

CHESHAM TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES of the ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

HELD ON THURSDAY 9th MAY 2019

PRESENT Councillor Mrs J.E. MacBean, Town Mayor (presiding)

Councillor	J.L. Baum	Councillor	D. MacBean
"	M.Z. Bhatti M.B.E.	"	R.C. McCulloch
"	Q. Chaudhry	"	N.T. Southworth
"	Miss E.A. Culverhouse		

Officers: W. Richards - Town Clerk
Ms M. McGwynn – Administration Manager

In Attendance:

PC Gavin McVeigh - Thames Valley Police.
61 members of the public, including representatives from outside organisations.

1. TOWN MAYOR'S WELCOME

The Town Mayor, Councillor Mrs MacBean, welcomed everyone present to the Annual Town Meeting and expressed her pleasure at seeing so many people in attendance.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Town Councillors A.K. Bacon, N.L. Brown, M. Fayyaz, Mrs D. M. Varley, N. Varley, M.W. Shaw and F.S. Wilson.

3. MINUTES OF LAST ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

The Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 10th May 2018 were agreed and signed by the Town Mayor as a true record.

4. POLICING IN CHESHAM 2018/19 REPORT

The Mayor welcomed PC Gavin McVeigh to the meeting and took the opportunity to acknowledge again the sad loss to the town of the late PC Kevin Flint who tragically died in a road traffic accident in January.

PC McVeigh then gave a brief overview of policing in Chesham for the last administrative year.

He began by explaining that he had worked as a police constable for several years in and around the Chalfonts area but had been transferred to the Chesham Neighbourhood policing team a couple of years ago. He then advised on the good news that a new PC had just started in the Neighbourhood team and two new PCSOs were currently being trained. He then advised that the Neighbourhood team took its three main priorities from the Chiltern Community Forum which, this year, were Drug Dealing and Drug Misuse; Tackling Burglary and Anti-Social Behaviour.

In terms of the second and third priorities, he suggested that the figures were generally encouraging. Specifically for Chesham, he reported the following:

	Last year	This year	Reduction
Residential Burglary Chesham	30	15	-50%
Violence against the person	194	173	-11%
Violence without injury	132	115	-13%
Violence with injury	62	58	-6%
Serious assault – GBH	5	1	-80%
Residential Sheds / Garages	23	12	-48%
Commercial Burglary	22	19	-14%

In respect to these crimes and anti-social behaviour generally he advised that the police were increasingly undertaking high visibility patrols in known crime ‘hot-spots’. He opined that working closely with other agencies had assisted in this positive crime reduction in this area.

Unfortunately drug dealing and drug misuse crimes were up significantly by around 75%. PC McVeigh acknowledged that this was an increasing problem for the local force but over the past few months, numerous stop searches, arrests and prosecutions have been completed. Much intelligence had been gained to help target the main offenders, groups and locations in Chesham and recently a partial closure on a known drug supplying house had been undertaken which only allows the occupants to be in the house as they are vulnerable to people attending and using the house for crime and they are afraid to request them to leave.

The Mayor thanked PC McVeigh for his presentation and invited those in attendance to ask questions and make observations.

The Mayor herself queried whether the upsurge in drug use and supply was due to an obvious general increase or simply more people reporting incidents. PC McVeigh replied that, on balance, he would say it was a combination of both but, nonetheless urged the public to keep reporting alleged drug misuse.

There being no further questions, the Mayor thanked PC McVeigh again and he duly left the meeting.

