

CHESHAM TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the RECREATION AND THE ARTS COMMITTEE

held on 24th September 2012

PRESENT Councillor Mrs A.M. Pirouet- Chairman (presiding)

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| Councillor | Mrs P.R. Cherrill | Councillor | Mrs C. Littley |
| " | T. Franks | " | R.C. McCulloch |
| " | P.J. Hudson | " | M.W. Shaw |
| " | D.J. Lacey | " | C.H. Spruytenburg |

IN ATTENDANCE

Councillors A.K. Bacon, Miss R.K. Bhatti and Mrs C.M. Michael.

Officer: Mr W. Richards, Town Clerk

Mr P. Folly - Chairman; Chesham Environmental Group

Mr M. Fletcher - Broadway Bowls Club

WPC Ms H. Goodwin

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ms J.E. Bramwell and Mrs R. Juett.

15. **CHESHAM IN BLOOM**

The Mayor, Councillor Mrs Littley, announced the success of the Chesham in Bloom group in obtaining a very high scoring Silver Gilt Award at the Thames and Chilterns in Bloom awards ceremony and also winning its category of Large Town for the first time. Councillor Mrs Littley also reported that Chesham scored its highest ever result in the horticultural achievement category, with praise for the attractive floral displays, clean and tidy town centre and displays at the open air pool and Elgiva. Moreover Elmtree School also won a Highly Commended award in the regional schools competition.

Members expressed delight at the result and the Clerk was asked to pass on the Committee's congratulations to the Chesham in Bloom group and gratitude for its efforts.

16. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Mrs Littley declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda items 4 and 7 as a member of the Chesham Environmental Group.

Councillor McCulloch declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 4 as a member of the Friends of Chesham Cemetery.

Councillors Mrs Cherrill and Mrs Littley declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 4 as members of the Allotments Group.

Councillor Spruytenburg declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 4 as an allotment holder.

Councillors Hudson and Mrs Littley declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 4 as members of the Impress the Chess.

Councillor Mrs Cherrill declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 4 as a member of the Elgiva Board of Management.

Councillors Hudson and Mrs Michael declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda items 5 as members of the Friends of Chesham Moor Gym and Swim.

Councillor Bacon declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 5 as a regular user of the Chesham Moor Gym and Swim Centre.

Councillors Lacey and Shaw declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 6 as members of the Pond Park Community Association. Councillor Hudson declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 6 as a member of Waterside Community Association.

Councillor McCulloch declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 7 as Secretary of the Chesham Society.

Councillors Mrs Cherrill and Mrs Pirouet declared a pecuniary interest in agenda item 9 as members of Broadway Bowls Club and left the Chamber during its discussion thereof.

17. **MINUTES**

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Recreation and the Arts Committee held on 11th June 2012, be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

18. **IMPRESS THE CHESS GROUP**

Members received the Minutes of the meetings of the Impress the Chess Group held on the 22nd May and 25th July 2012.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted.

In respect of the Minutes of the 25th July, Councillor Hudson advised that Chiltern District Council's Cabinet would be considering whether to make a financial contribution to the restoration of a fish pass at Lord's Mill in October.

19. **ALLOTMENTS GROUP**

Members received the Minutes of the meetings of the Allotments Group held on the 19th June and 31st July 2012.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted.

20. **ELGIVA BOARD OF MANAGEMENT**

Members received the Minutes of the meetings of the Elgiva Board of Management held on 11th June and 6th August 2012.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted.

In respect to the Minutes of the 11th June, it was reported by the Clerk that the Elgiva Elite scheme had been launched and already had attracted 27 members.

21. **CHESHAM ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP**

Members received the Minutes of the meetings of the Chesham Environmental Group held on the 21st June and 23rd August 2012

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted.

In respect to the Minutes of the 23rd August, Councillor Bacon raised the concern of re-infestation of Japanese Knotweed on the Council's sites. The Clerk replied that the Council had a legal duty to prevent the spread of certain invasive weeds from its land and was reminding neighbouring properties to its open spaces that its owners could face prosecution if they allowed species including Japanese Knotweed to spread from their land.

22. **FRIENDS OF CHESHAM CEMETERY**

Members received the Minutes of the meeting of the Friends of Chesham Cemetery held on 19th July 2012. It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted.

23. **PLAY AREA AND SKATEPARK REDEVELOPMENT**

The Committee noted the Minutes of the last Play Area Working Party held on the 8th August.

Firstly, the Committee noted the success of attracting external funding to the renovation of the Gordon Road play area and it was agreed that the upgrade should commence forthwith as per the submitted plans and quotation.

