

CHESHAM TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

held on Monday 27th October 2014

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

Councillor	A.K. Bacon	Councillor	Mrs R. Juett
"	Mrs C.I. Boxer	"	Mrs C. M. Michael
"	Mrs P.R. Cherrill	"	M.W. Shaw
"	M. Fayyaz	"	F.S. Wilson
"	P.J. Hudson	"	P.W. Yerrell

In attendance: Councillor R.C. McCulloch.

Officer: Mr W. Richards, Town Clerk

An apology for absence was received from Councillor T. Franks.

19. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillors Mrs Boxer, Fayyaz, Mrs Juett and Wilson declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 4 as members the Chesham Action Partnership.

Councillors Mrs Cherrill and McCulloch declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 4 as members of the Chesham and District Transport Users' Group.

Councillor Shaw declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 9 as a Deputy Portfolio Holder at Buckinghamshire County Council and left the meeting before the matter was discussed.

20. **MINUTES**

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on the 14th July 2014 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

21. **CHESHAM ACTION PARTNERSHIP**

Members received the Minutes of the meetings of the Chesham Action Partnership held on the 20th May and 29th July 2014.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted.

22. **CESHAM AND DISTRICT TRANSPORT USERS' GROUP**

Members received the Minutes of the meetings of the Chesham and District Transport Users' Group held on the 24th June and 5th August 2014.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted.

23. **DEVOLVED SERVICES UPDATE**

The Committee received an update on the current Devolved Services activities.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Report be noted.

24. **REVIEW OF HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY AT THE ELGIVA**

The revised Health and Safety policy for the Elgiva was presented and considered by Members.

It was

RESOLVED

that the revised Health and Safety Policy for the Elgiva be adopted.

25. **REVIEW OF HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY AT THE CESHAM MOOR GYM AND SWIM CENTRE**

The revised Health and Safety policy for the Chesham Moor Gym and Swim Centre was presented and considered by Members.

It was

RESOLVED

that the revised Health and Safety Policy for the Chesham Moor Gym and Swim Centre be adopted.

26. **HONORARY FREEMAN SCHEME AND PAST MAYORS' BADGES**

The Committee discussed whether it wished to consider the setting up of an honorary freeman or freewoman scheme and to commission 'Past Mayor' badges.

In respect to the former, it was agreed by Members that this would be a good way to honour residents or former residents of Chesham who had served and/or represented the town

exceptionally in some way. The presented Aylesbury Town Council policy was agreed to be a good template to use and it was noted that such a scheme would be of little or no cost to the Council. Accordingly the idea was agreed in principle and the Clerk was requested to devise a draft policy based on the model of Aylesbury Town Council's for adoption at full Council.

As regards the 'Past Mayor' badge, it was noted that an outlay of several hundred pounds would be required for the initial 'tooling' of the crest and the stipulation from the potential suppliers that there needed to be a minimum order of ten. The general view was that such a spend would be difficult to justify in the current financial climate. It was suggested that the Mayoral Allowance could be used for this purpose if Mayors wished to purchase a badge at the end of their tenure in office but other Members suggested this may be divisive and unfair on other hard working Members who never got the opportunity to become Mayor. After some discussion, it was decided not to pursue such a badge.

It was therefore

RESOLVED

1. That the Clerk be requested to draw up a proposed Honorary Freeman and Freewoman Scheme policy for possible adoption at Council.
2. That the idea of commissioning a Past Mayor badge be not pursued.

Note: Councillor Shaw left the meeting at 8.30pm

27. **BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL BUDGET CONSULTATION**

Members were asked what, if any, response they would wish to make to the Buckinghamshire County Council consultation on its budget for 2015/16.

The Committee was largely of the opinion that the consultation paper was structured in such a way that it implied that service cuts were inevitable and that this Council and other organisations were basically being asked to undertake the almost impossible task of trying to prioritise essential, but widely differing, services. Members were of the view that, rather than trying to do this, a better response was to say that this Council considered all these services very important and the County Council should be looking at operating them in a more efficient manner through its various delivery arms instead of cutting services any further. Councillor Yerrell opined that, ultimately, services for Chesham could not stand any further budgetary reductions and therefore it might be the case that the Council Tax needed to rise to ensure stability of provision. However other Members argued that, in a time of austerity, it was difficult to put the case to recommend a Council Tax rise until it could be indisputably proved that services could not be delivered in a more robust and efficient manner.

After some discussion it was agreed that the Committee should not try and rank any individual services in order of importance but rather reply to say that all services should be protected through more efficient service delivery and through further reviewing of the County Council's operating structure.

It was therefore

RESOLVED

that the Clerk be instructed to respond to the consultation paper reflecting the views expressed by the Committee.

28. **REVIEW OF COUNCIL SURGERIES**

As the Council has been operating a surgery within the High Street on a Saturday for over eight years, the Committee discussed the Clerk's report reviewing its operation and effectiveness over this period.

Members conceded that Members' attendance had sometimes been erratic at the surgeries in recent years and that there was a need to try and resolve residents' reported concerns in a different way, other than by simply referring them back to Town Hall staff to log with other statutory authorities. Nonetheless there was almost universal agreement that the surgeries continued to serve a good purpose and made the Council seem more accessible to the general public. It was generally agreed that they should be continued but also, ideally, with representation from both Chiltern District Council and Buckinghamshire County Council when possible. It was also accepted that dates should be flexible to run surgeries on days when special events are being organised and therefore likely that there would be a number of people in town.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Council surgeries be continued in their current format.

29. **FINANCIAL REPORT TO 30th SEPTEMBER 2014**

The Financial Report for six months to 30th September 2014 was presented.

Councillor Abraham stated the figures for the half-year seemed to be generally healthy and the Finance and Contracts Manager was commended by the Committee for his production of easily understandable presentation of figures.

Councillor Wilson noted the new legislation pertaining to production of financial figures for the public and expressed his hope that this would not be too onerous for officers.

The Clerk advised that, since the last Recreation and the Arts Committee meeting, the Parks and Premises Manager had now obtained a figure to install a hedge and fence around Skottowes Pond as agreed at the meeting. The Committee agreed the amount of £1,335 plus VAT should be committed from the General Reserve to facilitate this.

It was

RESOLVED

1. That the Financial report be noted.

2. That a report on the new model Financial Regulations and Local Government (Transparency Requirements) 2014 be made to a future Policy & Resources Committee after the Finance Working Group have had an opportunity to consider them and make recommendations.
3. That the new legislation pertaining to recording and filming meetings be noted.
4. That the amount of £1,335 plus VAT should be committed from the General Reserve to facilitate a wildfowl deterrence fence around Skottowes Pond.

30. **CHIMING OF CLOCKTOWER BELL**

The Committee considered a request from 'Christmas in Chesham' and representatives of Chesham Museum to allow the clock to chime until midnight on the evenings of the 28th November (Christmas Lights Switch-On and late night shopping) and the 31st December (New Year's Eve). This was agreed and it was

RESOLVED

that the chiming of the clocktower bell be extended until midnight on the evenings of the 28th November and 31st December 2014.

31. **CLOSE OF MEETING**

The meeting closed at 9.06pm.