

CHESHAM TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the RECREATION AND THE ARTS COMMITTEE

held on 28th November 2016

PRESENT Councillor Mrs J.E. MacBean – Chairman (presiding)

Councillor	N. L. Brown	Councillor	M. Fayyaz
"	Q. Chaudhry	"	A.W. Franks
"	Miss E.A. Culverhouse	"	P. J. Hudson

IN ATTENDANCE

Councillors A.K. Bacon, M.Z. Bhatti MBE, R.C. McCulloch and P.W. Yerrell.

Officers: Mr W. Richards - Town Clerk.
Mr S. Pearson - Finance and Contracts Manager.
Mr P. Isom - Parks and Premises Manager.

Mr P. Folly – Chesham Environmental Group.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D. J. Lacey, M.W. Shaw, Mrs D. M. Varley and S. P. Willmoth.

29. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Bacon declared a non-pecuniary interest as a member of the Chesham Arts Festival.

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

30. **MINUTES**

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Recreation and the Arts Committee held on 12th September 2016, be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

31. **ELGIVA BOARD OF MANAGEMENT**

Members received the Minutes of the meeting of the Elgiva Board of Management held on the 19th September 2016.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted.

32. **IMPRESS THE CHESS GROUP**

Members received the Minutes of the meeting of the Impress the Chess Group held on the 29th September 2016.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted.

33. **ALLOTMENTS GROUP**

Members received the Minutes of the meeting of the Allotments Group held on the 4th October 2016.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted.

34. **FRIENDS OF CHESHAM CEMETERY**

Members received the Minutes of the meeting of the Friends of Chesham Cemetery held on the 11th October 2016.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted.

35. **CHESHAM MOOR GYM AND SWIM CENTRE UPDATE**

The Committee considered the officers' report on the current financial situation, an update on the dilapidations report undertaken at the Chesham Moor Gym and Swim Centre facility and recommendations pertaining to replacement of the boilers following meetings of the Gym and Swim Working Party and Finance Working Group.

Members expressed their satisfaction in seeing an increase in income at the facility and requested that their thanks be conveyed to both the staff at the Gym and Swim Centre and to Councillor Willmoth for his advice pertaining to structural and health and safety matters.

It was

RESOLVED

1. That the Gym and Swim financial position is noted.
2. That the current position in respect to matters on the building's structure and health and safety and the dilapidations report be noted.
3. That, as recommended by the Gym and Swim Working Party and the Finance Working Group, a specialist company be contracted to oversee the tendering process and installation of new boilers at the facility.

36. **DEVOLVED SERVICES**

The Committee considered the report from officers in respect to the first seven months' operation of grass-cutting Devolved Services on behalf of Buckinghamshire County Council and proposals for expanding the provision in future years.

In respect to the operation to date, Members deemed it a success and requested their thanks be passed onto the Parks and Premises team accordingly.

In respect to future years, the Parks and Premises Manager, in attendance, outlined his vision for 2017/18 and future years. He opined that he believed an expanded workforce, taking much more work on 'in-house' and losing outside contractors, would be beneficial, not just for the Council's own parks and premises, but also because it would allow greater flexibility on potentially bidding for contracts outside of the Council. He expressed a preference for a team which included one extra operative and an apprentice.

Having noted this option was also supported by the Finance Working Group and able to be accommodated in the budgets, it was agreed this be supported in principle by the Committee and such approval be fed into the next round of budget setting. Moreover, again noting the approval of the Finance Working Group, there was support for the recommendations to begin leasing vehicles and major equipment and increasing the fleet, as well as upgrading the Depot. Councillor Mrs MacBean commented that, it would make sense for the Depot be upgraded and expanded first.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Committee, in principle, supports the expansion of the Parks and Premises team as outlined in 'Option 3' of the Report; the leasing of vehicles, increasing the fleet and the upgrading the Depot as also outlined in the Report.

37. **REVISED ESTIMATES 2016/17 AND DRAFT ESTIMATES 2017/18**

The Finance and Contracts Manager's report on the revised estimates for 2016/17

and draft estimates for 2017/18 was considered by the Committee.

