the City Council's investments.

Members were advised that the City Council's budget was expected show an estimated £80,000 surplus at the end of the year subject to their being no unexpected expenditure items.

66. **EARMARKED RESERVES**

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

She explained the background to some of the expenditure items and also highlighted some of the larger projects that were expected to proceed in the short to medium term, including the Mayor's Parlour facilities, Mayor's carpark, Assembly Room lighting and air conditioning, damp in the Town Clerk's office, external repairs and the Litten footpath.

The Deputy Town Clerk expressed concerns about the impact this would have on the reserves. In response to a question from Councillor Pramas, she confirmed that, while ongoing maintenance could not be funded from CIL monies, some of the proposed projects might qualify for funding from CIL to reduce the effect on the reserves.

67. **PUBLIC REALM PROJECTS**

Members noted the updates in the Deputy Town Clerk's report that had been circulated with the agenda.

68. **CITY COUNCIL BUDGET 2024/2025**

The Deputy Town Clerk summarised the proposed budget for 2024/2025 and explained the changes that had been included since the draft budget had been discussed at the Finance Committee meeting held on 24 October 2023.

Members were informed that the tax base figures had now been received and that, while the number of properties had gone up, the tax base itself had not risen as far as expected due to an increase in households struggling with the cost of living crisis and seeking support with Council Tax payments.

Members were further informed that this had resulted in a revised 10.53% increase in the precept demand which equated to a band D Council Tax annual payment of £70.76, £6.74 higher than for 2023/2024.

The Deputy Town Clerk highlighted some of the changes made since the draft budget including an increase in the staff salary budget of 6%, from 4%, to cater for the increased National Living Wage, the increase to the Grants budget and the Cathedral beds project.

After a short further discussion, it was RECOMMENDED to Full Council on 20 December 2023 that the City Council's budget for 2024/2025 be agreed providing the Tax Base remains unchanged from the draft figure of 12,036.40 provided by the District Council. The recommended budget to be £1,103,076 with a precept demand of £851,726 and a Band D Council Tax increase of 10.53% to £70.76.

69. **PROPERTY SUB-COMMITTEE MINUTES**

The Committee NOTED the minutes of the Property Sub-Committee meeting held on 2 November 2023.

Members then considered the following recommendations:

a) Council House portico (minute 18(i)b refers)

After further comments from the Town Clerk, it was RECOMMENDED to the Finance Committee on 21 November 2023 that a decision on whether to proceed with the project be made for taking to the meeting of Council on 20 December 2023 for a formal decision.

Members discussed the history of the project and merits as well as the difficulties presented by "selling" the idea to the city's residents and the relevant Officers at Chichester District Council.

All Members agreed that it was important that the Council did its homework and made the best business case possible to ensure wider agreement from the community.

Councillors Vivian and McHale expressed concerns about the project but also stated that they were not against it at this stage.

Members were reminded that a contingency of £20,000 had been set aside in the budget for feasibility work on the project to be commissioned.

After a short further discussion it was RECOMMENDED to Full Council on 20 December 2023 that the project should continue with the Property Sub-Committee being tasked with developing the feasibility study, including the creation of a suitable Working Group if appropriate.

b) Solar array and battery power (minute 18(i)d refers)

It was RECOMMENDED to the Finance Committee on 21 November 2023 that permission be given for an application for planning permission be submitted for the additional solar panels as suggested by the Historic Buildings Officer so that the project could proceed immediately.

RECOMMENDED to Full Council on 20 December 2023 that applications be made for Planning and Listed Buildings consents for the installation of solar panels on all remaining suitable roof areas with costings for the installation being

obtained based on the outcomes of the applications and brought back to the Finance Committee for a decision.

c) Old Courtroom roof light (minute 18(i)f refers)

After a short discussion about the Property Report, it was AGREED that Officers should continue to obtain further quotes for like-for-like works with the Sub-Committee giving in-principle approval for Officers to take a recommendation to Finance on November 21 2023 for up to £25,000 for the replacement of the roof light, to be funded from the City Council's CIL allocation.

The Property Maintenance Manager explained the project and advised that he had obtained a further quote of approximately £26,000 for the installation of double glazing, including replacing the current fans with electrically opening roof lights. He further advised that the cost may change if the current metal framework proved to be unsuitable.

RECOMMENDED to Full Council on 20 December 2023 that works proceed subject to the total cost being under £25,000 which would trigger the requirement to use the national Government's Contract Finder service.

d) Mayor's Parlour facilities (minute 19(i)a refers)

AGREED that three quotes should be obtained for the replacement of the sanitaryware and redecoration of the space, including any necessary repairs/improvements to the plumbing in order to ensure compliance with building regulations.

The Property Maintenance Manager confirmed that these works would be undertaken in house.

He outlined the proposed refurbishments and also noted that the work would include installation of an eco-friendly water heater as well as potable water and a small sink in the Parlour's kitchen area.

