

CHESHAM TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the COMMUNITY, ASSETS, RECREATION AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

held on 22nd November 2021

PRESENT Councillor J.E. MacBean – Chairman (Presiding)

Councillor	W.L. Augustus	Councillor	P. Harding
"	P. Aslam	"	C.A. Hood
"	E.A. Culverhouse	"	R. S. Matthews
"	M. Ditta	"	N.T. Southworth
"	J. C. Fulford		

IN ATTENDANCE

Councillors A.K. Bacon, J. L. Baum and S. J. Booth

Officer: Mr W. Richards, Town Clerk

21. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no Declarations of Interests that were brought to the Chairman's notice.

22. **MINUTES**

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Community, Assets, Recreation and Environment Committee held on 6th September 2021 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

23. **IMPRESS THE CHESS GROUP**

Members received the Minutes of the Impress the Chess meeting of the 4th November 2021.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted

24. **ENVIRONMENTAL AUDIT UPDATE**

The Committee received an environment audit update from the Policy and Projects Officer. The Chairman highlighted some positive initiatives undertaken since the last meeting, most notably the installation of the controlled heating zones in the Town Hall and the ordering of the LED lighting.

Following a query from Councillor Bacon in respect to green energy, Councillor MacBean explained that, following the collapse of several smaller green energy companies and a late decision of one not to take on new customers when the Council was poised to sign up, the Council remained with the LASER conglomerate and was signed up through Buckinghamshire Council. Councillor MacBean advised that she had challenged the relevant Cabinet Member at the principal authority in respect to improving its green credentials and she should be receiving an update in two months.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Report be noted.

25. **GEORGE PIGGINS ALLOTMENTS**

The Committee considered a request from the current landowner of the George Piggins Allotments in Wey Lane that the Council take over the ownership and maintenance of the land. Members were also advised that the current allotment holders from Old Chesham had indicated that they would be prepared to set up a self-management group to facilitate this.

The prevailing view was that much further information was required before a decision could be made, particularly in terms of the requirement for a full repairs assessment and a risk assessment on the fence as well as an indication on the potential legal costs for a land transfer and the implications of a possible overage clause. Moreover, it was agreed that the current allotment holders could look to form themselves in a Trust to have total autonomy and not be beholden to the conditions the Council placed upon its other allotment tenants.

Accordingly, it was

RESOLVED

that the matters raised be investigated and be subject to a further report.

26. **BOTLEY ROAD PAVILION**

Councillors Baum and Booth presented their report on Botley Road (Codmore Field) Pavilion.

Both Members were of the view that the building should be returned to its former use as a multi-purpose facility and opined that there would be enough local community usage to justify this. Moreover, they believed the current martial art class solely using the pavilion at the moment had almost outgrown the facility due to its popularity. They added that, to make the building a success, some investment would be required.

A brief discussion then took place on the use of the sports field. Councillor Aslam suggested that other sports, particularly cricket, could look to be accommodated on the field to increase use of the pavilion. Councillor MacBean advised that Buckinghamshire Council's Sports Strategy was due an update. She opined that, if the

review was imminent, it would be sensible to look at the pavilion in tandem with it as it would help determine possible need and usage. It was also noted that the pavilion had previously suffered from anti-social behaviour in terms of vandalism so this too needed to be considered in any renovations and upgrades.

After some further debate it was

RESOLVED

the Chairman ascertain the position in respect to the Buckinghamshire Council's Sports Strategy and relay any pertinent information to Councillors Baum and Booth to progress and refine their initial report.

27. SKOTTOWES POND

As requested at the last Council, the condition of, and potential improvements to, Skottowes Pond was brought before this Committee for further discussion.

Members firstly considered the Policy and Projects Officer's report and there was general agreement with her assertion that this was a significantly large project, both financially and environmentally, and should not be rushed. There was acceptance too that professional advice was crucial in ensuring that any remedial actions are to be beneficial, both in the short and long term. The Clerk advised that the Policy and Projects Officer had just received the first submission from a professional company who had quoted to carry out a topographical and silt survey for the lake area and deposition area and to carry out an ecological survey and to provide consideration for options of silt use or disposal. It was agreed that it would prudent to wait until all the quotations had been received and look at commissioning same as a first step. In the interim, it was also agreed that other, potentially temporary and low-cost, amelioration measures could be investigated.

Members broadly agreed that it would also be sensible not to look at the pond in isolation but as part of an overall Management Plan for the park as this may also aid the chances of obtaining external funding as well as trying to prioritise the public's wishes for Lowndes Park. It was therefore

RESOLVED

that the Lowndes Park Working Group be reconvened to look at both short-term and long-term solutions to Skottowes Pond's current condition as well as considering the future management of Lowndes Park as a whole.

Note: Councillors Baum and Booth left the meeting at 8.25pm

28. WAR MEMORIAL MAINTENANCE

The Committee received an update on recent maintenance to the War Memorial and future plans.

Members expressed their gratitude to the volunteers involved with the cleaning and it was

RESOLVED

1. That the Report be noted
2. That a vote of thanks is recorded to the team of volunteers who cleaned the War Memorial in 2021.

29. **DEVOLVED SERVICES**

The Chairman and Clerk updated Members on recent discussions with Buckinghamshire Council officers in respect to Devolved Services both currently and going forward to 2022/23 and beyond.

Councillor MacBean advised that the Council's dissatisfaction with certain aspects of the principal authority's position - most notably in respect of additional tasks added to the Parks and Premises team without consultation and giving incorrect or peremptory advice to the public (resulting in the Town Hall staff having unnecessary additional work) - had been forcibly expressed and hopefully the situation would improve. The Council has also been seeking additional monies for tasks having to be undertaken by the Parks and Premises team outside of the original contract.

