

CHESHAM TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the RECREATION AND THE ARTS COMMITTEE

held on 1st September 2008

PRESENT Mrs J.C. Fulford – Chairman (presiding)

Councillor	A.K. Bacon	Councillor	Mrs C.M. Michael
"	E.L. Bamford	"	Mrs M. Molesworth
"	Mrs C. Littley		

IN ATTENDANCE

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

Mr Mike Barden – Friends of Moor Road Gym and Swim.
Pc. Verity Ruddick – Thames Valley Police.

Officers: Mr. W. Richards, Town Clerk and Mr D. Essex, Moor Road Gym and Swim Centre Manager

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ms. J.E. Bramwell, D.J. Lacey, Mrs A.M. Pirouet and Mrs G. Walker.

16. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillors Holly and Mrs Fulford declared a personal interest in agenda items 4, 5 and 8 as members of the Friends of Moor Road Gym and Swim. Councillors Holly, Mrs Michael and Spruytenburg declared a personal interest in agenda item 4 as members of the Allotments Group. Councillor Spruytenburg also declared a personal interest in agenda item 4 as an allotment holder.
Councillors Mrs Fulford and Mrs Littley declared a personal interest in agenda item 4 as members of the 'Impress the Chess' Group.

17. **MINUTES**

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Recreation and the Arts Committee held on 2nd June 2008, be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

18. **FRIENDS OF MOOR ROAD**

Members received the Minutes of the meetings of the Friends of Moor Road held on 10th June and 22nd July 2008. It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted.

Arising from the Minutes of the Friends of Moor Road meeting held on the 10th June 2008, Councillor Mrs Wilkinson suggested that the Friends group may have to advertise in the local media to recruit Level 2 swimming teachers. The Centre Manager advised that he had subsequently recruited suitably qualified teachers for the rest of the summer.

In considering the Minutes of the 10th June, a brief discussion took place as to whether the 'Mayor's Open Day' should be an annual event. It was accepted that, while very successful this year, it should be left to the discretion of the incoming Mayor as to whether he or she wished to continue with it.

19. **ALLOTMENTS GROUP**

Members received the Minutes of the meetings of the Allotments Group held on 17th June and 12th August 2008. It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted.

Councillor Holly commended the group for organising another very successful open day in August.

20. **IMPRESS THE CHESS**

Members received the Minutes of the meeting of the Impress the Chess Steering Group held on 6th June 2008. It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted.

Arising from the Minutes of the Impress the Chess Steering Group held on 6th June 2008, Councillor Bamford advised that she had received complaints about the quality of the pathways in the newly renovated Meades Water Gardens area. The Clerk reported that he too was aware of the complaints and the contractor would be returning to attempt to compact the stones further in due course.

21. **ELGIVA BOARD OF MANAGEMENT**

Members received the Minutes of the meetings of the Elgiva Board of Management held on 23rd June and 11th August 2008. It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted.

Arising from the Minutes of the Elgiva Board of Management held on 11th August 2008, the Clerk advised Councillor Bacon that the proposal to consider setting up a Sole Custodian Trust for the Elgiva would first be considered at the next Performance Review Committee since it was a key recommendation from the Community Buildings review and then by the next Recreation and the Arts Committee.

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

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

The proposal to improve communication with the public queuing on hot days was welcomed by the Committee. Following a query as to why a fifteen minute break between sessions still remained, the Centre Manager explained that it was important for general tidying, cashing up and preparation for the next session and was usual practice for most pools operating timed entry sessions. Councillor Mrs Fulford opined that the fifteen minute break was also important to ensure that customers from the session just finished actually vacated the pool. The Centre Manager went on to explain that the timed sessions were quite lucrative compared to people just staying all day and, generally, the public seemed happy with the system. Councillor Mrs Molesworth opined that the times of the pool opening could be better advertised on the website which the Centre Manager accepted. He explained the Moor Road Gym and Swim Centre website was in its infancy but would be developed very shortly.

Councillor Mrs Wilkinson advised that she was aware that some teachers were offering one-to-one lessons but the pupils had, on occasions, not shown up. The Centre Manager replied that he was aware of this and was proposing that customers pay in advance in future to ensure no loss of income for both the centre and the teacher.

