

**CHESHAM TOWN COUNCIL**

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

held on 12<sup>th</sup> April 2021

**PRESENT** Councillor Mrs J.E. MacBean (Chairman – presiding)

Councillor	Q. Chaudhry	Councillor	R.C. McCulloch
"	Miss E.A. Culverhouse	"	N.T. Southworth
"	A.W. Franks		

**IN ATTENDANCE**

**Officers:** Mr W. Richards, Town Clerk  
Mr D. Essex, Chesham Moor Gym and Swim Manager  
Mr D. Cooper, Elgiva Manager

Ms I. Clements – ‘Zone 9’ Cycling Group

An apology for absence was received from Councillor M. Fayyaz

40. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no Declarations of Interest that were brought to the Chairman’s notice.

It was noted that, as agreed, all previously stated Declarations of Interests remained unchanged from the first meeting of the administrative year, either noted on the Register of Interests or reported subsequently.

41. **MINUTES**

It was

**RESOLVED**

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Community, Assets and Environment Committee held on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2021, be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

42. **‘ZONE 9’ CYCLING PROPOSALS**

The Chairman, Councillor Mrs MacBean, welcomed Ms Isobel Clements from the Chesham ‘Zone 9’ Cycling Group to the meeting and commended to the Committee the comprehensive report produced by the Zone 9 Group and previously circulated to Members. Before inviting Ms Clements to make further observations, the Chairman asked for comments from Members on the report itself.

Councillor Franks opined that, while he was in favour of cycling generally, he did question some cyclists' adherence to the law and he had reservations on the proposals for cycling through Lowndes Park, the pedestrianised High Street and the Cemetery. Councillor Chaudhry agreed that the Cemetery was probably not appropriate for cycling. Councillor Southworth and Miss Culverhouse both opined that it was important that cycling should be promoted for health and well-being and environmental reasons and the town should be pushing for sensible cycling lanes, especially with the dangers of vehicular through traffic in Chesham. Councillor Southworth added that these were initial draft routes and this will be a long process. Councillor McCulloch agreed that a proper plan was well overdue and suggested that Wycombe would be a good model to follow as a town in a valley surrounded by hills.

Councillor Mrs MacBean then invited Ms Clements to speak to the Committee. Ms Clements stated that the Zone 9 was keen to be part of the Buckinghamshire Council's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) and hoped that the Council could support them in such a venture. She accepted that some of the proposed routes might not be totally desirable and/or practicable but said the Group was preparing to undertake comprehensive public consultation on what was required. She emphasised however the importance of Chesham of being part of the countywide plan and the funding that this would unlock.

Councillor Mrs MacBean advised that she had already made contact with the new Cycling Officer at Buckinghamshire Council and officers at Transport for Buckinghamshire to begin a dialogue and opined that it was important that cycling routes were referenced in the emerging Chesham Neighbourhood Plan. She also advised Ms Clements that the Community Board could potentially assist with financial 'seed funding' for the Group to progress the plans if necessary. She suggested to the Committee that Members meet with the Zone 9 Group after the election to begin proper engagement with Buckinghamshire Council in respect to inclusion on the LCWIP. This was agreed.

It was

### **RESOLVED**

that the Zone 9 Cycle Group proposals be noted and the proposals be considered again after the local election with a view to entering into a dialogue with Buckinghamshire Council to have some or all of the Zone 9 Group's proposals included in the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan.

#### **43. RIVER CHESH WATER VOLE POPULATION**

The Committee considered the Water Vole Survey report which had been significantly delayed due to COVID-19 and had only recently been published. The report highlighted that the results indicated that the water vole population held steady between the 2017 and 2019 surveys, although the population was significantly smaller than recorded in 2001. The population has extended its range further into Chesham, including a small number of field signs being detected at the north-western end of The Moor, which is managed by the Council.

Members were pleased to read that numbers appeared not to be decreasing but accepted the situation required continued vigilance, particularly in respect to mink.

It was

**RESOLVED**

1. That the Report be noted.
2. That a vote of thanks be given to the Policy and Projects Officer for her efforts in this respect, both professionally and personally.

44. **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.

45. **UPDATE ON SERVICES DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

The Committee received an update from the Service Heads as well as a full report on operations during the current pandemic.

The Elgiva Manager reported that the theatre was due to open on the 17<sup>th</sup> May as part of the ‘Step 3’ Government roadmap to COVID-19 recovery. He stated that many of the professional shows had already cancelled but various activities were already in place such as painting classes and involving the Music Trust as programming was necessarily changing. On a positive note, the Autumn programme was looking very full and strong in terms of shows booked.

The Gym and Swim Manager advised the Open-Air pool had opened two weeks ago and ahead of indoor pools, as determined by Government. It had inevitably been very busy but a few complaints had been received from regular users that the influx of new members had meant they had found it difficult to book frequent swims in the pool. In light of this, officers had stopped taking new memberships. The Manager said that he expected many new members to return to their own pools from today and pressures would be less but Councillor Mrs MacBean opined that, perhaps, the Council needed to take a more considered look at how best to give preferential treatment to local residents as taxpayers for the facility if such a scenario arose again. The Manager also reported that the Gym had reopened from today and was busy, even with social distancing measures in place.

The Chairman thanked the two Service Heads and their teams for their on-going efforts. The Committee also noted and commended the Parks and Premises Manager’s very positive end-of-year report. Additionally, it was noted that the Town Hall was likely to remain a centre for vaccinations until at least June and therefore the public’s physical access to seeing officers at the counter would be delayed until the aforementioned ‘Step 3’ date in May when hirers and visits would be reviewed.

It was

**RESOLVED**

that the Report be noted

46. **POSSIBLE IMPROVEMENTS TO THE NASHLEIGH HILL PLAY AREA AND THE LOWNDES PARK MULTI-GAMES AREA**

The Clerk reminded the Committee that the Council had been awarded funding towards the upgrade of the play-area in Nashleigh Hill Recreation Ground and the Multi-Games Area (MUGA) in Lowndes Park by the former District Council which needed to be claimed by March 2022.

Members noted the designs and costs for upgrading Nashleigh Hill Recreation Ground received by the Parks and Premises Manager. The Committee was of the view that proper consultation with local residents was required before any order was placed and it was suggested local Members look for possible residents amenable to form a 'Friends' group, with full consultation to take place after the election.

The Committee also questioned whether the MUGA should be repaired with concrete in light of the Council's environmental policy or indeed was even required. It was agreed this ought to be looked at anew by a reconvened Lowndes Park Working Party with appropriate consultation where required.

It was

**RESOLVED**

1. That a proper consultation process be undertaken from May 2021 to ensure that any new Nashleigh Hill play equipment is approved by Newtown and neighbouring ward residents.
2. That no decision to upgrade the Multi-Games Area surface in Lowndes Park be confirmed until a Management Plan for Lowndes Park be undertaken and consulted upon with the public.

47. **CLOSE OF MEETING**

This being the final meeting of this Committee before the election, the Chairman thanked all Members for their contributions over the last five years.

The meeting closed at 8.17pm.

CHAIRMAN