The Committee was also advised that the Chairman and officers were negotiating with Buckinghamshire Council officers in respect of what aspects of services the Council is expected to undertake as a pilot council for further devolvement.

It was

RESOLVED

1. That the Committee agrees in principle to the continuation of providing existing Devolved Services on a one-year contract from April 2022, subject to further discussions with Buckinghamshire Council officers on the level of support and finance available.
2. That a further Report be brought before this Committee on the options in respect to being a Pilot Council for additional devolved services provision following further discussions with Buckinghamshire Council representatives.

30. **PROPOSED FEES AND CHARGES 2022/23**

The Committee considered the proposals detailed in the report for fees and charges for 2022/23.

The following was agreed:

(a) **Allotments**

It was

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND

that a 10p per pole increase on all sites be applied from 1st October 2022.

(b) **Cemetery**

It was

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND

that the proposed charges, broadly representing a 10% increase across all interment options, be applied from the 1st April 2022.

(c) **Housing**

It was

RESOLVED

that the current rents be noted.

(d) **The Elgiva**

It was

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND

1. That the hire and service charges be increased from the 1st April 2022 as per the attached schedule except if bookings have previously been confirmed.
2. That the Manager continues to be allowed flexibility and discretion in determining any charge where he believes it to be in the interest of the Theatre.
3. That the current caterer's one agreement be extended for a further twelve months on similar terms & conditions at the fee proposed in the Report but the Elgiva Manager be allowed flexibility to reduce this if the trading climate remains challenging.

(e) **Town Hall**

It was

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND

that the proposed scale of charges, reflecting no increase in room hire fees or other hire charges, be approved and that the Town Clerk continues to be delegated the determination of any ad hoc charges.

(f) **Sports Pitches and Pavilions, Film Fees, Wayleaves, Fairs and Circuses, Lowndes Park Catering**

It was

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND

1. That increases, broadly representing a 3% rise, in Sports Pitches charges effective from the 1st August 2022 be agreed.
2. That any increase for the Botley Road (Codmore) Pavilion martial arts trainer from the 1st April 2022 be negotiated by the Town Clerk following the consideration of the future of the pavilion.
3. That the range of fees for fun fairs and circuses remain unchanged for 2022/23 and that the Town Clerk be allowed to negotiate the charge within the range set.
4. That the Shelter on the Moor continues to be let at no charge to the Environmental Group.
5. That the Clerk continues to be empowered to negotiate charges for the use of Lowndes Park and other Council facilities by film companies.
6. That the fee of £100 for each use of the Council's Open Spaces be continued.
7. That the current concessionaire be offered a one-year agreement for the Lowndes Park Ice Cream Concession, following reassessment of the concessionaire's final offer and agreed by the Town Clerk and the Chairman of this Committee and the officers be delegated to seek and arrange a separate concessionaire to provide the teas and refreshments.
8. That a wayleave charge of £5 per annum for pedestrian access only and £50 per annum for vehicular/pedestrian access remain unchanged for 2022/23 but a Wayleaves review be undertaken this administrative year.
9. That the Clerk be empowered to negotiate charges for the use of the Moor Hardstanding for car-parking.

(g) **Chesham Moor Gym and Swim Centre**

It was

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND

that the following be agreed:

1. That the gym, swimming, general room hire charges and pool hire as per the circulated schedule be agreed.

2. That the Manager be allowed flexibility and discretion in determining any charge where he believes it to be in the interest of the Centre.
3. That the Chiltern Natural Therapies Ltd rent be increased to £395 per month from the 1st April 2022.
4. That the Moor Football Pitch charges be increased to £2,131 from the 1st August 2022.

31. **BUDGETS AND PROJECTS 2022/23**

The Chairman introduced the report by stating that difficult decisions would need to be made by Council in preparing the precept for 2022/23, particularly with the uplift in staffing costs. However, she opined that the Council was in a robust position financially and was of the view that, with the Council consistently coming in under budget most years, the end-of-year figures were never as negative as forecast. She suggested that it was this Committee's role to recommend large projects (with business plans where appropriate) that required funding to the Finance Committee to ultimately decide whether they were affordable and/or whether they could be funded wholly or partially with external funding.

Members provisionally agreed that priorities should include Skottowes Pond and other professional fees required to progress the large infrastructure projects as well as possible monies for the Council's play-areas. All Members were encouraged to submit priorities and comments to the Clerk before the Finance Committee for consideration if appropriate.

It was

RESOLVED

that Members be requested to submit possible large projects to the Clerk and Chairman to be collated and put forward for consideration at the Finance Committee.

Note: Councillors Aslam and Fulford left the meeting at 9.10pm

32. **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 item in accordance with the Public Bodies (Access to Meetings) Act 1960, as matters which are considered to be confidential are about to be discussed.

33. **CEMETERY HEALTH AND SAFETY**

Members were asked to approve the works, with appropriate equipment costs, to undertake a comprehensive testing procedure for all of the Council's memorials and headstones as a matter of Health and Safety.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Committee approve the works and necessary expenditure to undertake an initial testing procedure for the Council's memorials and headstones as outlined with the Report and to be advised of any possible additional expenditure for any additional comprehensive works required before proceeding.

34. **HANGING BASKETS CONTRACTS**

The Committee was advised that the current contractor had served notice to cease maintaining the Council's hanging baskets from March 2022 after many years of service and a new contractor was required.

It was

RESOLVED

1. That Window Flowers be offered the contract to maintain the Town Centre hanging baskets and planters on the terms laid out in its quotation submission letter
2. That a vote of thanks be offered to Simon Collins for his efforts working for the Council for many years and a letter sent to this effect.

35. **CLOSE OF MEETING**

The meeting closed at 9.25pm.

CHAIRMAN