Members then discussed the possible redevelopment of the Co-op Field as the next site to be renovated. Both Councillor Bacon and Spruytenburg raised the issue of perceived anti-social behaviour in the area and fears emanating from nearby residents that a new play-area may exacerbate this. Councillor Mrs Pirouet opined that as a nearby resident herself, she believed the matter of anti-social behaviour was somewhat overstated and asked WPC Goodwin to comment. WPC Goodwin responded by saying that the police could only effectively act on low-level crime if there was a high level of complaints and very few incidents had been logged for the Co-op Field. Moreover, she suggested that some progress had been made and often it was better for gangs of young people to be in such open spaces than congregating in the town centre.

Councillor Bacon expressed his view that there were almost two separate communities abutting Co-op Field at the bottom and top of the field respectively and it was important that both communities were happy with a new or upgraded play-area. Councillor Mrs Michael concurred and opined that it was important not to rush into installing new equipment and, moreover, other town play-area redevelopments should not be held up because of this.

Councillor Shaw observed that it was important that Asheridge Vale and Lowndes Community Association led on the play-area project and liaised with residents and users, much as both the Pond Park Community Association and Waterside Community Association had done with upgrading Windsor Road and Gordon Road.

After further debate, it was proposed by Councillor Mrs Pirouet that the matter be brought back to the next Recreation and Arts Committee meeting following further consultation by the Asheridge Vale and Lowndes Community Association and observations from the Play Area Working Party. This was agreed.

Having saved monies this year by attracting external funding for Gordon Road, the Committee considered the working party's recommendation that the resiting of the skatepark be looked at again using these savings; monies earmarked for re-skinning the existing ramps next year and, possibly, utilising the £20,000 set aside for annual play-area renovation. It was noted that this matter had been debated several times before, primarily because of the current noise abatement notice on the skatepark which meant it had to be put out of commission at 8pm every evening.

WPC Goodwin then informed the meeting that she had been working closely with many of the youths who used the facility and they were extremely keen to see the site updated and the hours of use in the summer extended. They had offered to help maintain the equipment and fund-raise if possible for new equipment. WPC Goodwin

further stated that, in her opinion, the facility played an important part in offering diversionary activities for young people and should be supported if possible.

Councillors Hudson, Mrs Littley and Mrs Pirouet all agreed that the skatepark needed new investment and highlighted that the users were becoming somewhat disillusioned with being periodically consulted on the type of equipment they would like to see but no new equipment actually being provided.

Councillor Bacon replied by saying that, while he was not necessarily against upgrading the skatepark in principle, he needed to be convinced that resiting was practicable and noise levels would be consequentially reduced to negate the noise abatement notice. He therefore suggested suitably qualified sound engineers were engaged at an early stage to confirm this. He also stated that finances and detailed costs should be clarified and confirmed before any decision was taken. Councillor Mrs Cherrill added that the current site was chosen for reasons of safety and emergency vehicle access and this needed to be taken into account if a new location was proposed. The Clerk added that some Park Road residents had also requested they be consulted on any new proposed equipment as well.

It was agreed that it would be prudent for a skatepark provider to meet the Play Area Working Party on site (along with Environment Health Officers if possible) to ascertain the feasibility of resiting; how much this would actually cost and the likelihood of noise reduction. Following this meeting and a confirmation of possible finances available, the matter would be reconsidered at the next Council meeting.

Finally Members considered officers' recommendations that Batchelors Way play-area be sold to Paradigm Housing as part of the lease agreement between this Council and the former Chiltern Hundreds Housing Association. Having noted that there was no viable working play equipment in it; that it is a play-area earmarked for closure in the Council's Play Area Strategy and that Paradigm Housing had provisional plans to utilise the area for recreational purposes, the Committee unanimously agreed to this.

It was

RESOLVED

1. That Gordon Road play-area be confirmed to be redeveloped as per proposals submitted at a cost of £23,918 plus signage costs with £14,850 being financed through external funding.
2. That the Co-op Field play-area redevelopment be reconsidered at the next Recreation and Arts Committee meeting following further consultation and design options being led by the Asheridge Vale and Lowndes Community Association.
3. That the possible relocation and/or redevelopment of the skatepark be reconsidered at the next Council meeting following the collation of further information pertaining to the feasibility of resiting, the noise implication and financing thereof.

4. That the Council offer Paradigm Housing the opportunity to buy back Batchelors Way play area for £1, subject to the question of the necessity of legal fees being clarified.

