

CHESHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the TOWN COUNCIL

held on Monday 9th September 2019

PRESENT Councillor Q. Chaudhry – Town Mayor (presiding)

Councillor	A.K. Bacon	Councillor	D. MacBean
"	J.L. Baum	"	Mrs J. E. MacBean
"	M.Z. Bhatti MBE	"	R.C. McCulloch
"	Miss E.A. Culverhouse	"	S.P. Willmoth
"	M. Fayyaz	"	F.S. Wilson

Officer: Mr W. Richards - Town Clerk

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors N.L. Brown, A.W. Franks, P.J. Hudson, M. W. Shaw, N.T. Southworth, Mrs D.M. Varley, N. Varley and P.W. Yerrell

30. **MINUTES**

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on the 17th June 2019 and the Special Meeting of the Council held on the 29th July 2019 be confirmed and signed by the Town Mayor as a true record.

31. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Wilson declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 10 as a Member of the proposed Buckinghamshire Council Shadow Executive. Councillors Bacon, Miss Culverhouse and Mrs MacBean declared a similar non-pecuniary interest as Members of Chiltern District Council.

32. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

Ms Gill Walker, a local resident, addressed the Council and said that while she welcomed the Council's decision to plant 200 trees, she had some questions on the details of such an initiative, namely:

- Would the Council be approaching Buckinghamshire County Council to request a waiver on its cultivation licence?
- What maintenance agreement was in place?
- Could the wall along St Mary's Way be replaced with an avenue of trees and a cycle path?
- Were there any specific initiatives to encourage residents to plant some of these trees in their gardens?

As one of the Members leading on the ‘Communi-tree’ project, the Mayor invited Councillor Mrs MacBean to respond.

In respect to the first question, Councillor Mrs MacBean advised that it was intended to ask the County Council about this possibility and, at the very least, try to get all the trees on one licence rather than piecemeal.

In respect to the second question, she stated that it was difficult to have a comprehensive and long-term maintenance plan for what were, deliberately chosen, slow growing trees but she was confident the new unitary authority, the Town Council and the public would take joint responsibility as and when major tree works were required.

In respect to the third question, Councillor Mrs MacBean opined that while the removal of the wall may be desirable, its ownership would make this difficult as would a cycle lane along there, both practicably and in terms of cost.

In respect to the final question, she advised that she and other Members would be canvassing residents on this matter shortly.

Ms Julia Brammer of Sustainable Chesham asked whether any of the trees would be producing edible fruit or nuts. Councillor Mrs MacBean replied that this had not been proposed due to the largely urban locations but if suitable rural sites could be earmarked, then this would be something that could be considered sympathetically.

33. **MAYORAL ENGAGEMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Members had before them and duly noted the list of the Town Mayor’s engagements from 18th June – 9th September 2019.

34. **PLANNING COMMITTEE**

It was moved by Councillor J.L. Baum and seconded by Councillor A.K. Bacon and

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 17th June 2019, be received and approved.

It was moved by Councillor J.L. Baum and seconded by Councillor A.K. Bacon and

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 15th July 2019, be received and approved.

It was moved by Councillor J.L. Baum and seconded by Councillor A.K. Bacon and

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 12th August 2019, be received and approved.

35. **FINANCE COMMITTEE**

It was moved by Councillor D. MacBean and seconded by Councillor A.K. Bacon and

RESOLVED

that the Minutes and recommendations of the meeting of the Finance Committee held on 22nd July 2019, be received and approved.

36. **RECREATION AND ARTS COMMITTEE**

It was moved by Councillor R.C. McCulloch and seconded by Councillor J.L. Baum and

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Recreation and Arts Committee held on 15th July 2019, be received and approved.

37. **RESOLUTIONS MOVED ON NOTICE**

Pursuant to 'Resolution Moved on Notice' in accordance with Council's Standing Orders no. 10, the Council considered the following motion moved by Councillor Bacon:

'The Council agrees to note that:(a) the recent 2018 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report states that we have just 12 years to act on climate change if global temperature rises are to be kept within the recommended 1.5 degrees Celsius;(b) all governments (national, regional and local) have a duty to limit the negative impacts on climate breakdown. UK county, district and local councils need to commit to realistic reduction targets and carbon neutrality as quickly as possible; (c) the Local Government Association has voted to "declare a climate emergency and commits to supporting councils in their work to tackle climate change"

In light of the above, the Council therefore agrees to:

(1) Join other councils in declaring a Climate Emergency; (2) use all practical means to reduce any negative impact of Council services on the environment, with an aspiration to be carbon neutral by 2030; (3) ask officers to ensure that specific consideration is given to how policies and our related decisions and actions, affect our contribution to climate change, and take action as appropriate; (4) continue to work with partners (including local residents and businesses) inside and outside the community to deliver widespread carbon reductions.'

In proposing the motion, Councillor Bacon highlighted that the Council had a proud record in terms of the environment and he opined that there was little doubt that the question of tackling climate change needed to be moved up the Council's priorities.

While there was a short discussion on whether the Council should focus solely on 'carbon' emissions, the motion had widespread support from Members who agreed to keep to the matter of reducing carbon rather than harder-to-quantify 'harmful' emissions.

The Mayor duly moved the motion to the vote and it was **CARRIED** unanimously.

38. **CHESHAM YOUTH COUNCIL**

Members received the Minutes of the meeting of the Chesham Youth Council held on the 1st July 2019.

Arising from the Minutes, Councillor Miss Culverhouse advised that, contrary to the attendance list, she was not at the meeting.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted.

