

CHESHAM TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the RECREATION AND THE ARTS COMMITTEE

held on 6th October 2008

PRESENT

Councillor	A.K. Bacon	Councillor	Mrs C. Littley
"	E.L. Bamford	"	Mrs C.M. Michael
"	M.Z. Bhatti	"	Mrs M. Molesworth
"	D.J. Lacey	"	Mrs A.M. Pirouet

IN ATTENDANCE

Councillors F.G. Holly, C.H. Spruytenburg and Mrs P.R. Wilkinson M.B.E.

Mr G. Lima – Chesham Moor Gym and Swim member.

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ms. J.E. Bramwell, Mrs J.C. Fulford and Mrs G. Walker.

32. **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

In the absence of the Chairman and Vice Chairman, it was

RESOLVED

that the Mayor, Councillor Mrs Pirouet, be elected as Chairman for the meeting.

33. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest that were brought to the Chairman's notice.

34. **MINUTES**

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Recreation and the Arts Committee held on 1st September 2008, be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

35. **FRIENDS OF MOOR ROAD**

Members received the Minutes of the meeting of the Friends of Moor Road held on 2nd September 2008. It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted.

Members requested that, in future, it would be helpful to have the minutes headed as 'Friends of Moor Road' and to have the full names of those attending.

36. **IMPRESS THE CHESS**

Members received the Minutes of the meeting of the Impress the Chess Steering Group held on 11th September 2008. It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted.

Arising from Minutes no.4 of the Impress the Chess Steering Group held on 11th September 2008, Councillor Spruytenburg noted, with concern, the lack of adherence to the maintenance regime for the wildflower meadow. The Clerk advised that he had recently received a letter from the Assistant Estates Officer at Chiltern District Council apologising and explaining that the problems had been due to a change of contract supervisor. The situation was being rectified.

37. **ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP**

Members received the Minutes of the meetings of the Environmental Group held on 12th June and 28th August 2008. It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted.

38. **USE OF ANIMALS AT CIRCUSES**

The Committee was requested to review the policy in respect of allowing animals to perform at circuses on Council land, particularly in light of the recent visit to Nashleigh Hill Recreation Ground from Bobby Roberts' circus that had brought an elephant for promotional purposes.

Councillor Lacey stated that this type of circus had been coming to Chesham for over a hundred years and he argued that the 1,200 people who had attended the circus recently reflected the continuing support from the people of the town for this type of performance. He referred to the recent Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) Circus Working Party report that concluded there appeared to be little evidence to demonstrate that the welfare of animals kept in travelling circuses was any

better or worse than that of animals kept in other captive environments and therefore he opined there was no case to ban circuses using animals in town so long as the veterinarian's report was satisfactory. Moreover, he suggested that banning circuses on such grounds would set a precedent making it harder to support other events involving animals such as the Donkey Derby and horse shows.

Councillor Bacon concurred with Councillor Lacey and argued that the Council had shown itself responsible by insisting on a veterinarian's report when animals were used. He also stated that he believed that the government would shortly be required to take a proactive stance and set up some sort of circus licensing scheme. He argued therefore that the Council would be better advised to wait until this was implemented than possibly face a legal challenge to any unilateral banning decision.

Councillors Bamford, Bhatti, Holly and Mrs Wilkinson also stated that their individual investigations had not produced evidence of cruelty and that the current circus provision should be allowed to continue.

Councillor Mrs Michael took a contrary view to those expressed by other Members. She opined that the vast majority of circuses did not use animals in their shows and there was no place for them in the modern era. She argued that there was a fundamental difference between domesticated animals such as donkeys as seen at the Donkey Derby and those born in the wild such as elephants and it was, in her view, essentially cruel.

After some discussion, the Chairman asked for a conclusion to the debate and it was agreed that the Council's current position should remain unchanged.

In view of this decision, the Chairman advised that Councillor Mrs Fulford had requested in writing that the matter be referred to full Council for determination in accordance with Standing Order No. 26 (c). It was therefore

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND

that the Council continue with its current policy until the government has determined its position in respect of use of non-domesticated animals in circuses.