In respect of the 2016/17 estimates, the report showed that the final end-of-year figures were likely to be close to £3,750 under the original budget.

In regard to the 2017/18 estimates, the Finance and Contracts Manager gave an overview of his proposed first draft budgets. He reported that next year's first draft budget shows a total funding requirement of £873,515, an increase of just under 2% on the annual precept. He highlighted that this increase almost exactly equated to the reduced 'Localisation of Council Tax' government grant of £15,618 (1.8%). He did emphasise a word of caution that the three year Actuary pension review was due shortly and there may be changes to the employers' contribution rates which was not assumed in this budget. On the positive side, the Band D Council Tax base for Chesham has increased for 2017/18 by over 1% which will partly offset any increases for residents across the town. He also highlighted that the Investment Provision includes the £20,000 for the Parking Review for 2016/17 and next year's provision of £32,000 could be used to assist the Parks and Premises aforementioned expansion and any additional marketing improvements not covered by the current £25,000 provision within the Corporate budget which has been maintained for 2017/18 and future years.

The Chairman thanked the Finance and Contracts Manager and asked for general observations on this first draft.

Councillor Bacon opined that the Elgiva's revised budget appeared somewhat optimistic in light of the recent discussions at the Finance Working Group.

Councillor Hudson sought confirmation that monies has been provisionally allocated for support for the Police Community Support Officers. The Finance and Contracts Manager confirmed that it had been.

It was generally accepted by the Committee that this first draft budget appeared to be reasonable and achievable in balancing a number of investment projects with an acceptable precept rise.

It was therefore

RESOLVED

that the Estimates be presented for consideration at the Policy and Resources Committee of the 9th January 2017 in light of the observations made at this Committee.

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

The Committee considered the proposals detailed in the report for fees and charges for 2017/18. The Town Clerk highlighted that the Elgiva and Chesham Moor Gym and Swim Centre Managers had been advised not to make any recommendations until the Market Review report had been fully assessed.

In light of this, the following was agreed:

(a) **Allotments**

It was

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND

that no increase be applied from 1st October 2017.

(b) **Cemetery**

The Town Clerk advised that the Council's current Cemetery charges had been benchmarked against neighbouring local authorities and found to be much lower in many aspects. Accordingly officers believed there was a case to uplift them significantly to increase the Council's revenue and potentially ring-fence monies for a new Cemetery in the future. Members agreed with these proposals and it was

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND

that the proposed scale of charges, reflecting various increases, be approved.

(c) **Housing**

It was

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND

that the current rents be noted.

(d) **Office Services**

It was

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND

that no increase be applied to these charges.

(e) **The Elgiva**

The Town Clerk reported that the current caterer's contract ceased on April 1st 2017 and she had indicated that she did not wish to be considered for a further three years. However her colleague currently working with her had expressed an interest in taking the franchise over. The Elgiva Board had suggested a one year trial for her to assess whether both parties were happy with the arrangements and to allow for possible advancement of the covered patio project which may result in greater catering options in the future. This was agreed by the Committee.

It was

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND

1. That the hire and service charges be reviewed in conjunction with the marketing review report and considered by the Policy and Resources Committee in January and that the Manager continues to be allowed flexibility and discretion in determining any charge where he believes it to be in the interest of the Theatre.
2. That the current caterer's agreement termination be noted and a one year agreement, on similar terms and conditions, be offered to the current concessionaire's employee, subject to both parties being happy with this arrangement.

(f) **Town Hall**

It was

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND

that the proposed scale of charges, reflecting no increase in room hire fees or other hire charges, be approved and that the Town Clerk continues to be delegated the determination of any ad hoc charges.

