

CHESHAM TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

held on Monday 14th December 2009

PRESENT Councillor V. M. Abraham, Chairman (presiding)

Councillor	A.K. Bacon	Councillor	F.G. Holly
"	N.L. Brown	"	C.H. Spruytenburg
"	Mrs J.C. Fulford	"	P.W. Yerrell

In Attendance

Councillors Mrs C.M. Michael, Mrs M. Molesworth and Mrs G. Walker.

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ms J.E. Bramwell, M.E. Brand, M. Fayyaz and M.W. Shaw. An apology for lateness was received from Councillor N.L. Brown.

41. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Mrs Walker declared a personal interest in agenda item 4 as a representative of the 'Chesham in Transition' Group.

Councillors Holly and Mrs Michael declared a personal interest in agenda item 5 as members of the Friends of Chesham Moor Gym and Swim.

Councillors Bacon and Mrs Fulford declared a personal interest in agenda item 5 as users of the Chesham Moor Gym and Swim Centre.

Councillors Holly and Mrs Michael 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.

Councillor Holly declared a personal interest in agenda item 5 as a member of the Friends of Chesham Cemetery.

Councillor Abraham declared a personal interest in agenda item 5 as a member of the Elgiva Board of Management.

Councillor Mrs Fulford declared a personal interest in agenda item 8 in her capacity of the current Mayor.

Councillor Yerrell declared a personal interest in agenda item 10 as a member of the Pond Park Community Association.

Councillor Mrs Fulford declared a personal interest in agenda item 11 as her daughter was a member of the Girl Guides.

42. **MINUTES**

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on 19th October 2009 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

43. **'CHESHAM IN TRANSITION' GROUP**

Members received the Minutes of the meeting of the 'Chesham in Transition' Group held on the 12th November 2009.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted.

Arising from Minute no 2, Members praised the Transition group in its efforts to reduce residents' footprints particularly since the district of Chiltern had recently been cited as having the worst level of carbon emissions in the country.

Councillor Brown arrived at the meeting at 8.05pm

44. **CHESHAM ACTION PARTNERSHIP**

Members received the Minutes of the meeting of the Chesham Action Partnership held on 1st December 2009.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted.

45. **TOWN CENTRE WORKING GROUP**

Members received the Minutes of the meeting of the Town Centre Working Group held on 3rd December 2009.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted.

Arising from Minute No 1 (vi), the Committee had a lengthy discussion on the future of the Parsonage Lane wall.

Some Members opined that they would like to see the wall removed altogether and replaced by hedging and trees. However there was no consensus as to whether the removal of the wall would alleviate or exacerbate noise problems and, moreover, it was noted that the ownership of the wall was still under some doubt. If it was the responsibility of Buckinghamshire County Council, Councillor Brown opined that the authority would have little monies to pay for a replacement. Councillor Mrs Fulford also suggested that she understood the wall was originally erected to tackle headlight dazzling.

Arising from Minute No 1 (i), Councillor Bacon enquired as to whether the Chesham Society was planning to liaise with the Council on any tree planting. The Clerk advised that he thought it would be but would confirm with the Chairman. He also reported that the survey of Broadlands Avenue residents had now been received and there had been an overwhelming response in favour of tree re-planting.

Arising from Minute No 6 (i), Councillor Brown confirmed that the Environment Agency's earmarked monies for tackling flooding in Chesham could only be used at this juncture for investigating flood risks rather than any actual maintenance works.

46. **REVISED ESTIMATES 2009/10 AND ESTIMATES 2010/11**

The Committee considered the report from the Finance and Contracts Manager on the revised estimates for 2009/10 and the estimates for 2010/11 which reflected the observations and recommendations made at the Recreation and the Arts Committee of the 23rd November 2009.

In light of the report, the Chairman, Councillor Abraham proposed and Councillor Bacon seconded that *'the Committee make no decision on the recommendations in the report, and that the Chairmen of Recreation and the Arts and the Policy and Resources Committee meet the budget holders and the Finance and Contracts Manager to go through their budgets and identify any possible savings. Proposals will then be brought to Council for decision on 11th January 2010'*.

In discussing the proposal, Councillor Brown raised his concerns that the Council meeting would not allow much room for amendments and debate and opined that there would be a lack of transparency in this approach. However both Councillor Abraham and Councillor Bacon insisted that the Chairmen would be only undertaking a more rigorous scrutiny of budgets at this difficult financial time and their findings and recommendations would be fully considered and discussed at Council before the final precept was set.

The recommendation was put to the vote and duly **CARRIED** by 6 votes to 1.

