

## CHESHAM TOWN COUNCIL

### MINUTES of the meeting of the RECREATION AND THE ARTS COMMITTEE

held on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2007

**PRESENT** Councillor Mrs J.C. Fulford, Chairman (presiding)

Councillor	A.K. Bacon	Councillor	Mrs C.M. Michael
"	E.L. Bamford	"	Mrs M. Molesworth
"	Ms. J.E. Bramwell	"	Mrs A.M. Pirouet
"	Mrs C. Littley	"	Mrs G. Walker

#### **IN ATTENDANCE**

Councillors M. E. Brand, M. Fayyaz, F.G. Holly, C.H. Spruytenburg, Mrs P.R. Wilkinson M.B.E. and P.W. Yerrell.

Mrs P. Lindsley, Mr A. Ogden and Mr T. Pilling - Elgiva Board of Management.

Officers: Mr. W. Richards, Town Clerk and Mr S. Pearson, Finance and Contracts Manager.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor D.J. Lacey.

#### 50. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillors Mrs Fulford and Mrs Littley declared a personal interest in the agenda item 4 as members of the 'Impress the Chess' Group.

Councillor Yerrell declared a personal interest in the agenda item 6 as a Trustee of the Little Theatre by the Park.

Councillors Mrs Pirouet and Spruytenburg declared a prejudicial interest in agenda item 7 as allotment holders.

Councillors Holly and Mrs Michael declared a personal interest in agenda item 7 as members of the Allotment Group. Councillor Mrs Molesworth declared a personal interest in agenda item 7 as a member of the Friends of Chesham Cemetery. Councillors Holly and Mrs Fulford declared a personal interest in agenda item 7 as members of the Friends of Moor Road.

#### 51. **MINUTES**

It was

**RESOLVED**

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Recreation and the Arts Committee held on 8 October 2007, be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

52. **ELGIVA BOARD OF MANAGEMENT**

Members received the Minutes of the meeting of the Elgiva Board of Management held on 5 November 2007. It was

**RESOLVED**

that the Minutes be noted.

53. **IMPRESS THE CHESS**

Members received the Minutes of the meeting of the Impress the Chess Steering Group held on 13 November 2007. It was

**RESOLVED**

that the Minutes be noted.

In response to Members' queries, the Clerk reported that the tenders for works on Meades Water Gardens should be despatched in the next fortnight and that an engineer is to be commissioned to try and get to the root cause of the leak on Moor Marsh.

54. **UPDATE ON THE ELGIVA**

Mr Trevor Pilling, Chairman of the Elgiva Board of Management was invited to address the Committee to give an update on the current position of the Elgiva. He advised that, while the financial position of the Elgiva was in a less healthy position than predicted in the original estimates, there were mitigating factors for this. Firstly it is the case that many income generating, local community groups hire the theatre biennially and this was a year that most were not performing. Secondly there is a well-documented national downturn in theatre ticket sales, a trend now also affecting the Elgiva. Thirdly the figures presented included the month of August which was set aside mainly for maintenance and finally they did not include the bulk of the pantomime income which appeared to be selling better than last year. In concluding, Mr Pilling stated the Board was reasonably confident of still coming in on budget by the end of the financial year.

The Chairman thanked Mr Pilling for his presentation and then sought comments and questions from Members.

Councillor Brand thanked Mr Pilling for his extremely useful explanation of the finances and opined that the Board's professional acumen should be utilised to ensure

the deficit was further reduced and that its business plan should be re-visited to facilitate this.

Councillor Yerrell congratulated the Manager and the Board for producing a programme of excellent variety and opined that, in line with national trends, a downturn in income was to be expected in the current economic climate.

