

CHESHAM TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES of the ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

HELD ON THURSDAY 19 MAY 2011

PRESENT Councillor D. J. Lacey, Town Mayor (presiding)
Councillor Mrs C. Littley, Deputy Town Mayor

Councillor	Ms R.K. Bhatti	Councillor	Mrs C.M. Michael
"	Mrs P.R. Cherrill	"	M.W. Shaw
"	M. Fayyaz	"	C.H. Spruytenburg
"	T. Franks	"	Mrs G. Walker
"	P.J. Hudson	"	F.S. Wilson
"	R.C. McCulloch		

Officers: W. Richards - Town Clerk
Ms K. Graves – Policy and Projects Officer

In Attendance:

Chief Inspector Ian Hunter and 52 members of the public, including representatives from outside organisations.

1. TOWN MAYOR'S WELCOME

The Town Mayor, Councillor Derek Lacey, welcomed everyone present to the Annual Town Meeting.

The Town Mayor gave a brief outline of the Town Council's policies and actions during the council year 2010/11. These included:

- Renovation of the Play Areas in Marston Field and Moor Road.
- Re-gaining of Green Flag status for Lowndes Park.
- Reformation of the Chesham and District Transport Users' Group.
- Continued high attendances for the Chesham Moor Gym and Swim Centre.
- First-class production of the 'Robin Hood' pantomime which was produced 'in-house' for the first time in a number of years.
- In partnership with the Environmental Group, the gaining of 'Walkers Are Welcome' status for the town.
- Operation of a Local Produce Market in partnership with Transition Town Chesham.

Councillor Lacey then thanked the previous Town Mayor, Councillor Ms Bramwell, for her efforts, both as Council Chairman and in her ceremonial role. Finally he advised that the previous Mayor's Mayoral Allowance expenditure for 2010/11 had been printed off for tonight's meeting and encouraged anyone interested to take a copy for examination.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs Diane Brackley and Town Councillors V.M. Abraham, A.K. Bacon, Ms J.E. Bramwell, N.L. Brown, Mrs A.M. Pirouet and P.W. Yerrell. An apology for lateness was received from Councillor F.S. Wilson.

3. MINUTES OF LAST ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

The Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 13 May 2010 were agreed and signed by the Town Mayor as a true record.

4. MATTERS ARISING NOT COVERED ON THE AGENDA

There were no matters arising.

5. MAYORAL AWARDS SCHEME

The Mayor gave details of the seventh Mayoral Award scheme. He offered his thanks to the Council's Policy and Projects Officer and the judging committee for their hard work and thanked the sponsors, the previous past Mayor, the Buckinghamshire Examiner and the Chesham Chamber of Trade and Commerce. The Town Clerk also advised that, regrettably, there had been no nominations for the Rafe Chiles Young Persons' Award and therefore this category had been dropped for this year.

The Mayor then read out the achievements of the nominees.

After announcing and introducing the short-listed nominees, Councillor Lacey revealed the winners as follows:

- *The People's Award – Joint Winners.* **Mr Vince Crompton** for his on-going promotion of Chesham allotments and his efforts to encourage people to grow their own fruit and vegetables as well as his important involvement with Chesham in Bloom. **Mrs Sheila Smith** for 30 years' service in setting up and administrating the Chesham All Girls' Band.
- *Business Award – Simon Collins Plant Display and Maintenance* for its widely commended production and maintenance of the hanging baskets and planters in the town centre each year.

The Mayor presented both the winners and the short listed nominees with certificates.

6. POLICING IN CHESHAM 2010/11 REPORT

Chief Inspector Ian Hunter gave a brief overview of policing in Chesham for the last administrative year.

Chief Inspector Hunter started his presentation by giving an overview of recorded crime in the Chiltern area. He was pleased to report that there were 967 fewer victims of crime (-17.3%) in

the past twelve months with violent crime down 31.2% and burglary, robbery and car crime down 22.8%. In Chesham itself crime had fallen by 23%. Coupled with this was a big increase in arrests and convictions helping to drive the crime figures down even further.

Chief Inspector Hunter also said that he was very pleased with the progress made tackling anti-social behaviour (down 16% with 204 fewer incidents in Chesham). He suggested a partnership approach has been pivotal and a strategy was in place that was victim focused and which identified the vulnerable and repeat victims at an early stage. He also stated he had more flexibility in ensuring that patrols were in the right place at the right time which clearly assisted. Moreover, he opined that young persons' diversionary activities such as 'Moor Stars' (football in Waterside), 'At the Edge' (Pond Park Football), VIBE (outreach work with Asian young people) and activities at Chesham Youth Centre / Hivings Free Church had played a big part in reducing anti-social behaviour levels.

In respect to actual police numbers and administration, he advised that he had been successful in increasing the Chesham Neighbourhood Team which now consisted of a Chiltern Neighbourhood Inspector, 2 Sergeants, 5 Neighbourhood Specialist Officers and 9 Police Community Support Officers. Other than the Inspector, all of these are based at Chesham Police Station, which is open to public Monday – Friday between 10am – 2pm. He also reported that the police had changed the way it consulted and its 'Have Your Say' road-shows appeared to be more successful in liaising with the public.

