

CESHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the TOWN COUNCIL

held on Monday 21st June 2021

PRESENT Councillor Miss E.A.L Culverhouse – Town Mayor (presiding)

Councillor P. Aslam	Councillor U. Hayyat
Councillor W.L. Augustus	Councillor F. Holly
Councillor A.K. Bacon	Councillor Ms C.A. Hood
Councillor J.L. Baum	Councillor Mrs J.E. MacBean
Councillor S.J. Booth	Councillor Mrs R.S. Matthews
Councillor Q. Chaudhry	Councillor N. Southworth
Councillor M. Ditta	Councillor G.D. Williams
Councillor M. Fayyaz	Councillor F.S. Wilson
Councillor Mrs J.C. Fulford	

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

An apology for absence was received from Councillor P. Harding.

13. **MINUTES**

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Council held on the 17th May 2021 and be confirmed and signed by the Town Mayor as a true record.

14. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interests that were brought to the Mayor's notice.

15. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

The Mayor invited questions from the public in respect to matters pertaining to the town.

Mrs R. Juett asked what was the position of the St Mary's Way subway which been closed for a several months.

While noting that this was the responsibility of Buckinghamshire Council, Councillor Mrs MacBean replied that there had been on-going pumping issues which had resulted in regular flooding. She stated that the unitary authority was looking at the best way to resolve this and agreed to provide the public with regular updates when pertinent to do so.

Ms J. Cooper asked whether the Council was prepared to try and prioritise the needs of the pedestrians over drivers having highlighting various perceived dangerous junctions and the poor state of footpaths.

Councillor Mrs MacBean replied that Buckinghamshire Council did have considerable monies set aside for transport and highway upgrades but it did have a difficult job in balancing demands for highways and footpaths improvements. The Town Council, she added, was working with the Chesham Renaissance Community Interest Company to deliver a town Masterplan and Neighbourhood Plan which would enhance connectivity and improve walking options. The question of cutting back hedges from footpaths was raised and the Clerk suggested Members approach him on such matters to ascertain whether they fell within the remit of the Council's Devolved Services.

Mrs G. Walker noted that the Town Council had set a carbon neutral target of 2030 while Buckinghamshire Council had set its target for 2050. She therefore asked Members who were councillors for both authorities how this variation was justified.

Councillor Mrs MacBean responded by saying that Buckinghamshire Council was in a slightly different position than the Town Council in that it was tied into long-term contracts with a number of third parties that needed redesigning but it was nonetheless committed to becoming carbon neutral while, at the same time, being aware of the need to be fiscally responsible. Mrs Walker added it would be useful for the public to be informed on progression in this area by the unitary authority and Councillor Mrs MacBean advised that the public was welcome to view the various pertinent Scrutiny Committees.

Mr J. Holloway lamented the death of a number of fish in Skottowes Pond in the recent very hot weather and asked whether the Council had plans to improve the oxygenation and aeration in the water. He also enquired whether the hedges and flora around the pond paths were to be cut back.

The Mayor responded by saying the Council was aware of the poor quality of the water predominantly due to silting over a number of years. The Council was looking at producing a holistic Management Plan for the Park, including Skottowes Pond, over the next twelve months but, in the short-term, officers were looking at appropriate possible aeration systems. The Clerk reported that his Parks and Premises team was committed fully on grass-cutting and was not aware of issues of excessive growth in Lowndes Park but would investigate.

Mr D. Cooper asked whether the Council was intending to facilitate an eco-workshop led by the author of the Environmental Audit and how many of the environmental consultant's Top 10 priorities had the Council managed to deliver in the first year.

The Clerk advised the workshop had been set for the 19th July and Councillor Mrs MacBean stated she would report back to Mr Cooper on the question of priorities.

16. **MAYORAL ENGAGEMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Mayor reported on the following Mayoral engagements:

- 3rd June Oasis Partnership Open Day
- 3rd June Auberge du Chocolat Closing Sale

- 5th June The Griffin Open Day

The Mayor also congratulated Councillor Harding and his partner on the birth of their daughter at the weekend.

17. **PLANNING WORKING GROUP**

It was moved by Councillor N.T. Southworth and seconded by Councillor Mrs J.E. MacBean and

RESOLVED

that the Minutes and recommendations of the meeting of the Planning Working Party held on 7th June 2021 be received, approved and adopted.

