

CHESHAM TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the RECREATION AND THE ARTS COMMITTEE

held on 2nd June 2008

PRESENT

Councillor	A.K. Bacon	Councillor	D.J. Lacey
"	Ms. J.E. Bramwell	"	Mrs C. Littley
"	Mrs J.C. Fulford	"	Mrs C.M. Michael

IN ATTENDANCE

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

Mr P. Ashby– Friends of Moor Road Gym and Swim
Mr T. Pilling – Elgiva Board of Management

Officer: Mr. W. Richards, Town Clerk

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors E.L. Bamford, M.Z. Bhatti, Mrs A.M. Pirouet, Mrs M. Molesworth and Mrs G. Walker.

1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN FOR ADMINISTRATIVE YEAR 2008/09

The Deputy Mayor opened the meeting and called for nominations for Chairman of the Recreation and the Arts Committee.

It was

RESOLVED

that Councillor Mrs J.C. Fulford be elected Chairman for the remainder of the Council year.

Note: Councillor Mrs Fulford took the Chair

Councillor Mrs Fulford called for nominations for Vice-Chairman of the Recreation and the Arts Committee.

It was

RESOLVED

that Councillor Ms J.E. Bramwell be elected Vice Chairman for the remainder of the Council year.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillors Holly and Mrs Fulford declared a personal interest in agenda items 5 and 6 as members of the Friends of Moor Road Gym and Swim. Councillor Mrs Littley declared a personal interest in agenda items 5 and 6 as her family were season ticket holders at Moor Road Gym and Swim facility.

Councillors Holly, Mrs Michael, and Spruytenburg declared a personal interest in agenda item 5 as members of the Allotments Group. Councillor Spruytenburg also declared a personal interest in agenda item 5 as an allotment holder.

Councillors Mrs Fulford and Mrs Littley declared a personal interest in agenda item 5 as members of the 'Impress the Chess' Group.

Councillor Mrs Fulford declared a personal interest in agenda item 5 as a member of the Environmental Group.

3. **MINUTES**

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Recreation and the Arts Committee held on 17th March 2008, be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

4. **ALLOTMENTS GROUP**

Members received the Minutes of the meeting of the Allotments Group held on 8th April 2008. It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted.

5. **FRIENDS OF CHESHAM CEMETERY**

Members received the Minutes of the meeting of the Friends of Chesham Cemetery held on 22nd April 2008. It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted.

6. **CHESHAM ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP**

Members received the Minutes of the A.G.M of the Chesham Environmental Group held on 24th April 2008. It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted.

It was raised that Mr Ian Freeman had stood down as Chairman of the group after many years' service in that position. Members were unanimously of the view that Mr Freeman's efforts as a hard-working Chairman had done much to improve the state of Chesham's natural environment and it was agreed that a letter be sent to him expressing the Council's appreciation of his work.

7. **ELGIVA BOARD OF MANAGEMENT**

Members received the Minutes of the meeting of the Elgiva Board of Management held on 6th May 2008. It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted.

8. **VERBAL UPDATE FROM ELGIVA BOARD OF MANAGEMENT CHAIRMAN**

After presentation of the Minutes, the Chairman invited Mr Trevor Pilling, Chairman of the Elgiva Board of Management, to give the Committee a verbal update on the Elgiva.

Mr Pilling reported that the Board was well on the way to finalising the five year business plan and would be presenting it to the Committee at a future meeting. Councillor Brand stated that he welcomed the Board's efforts in this area but did query why the Board felt it had no control over several matters including staffing costs. Mr Pilling reminded the Committee that the Board remained an advisory group and that salaries were set by the Council itself based on nationally agreed pay rates. He also emphasised the effect of utility price rises on the theatre with gas and electricity prices rising by about 65-70% over the last five years.