Councillor Ms Bramwell queried as to whether the prices at the theatre were set at a level to preclude the economically disadvantaged and requested that the Board perhaps undertake an equality audit to consider this. Mr Pilling responded by saying that the Board could undertake this but any recommendations suggesting further subsidies may have an effect on the overall deficit. He emphasised that current ticket prices were benchmarked with other comparable sized theatres and would be again during the current Best Value Service Review. Councillor Bacon enquired whether a 'savers' club' could be implemented to assist those on low income to attend the pantomime. Mr Pilling, while applauding the sentiment, raised his reservations in regard to giving the staff more administration to contend with. Councillor Mrs Fulford queried whether such a support group designed on the lines of the Chess Valley Swimmers could be set up to deal with such things. Mr Pilling advised that the matter of management trusts and other support groups would be considered at the end of the Best Value Service Review by the Board.

The Committee thanked Mr Pilling, Mr Ogden and Mrs Lindsley for their attendance and re-emphasised the Council's support for the work the Board was undertaking.

55. **REVISED ESTIMATES 2007/08 AND DRAFT ESTIMATES 2008/09**

The Finance and Contract Manager's report on the revised estimates for 2007/08 and draft estimates for 2008/09 was considered by the Committee.

In respect of the 2007/08 estimates, the Finance and Contract Manager advised that the summary showed a net overspend of £36,240 when comparing the original budget (2007/08) against the annual projected (revised 2007/08) budget. Much of this overspend was due to the Council's unexpected taking over of the management of the open air pool and associated facilities in April 2007.

In respect of the 2007/08 estimates, the Finance and Contract Manager reported that officers were presenting a draft precept budget totalling £826,075 without recourse to use of the balances. He emphasised that such a budget, unamended, would raise the precept considerably in percentage terms from the 2007/08 figure and therefore recommended that the Committee consider where savings could be made.

The Committee then went through the budgets in some detail. While no specific budget savings were proposed, Members expressed the importance of promoting the Moor Road leisure complex to increase income and generally working to a coherent business plan and ensuring the Elgiva budget was carefully monitored.

It was noted that monies were being set aside for major capital projects such as the Lowndes Park lottery bid (schemes within the renewals and repairs budget) and the re-

building of Marston Pavilion which would only take place if major external funding was secured.

A lengthy discussion then took place on the renewals and repairs budget and the officers' prioritised list scheme. A view was expressed that the former was unrealistic in that the Council was under-resourced in staff to deliver on many of the projects and therefore a thorough review was required. After some discussion to confirm that it would have no effect in respect of setting the precept in January, it was agreed that the whole renewals and repairs budget should be considered and re-assessed at the next Recreation and the Arts Committee. In regard to the prioritised list scheme, to which no monies had been budgeted for, Members requested that those projects requiring urgent attention should be highlighted and presented to the Policy and Resources Committee where the recommended precept budget would be set for final approval at the Council meeting scheduled for 14<sup>th</sup> January 2008.

It was

**RESOLVED**

1. that the budget, as presented, and an updated prioritised list of schemes be presented for consideration at the Policy and Resources Committee of the 17<sup>th</sup> December 2007 in light of the recommendations made at this Committee.
2. that the Renewals and Repairs budget be re-considered at the Recreation and the Arts Committee of the 28<sup>th</sup> January 2008.

*Councillor Mrs Wilkinson left the meeting at 8.40 pm*

*Councillor Mrs Littley left the meeting at 9.00 pm*

*Councillor Mrs Pirouet left the meeting at 9.20 pm*

56. **PROPOSED FEES AND CHARGES 2008/09**

The Committee considered the proposals detailed in the report for fees and charges for 2008/09 as follows:

(a) **Allotments**

It was

**RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND**

that a 10p per pole rise be levied on all of the allotments sites from 1 October 2008.

*Note: Councillor Spruytenburg left the Chamber during discussion of the above item.*

(b) **Cemetery**

The report was noted and it was

**RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND**

that the proposed scale of charges be approved reflecting a 4% rise from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008.

(c) **Housing**

A discussion took place as to whether the Council should re-consider its position in leasing out the Cemetery Lodges to Paradigm Housing. It was noted that the Council had previously agreed to extend the period of the lease to Paradigm Housing and officers were instructed to report back on this period of tenure and compile a further report if necessary.

In the interim, it was

**RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND**

that the two properties continue to be let through Paradigm Housing and the rent determined by Paradigm in line with their other properties.

