



Chichester City Council

## MEETING OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

### Minutes

**Date** Wednesday 19 November 2025

**Time** 5.30pm – 6.20pm

**Location** Council Chamber; Chichester City Council Chamber

**PRESENT:** Councillors Miall (RMi), Loxton (SL), McHale (SM), Pramas (LP) and Scicluna (AS)

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** Deputy Town Clerk (DTC), Council Services and Support Manager (CSSM), Project Manager (PM), West Sussex County Councillor Simon Oakley.

#### **FIN2025/34. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were noted from Councillor Squire.

#### **FIN2025/35. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made.

#### **FIN2025/36. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

No questions had been received.

#### **FIN2025/37. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2025 for signing by the Chair as a correct record.

#### **FIN2025/38. UPDATE ON ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Committee reviewed the updates on actions from the previous meeting.

Members noted that the recommendation to repair The Council House roof had been accepted at the Full Council meeting on 24 September 2025.

It was agreed that the letter from Copperstone surveyors in support of the proposed other works and the draft schedule for those works was not as expected.

**Decision:** AGREED that the surveyor would be asked to submit a revised letter for consideration at the meeting of the Property Sub-Committee being held on 25 November 2025.

Noted that the updated Committee terms of reference had now been published and that the outcomes of the first meeting of the IT Working Group would be discussed later in the meeting.

The DTC reported that the Public Sector Property Fund cashing out process had been started and that it would mature on 2 April 2026.

The Chair informed the Committee that the cash flow forecast for planned projects and activities for the next five years would be discussed later in the meeting.

He also advised that the Business Plan Sub-Committee's terms of reference had not yet been reviewed and that he would be arranging a meeting with the Town Clerk and other Councillors to gather ideas.

Members were informed that the proposed amendment to financial regulations regarding the Town Clerk's devolved authority to spend had been approved at the meeting of Full Council on 24 September 2025.

## **FIN2025/39. MINUTES FROM SUB COMMITTEES**

The Committee reviewed the notes and recommendations from the IT Working Group's meeting held on 17 October 2025.

**Decision:** AGREED that the terms of reference, as amended by the Working Group, be approved.

SL summarised some of the discussions that had taken place at the meeting and the modifications that had been made to the IT Equipment and Systems Acceptable Use Policy and Social Media Policy. Members agreed that it was important that the policies placed the same responsibilities on individuals undertaking work on behalf of the City Council as were expected of City Councillors and Officers.

The CSSM highlighted the Working Group's decision to delay purchasing new laptops for Councillors until there was more certainty about changes to regulations that would allow hybrid meetings of the Council to take place. He advised that this would allow the most up to date hardware specifications and most current prices to be put to Councillors for a decision.

**Decision:** AGREED to RECOMMEND to Full Council on 17 December 2025 that the IT Equipment and Systems Acceptable Use Policy and the Social Media Policy be adopted by the City Council.

### **FIN2025/39.1. IT WORKING GROUP**

This item was discussed under the minutes from Sub-Committees item.

## **FIN2025/40. COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL) UPDATE**

The Committee received an update on CIL allocations and funding.

Members discussed the cash flow forecast for CIL projects that had been distributed with the agenda and noted that the pavements project budget of £400,000 would likely slip to 2026-2027 and 2027-2028.

They noted the concerns about delays to the Minerva Heights phase 2 build and its knock on effects on the City Council's CIL income that would be needed to fund projects highlighted in the cash flow projection.

The Committee acknowledged the need to monitor the spend-by date for CIL funds to avoid the possibility of developers claiming the money back. They were advised that having clearly identifiable projects would likely mean the funds would not need to be passed back if the spend deadlines were not met.

#### **FIN2025/41. CONCLUSION OF AUDIT 2024-2025**

The conclusion of the External Audit for the financial year 2024-2025 was briefly discussed.

The DTC explained the comment that had been included on External Auditor's report and advised that changes had been made to the process of approving the City Council's Financial Regulations, Standing Orders and Code of Conduct to ensure that they were all reviewed according to the legal requirements.

#### **FIN2025/42. INTERIM INTERNAL AUDIT TO 31ST MARCH 2026**

The DTC introduced the interim internal audit report for the year to 31 March 2026.

She explained that the audit focused on various financial processes, including petty cash, payroll, and year-end accounts.

The DTC explained the notes that had been included in the Internal Auditor's interim report and advised that the financial regulations would need to be updated to reflect the change of the petty cash float which had increased from £30 to £65.

**Decision:** AGREED to RECOMMEND to Full Council that the appropriate change be made to the City Council's Financial Regulations.

#### **FIN2025/43. DRAFT BUDGET 2026-2027**

The Committee considered the Draft Budget Report for 2026-2027.

Members noted that the report included a reference to Financial Regulation 4.8, which prohibits members with unpaid council tax from voting on the budget or precept.

The discussion highlighted the need to reserve funds for local government organisation and legal fees.

The Committee expressed concerns about explaining budget increases to residents, particularly if no tangible services were being provided.

The timing of asset transfers and the impact on precept setting were discussed.

In response to a question from Councillors, the DTC explained the reasons for the relatively small remaining balance in the Community Grants budget that had been caused by payments for the previous year slipping in to the current financial year.

She also reported that the West Sussex Local Government Pension Scheme was currently fully funded which would mean the employer contributions to staff pensions would be lower in 2026-2027 and that the proposed budget had been adjusted for this.

**Decision:** The Committee agreed to have a detailed discussion on the budget in early 2026, with the possibility of calling extra meetings if necessary.

#### **FIN2025/44. FLORENCE PARK COMMUNITY HALL UPDATE**

The PM provided an update on the Florence Park Community Hall project.

The Committee agreed to allocate a budget of £20,000 to employ architects to progress the project to the pre-application stage.

Members were reminded that the total identified budget for the project was £1.5 million, with the Council's exposure being £800,000.

**Decision:** AGREED to approve the allocation of UP TO £20,000 from the City Council's £800,000 budget for the purposes of commissioning an architect to progress the project to deliver a concept design and take it to the pre-application stage. Further AGREED that the authority to place the order for this work be delegated to the Chair of the Finance Committee and the Town Clerk.

#### **FIN2025/45. CITY COUNCIL CHRISTMAS CLOSURE**

The Committee discussed the closure dates for the City Council over the Christmas period.

**Decision:** AGREED that the City Council offices close at the end of business on 23 December 2023 and re-open on 2 January 2026. Further AGREED that staff would need to book Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2026 as leave or TOIL.

#### **FIN2025/46. ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA**

- Additional meeting to discuss Local Government Reorganisation and the potential impact on the City Council's budget for 2026-2027.
- Next Ordinary meeting – no specific items were proposed.

#### **FIN2025/47. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next ordinary meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, 10 December 2025 at 5.30pm.

The Committee agreed to focus on the budget and local government reorganisation implications during the December meeting.

The possibility of additional meetings in January was discussed to ensure timely budget setting.

The meeting closed at 6.20pm