The Finance and Contracts Manager then gave a brief explanation of the Repairs and Renewals budget. He advised that it was always built into the budgets to ensure repairing and replacing equipment and/or facilities could be undertaken when required without having a significant impact on the precept. Members accepted the importance of such a budget but queries were raised as to whether a certain amount could be shaved off the figure for next and preceding years. It was noted that this was a question that the Chairmen intended to ask officers.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Committee make no decision on the recommendations in the report and revised proposals be brought to Council for determination following the budgetary meeting of the Chairmen of the Recreation and the Arts and Policy and Resources Committee with officer section heads.

47. **DEVOLVED SERVICES UPDATE**

The Committee considered the current position on the devolved services initiative emanating from Buckinghamshire County Council.

Members welcomed the fact that the Council would be undertaking emergency salting of the High Street when required and it was

RESOLVED

that the report be noted.

48. **PUBLIC LIABILITY COVER**

The Public Liability cover for third parties using the Council's facilities was discussed by Members.

It was noted that Council changed its insurers on 1st April 2008 and the standard policy covers 'not for profit' organisations using the Council's facilities for Public Liability up to £1m. There was general agreement that all hirers should have at least £2m and, preferably,

£5m public liability cover when hiring facilities. However there was some debate as to whether this should cover all the Council's services such as hire of football pitches or just the Elgiva and Town Hall. Moreover there was no consensus as to whether a percentage increase should be put on bookings for those without such insurance to cover the cost of the Council increasing its premium.

In light of this, it was resolved that

RESOLVED

the Finance and Contracts Manager investigate the public liability insurance matter further and report to a future Committee.

49. **MAYORAL PROTOCOL**

The Clerk advised that the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and he had sat down to produce a paper listing all that was expected of both the Mayor and Deputy Mayor during their respective years of office and making clear the relationship between them.

The Committee agreed it was a valuable document but there were some matters of contention. Foremost of these was the proposal that the Deputy Mayor automatically become Mayor (other than in an election year) and be known as the Mayor Elect. Councillor Yerrell opined that it would undermine the principle of elections at the Annual Meeting of the Council and may cause difficulties in the event of a 'hung' Council. Councillor Mrs Fulford responded by saying that being Mayor was a big task to take on. She opined that a closer relationship between Mayor and Deputy Mayor, (engendered by knowing that the latter would automatically become the former), could only help with the Deputy Mayor understanding his or her future role. There was a general feeling among the Committee not to change the current procedure for appointing the Mayor and Deputy Mayor but as any decision on this may affect the current Standing Orders, it was agreed that the proposal not to accept the paper's recommendation on this be referred to Council for determination.

It was also recommended by Committee that the Mayor's independence and impartiality be re-enforced. It was also felt that the Mayor be only expected to 'join' rather than 'lead' a twinning visit. Councillor Mrs Fulford also suggested that it was appropriate for the Mayor to wear a black ribbon rather than chain at a funeral.

It was

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND

that the Mayoral Protocol paper, as amended by the Committee, be adopted.

50. **INTERNAL AUDITOR'S REPORT**

The Committee considered the latest Internal Auditor's report.

It was

RESOLVED

that the report be noted.

51. **UPDATE ON POND PARK COMMUNITY CENTRE**

Members noted the current situation regarding the possible development of a community facility in the Pond Park. Councillor Yerrell advised the Committee that Councillor Shaw had replaced him as the Chairman of Pond Park Community Association.

It was

RESOLVED

that the report be noted.

52. **GIRL GUIDES' CENTENARY SIGN**

The Committee considered the request from the local Girl Guides' Association to erect a sign behind the flower-bed in Red Lion Street to celebrate a hundred years of the Girl Guides.

Members were happy to support the project but it was suggested that the principal authorities be contacted to ensure that there were no planning or highway constraints.

It was

RESOLVED

that permission be granted to allow the Girl Guides to erect a sign in Red Lion Street to celebrate their centenary.

53. **FINANCIAL REPORT FOR FOUR MONTHS TO 31st SEPTEMBER 2009**

The Financial Report for six months to 31st September 2009 was presented.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Report be noted.

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

It was moved by the Chairman and

RESOLVED

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

55. **DIGITAL MAPPING**

The proposal to purchase a comprehensive digital mapping software package was discussed by the Committee.

It was accepted by the Committee that such a system would be advantageous for the Council, particularly in respect of burial records and future tree management. However Members questioned the costs of such a system in a time of budgetary constraint and whether there were other services offered by the principal authorities that the Council could utilise. Accordingly the Committee requested that a further quotation be sought for a similar package and the company whose software was under consideration be asked to provide a demonstration to Members.

It was

RESOLVED

that the proposal be brought back to a future Committee following a demonstration of the software to Members and an alternative quotation for a similar package be obtained.

56. **ICE CREAM CONCESSION**

The Committee considered the three submissions to operate the ice-cream franchise in Lowndes Park for the next three years.

It was

RESOLVED

that the three year contract be awarded to Rossetti Ices

57. **CLOSE OF MEETING**

The meeting closed at 9.40pm.

CHAIRMAN

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