



Chichester City Council

EXTRA ORDINARY MEETING OF COUNCIL

Minutes

Date 22 January 2025

Time 6.00pm – 7.03pm

Location The Council Chamber, The Council House, North Street, Chichester. West Sussex • PO19 1LQ

PRESENT: The Mayor, Councillor Quail (SQ), the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Loxton (SL), Councillors Apel (CA), Butler (AB), Chant (RC), C Gershater (CG), J Gershater (JG), Knight (SK) – from 6.05pm, McHale (SM), Miall (RMi), Moore (RMo), Squire (KS) and Vivian (JV).

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Town Clerk (TC), Deputy Town Clerk (DTC), Council Services and Support Manager (CSSM), Communities Officer, West Sussex County Councillor Sarah Sharp.

75. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were noted from Councillors Corfield, Hitchman, Kondabeka, Pramas and Scicluna.

76. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL IN MATTERS ARISING ON THE AGENDA FOR THIS MEETING

No declarations were made.

77. BUSINESS PLAN SUB-COMMITTEE

Members **NOTED** receipt of the minutes of the Business Plan Sub-Committee meeting held on 14 January 2025.

Further noted that the recommendations from the meeting would be discussed later in the meeting.

Note: agenda item references for Playground and the Chichester Festival NEST were incorrect in the agenda and should have read 9 and 10 respectively.

78. CHICHESTER DISTRICT COUNCIL REGENERATION PANEL

Council considered the Chichester District Council (CDC) request to nominate a City Councillor to attend regular regeneration panel meetings at Chichester District Council.

Council **NOMINATED** Councillor Miall as the City Council representative, to report back to Full Council on any matters discussed.

79. DEVOLUTION IN ENGLAND

TC advised the Council of the decision of West Sussex County, East Sussex County and Brighton and Hove City Councils', to pursue a devolution deal with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the recommendations outlined in her briefing note.

Members were advised that there is currently considerable uncertainty about the final process for devolution and what the white paper would mean in practice. They were informed that it would be easier to ascertain how matters may proceed once the draft bill had been published, the proposed legislation scrutinised, and the government had announced the priority areas for Strategic Authority creation.

TC reported that the proposed timetable was very ambitious, with new Strategic Authorities expected to be in place by 2026 and new Unitary Authorities in place by 2027.

She stated that, although the reorganisation would undoubtedly pose opportunities for the City Council to take on more local services; it was important that the cost and resource implications were fully understood and that opportunities to take on revenue generating services were pursued to limit the impact on the precept.

TC advised that early engagement with both CDC and West Sussex County Council (WSCC) was essential in order to begin to shape what services and assets would best be managed locally, and which would be best retained at unitary level. An ongoing three-way dialogue would be essential to success.

Council agreed that a key consideration in the approach should also be minimising the costs of reorganisation to the taxpayer and ensuring that legal and land transaction costs were minimised. They further agreed that a piecemeal approach to asset and service transfers should be avoided, with as much as possible wrapped into the vesting of the new authority via day one agreements.

TC reminded Members that an informal workshop had been arranged for 28th January 2025 to allow Councillors to begin exploring the issues raised in more depth.

Councillors expressed concerns about staff capacity and the immediate resource implications of the proposed changes. The Clerk agreed that this would be a very challenging time, with a lot of work to be covered in the next 6-9 months.

Council **AGREED** to send a letter to the local MP, Leader of WSCC, Leader of CDC, CEO of WSCC and CEO of CDC reminding them of the role that town and parish councils could play in local government reform, particularly in hyper-local delivery of services and ensuring local representation and accountability. Further **AGREED** that the content of the letter would be finalised at the workshop to be held on 28/01/2025.

Additionally, Council **AGREED** to consider the following items in further detail at the workshop to be held on 28th January 2025:

- a) Identify assets or services they believe it is in the interests of residents to deliver and manage locally and write to WSCC and CDC expressing an interest in taking on these functions.
- b) Consider how to effectively model the potential costs, income and liabilities of any asset transfers and service functions so that the impacts upon the precept can be understood

- c) Develop an engagement strategy to understand residents' support for hyper-local service delivery given the potential impact this will have on the parish precept.

80. ITEMS FOR INCLUSION ON THE NEXT AGENDA

- Devolution
- Chichester Gala
- VE Day anniversary
- Neighbourhood Plan.

81. PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS ACT) 1960

RESOLVED that the public and press be excluded from the meeting for agenda items 8, 9 and 10 due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted namely financial and business affairs of third parties.

82. WESTS MEMORIAL GARDEN

TC advised that the lease negotiations between the landlord and leaseholder at the Duke and Rye had now reached a conclusion and the proposal was to lease the memorial garden to the City Council for 99 years on a peppercorn basis.

Council **RESOLVED** to proceed with the lease assignment and delegated authority to the Town Clerk to conclude the negotiations on the terms outlined in the report for a maximum cost of £2,500 in legal fees.

83. PLAYGROUNDS IN CHICHESTER

RMi advised that CDC had concluded the tender process for the refurbishment of playgrounds in the city and had appointed a contractor to deliver the works across five city playgrounds.

He reported that, following a presentation of the draft design proposals to the Business Plan Sub-committee on 14 January 2025 by Andy Howard, Head of Operations at Chichester City Council; the Sub Committee had made the following recommendations (*minute 41 refers*):

*The sub-committee **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND** to the Extra Ordinary meeting of the City Council on 22 January 2025 that we investigate enhancing the play provision at Oaklands Park by investing an additional £75K in the play provision at that site to create a destination playground.*

*Additionally, the sub-committee **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND** to the Extra Ordinary meeting of the City Council on 22 January 2025 that the remaining £325K be allocated against the delivery of additional facilities within the City, with alternative play provision options to be investigated.*

Following a lengthy discussion, Council **RESOLVED** to adopt the Business Plan Sub-Committee recommendations and allocate £75K of CIL funds to the CDC playground improvements of the play facilities in Oaklands Park, with options for alternative facilities to be explored for the remaining £325K.

84. CHICHESTER FESTIVAL THEATRE NEST PROJECT

RMi and RC reported on the proposal to support the NEST project and highlighted the following recommendation from the Business Plan Sub-Committee (*minute 42 refers*):

*The sub-committee considered the NEST report and recommendations, including the report update and **RESOLVED** to recommend to the Extra Ordinary meeting of the City Council on 22 January 2025 that the £150K currently allocated for the provision of a bandstand be allocated instead to funding the NEST project subject to a satisfactory service level agreement being agreed with CFT.*

Following a lengthy discussion, Council **RESOLVED** to adopt the Business Plan Sub-Committee recommendations and allocate £150K of CIL funds for development of the NEST based on the draft heads of terms agreed with the CFT.

85. **COMMON SEAL**

RESOLVED that the Common Seal be affixed to any documents necessary to give effect to the resolutions passed at this meeting.

DATE OF NEXT ORDINARY MEETING: 19 February 2025 at 6.00pm

The meeting closed at 7.03pm

ACTIONS ARISING FROM THIS MEETING

Minute ref.	Action	Assigned to:
82	Conclude the negotiations regarding the lease on the Wests Memorial Garden on the terms outlined in the report for a maximum cost of £2,500 in legal fees.	Town Clerk