(g) **Sports Pitches and Pavilions, Film Fees, Wayleaves, Fairs and Circuses, Lowndes Park Catering**

It was

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND

1. That no increases in Sports Pitches charges effective from the 1st August 2017 be agreed.
2. That the range of fees for fun fairs and circuses remain unchanged for 2017/2018 and that the Town Clerk be allowed to negotiate the charge within the range set.
3. That the Shelter on the Moor continues to be let at no charge to the Environmental Group.
4. That the Clerk continues to be empowered to negotiate charges for the use of Lowndes Park and other Council facilities by film companies.
5. That the fee of £100 for each use of the Council's Open Spaces be continued.
6. That the summer caterer for Lowndes Park be re-engaged in 2017 and on the same terms as 2016 i.e. a fee of 10% of gross sales.
7. That the current Lowndes Park Ice Cream concessionaire be noted.
8. That a wayleave charge of £5 per annum for pedestrian access only and £50 per annum for vehicular/pedestrian access remain unchanged for 2017/18.

9. That the Clerk be empowered to negotiate charges for the use of the Moor Hardstanding for car-parking.

(h) **Chesham Moor Gym and Swim Centre**

It was

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND

that the following be agreed:

1. That the gym, swimming and pool hire charges be reviewed in conjunction with the Marketing review report and considered by the Policy & Resources Committee in January.
2. That the Chiltern Natural Therapies Ltd rent be increased to £325 per month from the 1st April 2017.
3. That the Moor Football Pitch charges not be increased from the 1st August 2017.

39. **MEADES WATER GARDENS MAINTENANCE PLAN**

The Committee was informed that the original Meades Water Gardens Management Plan was nearly 10 years old and was therefore due for review. It was noted that the Parks and Premises Manager conducted a site visit to the Gardens with the Chilterns Chalk Streams Project Officer in October 2016 to identify works that need to be undertaken and, following this, had devised an updated plan for short to medium term actions.

The Parks and Premises Manager explained to the meeting that much of the plan had been centred on reducing anti-social behaviour in the area and central to it was a proposal to reduce the size of the laurel hedge to increase visibility. He highlighted also the plan would be reliant on support from volunteers and Mr Phil Folly, from the Chesham Environmental Group, pledged his group's support on the understanding the members would be working with the Parks and Premises team.

Members were broadly supportive of the plan but Councillor Hudson opined that it would be useful for the police to enforce the 'Alcohol Restricted Zone' regulations more vigorously and sought assurances that the benches would be replaced and re-sited in due course rather than simply removed. The Parks and Premises Manager confirmed this was the case.

It was

RESOLVED

that the proposed actions and revised Management Plan be approved.

40. **CONSULTATION ON PROPOSED LEISURE AND COMMUNITY HUB FACILITY IN AMERSHAM**

It was reported that Chiltern District Council was undertaking a public consultation, to determine if residents are supportive of developing a new leisure/community hub in Amersham to replace the existing Chiltern Pools, community centre facilities, library and youth centre and also what facilities they would like to be included.

While it was noted that it was not usual for this Council to comment on facilities in Amersham, officers were recommending a response since, at one point, the idea of a 300 seater theatre had been mooted. The Committee was in agreement that this should not occur as it would be in direct competition to the Elgiva and it would be unlikely either theatre could prosper being in such close proximity to each other. While a swimming pool was unlikely to be such a threat to the Chesham Moor Gym and Swim Centre as one already exists on site, it was also suggested the Council recommend there be no outdoor aspect to compete with its Open Air Pool.

It was duly

RESOLVED

that the Clerk, in liaison with the Mayor and the Chairman of the Recreation and Arts Committee, compile a response to the consultation expressing the views of the Committee.

41. **PUBLIC ART IN SKOTTOWES POND**

The Committee was advised that officers had been approached by the designer of the 'Miss Daisy' sculpture previously located in Skottowes Pond, in respect to providing a new piece of art there.

The design and concept of the new artwork was generally welcomed by Members on the understanding that it would not be accessible from the bank and the installation would be mainly undertaken by the designer himself with assistance only provided if necessary by the Parks and Premises team.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Committee agrees to the commissioning of the 'Dilemma' public art piece in Skottowes Pond.

42. **CLOSE OF MEETING**

The meeting closed at 9.23pm.

CHAIRMAN