*Post Meeting Note: At the Policy and Resources Committee of the 8<sup>th</sup> May 2006, the Committee decided to continue to lease the Lodges to Paradigm Housing and not sell the properties (Minute No 82). At the Policy and Resources Committee of the 18<sup>th</sup> September 2006, following a request from Paradigm Housing to extend the lease in light of the major internal repairs it was required to undertake on 185 Bellingdon Road, the Committee agreed to extend the length of the lease to five years (Minute No 21).*

(d) **Office Services**

It was

**RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND**

that no increase be applied to these charges.

(e) **Temperance Hall**

It was

**RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND**

that the report be noted.

(f) **The Elgiva**

The Committee considered the proposed charges for The Elgiva.

It was

**RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND**

that the proposed scale of charges reflecting a 4% rise for new hirings, subject to there being no objections from the Elgiva Board of Management, be agreed from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008 and that the Manager continues to be allowed flexibility and discretion in determining any charge where he believes it to be in the interest of the Theatre.

(g) **Town Hall**

Members debated whether a 50% discount for block bookings was too generous. It was agreed that no change to this should be applied at the present time but that the matter be considered within the Community Buildings Best Value Service Review currently taking place.

It was

**RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND**

that the proposed scale of charges be approved reflecting a 4% rise from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008 and the Town Clerk be delegated to determine any ad hoc charges.

(h) **Chesham Park Community College**

Following consideration of the report, it was

**RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND**

that the report be noted.

(i) **Swimming Pool**

Following consideration of the report, it was

**RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND**

- (i) that the current fees and charges set by the officers and the swimming pool working party for 2007/08 be confirmed
- (ii) that the charge to the Chiltern Harriers Running Club, be increased to £624 per annum from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2008 for use of the changing facilities and £52 per annum for storage
- (iii) that all the other charges (including any provisional recommendations) as detailed within the report, be agreed subject to further consideration before the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2008

(j) **Sports Pitches, Charter Fairs and Circuses, Film Fees, Donkey Derby/Schools of Chesham Carnival, Wayleaves**

Following consideration of the report, it was

**RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND**

- (i) that the proposed fees and charges for sports pitches, fun fairs and circuses for 2008/09 be approved;
- (ii) that the Clerk continue to be empowered to negotiate charges for the use of Lowndes Park and for any of the Council land or property by film companies;
- (iii) that a fee of £100 be charged for each use of the Council's Open Spaces by the Schools of Chesham Carnival and Donkey Derby;
- (iv) that a further report be submitted on the Council's wayleaves and the Moor wayleaves be not implemented until this has taken place.

(k) **Skottowes Pond Fish Management and Chesham District Model Boat Club**

It was

**RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND**

that the Skottowes Pond fish management licence and Model Boat Club licence be increased to £120 per annum with effect from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008, subject to agreement by the Model Boat Club, to be fixed for a period of three years.

57. **PLANTING OF TREES ON THE MOOR**

The Committee considered whether it wished to replant poplars on the Moor following the felling of previous poplars on safety grounds in September.

In noting that black poplar cuttings could be obtained through Aylesbury Vale District Council at no cost, it was

**RESOLVED**

that the replanting of the poplars on the Moor be approved.

58. **WILDFLOWER PROJECT IN THE CEMETERY**

Members were presented with a request to extend the wildflower project in the Cemetery for another 12 months.

The Committee warmly acceded to this request and requested that the Clerk write to the project organisers expressing the Council's appreciation.

It was

**RESOLVED**

that a twelve month extension to the wildflower project in the Cemetery be approved.

59. **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS**

It was moved by the Chairman and

**RESOLVED**

that the public and the Press be excluded from the following item in accordance with the Public Bodies (Access to Meetings) Act 1960, as matters which are considered to be confidential are about to be discussed.

60. **MANAGEMENT OF CHESHAM MARKETS**

It was

**RESOLVED**

that the Clerk be authorised to proceed in connection with this matter in the terms expressed at the meeting.

61. **CLOSE OF MEETING**

The meeting closed at 9.57pm.

CHAIRMAN

*Publication date 30.11.07*