The Committee then received an update from Mr Mike Barden, Chairman of the Friends the Moor Road, on the solar power proposals for the pool. He explained that the proposals have suffered some slippage due to the designated framework suppliers as appointed by BERR (i.e. the only companies who could install and allow for the Council to claim a 50% grant) being slow to respond due to the sheer volume of enquiries. However he was still confident of a winter installation so long as the planning application process went smoothly. The Chairman again thanked Mr Barden for his efforts on this project.

Members considered the proposal to install a mini-golf course around the perimeter of the centre by a local company. Concerns were raised on both security and on the aesthetics of such an installation but it was accepted that such a proposal was very much at its inception and, at this stage, it would be wrong to dismiss a project that may bring extra revenue to the facility.

The Committee was advised that the Friend of Moor Road were looking at the possibility of installing an extra lamp-post between the Moor car-park and complex to increase lighting for security reasons, particularly for women leaving the gym in the evenings and a site meeting had been arranged with officers of Buckinghamshire County Council and Jacobs Babbie to progress this. Members welcomed such an initiative and expressed support, subject to funding.

The matter of the Government's initiative on offering free swimming for the over 60s and 16s and under was briefly discussed by the Committee. There was general disappointment expressed that town and parish councils were not eligible to apply for funding to offset loss of income and the view was expressed that it appeared unlikely that the initiative would be taken up anywhere across the district. However it was agreed that there would be little to be lost registering a provisional interest with Chiltern District Council at this early stage to include the pool in any district-wide bids for funding.

The Centre Manager briefly raised the matter of a new lease agreement for the equipment in the gym. Members were reminded that the equipment was 'reconditioned' (i.e. second-hand) when installed and starting to show signs of wear and tear. Accordingly the Centre Manager reported that he is looking at other leasing options and will be reporting these back to a future meeting.

It was

RESOLVED

1. that the financial position be noted.
2. that the officers' proposals to improve communication with queuing customers be noted and approved.
3. that the current position in respect of solar powered heating be noted.
4. that officers be authorised to enter in to further negotiations with the contractors supplying mini-golf and a further report be submitted.
5. that the Committee support the principle of increased lighting between complex and car-park and request that the Friends Group and officers bring a further detailed report to a future meeting
6. that the Council register an interest in being part of the free swimming initiative through Chiltern District Council and officers enter into a dialogue with Chiltern District Council officers and the Friends' Group on the financial implications and that a further report on the matter be brought before the Committee.
7. that the current position on the leased gym equipment be noted.

23. **PLAY AREAS IN CHESHAM**

The Committee received an update from the Clerk on the proposals thus far from the Play Area Working Party. The Clerk advised that it had been proposed that several play companies be invited to audit all the current sites and put forward initial recommendations and proposals for general renovation of the Council play areas. The Working Party would then consider these and recommend a company to work with the

Council over an agreed period of time to implement this renovation after first consulting with residents and young people upon the exact designs. The recommendations of the Working Party would be submitted to the Council meeting on the 22nd September.

The Committee was happy to proceed with this approach. Pc. Ruddick stated that the local police were keen to see development of play area provision, particularly in Marston Field, as a way of tackling anti-social behaviour and, accordingly, it was agreed she should join the Working Party as a non-voting member.

It was

RESOLVED

1. that the Play Area Working Party proceed in the manner discussed and its recommendations be put before the Council meeting of the 22nd September 2008.
2. that a representative of the police be invited to join the Play Area Working Party as a non-voting member.

24. **REVISED TERMS AND REFERENCES FOR THE ALLOTMENTS GROUP**

The Committee considered the draft revised terms and references as proposed by the Allotments Group to be presented to its A.G.M on the 18th September 2008.

Before considering the revised terms and references in detail, a brief discussion took place on the desirability of the Allotments Group becoming fully autonomous, particularly since it now had its own bank account. It was agreed that the Group should remain an advisory one as it was utilising Council land and the final decision on allotments provision should lie with the Council.

In considering the revised terms and references, the Committee did not agree that the Member representatives should have deemed to have resigned if missing three meetings without tendering apologies as this should be a decision for Council to make. It also felt that the terms and references should not state that the Council would make rooms available free of charge for each group meeting. Additionally it expressed the opinion that, while the Council would try and support the Allotments Group where possible, it was not appropriate to state that the Council would seek to offer training opportunities to all group members and reimburse any reasonable expenses incurred.

