

CHESHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the TOWN COUNCIL

held on Monday 9th January 2012

PRESENT: Councillor D.J. Lacey – (Town Mayor - presiding)

Councillor	V.M. Abraham	Councillor	Mrs C. Littley
"	A.K. Bacon	"	R.C. McCulloch
"	Miss R.K. Bhatti	"	Mrs C.M. Michael
"	Ms J.E. Bramwell	"	Mrs A.M. Pirouet
"	N.L. Brown	"	M.W. Shaw
"	Mrs P.R. Cherrill	"	C.H. Spruytenburg
"	M. Fayyaz	"	F.S. Wilson
"	T. Franks	"	P.W. Yerrell
"	P.J. Hudson		

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

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Mrs G. Walker.

65. **MINUTES**

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on the 7th November 2011 be confirmed and signed by the Town Mayor as a true record.

66. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillors Mrs A.M. Pirouet and M.W. Shaw declared a personal interest in agenda item 6 in light of their representation on the Youth Council.

Councillor Mrs A.M. Pirouet declared a prejudicial interest in agenda item 11 (administration of Chesham Youth Club wages) due to her son's employment there and a personal interest as a member of the Chesham Youth Club Management Committee. Councillors N.L. Brown and M.W. Shaw declared a personal interest in agenda item 11 as members of the Chesham Youth Club Management Committee. Councillor P.J. Hudson declared a personal interest in agenda item 11 as a regular advisor to the Youth Club.

67. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

The Town Mayor invited questions from the public. No questions were forthcoming.

68. **MAYORAL ENGAGEMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Members had before them and duly noted the list of the Town Mayor's engagements from 8th November 2011 – 9th January 2012.

The Mayor paid tribute to former Members, Councillors Joe Pilling and Bill Stannard, both of whom had passed away recently. The Council then held a minute's silence in respect of ex-Councillors Pilling and Stannard.

Councillor Spruytenburg thanked the Mayor for undertaking the Christmas lights judging in Asheridge Vale ward just before Christmas.

69. **CHESHAM YOUTH COUNCIL**

The minutes of the Youth Council meetings on the 20th October and 17th November 2011 were presented and noted.

70. **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

It was moved by the Mayor, Councillor D.J. Lacey, and seconded by Councillor Mrs C. Littley and

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 7th November 2011, be received and approved.

71. **DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE**

It was moved by Councillor V.M. Abraham and seconded by Councillor Mrs A.M. Pirouet and

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Development Control Committee held on 21st November 2011, be received and approved.

It was moved by Councillor V.M. Abraham and seconded by Councillor Mrs A.M. Pirouet and

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Development Control Committee held on 12th December 2011, be received and approved.

72. **RECREATION AND THE ARTS COMMITTEE**

It was moved by Councillor Mrs P.R. Cherrill and seconded by Councillor Mrs C.M. Michael and

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Recreation and the Arts Committee held on 21st November 2011, be received and approved.

73. **SOLAR PANEL HEATING AT CHESHAM MOOR GYM AND SWIM CENTRE**

Arising out of Minute No. 48, Councillor Brown congratulated all those involved with the successful installation of the solar panelling at the Centre before the change in tariffs.

The Clerk advised that this successful project was mainly due to the efforts of Mr Roger Comer from the Friends of Chesham Moor Gym and Swim Centre and it was agreed a vote of thanks be sent to Mr Comer from the Council.

74. **POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

It was moved by Councillor Mrs C.M. Michael and seconded by Councillor A.K. Bacon and

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on 12th December 2011, be received and approved.

Note: In respect to the recommendation within Minute No. 56, it was noted that it was to be discussed anew at the meeting and therefore referred accordingly without discussion or resolution to the next agenda item.

75. **PRECEPT 2012/13**

The Council received a financial report from the Finance and Contracts Manager outlining a budget based on around a 3% increase on the precept as recommended at the last Policy and Resources Committee and, in light of this, considered the amount of the precept to be levied on the District Council for 2012/13.

Councillor Bacon opened the discussion by stating that the Finance Working Party had looked robustly at how a nil per cent increase on the Council Tax for Chesham could be

implemented for a second successive year to fulfil residents' expectations. However he reminded Members that, unlike the principal authorities, town and parish councils received no government grant to underwrite a Council Tax freeze. He emphasised that the officers' proposed 2.47% increase on a Band D property broadly equated, in percentage terms, to the grant principal authorities received from central government in respect to this. Moreover, Councillor Bacon highlighted that the Council had made some significant cutbacks in this financial year, including staff reductions. Another year of no increase to the Council Tax, he opined, could have serious repercussions on the Council's services, particularly with the Council reliant to a significant degree on income from the Chesham Moor Gym and Swim Centre and Elgiva Theatre; an income likely to be difficult to sustain in a tough economic climate. He concluded by saying that, while it was very regrettable the Council Tax needed to be increased when the public were generally feeling the effects of the economic downturn, the proposed increase remained well below the rate of inflation and worked out at less than 5p a week for a Band D property.

Councillor Shaw stated that he concurred entirely with Councillor Bacon. He said that no Member wished to put a further financial burden on residents but there was a real need to protect the Council's valuable services and to ensure this, a small rise in the Council Tax was necessary. He stated therefore he would be happy to second any motion put by Councillor Bacon this effect.