5. CHESHAM ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP

Mr Phil Folly, Chairman of the Chesham Environmental Group, gave a verbal report on the Group's activities for 2018/19. He stated that the group had changed its focus slightly from last November by deciding that the Sunday work parties would focus exclusively on the River Chess. One major piece forthcoming from this was the ‘Canons Mill Project’ where the bank was restored in two places and dog steps installed. Other projects included:

- Ñ Planting 135 saplings around Skottowes Pond.
- Ñ Litter-pick in Cemetery and Pond Park Road where one day’s work resulted in nearly 700 aluminium cans collected and recycled.
- Ñ Assisting the Town Council with its Devolved Services.
- Ñ Active involvement in ‘Chesham in Bloom’

Mr Folly added that he believed the reduction of the Chesham Waste Recycling site opening hours and the expansion of charges there had been unhelpful and was only likely to increase the amount of fly-tipping around town.

He thanked his colleagues in the group and officers at the Town Council, particularly the Parks and Premises Manager, Mr Paul Isom, and Chesham Town Council staff generally.

The Mayor offered her congratulations and appreciation for all the works the Environmental Group had done during the administrative year.

6. HONORARY FREEMEN AND FREEWOMEN OF CHESHAM STATUS

The Mayor, Councillor Mrs MacBean, advised that she was delighted to announce that, at a special Meeting of the Council held on Monday 15th April, it had been unanimously agreed that a further man and, for the first time, three women be confirmed as Honorary Freeman and Honorary Freewomen of the Town of Chesham to join Mr Vincent Compton and Mr Phil Folly in holding this title. The Mayor then confirmed the following:

Ms Katherine Merchant is admitted to be an Honorary Freewoman of the Town of Chesham in recognition of her international rugby coaching career, World Championship title and services to developing rugby within Chesham.

Ms Rochelle Clark MBE is admitted to be an Honorary Freewoman of the Town of Chesham in recognition of her international rugby coaching career, World Championship title and services to developing rugby within Chesham.

Mrs Mora Walker is admitted to be an Honorary Freewoman of the Town of Chesham in recognition of her long service to local government, her healthcare work and her voluntary work to safeguard the heritage of Chesham.

Mr Rodney Culverhouse is admitted to be an Honorary Freeman of the Town of Chesham in recognition of his long service to the Chesham Chamber of Trade and Commerce and his work to promote and improve the High Street of Chesham.

Unfortunately, due to long-standing rugby commitments, Ms Merchant and Ms Clark were unable to attend this meeting but the Mayor advised she would be presenting with their awards at another event. She then invited Mrs Walker and Mr Culverhouse to formally collect their respective, much-merited certificate of status, embossed with the Town Council seal, which they duly did.

7. MAYORAL AWARDS SCHEME

The Mayor gave details of the thirteenth Mayoral Awards scheme. She offered her thanks to the Council's Policy and Projects Officer and the judging committee for its hard work and thanked the sponsors of the Business Award, the Chiltern Chamber, and particularly Mr Andy Garnett.

Firstly the Mayor announced some one-off awards this year to recognise exceptional community service. In no particular order, the following were cited and provided with appropriate certificates:

- Jamie Kendall and Kenneth Brown for playing the Pipes and Bugle respectively in difficult conditions at the very moving 100th Anniversary Commemorations marking the end of the First World War
- Zafa Ali Raja (sadly, presented before his death earlier this year) for services to the community and being instrumental in the building of Chesham Mosque
- A group of young persons connected to St Mary's Church, Newtown Church and Ashley Green Church respectively for their inspiring work assisting the community in a township in South Africa.

The Mayor then read out the achievements of the nominees for the Business Award, People's Award and the new Volunteer Team Award.

After announcing and introducing the short-listed nominees, Councillor Mrs MacBean revealed the winners as follows:

- Ñ *Business Award* – **The Tavern** in recognition of its efforts in respect of its support of local community groups, support for Fairtrade and being the first High St business to sign up to 'Can Collect', a new charity recycling initiative designed to turn aluminium into money for community groups.
- Ñ *Volunteer Team Award* – **Chesham Community Fridge** in providing free food to over 250 deprived households while saving several tonnes of food going to Landfill Sites.
- *The People's Award* – **Ms Ricky Dutton** for her significant efforts in supporting a number of local causes and events particularly supporting many horse-riding events and charities and organising bridleway improvements and maintenance.