39. **CHESHAM AND 2012 OLYMPICS**

Danny Essex and Mr George Lima, Chesham Moor Gym and Swim Centre gym user, undertook a presentation in respect of their plans to make the facility a centre for sporting excellence in the lead up to the London Olympics and to try and find and train potential young athletes to be selected for the Great Britain squad. Mr Lima expressed that his passion behind this was driven by trying to get young people off the streets and channel their energies into something constructive while also enhancing the image of Chesham generally.

The Centre Manager advised that they were proposing to hold regular open days on the Moor to allow young people to have a go at a range of activities; assess young people's fitness and to harness the skills of local coaches to develop any potential talent. Mr

Lima went on to suggest that his networking with local business colleagues had indicated much support and potential sponsorship.

The Committee welcomed the concept enthusiastically but enquired as to what the Centre Manager and Mr Lima required from the Council. They advised that at this stage they were looking only for the Council's support in principle and the implicit agreement to use the Moor Road Gym and Swim Centre as a base.

The Town Clerk reminded the Committee that a letter of help, along with suggestions, had already been received from another local resident to promote the Olympics in town and also re-enforced the need to involve other agencies such as the local Bucks Sports Partnership and Nexus. Councillors Bhatti, Mrs Molesworth and Mrs Wilkinson all offered to sit on a working party if required.

The Chairman thanked Mr Essex and Mr Lima for their exciting presentation and it was

RESOLVED

that the Committee support in principle the concept of promoting the 2012 Olympics and help to develop possible participation from Chesham residents and a working party be set up to develop this further.

40. **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 facility and the agreement reached with Chiltern Natural Therapies on room hire.

In noting that the gym appeared unlikely to reach its onerous financial target, Councillor Bamford enquired as to whether any plans had been made to increase income. The Centre Manager advised that now the open air pool had closed for the summer session, a major marketing campaign would commence shortly with an emphasis on the gym having no contract fees.

It was

RESOLVED

that the financial position and the new agreement with Chiltern Natural Therapies Ltd. be noted.

41. **PLAY AREAS IN CHESHAM**

The Town Clerk reported that that the Council's Play-Area Working Party had short-listed two play company suppliers, both of whom had presenting to it on Monday 29th September. After some consideration the Working Party had selected Proludic Play Ltd to be its proposed partner in developing the Council's play-areas.

The Working Party's decision was based upon a number of factors, most notably on its track record of working with local authorities at the commencement of any proposed

renovation of its play areas. The Town Clerk reported that Produlic would be operating a step by step approach starting with a detailed assessment of current provision; giving a play value scoring to equipment; making recommendations on closure of some sites and major development of others; working with Members and the Working Party; assisting with consultation exercises with the public and advising on external funding bids.

It was noted that all companies approached, including Proludic, had recommended some of the Council's play-areas be permanently closed and it was agreed by the Committee that this was regrettably inevitable and some hard choices would be needed to be made to decide upon which ones. It was also noted that Proludic had indicated a five to six year programme was a realistic timescale to implement a complete redevelopment.

Councillor Bamford, one of the Working Party members, reported that she had visited Sunningdale to visit a Proludic play site and spoke to the parish councillor about it. She advised that the parish council was happy with the site. She further stated that this approach was the most sensible way forward and the Council should work with Proludic to guide it on priorities.

It was

RESOLVED

that Proludic Play Ltd. be invited to work with the Council to renovate its play-areas, subject to finance.

42. **ST MARY'S WAY RAISED PLANTERS**

The Committee considered the report from the Policy and Projects Officer on the current position of the raised planters in St Mary's Way.

It was noted that, while the planters were the responsibility of Buckinghamshire County Council, they had rarely been maintained properly and because of this, the County Council had agreed to pass on the cultivation to the 'Chesham in Bloom' Group.

Members commented positively on the work recently undertaken by Mr Len Vockins on behalf of the Group on the planters and it was

RESOLVED

that the report be noted and welcomed.

43. **MEADES WATER GARDENS MANAGEMENT PLAN**

The management plan, devised by Council officers and the Chilterns Conservation Board (Chilterns Chalk Streams Project) was presented to Members.

It was noted that the management plan details the maintenance regime, plus voluntary contributions by the Chesham Environmental Group, to ensure that the long term management vision for the site is adhered to, regardless of any future staffing changes.

It was

RESOLVED

that the management plan be approved and adopted.

44. **CLOSE OF MEETING**

The meeting closed at 8.30pm.

CHAIRMAN

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