24. **COMMUNITY ORCHARDS IN CHESHAM**

The Committee considered a request from the newly formed Community Orchard Group to provisionally allocate sites for fruit bearing trees on Council land.

It was noted that, provisionally, the Community Orchard Group was looking at three Council sites, namely: an area in the Lowndes Park behind the Parks and Premises depot, Berkhamstead Field on flat area below the wildflower meadow and the Lower Moor. Members were also advised that at this juncture, officers had no objections subject to the matter of maintenance of the trees being taken on by the Group.

The Committee welcomed the project in principle and it was

RESOLVED

that the Committee agree to the principle of one or more community orchards being developed on Council land subject to an in-depth further proposal being received on matters of management and ownership.

Note: Councillors Mrs Cherrill and Mrs Pirouet left the Chamber before the next agenda item and Councillor Spruytenburg took the Chair.

25. **ACCESS REQUEST ACROSS MOOR CAR-PARK**

It was reported that Broadway Bowls Club was provisionally proposing to relocate to a site behind the hard-standing area in Moor Road. Accordingly, as the hard-standing is owned and managed by the Council, the Club was requesting that a Right of Way, in the form of a Deed of Grant, be granted as it believed this would be integral to the building going ahead.

Members were of the view that a further community facility/hub was much needed in the Waterside area and it was unanimously agreed such a request should be acceded to with no fee charged to the club. However it was also agreed that the Deed of Grant should have a caveat that allowed the annual fair unfettered access to the hard-standing on its visits.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Committee agree to the granting of a Right of Way for Broadway Bowls Club across Chesham Moor hard-standing in the form of a Deed of Grant for a new bowls facility with no charge, subject to the Bowls Club solely financing any legal and administration

fees and including conditions which would allow the annual fair to operate as it does currently.

Note: Councillor Mrs Pirouet returned to the Chair for the rest of the meeting.

26. **CHESHAM MOOR GYM AND SWIM CENTRE UPDATE**

The Committee considered the officers' report on the current financial situation at the Chesham Moor Gym and Swim Centre facility.

While Councillor Spruytenburg commented upon the continuing downturn in gym income, it was noted that the swimming income had been exceptional, increasing by some £7,000 despite being the wettest summer for a hundred years and, therefore, it was hoped that the centre overall would remain in budget for 2012/13.

Following requests from the last Recreation and the Arts Committee meeting, officers presented a breakdown of season ticket holders' and gym members' residency. It was duly noted that the majority of both were Chesham residents. The possibility of charging those from out of the town slightly more was briefly debated but it was agreed that the implementation of this would be highly contentious and, indeed, may have the effect of lowering rather than increasing income.

The previous Recreation and Arts Committee also requested that officers look at the possibility of arranging activities that may attract members of the minority ethnic community such as women-only swimming sessions. The Clerk advised that, as at the Chesham Leisure Centre, these sessions needed to have no access for viewing and needed to be staffed by female lifeguards. He reported that while it was technically possible, the major problem would be the screening off of the foyer/pool viewing room. Installation of blinds would be expensive, as would be the purchase of effective dividers which would also have storage complications. Also, he advised that part of the fire regulations insists that access between the foyer and the pool is available which further complicated matters. Moreover the perimeter walls around the pool are relatively low (about 2m) and easy enough to peer over if someone was so inclined to do so and there was also the CCTV coverage of the pool to consider.

In light of the fact that such provision was already offered at Chesham Leisure Centre and the difficulties in ensuring the Chesham Moor Gym and Swim Centre would be able to accommodate such sessions, it was agreed not to pursue this at the present time.

RESOLVED

1. That the financial position be noted.
2. That the figures in respect of usage of the Chesham Moor Gym and Swim Centre by Chesham residents and non-residents be noted.

3. That the Centre does not progress plans to make the necessary alterations to accommodate women-only swimming sessions at the present time.

27. **REVIEW OF COUNCIL'S OPEN SPACES BYE-LAWS**

The Committee agreed that it would be appropriate to review the Council's byelaws.

Accordingly it was agreed to set up a working party with five Members to examine the existing byelaws together with the Government's model byelaws and make recommendations to a future Recreation and the Arts Committee meeting. Councillor Bacon suggested that the police also be consulted as they had the enforcement powers.

It was

RESOLVED

that Councillors Hudson, Lacey and Mrs Pirouet be appointed to a Byelaws Review Working Party with two further Members to be appointed at the Council meeting on the 5th November.

28. **CLOSE OF MEETING**

The meeting closed at 9.23pm.

CHAIRMAN

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