

## **CHESHAM TOWN COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of the meeting of the TOWN COUNCIL**

held on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> May 2022

**PRESENT** Councillor– M. Ditta, Deputy Mayor (presiding)

Councillor P. Aslam  
Councillor A.K. Bacon  
Councillor J.L. Baum  
Councillor Q. Chaudhry  
Councillor M. Fayyaz  
Councillor J.C. Fulford

Councillor F. Holly  
Councillor C.A. Hood  
Councillor J.E. MacBean  
Councillor R.S. Matthews  
Councillor F.S. Wilson

#### **IN ATTENDANCE**

Mr T. Marmo.

Mr P. Elliot and Mr T. Cross, Empiric Partners LLP.

**Officers:** K.A. Graves – Policy & Projects Officer  
K. Hallett – Head of Finance

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors W.L. Augustus, S.J. Booth, E.A. Culverhouse, P. Harding, U. Hayyat, N.T. Southworth and G.D. Williams.

#### 92. **CHAIRMAN’S WELCOME**

The Deputy Mayor welcomed to the meeting Kathryn Hallett, the Council’s new Head of Finance and Mr Tony Marmo, who will be joining the Council as the new Chief Executive next week.

#### 93. **MINUTES**

It was

#### **RESOLVED**

that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on the 14<sup>th</sup> March 2022 be confirmed and signed by the Town Mayor as a true record.

#### 94. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interests that were brought to the Deputy Mayor’s notice.

#### 95. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

The Deputy Mayor invited questions from the public in respect to matters pertaining to the town.

Ms G. Walker asked why the Council continues to mow verges when this activity contributes to carbon emissions and removes valuable sources of nectar for pollinators. She further asked why the Council would not change to a regime of mowing once a year and invest in electric mowing equipment. Councillor MacBean replied that Chesham has led the way in Buckinghamshire in trialling reduced mowing of verges and other areas of land. However, many verges in town fall under the control of Buckinghamshire Council's Highways department and legislation dictates that vision splays must be maintained. Councillor MacBean invited residents to nominate additional verges to add to those areas managed for wildflowers and grasses.

Ms F. Harding queried how the Annual Town Meeting could be a genuine meeting for the town if no-one from the town's voluntary groups has been invited to present, and emphasised the importance of having a meeting where electors can ask questions of the Council. Councillor MacBean explained that the pre-COVID format of the Annual Town Meeting included presentations from Chesham Environmental Group and the Police only, rather than being open to all local groups to present. Following a successful 'Celebration of Chesham' late last year, the Council is considering holding another event of this nature at The Elgiva, where a larger audience can be accommodated. Ms Harding asked if the public could ask questions at such an event and Councillor MacBean responded that the minutiae of these events had not yet been determined, but that any suggestions should be directed to the Town Clerk.

Mr D. Cooper asked whether the Council was aware that the air quality in Lowndes Avenue exceeds three World Health Organisation limits with concomitant risks to health. Councillor MacBean said that she wasn't specifically aware of this issue in Lowndes Avenue, but was pleased that the Communi-Tree project had seen trees planted in front gardens in Chesham's Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) to help with air pollution. Mr Cooper asked whether there have been improvements in the AQMA since tree planting has taken place. Councillor MacBean explained that there have been improvements over the last five years, but that recent data will be skewed by reduced traffic movements during the COVID pandemic and that 2022 will be the first full year of 'normal' traffic since the Communi-Tree planting. She also said that there are currently no DEFRA-approved digital air quality monitors and that she is in discussions with Buckinghamshire Council about improvements to methods for monitoring air quality. Councillor MacBean urged Mr Cooper to take the issue of air quality up with his local unitary councillors.

Mr C. Cockle asked, in light of the Ukrainian flag flying from the Town Hall and following comments made by the Mayor in a recent edition of the Your Chesham magazine, whether the Council endorses the Ukrainian administration and referenced the Azov Battalion of the Ukrainian army, which he claimed had 'Nazi affiliations'. Councillor MacBean responded that the Council is flying the flag in solidarity with the people of Ukraine and in support of peace there and recommended that any queries with regard to the article in Your Chesham should be addressed directly to the Mayor.