The Mayor presented all the winners and the short listed nominees with certificates.

8. TOWN MAYOR'S REVIEW OF THE YEAR

The Town Mayor then gave a brief outline of the Town Council's achievements and actions during the administrative year 2018/19. These included:

- Continued working with the Chesham Renaissance Community Interest Company (CRCIC) to help set the direction for the future development of the town with the imminent publication of the District Council's Local Plan.
- Completion of the second stage of the Parking Review where parking permits were issued for further town centre residents.
- Consolidation and improvement of the Council's Devolved Services programme, now in its fourth year.
- Establishment of the innovative Wildflower Verges project to encourage a diversity of fauna and flora along some roadsides and open spaces and various other environmental initiatives particularly centred in and on the River Chess.
- The Chesham Moor Gym and Swim Centre and Elgiva Theatre both being subject to rigorous reviews in terms of present and future infrastructure with a view to providing significant capital investment to either or both facilities.
- Continuation of the successful Town Partner Scheme who had helped with delivering a number of community projects and events.

Looking ahead, she highlighted the challenges of the Unitary Authority commencing this time next year and the opportunities for this Council to take on enhanced services for the people of Chesham. She also emphasised the importance of residents responding to the consultation exercise to the aforementioned Local Plan due out in June.

9. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Mayor invited questions and comments from the public on matters in relation to which the Council has powers or duties or which affects the Town.

Mr Tony Molesworth, from the Chesham Renaissance Community Interest Company (CRCIC) advised that he had sight of the revised Local Plan and opined that it was less advantageous for this town than the original Local Plan dismissed by the Planning Inspector. He therefore asked what the Council intended to do in response. The Mayor replied that the Council had always submitted a robust response to all previous consultation exercises on the Local Plan and would be doing so again. She also suggested that it was likely that the Council would now give serious consideration to developing a Neighbourhood Plan. Mr Andrew Ketteringham also asked whether the Council had asked, or intended to, for an actual material contribution for Chesham through the Local Plan such as a car-park. The Mayor replied that the Council had always highlighted the infrastructure pressures on the town and this had been uppermost in previous consultation responses but, with pressures on land space, no one specific item had been requested.

Mr Chris Spruytenburg enquired whether Chesham in Bloom could also provide a report to this meeting in future in order to update residents and hopefully recruit more volunteers. The Town Clerk advised it might be sensible to merge this with the Environment Group's presentation in future due to the synergies between the two groups.

Ms Agnieszka Lukasiewicz enquired whether the Council was minded to declare a 'climate emergency' in light of the recent alarming UN report of the effects of man-made pollution on the planet. The Mayor advised that, personally, she was very concerned with many environmental matters and would welcome any measures to tackle climate change. However it was difficult necessarily for this Council to measure and monitor its actual impact due to its relatively small service operation. She stated however the Council would continue to work closely with its many environmental town partners. The Clerk added that the Council did have a robust environmental policy and said officers would welcome further scrutiny of it by both individuals and groups.

Mr Andy Garnett asked whether the decision to close the Chesham Waste Centre on two days a week and to charge for some waste disposal could be reversed as he feared, like Mr Folly, that it could increase fly tipping. The Mayor advised that she had discussed the matter with the Leader of Buckinghamshire County Council recently and it was likely to be reviewed by the County Council in the Autumn. In the meantime she suggested that it was important any evidence of fly-tipping should be logged and reported to build a case for reversing the decision.

10. MAYOR'S CLOSING REMARKS

Councillor Mrs MacBean welcomed Councillor Joseph Baum and introduced him to the meeting as he had just been elected as a new Member for the Townsend ward. Finally she thanked all those present for their attendance and offered again her congratulations to all those who had been acknowledged for their community works within the town.

11. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 9.15pm.

Town Mayor