

CHESHAM TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the RECREATION AND THE ARTS COMMITTEE

held on 1st June 2009

PRESENT

Councillor	A.K. Bacon	Councillor	Mrs C.M. Michael
"	Ms. J.E. Bramwell	"	Mrs M. Molesworth
"	Mrs J.C. Fulford	"	Mrs A.M. Pirouet
"	Mrs C. Littley		

IN ATTENDANCE

Councillors M.E. Brand, F.G. Holly and Mrs P.R. Wilkinson M.B.E.

Mr A. Ogden and Mr T. Pilling – Elgiva Board of Management

Officer: Mr. W. Richards, Town Clerk

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors E.L. Bamford, D.J. Lacey and Mrs G. Walker.

1. **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN FOR ADMINISTRATIVE YEAR 2009/10**

The Mayor opened the meeting and called for nominations for Chairman of the Recreation and the Arts Committee.

It was

RESOLVED

that Councillor Mrs A.M. Pirouet be elected Chairman for the remainder of the Council year.

Note: Councillor Mrs Pirouet took the Chair

Councillor Mrs Pirouet called for nominations for Vice-Chairman of the Recreation and the Arts Committee.

It was

RESOLVED

that Councillor Ms J.E. Bramwell be elected Vice Chairman for the remainder of the Council year.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Holly and Mrs Michael declared a personal interest in agenda items 5 and 7 as members of the Friends of Moor Road Gym and Swim.

Councillors Mrs Fulford and Mrs Littley declared a personal interest in agenda item 5 as members of the Impress the Chess Group.

Councillor Holly declared a personal interest in agenda items 5 and 8 as a member of the Allotments Group. Councillor Mrs Pirouet declared a personal interest in agenda item 5 and 8 as an allotment holder.

Councillor Mrs Fulford declared a personal interest in agenda item 5 as a member of the Environmental Group.

Councillors Bacon and Ms Bramwell declared a personal interest in agenda item 7 as members of the Moor Fitness Gym. Councillor Mrs Fulford declared a personal interest in agenda item 7 as a swimming season ticket holder.

Councillor Mrs Pirouet declared a prejudicial interest in agenda item 10 as her husband was a member of the Royal British Legion.

Councillor Ms Bramwell declared a personal interest in agenda item 14 as a friend of the possible land purchaser.

3. **MINUTES**

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Recreation and the Arts Committee held on 2nd March 2009, be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

4. **ALLOTMENTS GROUP**

Members received the Minutes of the meetings of the Allotments Group held on 7th April and 5th May 2009. It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted.

Arising out of Minute no 1 of the meeting held on the 7th April, Councillor Mrs Wilkinson opined that she believed it unlikely that Buckinghamshire County Council would allow the planting of a thorny hedge along the lower end of Cameron Road since the authority was now designating it as a parking area. Councillor Mrs Pirouet responded by saying she understood that it would be approved so long as local residents had been consulted and agreed to the proposal. Other Members also raised concern on the possible loss of on-street parking and it was agreed further consultation and negotiation was required before the Council could countenance supporting such planting.

5. **FRIENDS OF CHESHAM MOOR GYM AND SWIM CENTRE**

Members received the Minutes of the meeting of the Friends of Moor Road Gym and Swim Centre held on 17th March 2009. It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted.

Arising out of Minute no 3, Councillor Mrs Wilkinson, as a member of the Chesham 2012 Group, expressed disappointment that a recent risk assessment meant that the triathlon event planned for 11th July would be swimming only. The Clerk advised that it was hoped the other two activities within a triathlon, namely cycling and running, would be offered later separately in the year with the support of the appropriate local clubs.

6. **ELGIVA BOARD OF MANAGEMENT**

Members received the Minutes of the meeting of the Elgiva Board of Management held on 20th April 2009. It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted.

Arising out of Minute no 3, Councillor Ms Bramwell stated that she was very pleased to see that the new café operator appeared to be operating much more successfully than she had originally expected and was offering a good service.

7. **FRIENDS OF CHESHAM CEMETERY**

Members received the Minutes of the meetings of the Friends of Chesham Cemetery A.G.M. and group meeting held on 21st April 2009. It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted.