RESOLVED that the works proceed as outlined at a cost for materials of £2,200.92+VAT to be paid from the Council House Reserve.

e) "Property Office" furniture (minute 19(i)b refers)

It was RECOMMENDED to the Finance Committee on 21 November 2023 that the two items of furniture be sold with any monies raised being used to fund any setup costs for any change of use of the room.

RESOLVED that the sale of the two items proceed with any monies raised being used to fund any changes to the room required following adoption of the Council Plan in February 2024.

f) Assembly Room projector screen (minute 19(i)d refers)

AGREED the installation of the screen in principle with Officers asked to proceed to obtain quotes for the installation costs. Further AGREED that the project costs should be taken to the next meeting of the Finance Committee for approval.

The Property Maintenance Manager confirmed that the installation would be completed internally.

He summarised the benefits of the project and confirmed that the cost of the screen would be £2,400+VAT.

In response to a question from the Mayor about a fully installed projector to accompany the screen, the Council Services and Support Manager advised that this kind of installation would be difficult given the configuration of the Assembly Room and the listed status of the building.

He advised that the rapidly developing area of ultra short throw projectors might represent an opportunity for this kind of installation and would keep an eye on developments.

RESOLVED that confirmation be sought from the District Council's Historic Buildings Officer that the installation was acceptable and, subject to this confirmation, an order be placed in the sum of £2,390.23+VAT for a suitable projector screen, funded from the Council House Equipment budget and for the installation to proceed.

g) Introduction of automatic timers to control the water heaters (minute 19(i)h refers)

RECOMMENDED to the Finance Committee on 21 November 2023 that authority is delegated to the Town Clerk and Officers to investigate the viability of installing timer switches on the water heaters and to proceed subject to a cost limit. The project to be funded from the City Council's CIL allocation.

RESOLVED to proceed with the installation of suitable timers and overrides on the Council House water heaters at a total cost of £411.38+VAT to be funded from the City Council's CIL (Energy Efficiency) allocation. The works to be completed in house.

h) Air conditioning system (minute 19(i)i refers)

RECOMMENDED to the Finance Committee on 21 November 2023 that the Town Clerk and Officers be authorised to obtain an updated quote from the existing contractor and proceed to obtain two further quotes for comparison.

Further RECOMMENDED to authorise the Town Clerk to proceed to a full tender process through the Government's contract finder service if the value of the project was found to be over the threshold requiring this to happen. The results of the process to be reported to the next meeting of the Sub-Committee.

The Property Maintenance Manager advised that he had received an indicative quote of £21,500+VAT for the replacement of the air conditioning chiller unit and was awaiting a further quote from a recent contractor visit.

Members agreed that the work was important due to heat issues that had been experienced in the Assembly Room and it was RESOLVED that further quotes be obtained and authority be delegated to the Town Clerk to proceed to a full tender if the quotes exceeded £25,000. The outcomes to be presented to the next Property Sub-Committee.

i) St Pauls allotments – northern tree line reduction/removal (minute 19(iii)d refers)

RECOMMENDED to the Finance Committee on 21 November 2023 to proceed with the full quote of £5,000 for the reduction of the tree line and taking down of the trees found to be suffering from Ash die-back.

Members agreed that, while it was always difficult to make decisions to cut trees down, it was necessary on this occasion due to the Ash Die Back and safety

concerns for children at the neighbouring school and the allotment holders with plots under the tree line.

The Property Maintenance Manager advised that he had received an additional quote of £4,200 (no VAT) for the work which he proposed as an acceptable way forward.

RESOLVED that, due to the safety concerns, an order be placed with S&P Tree Specialists in the sum of £4,200 (no VAT) to be paid from the Allotment Reserve.

j) Madge Turner maquette (minute 19(iv)b refers)

The Sub-Committee AGREED TO RECOMMEND to the Finance Committee on 21 November 2023 that the payment be made to the sculptor for the maquette but that it was to be made clear that the City Council was under no obligation to provide further funding or to commission a full bronze statue in the future.

The Chairman reminded the Committee who Madge Turner was and that the City Council had awarded a Blue Plaque in her memory which was now installed on the Market House.

Members discussed the background to this recommendation and agreed that the manner in which this had arisen was regrettable.

The Town Clerk was asked to send an email to all Councillors reminding them of their responsibilities under the City Council's Standing Orders and Code of Conduct and also the limits of their authority when acting on behalf of the Council.

Councillor Quail reported that it was her understanding that fundraising was under way for the full statue to be produced.

Councillor Pramas suggested that, if the payment was made, the maquette could be held for possible future use if the Council decided to move forward with increasing the diversity of the people represented by the statues in the city.

The Committee generally agreed that, while there was no obligation to make the payment, it might be deemed to create a difficult situation if it was not made.

