

CHESHAM TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the COMMUNITY, ASSETS, RECREATION AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

held on 14th February 2022

PRESENT Councillor J.E. MacBean – Chairman (Presiding)

Councillor	P. Aslam	Councillor	C.A. Hood
"	W.L. Augustus	"	R. S. Matthews
"	M. Ditta	"	N.T. Southworth
"	J. C. Fulford		

IN ATTENDANCE

Councillor F. Holly

Officer: Mr W. Richards, Town Clerk

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors E.A. Culverhouse and P. Harding

36. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no Declarations of Interests that were brought to the Chairman's notice.

37. **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

In light of Public Question Time at the last Council meeting being delayed due to unforeseen circumstances, Members agreed to take pertinent questions from the public for matters which fell into the terms of reference for this Committee.

Ms A. Stranc asked whether the Council had investigated the environmental implications of the institutions it invested in, as many of the major banks still financed companies involved with the fossil fuels industry. The Chairman advised that a new Head of Finance was currently being appointed and the question of investments, both financial and ethical, would be considered by the new postholder in due course.

Mrs G. Walker enquired about progress generally with the Council's Environmental Audit and specifically about the possibility of wind turbines at the top of Lowndes Park. The Chairman replied that several initiatives had been progressed as highlighted in the following Environmental Update agenda item. She also highlighted that the upper section of Lowndes Park was being earmarked for biodiversity enhancements and questioned whether an industrial sized wind turbine would be suitable and appropriate for the park.

Mr J. Holloway questioned the environmental impact of the Chesham Masterplan on the town. Members advised that this plan was not produced by the Council so it was not appropriate for the Committee to comment. However, Councillor Southworth, as Chairman of the Planning Committee, gave a brief outline of progress with the Council's Neighbourhood Plan, including the environmental protection proposals, and

urged as many people as possible to respond to the initial consultation scheduled for March.

Note: Councillor Ditta joined the meeting at 7.45pm

38. **MINUTES**

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Community, Assets, Recreation and Environment Committee held on 22nd November 2021 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

39. **IMPRESS THE CHESS GROUP**

Members received the Minutes of the Impress the Chess meeting of the 13th January 2022.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted

40. **CHESHAM ENVIROMENTAL GROUP**

Members received the Minutes of the Chesham Environmental Group meeting of the 18th November 2021.

It was reported that Mr Phil Folly was standing down as Chairman after many years of service and it was agreed that a vote of thanks be offered to him in this respect.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted.

41. **ENVIRONMENTAL AUDIT UPDATE**

The Committee received an environment audit report update from the Policy and Projects Officer.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Report be noted.

42. **PLATINUM JUBILEE REPORT**

The Committee was asked to consider a variety of options to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

To celebrate this unprecedented anniversary, it was reported that events and initiatives will be taking place throughout 2022, culminating in a four-day UK bank holiday weekend from Thursday 2nd to Sunday 5th June. Members considered a range of options put forward by the Policy and Projects Officer and agreed with her assessment that lighting beacons and bonfires did not accord with the Council's carbon neutral policy and should be dropped. Similarly, the Committee was not in favour of a potentially costly laser show. However, Members were keen to investigate the potential for a Council led Street Party in the High Street and an Augmented Reality Trail and it was agreed that Councillors Aslam, Augustus and Ditta form a working party to look at this further and report back, along with costings for bunting and tree lights as proposed by the Policy and Projects Officer. The Committee also expressed its wish to undertake tree planting and support community groups with their own celebrations to recognise this auspicious occasion.

Accordingly, it was

RESOLVED

1. That a Platinum Jubilee Working Party be set up consisting Councillors Aslam, Augustus and Ditta to look at the feasibility of a Town Centre street party; development of an augmented reality trail or other alternative events on the 2nd June 2022.
2. That no beacon, bonfire or light show be provided.
3. That a range of bunting, pennant and light designs, and prices thereof, be investigated.
4. That the Council commits to support community organisations hosting street parties and other events where possible.

43. **MARKET SQUARE – ROAD CLOSURE REPORT**

The Committee received an update on extending the road closure for Market Square to May 2023.