8. **IMPRESS THE CHESS**

Members received the Minutes of the meeting of the Impress the Chess Group meeting held on 30th April 2009. It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted.

9. **CHESHAM ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP**

Members received the Minutes of the group meeting and A.G.M of the Chesham Environmental Group held on the 19th March and 23rd April 2009. It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted.

10. **ELGIVA BOARD OF MANAGEMENT FINANCIAL PLAN**

The financial plan devised by the Elgiva Board of Management, at the request of the Committee, was considered.

Appreciation was expressed by Members in regard to the document, particularly its projections on base budget figures and ‘worse case’ scenarios.

The Chairman asked whether the Committee had any queries for the Board Members, Mr Pilling and Mr Ogden, who were in attendance. Councillor Ms Bramwell asked whether, with the success of the internet and on-line bookings, it was necessary to put so much financial resources into the ‘What’s On’ brochure. Mr Pilling replied by suggesting that, in his opinion, if the brochure was reduced to less than three issues per year, some bookings would inevitably be forgotten about by potential customers, resulting in lost bookings. Moreover he opined that, while it was rapidly developing, it was too early to rely on e-marketing as the main promotional tool. Mr Ogden advised that the Manager was about to invest in a marketing package that would help fine tune the ‘paper’ distribution.

Councillor Mrs Molesworth questioned whether addresses of customers were being collated for future promotions. Mr Ogden responded that the on-line booking system already recorded details of e-mail addresses and the aforementioned marketing package would develop this further for smarter marketing that would result in less reliance on paper copy distribution.

Councillor Ms Bramwell concluded by stating that the plan had been most constructive and useful but reminded the Committee it needed to be aware of the need to make sure base budgets are regularly scrutinised.

The Chairman thanked Mr Pilling and Mr Ogden for their contribution and it was

RESOLVED

that the Elgiva Board of Management financial plan be noted.

11. **CHESHAM MOOR GYM AND SWIM UPDATE**

The Committee considered the officers’ financial report on the Chesham Moor Gym and Swim facility.

Members noted with satisfaction that the final end of year financial figures had seen a reduction in the projected revised budget of £12,972 and the Committee was particularly pleased to see the continued general upturn on the income for the gym.

While there was general consensus that the facility was on an upward trend there was acceptance that costs needed to be kept down wherever possible since a significant proportion of the town's precept was committed to the facility. Councillor Ms Bramwell commented that she believed that the friendliness of the current staff had done much to encourage visitors to return to the facility.

It was

RESOLVED

that the financial position be noted.

12. **ALLOTMENTS NEW SITE AND REVISION OF ALLOTMENTS AGREEMENT**

The Committee considered two matters raised by the Allotments Group, namely the possible location of a new site behind Nashleigh Hill Recreation Ground and proposed revisions to the tenancy agreement.

In respect to the former, it was noted that there had been a site meeting organised by the Chairman of the Allotments Group with the Town Clerk and the Parks and Premises Manager in attendance to assess the suitability of the site. The Committee was further advised by the Clerk that there appeared no logistical reasons why it could not accommodate allotments but it was noted that the costs may be prohibitive. The Committee was informed that the Council has a duty to consider providing more allotments if requested by way of a formal request from a minimum of six residents. If this happens, the Clerk reported that the Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908 requires the Council to undertake a benefit/cost analysis on the use of its current landholdings and the comparable costs and value of providing additional allotments and the cost of acquiring additional land as set against its other duties and responsibilities for other community uses. With this information forthcoming, it was agreed a cost/benefit analysis should be undertaken.

In regard to the latter, Members were happy to endorse the revisions suggested by the Allotments Group to the tenancy agreement but Councillor Mrs Fulford proposed that a clause be added limiting new tenants to one plot. This was duly agreed. It was also suggested and agreed that officers look at the possibility of devising an appeals procedure for allotment holders.

It was therefore

RESOLVED

1. that the officers be authorised to undertake a cost/benefit analysis of providing a new allotments site in Vale Road.
2. that the amendments to the allotments tenancy agreement be

agreed with the proposed addition clause to be included and the matter of an appeal procedure be investigated.

