

**CHESHAM TOWN COUNCIL**

**MINUTES** of the meeting of the **POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

held on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> January 2017

**PRESENT** Councillor R.C. McCulloch – Chairman (presiding)

Councillor	A.K. Bacon	Councillor	B.R. Whitfield
"	M.Z. Bhatti MBE	"	S.P. Willmoth
"	N.L. Brown	"	F.S. Wilson
"	Q. Chaudhry	"	P.W. Yerrell
"	P.J. Hudson		

Officers: W. Richards - Town Clerk  
S. Pearson - Finance and Contracts Manager

In Attendance: Councillor M. Fayyaz.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Miss E.A. Culverhouse and D. MacBean.

35. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Bacon declared a non-pecuniary interest as a member of the Chesham Moor Gym and Swim Centre

It was noted that, as agreed, all previously stated Declaration of Interests remained unchanged from the first meeting of the administrative year.

36. **MINUTES**

It was

**RESOLVED**

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on the 24<sup>th</sup> October 2016 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

37. **CHESHAM & DISTRICT TRANSPORT USERS' GROUP**

Members received the Minutes of the meetings of the Chesham & District Transport Users' Group of the 25<sup>th</sup> October and the 20<sup>th</sup> September 2016.

It was

**RESOLVED**

that the Minutes be noted.

38. **CHESHAM ACTION PARTNERSHIP**

Members received the Minutes of the meeting of the Chesham Action Partnership AGM of the 27<sup>th</sup> October 2016.

It was

**RESOLVED**

that the Minutes be noted.

39. **FINANCE WORKING GROUP**

Members received the Minutes of the meetings of the Finance Working Group held on the 21<sup>st</sup> November and the 19<sup>th</sup> December 2016.

It was

**RESOLVED**

that the Minutes be noted.

40. **COUNCIL SURGERIES**

The Committee reviewed again its current provision of Councillor Surgeries in Chesham on a Saturday.

Councillor Bacon opined that they still served an important service in engaging with the public but he expressed his view that the winter library sessions should be halted as attendance was minimal. Members broadly agreed with this and it was proposed that the spring and summer surgeries remain as they are in the High St but the late autumn/winter period see a reduction from the current provision and all surgeries to be outside. Councillor Hudson suggested that perhaps a surgery could be trialled in Lowndes Park in the summer but it was agreed the logistics of setting up a stall there would be too difficult.

It was

**RESOLVED**

that the Surgeries be discontinued in the Library and the numbers be reduced in the autumn and winter months.

41. **GREEN FLAG AWARD ENTRY FOR 2017**

The Committee was asked to decide whether Lowndes Park should be entered for the Green Flag award for 2017.

Having noted that the Friends of Lowndes Park are supportive of the idea of delaying entry to the Green Flag until 2018 and will be working with officers to develop a new management plan for Lowndes Park during early 2017 which will be critical to making a

successful entry for 2018, it was

**RESOLVED**

that Lowndes Park is not entered into the Green Flag Award for 2017.

42. **FIRST AND SECOND QUARTER PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

Members considered the first and second quarter performance indicators for 2016/17.

No real concerns on the Performance Indicators were raised other than Councillor Yerrell remarking that the Member attendance figures were slightly disappointing. However Councillor Bhatti expressed disquiet on the drop in the number of electors for Chesham following the introduction of the new individual electoral registration system. While it was noted that this was not under the control of this Council, it was agreed a letter should be sent to Chiltern District Council expressing concern that this had happened. In respect to the Performance Indicators, it was agreed that it would be better to base them on the cost per Council Tax payer as opposed to elector in future.

It was

**RESOLVED**

that the Report be noted.

43. **ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS**

The proposed Annual Subscriptions were put before the Committee. The Clerk advised that the Bucks Association of Local Councils' figure for 2017/18 had been confirmed as £2,866.

It was

**RESOLVED**

that the payment of the annual membership subscriptions as listed and reported be confirmed for 2017/18.

44. **PROPOSED FEES AND CHARGES 2017/18**

The Committee received the revised proposed fees and charges for 2017/18 following recommendations from the Finance Working Group and initial findings from the recently commissioned Marketing Review.

It was

**RESOLVED**

1. That the price increases from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017 for the Elgiva be kept at the Consumer Price Index level (1.2%) and be recommended for approval at the Council meeting of the 16<sup>th</sup> January.

2. That the Gym and Swim Monthly membership be uplifted to £30 from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017 for new members and kept at £25 for existing members for a 12 month period and be recommended for approval at the Council meeting of the 16<sup>th</sup> January.
3. All other recommended fees and charges as agreed at the Recreation and Arts Committee be recommended for approval at the Council meeting of the 16<sup>th</sup> January along with the other proposed prices for the Elgiva and Gym and Swim Centre as presented.

45. **ANNUAL PRECEPT 2017/18**

The Finance and Contracts Manager presented the budget to the Committee explaining that it had taken account of the recommendations of the Finance Working Party which had recently met and had proposed a 2.2% increase on the Band D precept. These figures, he reported, included the complete withdrawal of the Reduction in Council Tax grant; the increase in the Parks and Premises team and improvements to the Depot and the vehicles' machinery. The Finance and Contracts Manager also highlighted that the well-documented additional major repairs required for the Chesham Moor Gym and Swim Centre were being funded from the reserves and added that officers and the Finance Working Group was currently working on a new Reserves Policy which would be brought before this Committee in due course.

