

CHESHAM TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the **POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

held on Monday 6th February 2012

PRESENT Councillor Mrs C.M. Michael – Chairman (presiding)

Councillor	V.M. Abraham	Councillor	T. Franks
"	A.K. Bacon	"	Mrs C. Littley
"	M. Fayyaz	"	F.S. Wilson

In attendance: Councillors R.C. McCulloch and C.H. Spruytenburg.

Ms J. Brammer – Transition Town Chesham

Officers: Mr W. Richards, Town Clerk
Mr S. Pearson, Finance and Contracts Manager
Ms. K. Graves, Policy and Projects Officer

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ms Bramwell, D.J. Lacey, M.W. Shaw and P.W. Yerrell.

64. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillors Mrs Littley and Wilson declared a personal interest in agenda item 4 as members of the Chesham Action Partnership. Councillor Mrs Littley declared a personal interest in agenda item 4 as Chairman of the Town Centre Working Group.

Councillors Mrs Littley and Mrs Michael declared a personal interest in agenda item 7 due to their active administrative role in the Local Produce Market.

Councillor McCulloch declared a personal interest in agenda item 9 as Secretary of the Chesham Society.

65. **MINUTES**

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on the 12th December 2011 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

66. **CHESHAM ACTION PARTNERSHIP**

Members received the Minutes of the meeting of the Chesham Action Partnership held on the 15th November 2011.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted.

Councillor Bacon reported on the recent meeting he attended hosted by 'Better Chesham' in regard to the High Street and regeneration issues. While he opined that it was good a group was trying to tackle economic issues in the town centre, he stated that there did appear to be a number of organisations with such a brief and opined that clarity and a lack of possible duplication in this respect would be very beneficial. Councillor Wilson responded by saying that it was positive so many people appeared willing to be involved with town centre regeneration. He explained that while the Chesham Action Partnership was involved with all aspects of the town, 'Better Chesham' was much more concerned with the town centre itself. The Clerk then advised that 'Better Chesham' representatives had been asked to present directly to the Council and therefore Members may get a better understanding of its, and other groups', modus operandi.

67. **TOWN CENTRE WORKING GROUP**

Members received the Minutes of the meeting of the Town Centre Working Group held on the 8th December 2011.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted.

68. **TRANSITION TOWN CHESHAM**

Members received the Minutes of the meeting of the Transition Town Chesham group held on 12th January 2012.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted.

69. **DEVOLVED SERVICES UPDATE**

It was

RESOLVED

that the Report be noted.

70. **LOCAL PRODUCE MARKET**

The Committee considered the Policy and Projects Officer's report on the Local Produce Market.

Members agreed that the market was a great success and a real asset to the town. It was noted that it was mainly administered by the Policy and Projects Officer and a number of volunteers, including those members from Transition Town Chesham and thanks were passed on accordingly. The market organisers were also commended for their recent success in being named the 'Greenest Market' in the country.

Councillor Abraham said that he had visited the market and had been very impressed with it. However he expressed his surprise to discover one of the traders had come from Luton. Ms Brammer, a committee member of Transition Town Chesham, explained that while all traders should ideally be from a ten mile radius from Chesham, a guest trader from further away is invited if a certain commodity like cheese is unavailable to be sourced locally. These guest traders came regularly to ensure there were no gaps in the produce range at the market but are asked to give up their pitch if a more local producer comes forward.

The Committee then briefly discussed the income from the market. It was agreed that it was fair and equitable that the pitch fees be shared equally between the Council and Transition Town Chesham. However Councillor Mrs Michael suggested that this division of income be confirmed for three years and be reviewed after this time. This was agreed.

It was

RESOLVED

1. That the equal distribution of Local Produce Market income over expenditure between the Council and Transition Town Chesham at the end of each financial year be agreed, with the proviso that funds (total or partial) may be rolled over from one year to the next if the organisers deem them to be required for market expenditure.
2. That this agreement be reviewed after three years.

71. **CHESHAM MARKET UPDATE**

Members received an update on the Wednesday and Saturday market now managed by a co-operative and monitored by this Council on behalf of Chiltern District Council.

The Committee noted that the fees for the Council's monitoring role outstanding from 2010/11 had now been paid by Chiltern District Council and that the draft legal agreement remained with the District Council's Legal section. There was general unanimity from the Committee that the Market appeared to be improving both in size and vitality which was welcomed.