39. **POSSIBLE SETTING UP OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL WORKING GROUP**

In light of the previous Motion Moved on Notice and the Special Council Meeting held in July to look at climate change, the Council was asked whether it wished to formulate a Working Group to look at all environmental matters.

Councillor Mrs MacBean opined that the Council already had a number of internal working parties and external town partners involved with the environment and there was little need for an additional one. She suggested that the Recreation and Arts Committee should oversee all environmental initiatives and that the Committee would welcome suggestions from partners and others on tackling climate change. She noted that Members had received a circulated letter with suggestions on actions the Council could potentially take to begin to reduce carbon emissions and stated she believed this would be a good starting point.

Members generally agreed that another working group was not required and that a lot of the town partners had much knowledge that could be utilised. Councillor Bacon also suggested that it may be advantageous to seek advice from the Corporate Environmental Advisory Centre (CEAC) who had assisted the Council previously.

It was

RESOLVED

1. That the Council does not form a separate Environmental Group
2. That residents and organisations be encouraged to bring environmental initiatives to the Recreation and Arts Committee for consideration.
3. That the letter circulated to Members on possible initiatives the Council could undertake on climate change be the basis for discussion at a future Recreation and Arts Committee meeting.

40. **REVIEW OF COMMITTEES**

The Clerk's report on the current Committee system was considered by the Council.

Members noted that the report broadly focused on the perceived inherent weakness of the current Planning Committee. It was agreed that the current system where planning applications were largely delegated to ward Members was not working efficiently and it was beholden to the Committee to make recommendations on planning applications rather than simply offering no comments. It was also suggested and agreed that those Members on the Committee should have comprehensive training on planning matters though such training could be extended to any Member who requested it.

A debate ensued as to whether the Planning Committee should revert to being all 19 Members as previously or continue with 9 Members who had an interest in planning. It was proposed that it should remain as a 9 Member Committee but that these Members consider all applications and the delegation to ward Members be discontinued. This proposal was put to the vote and was **CARRIED** by 7 votes to 1 with 1 abstention.

For the longer-term, Councillor Baum offered to liaise with the current Planning Committee Chairman and try and find different committee models which may be best suited to dovetail with the new unitary authority.

No other changes to the Committee system were deemed necessary at this juncture.

It was

RESOLVED

1. That the current Planning Committee makes recommendations on all planning applications and delegation to ward Members be discontinued.
2. That planning training for the Planning Committee Members be sourced and this training be offered to all other Members if requested.
3. That no other changes to the Committee system be implemented at the present time.

41. **UNITARY COUNCIL COMMUNITY BOARDS CONSULTATION**

Members were asked to consider whether the Council wishes to respond to the current consultation being undertaken by Buckinghamshire County Council on community boards for the new unitary authority, Buckinghamshire Council.

In respect to the boards themselves, the Council was of the view that it should, at this stage, simply respond to say that it would not wish the town to be in an area which combined Amersham and Chesham. In regards to other questions posed, there was a general feeling that funding ought to be based on need rather than population. In respect to voting rights, Members expressed it was a little early to have a definitive view on this until the community board areas and governance had been further advanced in their proposals. However the view was expressed that there should be no right of veto from the Chairman as was the case with the current Local Area Forums.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Clerk be delegated to respond to the consultation reflecting the views expressed by the Council.

42. **CONSULTATION ON PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDERS**

Members were asked whether they wished to respond to the current consultation being undertaken by Chiltern District Council on Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs) in respect to the restriction of alcohol. The Clerk's report advised that the Council currently has PSPOs pertaining to the restriction of alcohol in place in the Cemetery; the town centre covering Market Square, the High Street and the Broadway and Meades Water Gardens. The report further advised that there was a danger that the PSPOs would be withdrawn if no evidence on their effectiveness was forthcoming even though the Neighbourhood Police team had offered its support.

The council was unanimous in its view that these should be maintained and it was

RESOLVED

that the Clerk respond to the consultation expressing the Council's wish to see the PSPOs in Chesham being continued.

43. **MOBILE PHONE POLICY**

The matter of usage and possible remuneration of staff who used their personal phones for Council work was considered by the Council. The Clerk reported that it did not appear that any other town council had a mobile phone policy and it was generally the case that most councils simply provided their limited number of employees a work phone if deemed necessary.

Members generally believed that there was a case for reimbursing staff but this should be across the Council and properly enshrined in an agreed policy. Councillor Mrs MacBean agreed to try and get a copy of the District Council's policy while Councillor Willmoth offered to submit the policy from his company so there would be possible templates to devise a bespoke policy for this Council. Following receipt of these, it was agreed the matter should be considered anew.

It was

RESOLVED

that, following receipt of other principal authorities/companies' mobile phone usage policies, the matter be reconsidered at a future meeting.

44. **CONSULTATION PROCEDURE REVIEW**

The Council was asked to approve an amendment in respect to enhancing guidance on collection of personal data to the Consultation Procedure, which forms part of the Council's Consultation Policy.

It was

RESOLVED

that the updated Consultation procedure be adopted.

45. **PLANNING COMMENTS**

It was

RESOLVED

that the recommendations forthcoming from Members at the inquorate Planning Committee that preceded the Council meeting, verbally reported by the Clerk, be adopted.

46. **PAYMENTS NO. 1**

Following consideration of Payments Sheet No. 2, it was

RESOLVED

that Payments Sheet No. 2 in the grand total of £569,443.39 be approved and the various payments and transactions set out therein be confirmed.

47. **CLOSE OF MEETING**

The meeting closed at 9.30pm.

CHAIRMAN

13th September 2019