

CHESHAM TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

held on Monday 31st March 2014

PRESENT Councillor Mrs C.M. Michael – Chairman (presiding)

Councillor	V. M. Abraham	Councillor	P. J. Hudson
"	A. K. Bacon	"	M. W. Shaw
"	Mrs P. R. Cherrill	"	F. S. Wilson
"	T. Franks	"	P. W. Yerrell

In attendance: Councillors D. J. Lacey and C. H. Spruytenburg.

Officers: Mr W. Richards, Town Clerk
Mr S. Pearson, Finance and Contracts Manager
Mr S. Maguire – Chesham Museum

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M. Fayyaz and Mrs R. Juett.

70. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Wilson declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 4 as a member of the Chesham Action Partnership.

Councillor Shaw declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 5 as a Member of Buckinghamshire County Council.

Councillor Spruytenburg declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 7 as a trustee of Chesham Museum.

71. **MINUTES**

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on the 17th February 2014 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

72. **CHESHAM ACTION PARTNERSHIP**

Members received the Minutes of the meeting of the Chesham Action Partnership held on the 28th January 2014.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted.

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

Members received the Minutes of the meeting of the Chesham and District Transport Users' Group held on the 18th February 2014.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted.

73. **MARKETING WORKING PARTY**

Members received the Minutes of the meeting of the Marketing Working Party held on the 13th March 2014.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted.

74. **DEVOLVED SERVICES UPDATE**

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

It was

RESOLVED

that the Report be noted.

The Town Clerk advised that the recently agreed contract for the Council to take over the maintenance of parish paths from Buckinghamshire County Council and to devolve this to the Chiltern Society had now been signed.

75. **FINANCIAL REPORT TO 28TH FEBRUARY 2014**

The Financial Report for eleven months to 28th February 2014 was presented.

The Finance and Contracts Manager reported the revised year end deficit was forecast to

show an improvement against the original budget of £30,627. Following a query from Councillor Wilson, he explained that this predicted improvement against the original budget was taken into account when the revised budget forecast was considered at the budget setting meetings late in 2013. He stated that, since then, a further recent review has indicated that there should now be sufficient further improvements by the end of the financial year to allow for a contribution of up to £5,000 from the General Fund to support a restoration of the town bell project should Members choose to do so during the discussion of the next agenda item.

The Chairman thanked the Finance and Contracts Manager for his explanation and it was

RESOLVED

that the Report be noted.

76. **RESTORATION OF TOWN BELL**

Councillor Spruytenburg addressed the Committee to reiterate what he had said at an earlier Committee, namely to emphasise the importance, in the Museum's view, to the town centre and the community of the re-instatement of the town bell. He stated it would be particularly fitting to have the bell re-installed before the commemoration of the outbreak of World War I in August so the bell could chime to remember the fallen of that conflict.

The Chairman then invited Mr Stirling Maguire of the Chesham Museum to update the Committee on fund-raising for the project. Mr Maguire reported that the community of Chesham and associated organisations had been very supportive and, to date, some £4,500 had been pledged out of the £7,703 required.

Members congratulated the Museum on its efforts to date. Councillor Shaw added his congratulations and suggested that it apply to the Heritage Lottery Fund '*First World War: then and now*' Scheme. He expressed the view that, possibly, some of any monies granted by the Council could be reduced if funds were secured from this external source.

A discussion then took place on the legal ownership of the bell. Councillor Spruytenburg stated that the Museum was planning to gift the bell to the Council so the latter had unequivocal ownership. Some Members were certain that the bell previously belonged to the Chesham Urban District Council before the former clock-tower was dismantled, but there was no paperwork to this effect. While the view was expressed that it would be desirable to have the former ownership definitively confirmed, it was agreed that would be almost impossible to ascertain and, realistically, confirmation in writing from the Museum that it was signing over the ownership of the bell to the Council was the best option.

Accordingly it was proposed by Councillor Bacon and seconded by Councillor Shaw that '*an amount of up to £2,000 be committed from the General Fund as a contribution to the restoration of the town bell project*'. This was **AGREED**.

It was therefore

RESOLVED

that an amount of up to £2,000 be committed from the General Fund as a contribution to the restoration of the town bell project.

77. **CALENDAR OF MEETINGS**

The Committee received a revised proposed calendar of meetings for the administrative year 2014/15.

It was noted that changes were being recommended as the original proposed calendar had one Committee meeting scheduled for a Bank Holiday and that the change of the date for the Annual Meeting of the Council on the original calendar was required to reflect the election scheduled for May 2015.

It was

RESOLVED

that the revised calendar of meetings for 2014/15 be noted and adopted.

78. **INTERNAL AUDITOR'S REPORT**

The Committee considered the latest Internal Auditor's report.

In compliance with the Government's directives on Good Governance, the Finance and Contracts Manager also asked the Committee to approve the questions on the Internal Audit review checklist and confirm the continuing engagement of the current Internal Auditors.

It was

RESOLVED

1. That the Internal Audit report and programme be noted.
2. That the questions on the Internal Audit review checklist be approved.
3. That the current Internal Auditor's engagement be continued.

79. **ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY**

The Finance and Contracts Manager presented his report on the Investment Strategy and reminded the Committee that this was required to be undertaken annually.

No major issues were raised and it was

RESOLVED

that the current Investment Strategy be continued and the Finance Working Group be delegated to deal with any future reviews and investment issues, including the receiving of any company presentations.

80. **ANNUAL REVIEW OF STANDING ORDERS AND FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**

Members considered the report on the annual review of standing orders and financial regulations.

The Committee agreed to the setting of the lowest threshold to £10,000 before three quotations are required, having noted this had not been uplifted for five years. The Finance and Contracts Manager also advised that the new legislation allowing town and parish councils not being required to have two Members as signatories, was now on the statute book. Accordingly it was agreed that the cheque signing procedure be amended to require one Member's and one officer's signature to improve efficiency. It was also agreed that internet banking was inevitably going to become much more prominent in future years and the Finance and Contracts Manager advised he would be preparing a report on this in due course.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Council's Financial Regulations and Standing Orders be amended to take into account the following:

1. That the requirement for obtaining three quotations be uplifted from £5,000 to £10,000.
2. That cheques or any standing orders or direct debits drawn on the Council's bank or building society accounts in accordance with the schedule referred to in Regulation 5.2 shall be signed by any one from the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, the previous past Mayor and Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee, together with either the Town Clerk or the Responsible Financial Officer.

81. **CLOSE OF MEETING**

The meeting closed at 9.02pm.

CHAIRMAN