Mr Pilling further advised that he expected that the current economic downturn would have an effect on the Elgiva's attendances, since trips to the theatre and other cultural events always decline nationally during such economic periods. Already there appeared a trend of income being reduced by 15%. However he opined that the Elgiva was less likely to be affected by the 'credit crunch' than some of the West End theatres since people tended to be more loyal to a local facility and would choose a night out that did not require much travel. Moreover, he stated that the exciting programme that the Manager and his team had booked, should continue to draw audiences in. He was also hopeful that the new on-line booking system would generate extra revenue. Therefore he concluded that the theatre should comfortably remain within budget for 2008/09 despite it being a potentially difficult year. Councillor Brand, while welcoming this, reminded the Committee that this projected budget did not include the Renewals and Repairs expenditure.

Finally, Mr Pilling stated that he felt it important to bring to the Council's attention that since the Board began operating in 2003, the overall deficit of the theatre had only risen by 4%. This, he opined, was a remarkable achievement and a testament to both the Board, but more importantly, also to the Elgiva Manager and his staff at the theatre.

The Committee agreed that this reflected excellent management and financial control and offered its congratulations both the Elgiva Manager and Mr Pilling and the Board of Management.

9. **IMPRESS THE CHESS**

Members received the Minutes of the meeting of the Impress the Chess Steering Group held on 1st May 2008. It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted.

10. **CHESHAM MOOR GYM AND SWIM UPDATE**

The Committee considered the officers' report on various matters arising at the Chesham Moor Gym and Swim facility.

Members noted with satisfaction that the financial figures had seen a reduction in the projected budget of £17,052 on the accounts up to the end of March 2008 and the Committee was particularly pleased to see a general upturn on the income for the gym.

The matter of the open air pool and its operation and staff was then discussed. Members agreed that it had been unfortunate that there had been a lack of lifeguards on an early May weekend when the weather was unseasonably hot and entry numbers had to be restricted. However it was accepted that this lifeguard shortage was a national problem and it was noted that the Manager was now up to full capacity on his lifeguards. Nevertheless it was agreed it would be prudent to try and recruit and train local people who were not students so there was a bigger pool of staff to call upon, particularly in the early summer season.

In respect of the current timed entry system, Councillor Mrs Wilkinson queried as to why there had to be a fifteen minute break between sessions. The Town Clerk and Chairman advised that was to allow the limited number of lifeguards on duty a legal break and to undergo general preparation for the next session. Councillor Ms Bramwell opined that it seemed unnecessary to have more than one lifeguard on for adults only sessions and requested that the Friends group investigate the legal implications of this. The Committee accepted that, while the timed system was not perfect, it was the easier and fairest system to administer and monitor and it was agreed to continue with this.

The Committee then debated the state of the multi court and tennis court on the complex. It was agreed that the facilities did need repairing if they were to be utilised for their full potential. A discussion then took place as to whether the Committee should express to the Friends that it wished to see them repaired or wait until the Friends had devised its five year plan. Members were of the view that they were valuable community facilities and that officers be requested to seek tenders for the repairs and that the Committee's views on this matter be relayed to the Friends.

Members agreed to the request to Strides FC to install a lock-up container on The Moor subject to the club financing the purchase and obtaining all necessary planning consents

and adhering to the bye-laws pertinent to the Moor. In respect of the existing hut, that may become surplus to requirements, officers were requested to obtain a quotation for its demolition, after which its future would be determined.

The Chairman then asked Mr Ashby from the Friends as to whether he wished to make any observations. Mr Ashby stated that he did not have much to add that was not highlighted within the report but did feel it important to stress that Members should be in little doubt that the tennis court and multi court were unlikely to engender significant income.

It was

RESOLVED

1. that the financial position be noted.
2. that the Committee agree to allow an amount of up to £1,000 to be allocated for lifeguard training.
3. that the current pool entrance system be continued but monitored over the season.
4. that the officers be instructed to seek tenders for the repairs to the tennis court and multi court and this decision relayed to the Friends.
5. that the Committee grant Strides F.C. permission to buy and locate a lock-up container upon the Moor at their own cost and subject to planning consent being obtained and that officers obtain quotations for the demolition of the Moor hut.