Within the 'Roles and Responsibilities' section, the Committee also sought further clarification on the clause '*to consider and recommend the level of allotments to the Council for further consideration*'.

It was therefore

RESOLVED

that the Committee support the proposed revised terms and references for the Allotments Group, save for clauses 8, 11 and 12 in the

constitution and clause ix of the roles and responsibilities and this be fed back to the Allotments Group.

25. **USE OF CODMORE PLAYING FIELD AND PAVILION FOR ANNUAL DONKEY DERBY**

The application on behalf of the Amersham and Chesham Lions and Tylers Hill Scout Group for use of the Codmore Playing Field and Pavilion, Botley Road, for a further five years was considered by the Committee. It was noted that the event is normally held in June and it is proposed that the next event will be held on Sunday 7th June 2009.

It was

RESOLVED

that officers be given delegated authority to approve the use of Codmore Field by the Amersham and Chesham Lions and Tylers Hill Scout Group for their annual Donkey Derby for the next five years, subject to payment of the appropriate annual charge and that the charge for 2009 be fixed at £100 for the use of the Field and the Pavilion.

26. **MOOR FOOTBALL PITCHES AND PAVILION**

The Committee considered the application of Strides Football Club to site a storage container on the Moor and the possible long term proposals put forward by the club.

It was unanimity that the 40 foot container proposed by the club to be sited at the south-east section of the Moor would be totally inappropriate and would be vigorously opposed by the local residents. A debate then took place on whether any sort of lock-up container should be considered. The Committee agreed that if the pavilion remained, it would not be appropriate to have further building on the Moor and it was noted that obtaining planning permission for such a container would be required from the Secretary of State in any case. The Committee, while sympathetic to the fine development Strides F.C. did in promoting junior football, also did not feel it could enter into a long term lease agreement with the club on an area of common land.

In respect of the proposed annual rent, this was agreed by the Committee.

It was

RESOLVED

1. that permission for a storage container on the Moor be not approved.
2. that no long term lease agreement for use of the Moor be entered into.
3. that a rent of £1,768 for the Moor Football Pitches and Pavilion for the 2008/09 season be agreed.

27. **PROVISION OF DOG BINS**

The Clerk advised that officers have received a request for an additional dog bin around the Vale Road/Greenway area. He reported that while the Chiltern District Council is prepared to order this, it requests that this Council pay both for the purchase of bins and the emptying thereof. Costs of purchase of a new bin are around £200 and the emptying amounts to £186 per year. The District Council used to be able to contribute up to 25% for the purchase and emptying but now can only make a small contribution to the purchase of a new bin.

In light of this request, Members were asked to reconsider the Council's position on dog bins previously set at the Council's Sport and Leisure Committee on 12 November 2001 which stated that this Council considers the collection of dog waste to be the responsibility of the Principal Authority, a service which should be fully funded by Chiltern District Council. It was agreed that this position remain unchanged and therefore the Committee did not feel it appropriate to support the request for the dog bin in Vale Road/Greenway with any financial commitment. However it was agreed that the provision of new dog bins on Council land should be considered when budgets for 2009/10 are being considered in the autumn.

It was

RESOLVED

1. that the Council reaffirm its position that the responsibility for dog waste collection not on Council land should remain the responsibility of the District Council.
2. that no financial commitment be made to the request to install a dog bin in on the junction of Vale Road/Greenway.

Councillor Spruytenburg left the meeting at 9.20pm

28. **INFORMATION ITEM**

The item presented on the Information Sheet was received and noted.

The Clerk advised that the taking over the management of the existing market contract would be commencing on the 3rd September and not 3rd May as presented.

29. **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.

30. **TENDERS FOR MULTI-SPORTS/TENNIS COURTS RENOVATION, MOOR ROAD , GYM AND SWIM CENTRE.**

Members considered the tenders for the renovation of the multi-sports court and tennis court at the Moor Road Gym and Swim Centre.

A discussion took place of the type of fencing required for the facility. It was agreed that it would be prudent to have the robust metal fencing all around the facility and therefore it was

RESOLVED

that the Committee confirm that a contract be offered to Playground Services Ltd to undertake the renovation work for the facility for the amount presented to Members within the report.

31. **CLOSE OF MEETING**

The meeting closed at 9.45pm.

CHAIRMAN

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