

CESHAM TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES of the ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

HELD ON THURSDAY 14 MAY 2009

PRESENT Councillor Mrs A.M. Pirouet, Town Mayor (presiding)
Councillor, Mrs J.C. Fulford Deputy Town Mayor

Councillor	V.M. Abraham	Councillor	F.G. Holly
"	E.L. Bamford	"	Mrs C. Littley
"	M.Z. Bhatti	"	C.H. Spruytenburg
"	M.E. Brand	"	Mrs G. Walker
"	M. Fayyaz		

Officer: W. Richards - Town Clerk

In Attendance:

Police Sergeant J. Benfield; Police Community Support Officers R. O'Callaghan and M. Shepherd and 48 members of the public, including representatives from outside organisations.

1. TOWN MAYOR'S WELCOME

The Town Mayor, Councillor Mrs Alison Pirouet, welcomed everyone present to the Annual Town Meeting.

The Town Mayor gave a brief outline of Town Council's policies and actions during the council year 2008/09. These included:

- Completion and opening of Meades Water Gardens following major regeneration and the installation of disabled accessible pathways and boardwalk
- Renovation of the Chesham Moor Gym and Swim Centre outside sports facilities and upgrade of Moor Fitness gym equipment.
- Re-accreditation of 'Quality Status' for the Council.
- Attaining of 'Green Flag' status for Lowndes Park.
- Continued high attendances for the Elgiva and the implementation of an on-line booking system there.

Councillor Mrs Pirouet then thanked the many 'Friends' groups who had worked tirelessly over the last year to enhance both the Council's facilities and the town itself.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Town Councillors A.K. Bacon, Ms. J.E. Bramwell, N.L. Brown and Mrs M. Molesworth; Mr K. Austin and Mr K. Patrick.

3. MINUTES OF LAST ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

The Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 15 May 2008 were agreed and signed by the Town Mayor as a true record.

4. MATTERS ARISING NOT COVERED ON THE AGENDA

There were no matters arising.

5. MAYORAL AWARD SCHEME

The Mayor gave details on the fifth Mayoral Award scheme. She offered her thanks to the Council's Policy and Projects Officer and the judging committee for their hard work and thanked the sponsors, the Chesham Chamber of Trade and Commerce, the family of the late Rafe Chiles and a generous anonymous donor. She then read out the achievements of the nominees.

After announcing and introducing the short-listed nominees, Councillor Mrs Pirouet revealed the winners as follows:

- *The People's Award* - **Mr Michael Rowan** for his ceaseless work in helping to set up Friends of Lowndes Park which undertakes many voluntary tasks in this much loved facility and his help in developing the Management Plan for the park.
- *Rafe Chiles Young Person's Award* – **Isabelle Jarvis, Chris Morris, Andrew Parker and Kate Richards** for their joint project work as sixth-formers at Chesham High School in developing the 'Silver Surfers' project in association with Paradigm Housing.
- *Business Award* – **Newtown Garage** for its on-going financial support for numerous community events in Chesham and particularly the Schools of Chesham Carnival.

The Mayor presented both the winners and the short listed nominees with certificates.

6. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Mayor invited questions and comment from the public on matters in relation to which the Council has powers or duties or which affect the Town. There were none that were brought to the Mayor's notice.

7. POLICING IN CHESHAM 2008/2009 REPORT

Police Sergeant James Benfield, assisted by Police Community Support Officers Rob O'Callaghan and Mike Shepherd gave a brief overview of policing in Chesham for the last financial year.

Sgt Benfield was pleased to report that the levels of crime in town had not significantly increased over the last year. There were some 2,500 crimes over the last 12 months. There was a significant 'spike' in the level of burglaries just before Christmas but a dramatic reduction in the numbers after the police made appropriate arrests.

Since last year's Annual Meeting, Sgt Benfield was pleased to advise that the town had two additional Police Community Support Officers. In addition, closer collaborative working with the Great Missenden and Prestwood policing area has meant greater resources can be pulled into Chesham from this area if so required. He then opined that it was important that the local community supported its Neighbourhood Action Group (NAG) to set the policing agenda for the area. In light of requests coming out of the NAG he highlighted that action has been taken tackling unlicensed 'mini motos' and the problem had been more or less eradicated.

PCSO Mike Shepherd then reported on recent initiatives within the centre of town. He advised that a CCTV camera had been erected in front of the Waitrose store in the High Street and this had significantly lessened the anti social behaviour there. In addition, twenty footballs had been confiscated in recent months to deter playing informal football in the town centre. Other initiatives have included a partnership project with Paradigm Housing to install security locks on the Dellfield estate.

PCSO O'Callaghan then introduced himself as the new PCSO for Chesham West. It was reported that he had already become involved with the recently re-formed Youth Club in Bellingdon Road and emphasised how important the public were for supplying information for both the police and PCSOs around town.

The Mayor then enquired as to whether anyone in attendance had specific questions for the officers.

In respect of a query as to whether the refurbishment of Chesham Police Station was still going ahead, PS Benfield confirmed that the station would be closed for about eight weeks from mid June but a number of mobile surgeries would be in operation during this time and these would be advertised in the local press, with posters and on the police's website.

A question was asked about the level of drug possession and dealing within town. PS Benfield responded by reporting that there had been a slight increase in arrests. However he admitted that it was likely that considerable illegal activity was taking place without detection and therefore the police would be investing more resources to tackle this shortly.

Buckinghamshire County Councillor Mrs Lindsley offered her thanks to the PCSOs for their prompt response to an incident of low level anti-social behaviour she had reported recently.

In concluding PS Benfield advertised the imminent Chesham NAG meeting about to take place and advised that the group was still looking for a Chairman.

There being no further questions, the Mayor thanked PS Benfield and the two PCSOs for their time and very encouraging report.

8. ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP

Mr Phil Folly, Chairman of the Environmental Group, gave a verbal report on the Group's activities for 2008/09. Among the projects this year was:

- Clean up and on-going maintenance of the newly regenerated Meades Water Gardens.
- Major pruning of shrubs in St Mary's Way.

- Support for Action for Bridleways in Chesham successful campaign.
- Clear up of Jacob's Ladder.
- Comprehensive litter pick and clearing of Captain's Wood.
- Painting of Amersham Road allotments railings
- Support for the 'Trout in the Classroom' project.
- Clear-up in association with the residents in Shelley Road.
- Continued and regular maintenance of the River Chess.

Mr Folly paid particular tribute to his colleagues in the group, particularly Mr Ian Freeman, Mr Ken Austin and Ms Georgina Lomnitz all of whom had offered huge support. He also thanked Mr Allen Beechey the AONB's Chalkstreams Project Officer and officers at the Town Council.

The Mayor offered her congratulations and appreciation for all the works the Environmental Group had done during the financial year and added her thanks, on behalf of the Council, to Mr Folly.

9. TOWN MAYOR'S CLOSING REMARKS

Councillor Mrs Pirouet thanked all those present for their attendance and lively contributions throughout the meeting. She again congratulated all the nominees of the awards present at the meeting; offered her thanks to her Deputy, Councillor Mrs Fulford, and offered good wishes to her for 2009/10 and passed on her appreciation to the Town Clerk and the Council's officers for their support. She concluded by saying that she had felt humbled by the overwhelming support offered by the community during her Mayoral year which reminded her once again of the sense of civic pride to be found within Chesham.

10. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 8.11pm.

Town Mayor