Members were advised that officers were of the view that extending the current Temporary Traffic Regulation Order (TTRO) in place to pedestrianise Market Square, (lasting until 21st February 2022) was very desirable to maintain the benefits to local businesses, shoppers, visitors and the Local Produce Market. Therefore, following consultation with the Chairman of this Committee, an application to extend the TTRO was submitted, with the cost to be met by the Council. It was noted that the extension will provide time to gain valuable feedback on the benefits of the TTRO and the need for any improvements in its implementation, as well as begin the informal consultation about extending pedestrianisation to cover the lower half of the High Street, as far as Station Road. Officers advised that initial discussions have begun with Transport for Buckinghamshire about the informal consultation procedure.

It was

RESOLVED

that the report be noted.

44. **NASHLEIGH HILL RECREATION GROUND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS**

Changes to the management of Nashleigh Hill Recreation Ground to create environmental improvements was put to the Committee.

Having noted that a grant application had been made to the Buckinghamshire Council Community Board which may fund a lot of the initiatives, the proposal was welcomed by Members and it was

RESOLVED

that the proposed change in management regime for Nashleigh Hill Recreation Ground be approved.

45. **PLAY AREA STRATEGY REPORT**

The Committee received an updated Play Area Strategy from the Clerk informing Members on the current state of the Council's play-areas, with appropriate recommendations as to beginning the refurbishment of these.

The prevailing view was that the Council should assess need and demand for all its play-areas before investing in refurbishment, though there was general agreement that the Lowndes Park Play-Area ought to be prioritised. Accordingly, it was agreed that a working party, chaired by Councillor Matthews, be set up to review all the current provision across town and report back to this Committee.

It was

RESOLVED

that a working party, chaired by Councillor Matthews, be set up to look at current play provision across Chesham and report back.

46. **REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY COMMEMORATIONS**

Members were informed that, before the 2021 Remembrance Day commemoration held at the War Memorial, representatives from the British Legion informed officers that they had been told by their national body that branches could no longer be the organisers of said event due to the public liability implications. Accordingly, officers took over the organisation of the event and insured it appropriately and were now seeking the Committee's approval to take over the responsibility for the event permanently. This was agreed as appropriate by Members.

In respect to the ceremony around the War Memorial, officers proposed this still be led by the Legion's Parade Master. However, with the proliferation of wreath laying, it is also proposed that the Council only allow statutory organisations (and the Legion) to undertake this, to foreshorten the event and to reduce the number of non-environmentally friendly plastic wreaths to be laid. Other organisations, if able to provide more sustainable wreaths, will be encourage to lay their own, less formally on the 11th November or another time of their choosing. This too was agreed.

The Committee was also informed that another event that other town councils have taken on the liability for, has been Armed Forces Day scheduled for the 25th June. It was noted that traditionally no significant events have been held in Chesham to acknowledge the event but that the Principal Authority did recognise the event last year by allowing members of the Armed Forces to attend its leisure facilities free of charge on that day. Accordingly, it was agreed that this Council adopt the same policy.

It was

RESOLVED

1. That the Committee formally agree to take over the responsibility and organisation of the Remembrance Sunday event in November.
2. That it agrees to the proposal to allow wreath laying to be restricted to statutory organisations only at the Service and encourages the purchase of wreaths made from sustainable materials.
3. That the Committee agrees to allow free access to the Gym and Swim Centre and Elgiva (if deemed suitable by the Centre Managers) to serving members of the armed forces on the 25th June.

47. **ELGIVA PANTOMIME AND GYM AND SWIM EXTENSION UPDATE**

The Chairman presented two items from the Centre Managers. Firstly, Members considered the Pantomime figures at the Elgiva which went ahead despite great uncertainty in regard to the Covid pandemic. The Elgiva Manager reported that it had been a record box office and the best attendance since 2016. The Committee agreed this was a remarkable achievement considering the external situation and asked that its appreciation be passed onto the Manager, his staff and volunteers involved.

Discussion then turned to the Gym and Swim Centre and it was agreed, following the recommendations of the Gym and Swim Extension Working Party, to commission the architect leading on the project to submit a pre-application to the Planning Authority for the extension for the fee proposed. However, it was also agreed that it would be advantageous for the Committee to have evidence of similar projects receiving Secretary of State approval for building on Common Land before submission.

It was

RESOLVED

1. That the Report be noted.

2. That the Architect be commissioned to put in a planning pre-application to Buckinghamshire Council for the Gym and Swim extension for the fee proposed, following evidence of similar Common Land building permissions and this agreed as appropriate by the Clerk and the Chairman.
3. That the 2021 Elgiva Pantomime figures be noted and welcomed.

48. **CLOSE OF MEETING**

The meeting closed at 8.48pm.