

CHESHAM TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

held on Monday 8th December 2014

PRESENT Councillor V.M. Abraham– Chairman (presiding)

Councillor	A.K. Bacon	Councillor	Mrs R. Juett
"	Mrs P.R. Cherrill	"	Mrs C. M. Michael
"	M. Fayyaz	"	M.W. Shaw
"	T. Franks	"	F.S. Wilson
"	P.J. Hudson	"	P.W. Yerrell

In attendance: Councillors N.L. Brown, R.C. McCulloch and C.H. Spruytenburg.

Officers: Mr W. Richards, Town Clerk
Mr S. Pearson, Finance and Contract Manager

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Mrs C.I. Boxer

32. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillors Brown, Mrs Cherrill, Fayyaz, Mrs Juett, Spruytenburg and Wilson declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 4 as members the Chesham Action Partnership.

Councillors Mrs Cherrill and McCulloch declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 4 as members of the Chesham and District Transport Users' Group.

Councillors Brown and Shaw declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 8 as Members of Buckinghamshire County Council involved with the Well-Being Project for Chesham.

Councillors Bacon, Brown, Hudson, Spruytenburg and Wilson declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 9 pertaining to the Reduction in Council Tax grant, as Members of Chiltern District Council.

Councillor Mrs Cherrill declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 9 pertaining to the proposed budget for 2015/16 as a member of the Elgiva Board of Management.

33. **MINUTES**

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on the 27th October 2014 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

34. **CONTRIBUTION TO THE CHESHAM WELL-BEING PROJECT**

Following a request from a Member to discuss this at the start of the meeting, the Committee debated whether it wished to make a financial contribution to a proposal emanating from the Chesham Well-Being Project. Members were informed that this was a multi-agency partnership and both Buckinghamshire County Council and Chiltern District Council had pledged, or were about to pledge, monies to upgrade the lighting in The Backs as it had

apparently been highlighted to those on the Well-Being Steering Group that this was of some importance to residents. The Committee noted the cost of the installation of the improved LED lights would be £34,000 and the Well-Being Partnership was seeking a contribution from this Council of some £10,000.

There was general unanimity from Members that, if the Council was to contribute, the amount of £10,000 was disproportionately too much in comparison to the principal authorities' proposed contributions. However, some Members were firmly of the opinion that a commitment of a sum of money was essential to ensure this project happened and, like the recent repairs to the culvert in Market Square, would be a successful and much appreciated example of the three local authorities working together for the betterment of the residents. Conversely, other Members opined that it was disappointing that the Council appeared not to have been part of these discussions at the outset. Moreover, Councillor Bacon stated that the public feedback he had received at Council surgeries was that the Chesham public was more concerned about the lights switched off in Amersham Hill. Other Members also argued that it would set an unwelcome precedent for this Council to contribute to improvements in street lighting which was the responsibility of the County Council.

After some discussion, it was proposed by Councillor Yerrell and seconded by Councillor Bacon that '*Buckinghamshire County Council be requested to repair the three streetlights currently not operational in The Backs and no contribution be made to the proposal to upgrade the lighting within this area.*'

This was **CARRIED** by 6 votes to 4.

It was therefore

RESOLVED

that Buckinghamshire County Council be requested to repair the three streetlights currently not operational in The Backs and no contribution be made to the proposal from the Well-Being Project to upgrade the lighting within this area.

Note: Councillor Brown left the meeting at 8.45pm

35. **CHESHAM AND DISTRICT TRANSPORT USERS' GROUP**

Members received the Minutes of the meetings of the Chesham and District Transport Users' Group held on the 23rd September and 28th October 2014.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted.

36. **CHESHAM ACTION PARTNERSHIP**

Members received the Minutes of the meetings of the Chesham Action Partnership held on the 14th October and 25th November 2014.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted.

37. **DEVOLVED SERVICES UPDATE**

The Committee received an update on the current Devolved Services activities.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Report be noted.

38. **ADOPTION OF SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

The revised Social Media Policy was presented and considered by Members.

It was

RESOLVED

that the revised Social Media Policy be adopted.

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

Members raised no apparent areas for concern on the first and second quarter Performance Indicators and it was

RESOLVED

that the Report be noted.

40. **COMPLETION OF AUDIT 2013/14 AND INTERNAL AUDITOR'S FIRST INTERIM REPORT 2014/15**

The Committee received the external auditor's governance statement for 2013/14 and the internal auditor's first interim report 2014/15.

Members expressed satisfaction that no areas of concern had been raised in either report and it was

RESOLVED

that the Reports be noted.

41. **REVISED FORECASTS 2014/15 AND ESTIMATES 2015/16**

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 3.6% increase on the Band D precept. These figures, he reported, included the predicted shortfall in the Reduction in Council Tax grant, held back by Chiltern District Council which, in itself, was likely to equate to an extra 2.4% rise on a Band D property. He explained that the Finance Working Party had reached this revised figure to the one presented to the Recreation and Arts Committee by: setting more challenging income and expenditure targets for the Elgiva and Chesham Moor Gym and Swim Centre; adding an additional £10,000 from 2014/15 savings accrued by the Chesham Moor Gym and Swim Centre; setting less aside for possible pension increases and less aside, similarly, for the recommendations emanating from the upcoming staff Pay Review. In respect to the former, Councillor Wilson reminded the Committee that, in fact, the two facilities were only being asked to achieve this year's predicted end-of-year figures again, which, he opined, may even be considered too cautious.

Members then had a brief discussion on the Reduction in Council Tax grant and the District Council's likely decision to reduce passing the full amount across to this Council as happened last year. While there was no consensus as to whether the District Council was adhering to the recommendations of central government in respect to this, it was generally accepted that little could be done to obtain the full grant to cover the loss on Council Tax benefits revenue for this town, particularly since this Council had previously lobbied both the District Council and the appropriate Ministers of State on this issue.

The Chairman then moved the recommendation that *'the Finance Working Group's recommendations be agreed and a provisional funding requirement of £855,050 (subject to final confirmation on the Council Tax base and the Reduction of Council Tax grant) be levied on the Chiltern District Council for 2015/16'*. This was **AGREED**.

Members then briefly discussed the Renewals and Repairs budget and agreed on the additional contribution of £3,200 to facilitate the repair of the sluice gate and riverbank works at the Moor be added to this year's programme.

It was

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND

that a provisional amount of £813,730 to be collected from the Chesham Council Taxpayer (subject to final confirmation on the Council Tax base and the Reduction of Council Tax grant being confirmed as £41,320) be levied on the Chiltern District Council for 2015/16

and

RESOLVED

that the repair of the sluice gate and riverbank at the Moor at a cost of £3,200 be added to the current financial year's Renewals and Repairs budget.

42. **CLOSE OF MEETING**

The meeting closed at 9.15pm.

CHAIRMAN