Mr J. Holloway asked what the Council will do to tackle the holes dug out by rats in Lowndes Park. Councillor MacBean agreed to look into this. Mr Holloway asked whether a working party will be set up to look at the regeneration of Skottowes Pond, once the specialist surveys have been conducted, and whether interested members of the public could be involved. Councillor MacBean explained that Councillor Matthews is chairing a play area working group which will look at Lowndes Park as a whole, including the pond. Whilst

working parties consist of councillors and technical experts, Councillor MacBean invited Mr Holloway to feed into the process through his local councillors.

96. **MAYORAL ENGAGEMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Mayoral engagement from the 14<sup>th</sup> March to the 9<sup>th</sup> May 2022 was duly noted.

97. **FINANCE COMMITTEE**

It was moved by Councillor J.L. Baum and seconded by Councillor F. Holly and

**RESOLVED**

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Finance Committee held on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2022 be received and approved.

98. **PLANNING COMMITTEE**

It was moved by Councillor F. Holly and seconded by Councillor J.E. MacBean and

**RESOLVED**

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2022 be received and approved.

It was moved by Councillor F. Holly and seconded by Councillor C.A. Hood and

**RESOLVED**

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2022 be received and approved.

98. **COMMUNITY, ASSETS, RECREATION AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

It was moved by Councillor J.E. MacBean and seconded by Councillor J.C. Fulford and

**RESOLVED**

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Community, Assets, Recreation and Environment Committee held on 11<sup>th</sup> April 2022, be received and approved.

99. **ANNUAL TOWN MEETING**

A discussion took place on this year's Annual Town Meeting. Councillor Fulford said that she would prefer the Annual Town Meeting to remain on the 19<sup>th</sup> May 2022 and expressed the view that the proposed changes, in reducing the number of residents who could attend and the length of time for people to ask questions, constituted an erosion of democracy.

Councillor Bacon agreed with Councillor Fulford's remarks and stated that the Annual Town Meeting is not a Council meeting, but a meeting for the public to discuss town affairs

and should be open to all electors. Councillor Bacon proposed that the Annual Town Meeting remained on the original date of the 19<sup>th</sup> May and requested a recorded vote.

Councillor MacBean responded that the Council must consider the original recommendation first. She gave the view that the Celebration of Chesham event held at The Elgiva in 2021 had been very well attended, despite COVID restrictions. This contained elements included in Annual Town Meetings prior to COVID. She suggested that without these popular elements, the Annual Town Meeting is unlikely to command a large audience. However, Councillor MacBean indicated that the Annual Town Meeting could be held in the Council Chamber before the Annual Council Meeting, allowing for a larger number of people to attend and enabling the meeting to run for as long as required to allow electors to ask questions and provide comments.

Following this discussion, it was

**RESOLVED**

that the Annual Town Meeting be held on Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> May before the Annual Meeting of the Council and that the agenda be limited to the Mayor's Review of the Year and Public Questions.\*

*\* Councillor Bacon called for a recorded vote and the vote was recorded as follows:*

*In favour of the recommendation – Councillors Baum, Chaudhry, MacBean, Holly, Hood, Wilson and Matthews.*

*Against the recommendation – Councillors Aslam, Bacon, Fayyaz and Fulford.*

*Abstention – Councillor Ditta.*

100. **PAYMENTS NO. 6**

Following consideration of Payments Sheet No. 6, it was

**RESOLVED**

that Payments Sheet No. 6 in the grand total of £169,371.36 be approved and the various payments and transactions set out therein be confirmed.

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

It was moved by the Deputy Mayor 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.

102. **CONTRACTUAL ISSUES PERTAINING TO IT ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMME**

Mr P. Elliot and Mr T. Cross of Empiric Partners presented their work to date, which has resulted in the creation of two tenders to upgrade the Council's communications and IT. After a discussion on next steps, it was unanimously

**RESOLVED**

that Stage II (Lot 2) of the IT tendering process be agreed as presented within the report.

103. **CLOSE OF MEETING**

The meeting closed at 8.48pm.

CHAIRMAN

*Publication date 13.5.2022*