

CHESHAM TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

held on Monday 25th March 2013

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

Councillor	V.M. Abraham	Councillor	P.J. Hudson
"	A.K. Bacon	"	M.W. Shaw
"	Miss R.K. Bhatti	"	F.S. Wilson
"	M. Fayyaz	"	P.W. Yerrell

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

In attendance: Councillor C.H. Spruytenburg

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors T. Franks, Mrs C. Littley and Mrs A.M. Pirouet.

71. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest that were brought to the Chairman's notice.

72. **MINUTES**

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on the 11th February 2013 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

73. **FINANCE WORKING GROUP**

Members received the Minutes of the meeting of the Finance Working Party held on 14th February 2013.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted.

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

Members received the Minutes of the meeting of the Chesham and District Transport Users' Group held on the 19th February 2013.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted.

75. **DEVOLVED SERVICES UPDATE**

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

It was

RESOLVED

that the Report be noted.

76. **CALENDAR OF MEETINGS**

The Committee received the proposed calendar of meetings for the administrative year 2013/14.

It was

RESOLVED

that the calendar of meetings for 2013/14 be noted and adopted.

77. **CHILD PROTECTION AND VULNERABLE PERSONS' POLICY REVIEW**

The updated Child Protection and Vulnerable Persons' Policy was presented to the Committee.

Councillor Shaw queried as to the definition of 'volunteers' in the policy and enquired as to whether this was supposed to include the various 'Friends' groups. The Clerk replied that he believed that it was supposed to refer simply to those directly requested to undertake practical works by officers at no cost to the Council but agreed inserting the phrase 'volunteers working on behalf of Chesham Town Council' as suggested by Councillor Yerrell, may be appropriate.

Subject to clarification on this at the next Council meeting, it was

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND

that the revised Child Protection and Vulnerable Personsø Policy be adopted.

78. **COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE REVIEW**

The Committee considered the revised Complaints Policy and Procedure.

The Clerk advised that he was happy to report that, in the last four years, there had been no complaint serious enough to warrant a member of the public having recourse to the Stage II process of the procedure. A brief discussion then took place of the desirability of logging all complaints but it was agreed that this was not necessary on a formal basis but officers may wish to record these informally for their own purposes.

It was

RESOLVED

that the revised Complaints Policy and Procedure Policy be adopted.

79. **ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY REVIEW**

Members received an update on the Councilø environmental progress to date and were asked to note the developments.

The Committee congratulated officers and Friendsø groups on their efforts and noted that the Community Orchard could be added to the list of achievements in future.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Report be noted.

80. **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY REVIEW**

The revised Equal Opportunities Policy was presented to the Committee.

It was

RESOLVED

that the revised Equal Opportunities Policy be adopted.

81. **INTERNAL AUDITOR'S REPORT**

The Committee considered the latest Internal Auditor's report.

Councillor Wilson queried as to whether the auditor undertook reviews of the Council's income streams as these, he opined, were the most difficult to control. The Finance and Contracts Manager replied that these checks were robust with the auditor visiting the Elgiva and the Chesham Moor Gym and Swim Centre regularly to scrutinise income procedures.

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.

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

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

Having noted that the standing orders had been revised following the adoption of the new Code of Conduct in September, it was agreed that only the proposed amendments to the financial regulations needed to be considered.

The Committee was presented with the following recommended insertions/amendments:

- *'that officers be permitted to continue to progress any scheme, or item within a scheme, costing up to £5,000 from the Renewal and Repairs Fund without further referral to Committee or Council'* be added to Section 3.6 'Budgetary Control'
- that Section 8.3 be amended to refer to *'the Finance Working Group'* in respect to delegation of responsibility for investment reviews and policies.

It was

RESOLVED

that the proposed amendments to the financial regulations be agreed.

83. **PENSION SCHEME**

The Committee considered the report from the Finance and Contracts Manager on the Council's Pension Scheme. He highlighted the fact that new legislation required local authorities to have a policy on ten discretions within the existing policy. He referred to his report which had proposed a possible Council position on this. Moreover, he proposed that previous Council resolutions pertaining to the pension scheme were rescinded to allow for clarity as the scheme was to be reviewed annually.

Members expressed concern that they were being asked to rescind some policies that they were not aware of and that such a decision may affect the rights of the employees. While noting that there was no legal necessity to consult on these discretionary clauses, the Committee asked that further clarification on the implications of rescinding previous resolutions be produced for Members.

Councillor Abraham suggested that further advice on pensions be garnered from other similar sized councils and the Local Government Association.

The Finance and Contracts Manager stated that he had been informed that the Council's policy should be in place by the 1st April 2013 but agreed to liaise further with the appropriate officers at Buckinghamshire County Council to ascertain how essential this was.

It was therefore

RESOLVED

that the matter be brought back to the next Council meeting with clarification on the Council's previous resolutions pertaining to pensions and how they may affect current employees' pension rights.

84. **TACKLING OF LITTER**

The Chairman, Councillor Mrs Michael, informed the Committee that she had asked for this matter to be placed on the agenda as she was aware that it was an issue that many residents had raised with her as a concern.

Members agreed with the Clerk's observations that it would not be appropriate for the Parks and Premises team to be instructed to issue on-the-spot fixed penalties for littering even though it was technically permissible to do so through the powers of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005. However Councillor Hudson reported that a potential change in Thames Valley Police's position could mean that such powers were granted to the Police Community Support Officers which, he opined, would be a good deterrent and would be a useful tool to run alongside an educational campaign.

Members agreed that the Council ought to play a leading part in an education campaign

against littering. It was agreed that it would be too onerous for officers to run such a campaign and Councillor Wilson suggested that local groups such as Better Chesham, Chesham in Bloom and the Chesham Environmental Group should be invited to be heavily involved with this. Councillor Hudson further advised that the new waste contract the principal authorities were developing with a major contractor had set aside monies for educational and publicity purposes and he offered to enquire as to whether some of these monies could be directed to Chesham to support an anti-littering campaign.

Members were fully supportive of a campaign to keep Chesham tidy and it was

RESOLVED

that a further report be brought before this Committee with ideas as to how an anti-littering campaign could be developed.

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

It was moved by the Chairman and

RESOLVED

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

86. **DIGITAL PROJECTOR ELGIVA THEATRE**

Members were informed that two tender bids had been received to provide a digital projector and ancillary equipment for the Elgiva Theatre as previously reported to the Recreation and Arts Committee.

It was

RESOLVED

that the tender submitted by Future Projections Ltd be accepted and the cost be funded through balances, minus any external funding being obtained before installation.

87. **CLOSE OF MEETING**

The meeting closed at 8.57pm.

CHAIRMAN