Councillor Wilson raised the matter of liability insurance. Officers advised that since the Council had not signed any agreement as yet, the matter of liability for all non Council related activities remained with Chiltern District Council as previously.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Report be noted.

72. **MARKETING AND INCOME GENERATION STRATEGY**

The Committee received an update on the progression of the Marketing Review and its role in assisting with income generation.

There was general agreement that the Marketing Working Party appeared to be developing an important strategy for its various centres with a view to increasing income generation. The Committee also agreed with Councillor Mrs Michael's opinion that the timescale for the review should be kept short and focussed. Councillor Abraham suggested that the Local Produce Market also be included in the marketing strategy as it was a revenue stream. This was agreed.

It was

RESOLVED

that the remit of the Market Review Panel be noted and endorsed.

73. **NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

A discussion took place on the advantages of the Council producing a Neighbourhood Plan for the town as set out in the Localism Act.

Councillors Bacon and Franks, who are members of Neighbourhood Plan Working Party and who had met with the District Council's planning officers, both expressed the view

that it was too early to decide on whether the idea of developing a Neighbourhood Plan should be progressed but Councillor Bacon opined that it may be useful in determining where the town should have its new dwellings.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Neighbourhood Plan Working Party look at the benefits and disbenefits of adopting of a Neighbourhood Plan following publication of regulations on Neighbourhood Development Orders and report back to a future Committee meeting.

74. **ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY**

The Finance and Contracts Manager presented his report on the Investment Strategy and reminded the Committee that this was required to be undertaken annually.

Councillor Franks, while commending the Finance and Contracts Manager for his general prudence in this area, suggested that it would be more secure to split the investment monies up rather than having it with one bank. The Finance and Contracts Manager replied that he had no particular issues with such a proposal, but he did highlight the fact that, generally, higher interest rates were more likely to be found through one large investment rather than with smaller, multiple investments. It was suggested that the Finance Working Group should look at options further in this respect and report back.

Councillor Wilson also argued that the Council should not change its current policy of not allowing balances to be committed to longer-term investments (i.e. those with a maturity exceeding a year) in case the Council was obliged to access these finances in an emergency. The Finance and Contracts Manager responded by highlighting that balances had diminished over the last two years and the opportunity to invest in higher rate, longer term accounts may not arise again. Accordingly it was agreed that this too should be considered by the Finance Working Group.

It was

RESOLVED

1. That the Investment Strategy be continued.
2. That paragraphs 3.2, 4.1, and 4.2 be deleted and replaced by new paragraphs 3.2 and 4.1 as detailed in the report but that any investment of more than one year be subject to the agreement of the Finance Working Group.

75. **INTERNAL AUDITOR'S REPORT**

The latest Internal Auditor's report was presented to the Committee.

The Committee considered the report and, in particular, the Auditor's recommendation that the Council obtain a credit card or cards for purchases made on-line or in lieu of using petty cash. Members agreed to the principle of this but were of the view that this needed to be carefully monitored. Therefore it was proposed and agreed that there should be just one Council credit card to begin with and that, after a period of usage, the situation be reassessed to decide whether different service areas should have their own cards.

After confirming there were no other matters of conjecture raised, it was

RESOLVED

1. That the Report be noted.
2. That a Council credit card be obtained with a starting limit of £1,000 and a future report be brought back to the Committee should further cards be requested.

76. **FINANCIAL REPORT FOR NINE MONTHS TO 31ST DECEMBER 2011**

The Financial Report for nine months to 31st December 2011 was presented.

The Committee was pleased to note a stronger showing in film attendances at the Elgiva.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Report be noted.

77. **THIRD QUARTER PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

The third quarter Performance Indicators were considered by the Committee.

Members raised no apparent areas for concern and expressed satisfaction that the Performance Indicators were generally improved in comparison to the previous year.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Report be noted.

78. **CALENDAR OF MEETINGS**

The Committee received the proposed calendar of meetings for the administrative year 2012/13 up to the end of December 2012.

It was

RESOLVED

that the calendar of meetings for 2012/13, up to December 2012, be noted and adopted.

79. **CLOSE OF MEETING**

The meeting closed at 8.45pm.

CHAIRMAN