RESOLVED to accept the recommendation and make payment to the sculptor for the maquette of Madge Turner in the sum on no more than £1,500. Further RESOLVED that it be made clear that the City Council was under no obligation to provide further funding or to commission a full bronze statue in the future.

70. DRAFT CITY COUNCIL PLAN 2024-2029

Members discussed the updated draft of the plan and many present expressed thanks to the Working Group for all their efforts in producing the document.

Councillors McHale and Quail advised that they thought the document was a good outcome and represented a very positive step forward in the work of the Council.

Councillor Kondabeka summarised her thoughts on the document and expressed the hope that it would provide a sound basis for community interaction with the City Council.

Councillor Loxton proposed a couple of minor revisions to the document, namely that the Mayoralty plans be moved to the heritage section and the date for the environmental targets be changed to BY 2029 rather than in 2029.

Committee RESOLVED that, further to the delegated authority given to the Finance Committee at Full Council on 27 September 2023 (minute 54 refers), and subject to Councillor Loxton's amendments; the draft Council Plan for 2024-2029 be published and put out for public consultation in the new year with the results being reported back to a future meeting of the Full Council.

71. MATCH FUNDING FOR SHARED PROSPERITY FUND PROJECTS BEING SUBMITTED BY CHICHESTER BID FOR CITY CENTRE IMPROVEMENTS

Members noted the recommendation made at the Planning and Conservation Committee meeting held on 7 December 2023 (minute 98 refers), namely:

After a lengthy discussion of the proposed projects, the Committee RESOLVED to recommend to the finance committee meeting on 11th December that CIL funds of up to £28,000 be made available as match funding towards the UK Shared Prosperity Fund bid, release of the funds to be contingent upon the bid being successful.

In response to a question from Councillor Vivian, it was confirmed that the funding for Cathedral Green project was for provision of power only with the WiFi element being placed in a separated project.

RECOMMENDED to Full Council on 20 December 2023 that up to £28,000 be allocated from the City Council's CIL funds to provide match funding for the Chichester BID's application for project funding to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Further RECOMMENDED that the release of the funds be contingent on the bid being successful.

72. ANNUAL AWARDS 2023 – PRESENTATION CEREMONY

Members noted the date of the presentation ceremony for the Annual Awards 2023 as being Tuesday 13 February 2024.

73. CITY COUNCIL DISCRETIONARY GRANTS AND CONCESSIONS

Members noted the recommendation made at the Community Affairs Committee meeting held on 4 December 2023 (minute 48 refers), namely:

It was RECOMMENDED to the Finance Committee on 11 December 2023 that the draft City Council budget for 2024/2025 be amended in line with the Working Group recommendations such that:

- *£50,000 per annum be made available from the City Council's CIL allocation for the provision of funding for defined projects submitted by community groups and organisations.*
- *£50,000 per annum be allocated from the City Council revenue budget for the longer term provision of funding for local voluntary groups.*

Committee RESOLVED that the changes to the City Council budget, as well as the allocation from the City Council's CIL funds, be agreed in full as per the recommendation from the Community Affairs Committee meeting held on 4 December 2023.

It was also AGREED that a follow up meeting of the Grants & Concessions Policy Working Group will be called in January 2024 to agree the criteria for the two schemes and make recommendations to the March 2024 meeting of the Community Affairs Committee.

74. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION ONLY

a) MONTHLY RECONCILIATION WITH EVIDENCE OF BANK STATEMENTS TO END OF SEPTEMBER 2023

RESOLVED to note the monthly reconciliations with evidence of bank statements until end of September 2023.

b) LIST OF PAYMENTS MADE FOR AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER 2023

RESOLVED to note the list of receipts and payments made for August and September 2023.

c) LIST OF BARCLAYCARD PAYMENTS FOR AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER 2023

RESOLVED to note the list of Barclaycard payments made for August and September 2023.

75. ITEMS FOR INCLUSION ON THE NEXT AGENDA

- Portico project update
- Market House update

76. DATE OF NEXT ORDINARY MEETING

DATE OF NEXT ORDINARY MEETING: TUESDAY 6 FEBRUARY 2024

The meeting closed at 6.04pm

ACTIONS ARISING FROM THIS MEETING

Minute ref.	Agreed action	Assigned for action to
61	Request additional information regarding the proposals for the Market House and associated lease from Robert Bebington and Company and Orion Developments (Southern) Ltd.	Deputy Town Clerk
69a-69j	Implement agreed actions from the Property Sub-Committee recommendations and report back as appropriate	Officers
69j	The Town Clerk to send an email to all Councillors reminding them of their responsibilities under the City Council's Standing Orders and Code of Conduct and also the limits of their authority when acting on behalf of the Council. Payment to be made to the sculptor of the Madge Turner maquette as agreed with the additional caveats about further funding being advised.	Town Clerk Deputy Town Clerk
70	Prepare and publish the Council Plan 2024-2029 for formal consultation with the general public.	Town Clerk and Officers