Finally he concluded by reporting on recent successes in Chesham, particularly tackling dog-fighting, speeding and illegal parking and town centre crime and disorder.

The Mayor thanked Inspector Hunter for his encouraging presentation and invited those in attendance to ask questions.

The Mayor, Councillor Lacey, asked the first question, namely whether the Police Station could be open longer if staffed by volunteers. Inspector Hunter stated that there was a model to run stations with volunteers and he would be happy to look at this though he did not feel presently that the current footfall warranted longer opening hours.

Councillor Spruytenburg enquired if the Inspector believed there was a possible under-reporting of crimes. Inspector Hunter replied that he did not believe this was the case in Chesham other than possibly with small scale thefts. Moreover he advised that the recent British Crime Survey had suggested that under-reporting was not a major issue nationwide.

Councillor Wilson opined that much of the speeding that took place appeared to be in roads in and out of town such as Lye Green Road. He asked therefore whether the police could tackle this more rigorously. Inspector Hunter responded by saying that unfortunately the police could not be there all the time and reducing speeding was as much to do with educating people on its dangers as anything else. However he did suggest that Vehicle Activated Signs often worked well to slow down drivers.

Mrs Beryl Meldrum enquired whether the police would be taking a more proactive approach in dealing with people driving while using their mobile phones. Inspector Hunter agreed it was a concern and the police did undertake regular surveillance and would hand out fixed penalty notices for this, along with speeding and non-wearing of seat belts.

Mrs Julia Yeardye asked whether there was provision to help young persons on drugs who were petty offenders. Inspector Hunter replied that the police would always refer cases to the Drugs and Alcohol Action Team at Buckinghamshire County Council if deemed appropriate. He informed the meeting that in actual fact, contrary to some recent unfortunate local press reports, there was very little evidence of hard drug use in Chesham.

Councillor Mrs Walker requested more visible policing on the streets during the day. Inspector Hunter replied that the force was a demand led institution and a lot of the time his officers were obliged to work during the periods when crime was at its highest, namely evenings and at night. Nonetheless he agreed with the sentiments and was working hard to get his officers from behind their desks and onto the beat whenever possible.

There being no further questions, the Mayor thanked Inspector Hunter again and invited him to remain for the rest of the meeting.

7. ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP

Mr Phil Folly, Chairman of the Environmental Group, gave a verbal report on the Group's activities for 2010/11. Among the projects this year were:

- Major clearance of Hollow Way Lane.
- Successful launch of the 'Walkers are Welcome' initiative.
- Assisting Town Council with removal of Himalayan Balsam.
- Regular clear-ups on the Moor and Captain's Wood.
- Key partners in the Shelley Gardens project.
- Continued and regular maintenance of the River Chess.
- Active involvement in 'Chesham in Bloom'.

He also advised that, as well as meeting every third Sunday of the month, the group now did ad hoc works during the week which added to its input in the town.

Mr Folly paid particular tribute to his colleagues in the group. He also thanked Mr Allen Beechey the AONB's Chalk Streams Project Officer and officers at the Town Council. He said he was particularly grateful to the Town Council for its provision of a tool storing facility and to Chiltern District Council for collecting up the bags of rubbish accumulated by the group.

The Mayor offered his congratulations and appreciation for all the works the Environmental Group had done during the administrative year.

8. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Mayor invited questions and comment from the public on matters in relation to which the Council has powers or duties or which affect the Town and on any issue raised during the police report.

Mr Richard Berry, while paying tribute to works undertaken by the Chesham in Bloom and Chesham Environmental Groups opined that parts of the town still looked 'scruffy' and asked whether the Town Council could somehow energise the residents to take more civic pride and

clear up its own areas. Through the Chair, Mrs Rachel Watts, Chairman of the Chesham in Bloom Group advised that her group were now organising 'weeding days' in June and July which, she opined, would enhance the appearance of the town centre. The Town Clerk also highlighted that clearance by a mix of groups in specific areas such as Pond Park had been successful in the past but the size of Chesham meant that, in his opinion, a co-ordinated effort across the entire town would be logistically difficult but he would be happy to promote any such initiatives should they be forthcoming.

Mrs Beryl Meldrum enquired whether Buckinghamshire County Council would be shortly undertaking maintenance of St Mary's Way and other town verges which, she opined, was well overdue. The Town Clerk responded by saying that the Area Technician for the County Council had informed him that works would be undertaken shortly.

Mrs Beryl Catley enquired as to the current state of the underpass and why it was presently closed. The Town Clerk advised that officers at Buckinghamshire County Council had informed him it was due to a problem with the pumping system and engineers had been contracted to resolve this.

9. TOWN MAYOR'S CLOSING REMARKS

Councillor Lacey thanked all those present for their attendance and lively contributions throughout the meeting. He congratulated again all the nominees and winners of the Peoples' Award and Business Award. He also stated his appreciation of the Town Clerk and the Town Council's officers for their support and wished his Deputy, Councillor Mrs Littley, every future success in her role.

Finally he informed the meeting that his chosen Mayoral charity for the forthcoming year was the Douglas McMinn Centre which did an excellent job as a day centre for older persons and whose future was far from certain.

10. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 8.40pm.

Town Mayor