Accordingly it was proposed by Councillor Bacon and seconded by Councillor Shaw that *'A precept of £828,430 be levied on the Chiltern District Council for 2012/13 which represents a 2.73% increase on the 2011/12 precept, equivalent to an increase of 2.47% for a 'Band D' property.'*

Councillor Ms Bramwell then informed the Council that she wished to make an amendment to the proposal. She stated that she did not believe that, in a time of great hardship for many of the town's less affluent residents, an increase in the precept was either fair or justifiable. Councillor Ms Bramwell argued that most other major public sector authorities had been forced to find significant savings in the last few years and there was no reason why the Council should be exempt from such cost cutting exercises, particularly as she believed that delivering a nil per cent increase would not greatly affect the Council's operation. The Council would, in her opinion, be taking the easy option by increasing the Council Tax rather than attempting to find the appropriate savings through a rigorous review of its service provision. She went on to state that she had undertaken some consultation of her own and quoted examples of residents opposing an increase due to financial difficulties in the current economic climate.

Councillor Fayyaz supported Councillor Bramwell's views and he stated that his work, both within the Pakistani community and his involvement with advice on debt, led him to believe that a significant number of families, however small the rise, would struggle to finance a Council Tax increase.

In light of this, Councillor Ms Bramwell put forward an amendment, seconded by Councillor Fayyaz that *'the 2012/13 precept be set to represent a 0% increase on the 2011/12 precept'*.

The amendment was **LOST** by 5 votes to 12.

Note: Councillor Ms Bramwell requested that her vote in favour of the amendment be recorded.

The Mayor then called for a vote on the original proposal and this was **CARRIED** by 12 votes to 5.

Note: Councillor Ms Bramwell requested that her vote against the motion be recorded.

It was therefore

RESOLVED

a precept of £828,430 be levied on the Chiltern District Council for 2012/13 which represents a 2.73% increase on the 2011/12 precept, equivalent to an increase of 2.47% for a 'Band D' property.

The Finance and Contracts Manager then advised that, legally, the £14,620 income improvement targets recommended by the Finance Working Party needed to be allocated to specific services before the Council could levy a precept request to Chiltern District Council. It was agreed that the Council could not undertake such a task at the meeting and therefore it was proposed by Councillor Mrs Michael and seconded by Councillor Brown and

RESOLVED

that the £14,620 recommended income improvement targets outlined within the report be allocated to specific services and this to be delegated to the Responsible Financial Officer, in liaison with the Finance Working Party, to determine.

Finally Councillor Bacon stated that he thought it prudent that the list of projects not currently included in the budgets but proposed in the report be reconsidered towards the end of the financial year when the Council's position was clearer. This was **AGREED** and accordingly it was

RESOLVED

that the projects listed in paragraph 9 on the Finance and Contracts Manager's report be considered at the 2011/12 financial year out-turn.

76. **ELECTED MEMBER, SIX MONTHS' ABSENCE**

The Council considered the absence of Councillor Mrs Gill Walker from Council Meetings as a result of her personal circumstances, and considered whether it wished to

exercise its powers under Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972 to approve her absence as a result of these circumstances.

It was

RESOLVED

1. That, in accordance with Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972, Councillor Mrs Walker's failure to attend a meeting of Chesham Town Council for reasons of personal family issues be approved.
2. That the absence be approved for a further period from the 18th January to the 31st March 2012.

77. **VEOLIA DROUGHT MANAGEMENT PLAN CONSULTATION**

Members were asked to consider a response to Veolia Water Central's Drought Management Plan consultation.

It was noted that officers had assessed the plan and concluded that large parts of the plan were not easily understandable to the general public. In view of the comprehensive analysis of the plan already undertaken by the Policy and Projects Officer, it was

RESOLVED

that the response to Veolia Water Central's Drought Management Plan consultation be delegated to the Policy and Projects Officer, in liaison with the Town Mayor.

Note: Councillors Brown, Mrs Pirouet and Shaw left the Chamber before consideration of the next agenda item.

78. **ADMINISTRATION OF CHESHAM YOUTH CLUB WAGES**

Members were informed that the Chairman of the Chesham Youth Club Management Committee has approached the Finance and Contracts Manager in respect to the Council administering the wages of three part-time employees as an alternative to paying for a bespoke service.

Having noted that the Finance and Contracts Manager was happy to undertake this work and the time and resources required to administrate were negligible, it was

RESOLVED

that the Council agree to assist with the administration of the wages for Chesham Youth Club.

79. **SEALING OF MOOR PUBLIC CONVENIENCES DEED OF SURRENDER DOCUMENT**

Chiltern District Council had produced an official Deed of Surrender document which required the Common Seal of both Councils following the demolition of the Moor Public Conveniences last year. The document was presented to Members and the Council was requested to approve the sealing by resolution as required by Standing Order no. 23.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Council approves the sealing of the Deed of Surrender document in respect to the Moor Public Conveniences.

80. **PAY SCHEDULE NO. 4**

Following consideration of Pay Schedule No. 4, it was

RESOLVED

that Pay Schedule No. 4 in the grand total of £309,178.32 be approved and the various payments and transactions set out therein be confirmed.

81. **INFORMATION ITEMS**

The item presented on Information Sheet No. 11 was received and noted.

82. **CLOSE OF MEETING**

The meeting closed at 8.15pm.

TOWN MAYOR

Publication Date: 13.01.2012