18. **COMMUNITY, ASSETS AND ENVIRONMENT WORKING GROUP**

Councillor Mrs MacBean, while moving the Working Group Minutes, advised the Council she had subsequently met with the Elgiva Manager and the Town Clerk. In order to ensure that the theatre could continue to operate with as much as flexibility as possible, she proposed the following amendment to Minute No. 7 (3): *‘That short term measures in respect of supporting the Elgiva staffing situation be investigated and the Manager’s proposed staffing restructure be agreed in principle with the proviso that the creation of any new post be confirmed by the Clerk and Chairman of the CARE Committee following evidence of need and increased income/bookings to fund said post and ensure delivery of a balanced budget.’* This was agreed.

It was moved by Councillor Mrs J.E. MacBean and seconded by Councillor Mrs J. C. Fulford and

RESOLVED

that the Minutes and recommendations, as amended, of the meeting of the Community, Assets and Environment Working Group held on 14th June 2021, be received, approved and adopted.

19. **ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN 2020/2021 AND STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2020/21**

The Statutory Annual Return for 2020/21 was presented to the Council. Members were reminded that these needed to be agreed legally by the Council by the end of June this year. Councillor Mrs MacBean advised that the former Chairman of the Finance Committee had also reviewed the statutory accounts and had seen no anomalies. Councillor Wilson commended the Council in running a surplus budget in a very difficult year. He raised the question of whether the financial risk assessments would be undertaken. Officers advised internal reviews had been undertaken but not yet put before the Finance Committee which they hoped to do at its next meeting.

Having noted the Finance and Contracts Manager’s report and accounts, it was duly

RESOLVED

1. That, in respect to the Annual Governance Questions numbered 1 to 9 on Section 1 page 4 of the Annual Return, the Council responds in the affirmative, except for number 9 which is 'not applicable' and that it is then signed by the Chairman presiding at this Council meeting and the Town Clerk.
2. That the Accounting Statement as shown in Section 2 on page 3 of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return be approved and signed by the Chairman presiding at this Council meeting together with supplementary Financial Statement which remains not subject to audit.

20. **ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS**

The proposed Annual Subscriptions were put before the Council.

The Council agreed it would be advantageous for representatives of the Bucks Association of Local Councils (BALC) to present to Members on the benefits of membership before the subscription was renewed.

It was

RESOLVED

that the payment of the annual membership subscriptions as listed and reported be confirmed for 2021/22 and financed through the General Power of Competence save for the subscription for NALC/BALC at the present time.

21. **PAYMENTS NO. 1**

Following consideration of Payments Sheet No. 1, it was

RESOLVED

that Payments Sheet No. 1 in the grand total of £269,162.16 be approved and the various payments and transactions set out therein be confirmed.

22. **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS**

It was moved by the Mayor 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.

23. **STAFFING WORKING GROUP**

It was moved by Councillor Miss E.A. Culverhouse and seconded by Councillor Mrs J.E. MacBean and

RESOLVED

that the Minutes and recommendations of the meeting of the Staffing Working Party held on 14th June 2021 be received, approved and adopted.

24. **PROPOSED RESTRUCTURE**

The Council considered the latest reports pertaining to possible restructuring.

Councillor Bacon referred to the Minutes of the last Finance Committee when the matter was discussed and, in light of this, proposed the following amendment, seconded by Councillor Fayyaz, to the following recommendation within the report: *‘The steps and timeline agreed at the Finance Committee on 29th March be followed and that a timeline also be drawn up to have a Chief Executive in place before the Town Clerk’s proposed retirement date and to allow a reasonable handover period.’*

The amendment was **LOST** by 2 votes to 13 with 3 abstentions.*

The Mayor then moved the recommendation from the report that: *‘The Council notes the progress to date and agrees to the setting up of a sub group from the Staffing Working Group to look at the next steps as indicated within the report.’*

This motion was **CARRIED** unanimously and it was

RESOLVED

the Council notes the progress to date and agrees to the setting up of a sub group from the Staffing Working Group to look at the next steps as indicated within the report.

* Councillor Bacon called for a recorded vote and the vote was recorded as follows:

In favour of the amendment – Councillors Bacon and Fayyaz.

Against the amendment – Councillors Augustus, Baum, Booth, Chaudhry, Miss Culverhouse, Ditta, Holly, Ms Hood, Mrs MacBean, Mrs Matthews, Southworth, Williams and Wilson.

Abstentions – Councillors Aslam, Mrs Fulford and Hayyat

25. **CLOSE OF MEETING**

The meeting closed at 8.19pm.

CHAIRMAN

25th June 2021