11. **PLAY AREAS IN CHESHAM**

The Committee considered how it wished to proceed with the renovation of some or all of its play areas in the town.

There was unanimity that a play area strategy was required for Chesham and some hard decisions needed to be taken as to whether the Council could afford to maintain and upgrade all of the sites. A debate then took place as to whether any monies should be spent on the play areas before such a strategy was presented to Council. Members noted that the Parks and Premises Manager had proposed that Marston Field play area be renovated as soon as possible and the Town Clerk reminded the Committee that a further £35,000 had been earmarked as play equipment 'match-funding' for Lowndes Park as part of the Council's lottery bid.

It was initially proposed by Councillor Ms Bramwell that the earmarked £35,000 be spent on Lowndes Park and the remaining £74,100 be divided across the main play areas in Chesham. However it was agreed that it would prudent to wait until the play area strategy had been completed and priorities agreed until committing the monies. The Town Clerk was asked to bring such a strategy to the next Recreation and the Arts Committee.

The Committee then voted on whether to undertake any upgrading of Marston Field play area before the presentation of the strategy and it was resolved that no works on

any play areas (other than urgent safety repairs) should be instigated before the strategy was presented.

The Committee further agreed to begin a consultation process in respect of siting the multi-play goal following its removal from Woodland View play-area but it was accepted that any proposed site may garner opposition from local residents and the benefits to young people would be needed to be weighed up against such opposition.

In accordance with standing order 26c, Councillor Lacey asked for the matter to be referred to full Council for determination.

It was therefore

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND

1. that officers be requested to develop a play-area strategy, approach Chiltern District Council to help facilitate this and present this strategy to the next Recreation and the Arts Committee.
2. that no upgrading of Marston Field Play Area be undertaken until after the consideration of the play strategy.
3. that officers proceed with a consultation exercise with a view to recommending a site for the Multi-Play Goal.

12. **SECURITY FENCING ON NORTHERN PERIMETER OF CHESHAM CEMETERY**

The Committee considered the Parks and Premises Manager's proposal to install palisade security fencing at the northern end of the cemetery where there had been obvious incursions and subsequent vandalism to headstones.

Members agreed such fencing was a regrettable necessity and requested this work be commissioned. A brief discussion took place on the colour of the fencing and it was agreed that this decision be delegated to officers.

It was

RESOLVED

that the installation of the security fencing for Section M and a very short length of section P, funded from the Renewals and Repairs budget carried forward from 2007-08, be approved.

13. **DOG WALKING WITHIN GROUNDS OF CHESHAM CEMETERY**

The Parks and Premises Manager's report on dog walking in the cemetery was discussed. It was agreed that the cemetery was an inappropriate place for recreational dog-walking and

RESOLVED

1. that the ban on dogs within the cemetery be reaffirmed.
2. that any exemptions to the rule given in the past be rescinded on health and safety grounds.
3. that future wording regarding '*guide dogs only*' be altered to read '*Disability Assistance Dogs excepted*'.

14. **TOWN HALL- REPLACEMENT OF FURNITURE AND NOTICE BOARD**

The Administration Manager's proposals to purchase new equipment for the Town Hall were discussed by the Committee.

It was agreed that the Town Hall chairs were in need of replacing and it was noted that those still serviceable would be re-located to the cemetery chapel. However Members were of the view that the Council Chamber tables remained in comparatively good condition and should not be replaced.

In respect of a notice board, it was agreed that the current one in the reception area needed replacing but the Committee did not feel the figure quoted by the Administration Manager to supply an electric one could be justified.

It was

RESOLVED

1. that the blue chairs in the Town Hall be replaced at a cost of no more than £3,240.
2. that the tables in the Council Chamber be not be replaced at the present time.
3. that an amount of no more than £1,000 be spent on a new notice board.

15. **CLOSE OF MEETING**

The meeting closed at 8.45pm.

CHAIRMAN