It was

**RESOLVED**

that the total funding requirement to be levied on the Chiltern District Council for 2017/18 be recommended to be set at £887,012 and agreed at full Council on the 16<sup>th</sup> January 2017.

46. **PROPOSED RESTRUCTURING OF THE COUNCIL**

The Chairman, Councillor McCulloch, introduced the next agenda item by reminding Members that the paper produced by the Clerk was following on from the initial discussions at the previous Policy and Resources Committee on the proposed restructuring of the Council and was an attempt to address and clarify some of the issues forthcoming from there. He emphasised that there were a number of recommendations within the report so he suggested they were discussed individually but to make the proposed calendar of meetings the last recommendation to be considered on the assumption that the other recommendations were agreed in principle.

- **Recommendation – that the number of Members (9) and quorum (5) for the Planning Working Group be agreed.**

Councillor Yerrell opened the debate by suggesting that the current all Member, 19 strong Development Control Committee worked well and did not require change. He opined that a smaller group ran the risk of being regularly inquorate and there would be complications in respect to substitutes and voting rights. Other Members however suggested the reason why Development Control Committee had been previously inquorate, or close to being inquorate, was that not all Members had an interest in planning particularly as the Council was only a consultee and the fact that the

Government's changes in legislation had significantly increased the number of permitted developments. Councillor Whitfield argued that any such Working Group should be commenting collectively on all planning matters affecting the town, large or small, and therefore having all ward Members present was not necessary.

After some debate, the recommendation was moved and **CARRIED** by 6 votes to 3.

- **Recommendation – that some planning applications be delegated to the Clerk in liaison with ward Members along the lines of the criteria listed within the Report.**

Councillor Bacon argued that it was the role of the Members to seek local views and recommend planning application comments and not officers so he was opposed to the proposal. Other Members argued to the contrary and highlighted that the ward Members would be integral to the Clerk's response and that such a system would allow Chiltern District Council to receive comments before its Planning Committee sat, regardless of whether this Council had a meeting scheduled in before then. Councillor Bhatti opined that it might be beneficial for Members to receive additional planning training if the Council adopted this approach.

The recommendation was moved and **CARRIED** by 6 votes to 3.

- **Recommendation – that the Working Groups be accorded Executive Powers but Standing Order 26 (d) be amended and retained.**

The Committee agreed in principle that delegated powers for the working groups would be desirable to avoid referring every recommendation to full Council. However it was agreed that the Finance Working Group's number of Members was currently too low to allow this for this body with the powers to agree spending. It was suggested and agreed the number be uplifted to 9 (with a quorum of 5) in line with the other working groups.

The recommendation was amended to: **that the Working Groups be accorded Executive Powers but Standing Order 26 (d) be amended and retained on the understanding the Finance Working Group's membership be increased to 9 with a quorum of 5.**

The amendment was moved and **CARRIED** unanimously.

- **Recommendation - that the Finance Working Group be allowed to agree spending up to £30,000 with any amount above this figure requiring approval from the Council.**

In light of the previous discussion, the recommendation was amended to: **that the Finance Working Group be allowed to agree spending up to £30,000 with any amount above this figure requiring approval from the Council on the understanding the Finance Working Group's membership be increased to 9 with a quorum of 5.**

The amendment was moved and **CARRIED** unanimously.

- **Recommendation – that the numbers of Members per Working Group; the**

**quorum and political proportionality as proposed be agreed.**

This was amended to: **that the numbers of Members per Working Group; the quorum and political proportionality as proposed be agreed but the Finance Working Group's membership be increased to 9 with a quorum of 5.**

Councillor Whitfield opined that attempting to ensure political proportionality was a laudable aim but might be difficult with the current make-up of the Council.

The amendment was moved and **CARRIED** unanimously.

- **Recommendation - that the draft 2017/18 Calendar of Meetings as presented be adopted.**

Councillor Yerrell stated that, while no had no objections to the dates per se, he believed the working groups should be known as committees and he said that he intended to raise this again at the Council meeting in February.

The recommendation was moved and **CARRIED** unanimously.

In respect to the proposed Standing Orders and Financial Regulations, it was noted that they would need to be amended again, in light of the recommendations made at the meeting.

Councillor McCulloch thanked Members for their productive and positive contributions and reminded them that the recommendations from the meeting would be put forward to the Council meeting on the 20<sup>th</sup> February for further deliberation and possible adoption.

It was

**RESOLVED**

1. That the recommendations, as amended, for restructuring the Council's governance for implementation for the 2017/18 administrative year be considered for adoption by the Council meeting of the 20<sup>th</sup> February 2017.
2. That the revised Standing Orders and Financial Regulations be further amended to reflect the recommendations of the meeting and submitted to the Council meeting of the 20<sup>th</sup> February 2017 for further consideration.
3. That the system be recommended for trialling for the administrative year 2017/18 and be reviewed in 12 months.

47. **CLOSE OF MEETING**

The meeting closed at 9.40pm.

CHAIRMAN