13. **UPDATE OF THE ELGIVA REFURBISHMENTS**

The Committee considered the refurbishments and renewals proposed by the Elgiva Manager. The Clerk advised that all works were contained within the renewals and repairs budget and two or more quotations would be obtained where appropriate.

Councillor Ms Bramwell reported that she and Mrs Pirouet had toured the theatre the previous week and fully endorsed the proposals. She also stated that the disabled toilets should be fitted with a nappy changing unit.

It was

RESOLVED

that the proposed renovations at the Elgiva be noted and agreed.

Note: Councillor Mrs Pirouet left the Chamber during consideration of the next item and Councillor Ms Bramwell took the Chair.

14. **COMPLIMENTARY USE OF COUNCIL FACILITIES**

The Committee considered two requests for complimentary use of the Council's facilities.

The first request was from the Royal British Legion requesting use of the Community Hall to host its Veterans' Day party on the 27th June. The Committee was sympathetic to the plight of the Royal British Legion following the burning down of its building in Broad Street and, having confirmed such an event was not covered by the organisation's insurance, agreed to charges being waived as an emergency application.

The second request was from the Chesham Asian Welfare Society which was intending to hold its third annual multi-cultural and community cohesion event in the Elgiva on the 9th August. It was noted that the previous two events have been highly successful in attracting a number of bodies from the statutory and voluntary sector to offer advice to all sections of the community on practical matters such as benefit entitlement, housing accommodation and that the society was requesting that the Council consider waiving or reducing the Elgiva hall hire fee of £865 inclusive of VAT since it was finding external funding for this event hard to come by this year. Members while sympathetic to its aims, did feel this would set a precedent for other community and charitable bodies and therefore did not feel it appropriate to accede to this request.

RESOLVED

1. that the hire fee for the Royal British Legion event in the Community Hall on the 27th June 2009 be waived.
2. that no reduced fees be agreed for the Chesham Asian Welfare Society's proposed hire of the Elgiva on the 9th August 2009.

15. **PURCHASE OF A TRACTOR MOUNTED MACHINE FOR THE PARKS AND PREMISES DEPARTMENT**

The Parks and Premises Manager's proposal to purchase a tractor mounted chipper / shredder was considered by the Committee.

It was

RESOLVED

that the request to purchase the Greenmech Eco-TMP tractor mounted chipper from a local company at the quotation price of £5,850.00 + VAT be authorised.

16. **REPLACEMENT OF TRACTOR TRAILER FOR THE PARKS AND PREMISES DEPARTMENT**

The Parks and Premises Manager's proposal to purchase a tractor drawn tipper trailer was considered by the Committee.

It was

RESOLVED

that the request to purchase a new trailer along with the extension kit from a local company in part exchange for the existing trailer, at the quotation price of £3,000.00 plus VAT from a local company be authorised.

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

It was moved by the Chairman and

RESOLVED

that the public and the Press be excluded from the following two items in accordance with the Public Bodies (Access to Meetings) Act 1960, as matters which are considered to be confidential are about to be discussed.

18. **POSSIBLE PURCHASE OF LAND FROM LOWNDES PARK**

Members discussed whether they wished to agree to the principle of the sale or lease of a small part of Lowndes Park and to agree to the commissioning of an independent land price evaluation. There was general agreement that this would not be in the Council's best interests and accordingly it was

RESOLVED

that no selling or leasing of part of the park be sanctioned.

19. **TRUST STATUS UPDATE FOR COUNCIL FACILITIES**

The Committee considered the recommendations of the Council's Trust Working Party.

It was accepted that the concept of putting the Elgiva Theatre by itself into a company limited by guarantee and therefore eligible for charitable status may only offer marginal savings on rate relief. Accordingly the Working Party's suggestion to investigate putting the Chesham Moor Gym and Swim Centre into such status first was agreed by the Committee.

It was

RESOLVED

the proposal from the Trust Working Party to prioritise the Chesham Moor Gym and Swim Centre instead of the Elgiva as the first facility to be considered for a company limited by guarantee status be agreed.

20. **CLOSE OF MEETING**

The meeting closed at 8.15pm.

CHAIRMAN

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