



Chichester City Council

## FINANCE COMMITTEE

### Minutes

**Date** 5 February 2025

**Time** 5.30pm – 6.58pm

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

**PRESENT:** Councillors Miall (Chair), Corfield (MC), Loxton (SL) and Squire (KS)

**EX-OFFICIO:** The Mayor, Councillor Quail (SQ)

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** Councillor McHale (SMc), Town Clerk (TC), Deputy Town Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer (DTC), Council Services and Support Manager (CSSM), West Sussex County Councillor Simon Oakley.

#### 81. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were noted from Councillors Pramas and Scicluna.

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

None.

#### 83. MINUTES OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 4 DECEMBER 2024

**RESOLVED** to approve and sign as a correct record the minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held on 4 December 2024.

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

- a) **Minute 68a refers - Contact WSALC regarding City Council concerns with comments received from the External Auditor following the conclusion of the 2023-2024 external audit.**

Members noted that no update had been received.

#### 85. PROPERTY SUB-COMMITTEE

The Committee received and **NOTED** the minutes of the Property Sub-Committee meeting held on 28 January 2025.

#### 86. BUSINESS PLAN SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 14 JANUARY 2025

- a) Members **NOTED** the minutes of the Business Plan Sub-Committee meeting held on 14 January 2025 and also that recommendations from that meeting

relating to the playgrounds in Chichester and the Chichester Festival Theatre NEST project (*minutes 41 and 42*) had been referred to the Extra Ordinary Meeting of the City Council held on 22 January 2025 due to the urgency of the decisions that needed to be made.

- b) To consider a recommendation from the Business Plan Sub-Committee to allocate up to £20,000 from Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds for the purchase of pop-up staging to replace the existing staging at the Council House and to be made available as a community resource for performances across the City (*minute 42 refers*).

Following a lengthy discussion, the committee **REQUESTED** that a more detailed paper be prepared and brought back to the April meeting using the relevant resources in Council to specify the equipment required, propose charges and develop a hiring policy.

#### 87. **REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING TO END DECEMBER 2024**

DTC summarised her report that had been included with the agenda and clarified some of the individual variances against the annual budget that had been highlighted.

She reported that the accounts were currently showing an overall surplus of £55,348 and that she was expecting an underspend of approximately £30,000 by the end of the 2024/2025 financial year.

The DTC expressed concern that the allotment reserve was currently very low after the funding of recent fencing works at St Pauls allotments.

Members were also informed that a closer look at the income and expenditure related to Portfield Cemetery would be undertaken shortly.

#### 88. **EARMARKED RESERVES**

The Committee noted receipt of the report.

The DTC advised that the Council House reserve had been used to fund a number of projects including interior lighting upgrades and electrical safety works and that it would also be used to fund the ongoing kitchen upgrades and upcoming external lighting upgrade.

#### 89. **PUBLIC REALM PROJECTS**

The Committee noted receipt of the report.

Members were informed that the Public Realm budget had been used for various projects in the City including a contribution to the decorations in the city centre Christmas tree and waterproof storage lockers at the Stonepillow Glassworks site.

They were advised that there was an expectation that there would be a surplus to carry over at the end of the financial year.

#### 90. **COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL) UPDATE**

The DTC provided an update on the current CIL position, including receipts retained, and projects committed to date.

The Committee discussed how the phasing of projects would need to be carefully considered to ensure that they reflected the rate of CIL receipts – e.g. the community

centre was originally expected in 27/28 but may now be brought forward which could impact the ability to deliver other projects in the short term.

## 91. LOCAL GOVERNMENT DEVOLUTION

TC advised that West Sussex County Council (WSCC) had been selected as a priority area for creating a Strategic Regional Authority (SRA) and Mayoralty. As such, the 2025 elections would be delayed with the expectation being that Mayoral elections would take place in 2026, the new unitary authority being created later and elections to that body taking place in 2027 – this was subject to consultation and final approval.

West Sussex County Councillor Oakley provided an additional update on the UK Government's announcement. Members were advised that it was expected that Mayoral devolution (SRA) would be one stream of work that would move quickly.

A second separate piece of work would be the creation of the new unitary authority.

Councillor Oakley gave Committee a brief overview of expectations and actions, including:

- The consultation on the creation of the Mayoralty would begin in February 2025 with completion by March 2025.
- A separate invitation was open to two tier areas to submit unitary creation Expressions Of Interest by the end of January. Draft plans were due by end of March and full business cases for unitary authorities must be prepared by the autumn,
- Mayoral elections would be taking place in May 2026, there would then be an 18-month period whilst the mayoralty was established and final structures were created and adopted (e.g. Fire & rescue services transferred, etc.). Initially the Mayoral Authority would be a committee comprised of the Mayor plus two representatives from each of the member authorities.
- Unitary elections were expected in May 2027, with the new executives expected to be fully functional by mid 2028 – the elected members would form a shadow authority for the 2027-28 period, effectively meaning no WSCC elections for 2 years.
- County and District/Borough councils would exist until 2028 but would not be able to make decisions that would impact the new unitary authorities.
- Not yet clear how the changes would affect Town and Parish Councils. Expected that this would become clearer when the legislation was published.

RMi reported that discussions with Chichester District Council (CDC) had taken place and it was intended to engage with WSCC shortly.

Chair reminded Members that a letter from the City Council to WSCC and CDC on Devolution matters was currently being finalised.

**92. REVIEW OF CITY COUNCIL POLICIES**

**a. City Council Standing Orders**

The Committee AGREED to establish a working group to review the current Standing Orders and report back to the April Finance committee.

**b. City Council Financial Regulations**

The Committee reviewed the current Chichester City Council Financial Regulations (ratified June 2024) and AGREED that no changes were needed at this time.

**93. ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**

TC reminded Members that the Annual Parish Meeting was currently scheduled for Monday 28<sup>th</sup> April 2025.

TC suggested that a similar format to the Town Hall Meeting held in October 2024 be arranged, with a focus on informing residents about the local government devolution.

The Committee REQUESTED that the item be added to the Full Council agenda for 19<sup>th</sup> February 2025.

**94. TO NOTE AND RATIFY THE FOLLOWING RECONCILIATIONS AND TRANSACTIONS**

The Committee **NOTED** the reports as presented and **RATIFIED** the following reconciliations and payments:

**a) Monthly reconciliation with evidence of bank statements for October to December 2024**

The Chair and DTC signed the bank reconciliations as a correct record

**b) List of payments made for October to December 2024**

**c) List of Barclaycard payments for October to December 2024**

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

- CIL funds and financing for the Community Space in the South of the city
- City Council Standing Orders
- Local Government Devolution update
- Staging replacement project

**96. DATE OF NEXT ORDINARY MEETING**

DATE OF NEXT ORDINARY MEETING – Wednesday 2 April 2025 at 5.30pm

The meeting closed at 6.58pm

**ACTIONS ARISING FROM THIS MEETING**

<b>Minute ref.</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Assigned to</b>
86b	Pop-up staging – prepare a more detailed paper using the relevant resources in Council to specify the equipment required, propose charges and	Town Clerk

	develop a hiring policy. Report to be presented at the April Finance Committee meeting.	
92	Invite expressions of interest from Councillors for joining the Standing Orders Working Group	Town Clerk
93	Add Annual Parish Meeting to the agenda for the Meeting of the City Council on 19 February 2025	Town Clerk