

CHESHAM TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES of the ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

HELD ON THURSDAY 15th MAY 2014

PRESENT Councillor Mr M. W. Shaw, Town Mayor (presiding)

Councillor	A.K. Bacon	Councillor	Mrs C. Littley
"	Mrs P.R. Cherrill	"	R. C. McCulloch
"	M. Fayyaz	"	C.H. Spruytenburg
"	P. J. Hudson	"	F.S. Wilson
"	Mrs R. Juett		

Officer: W. Richards - Town Clerk

In Attendance:

Chiltern District Councillor Mohammad Bhatti.

Inspector Richard Vine and Sgt James Ellis - Thames Valley Police.

Ms Jane Dodd – Town Crier.

Mr Anthony Church MBE – The Ancient and Honourable Guild of Town Criers.

Miss Camilla Goodman – Bucks Examiner

8 members of the public, including representatives from outside organisations.

1. TOWN MAYOR'S WELCOME

The Town Mayor, Councillor Mark Shaw, welcomed everyone present to the Annual Town Meeting.

The Mayor opened the meeting with a tribute to former Town Crier, Mr William Ellis, who, he opined, would be greatly missed and who had done much to advance the cause of people with disabilities. He stated he looked forward to introducing Mr Ellis's successor, Ms Dodd, later in the evening, who, he believed, was likely to be a more than adequate replacement.

The Town Mayor then gave a brief outline of the Town Council's achievements and actions during the administrative year 2013/14. These included:

- New skatepark in Lowndes Park installed, thanks to funding from Paradigm Housing, Buckinghamshire County Council and Biffa Awards.
- New digital projector at the Elgiva installed allowing live streaming of various cultural and sporting events across Britain and the world and which had proved highly popular.
- Very successful sixtieth anniversary celebrations of Lowndes Park held in Lowndes Park in August.
- Green Flag reaccreditation for Lowndes Park.
- Introduction of all year round swimming at the open air pool at the Chesham Moor Gym and Swim Centre which proved a great success with excellent attendance figures.
- First-class production of the 'Wizard of Oz' pantomime at the Elgiva producing a record surplus for the Council.
- Installation of new Gym equipment at the Chesham Moor Gym and Swim Centre.

- Launch of Town Partner Scheme. He read out the list of those currently acknowledged and, following requests from those in attendance, agreed to add the Chesham Town Twinning Association and Chesham Museum.
- Active involvement with 'Chesham in Bloom' entry which resulted in the town winning the Thames and Chilterns 'Large Town' category.

Looking ahead to the new administrative year, he highlighted the following proposed projects:

- Completion of the culvert repairs in the Market Square to be overseen by the Environment Agency.
- Development and progression of the Parking Review.
- Council leading on World War One commemoration events.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Town Councillors N.L. Brown, T. Franks, Mrs C.M. Michael and Mrs A. M. Pirouet.

3. MINUTES OF LAST ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

The Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 9th May 2013 were agreed and signed by the Town Mayor as a true record.

4. MATTERS ARISING NOT COVERED ON THE AGENDA

There were no matters arising.

5. POLICING IN CHESHAM 2013/14 REPORT

Inspector Richard Vine gave a brief overview of policing in Chesham for the last administrative year.

He started his presentation by explaining that the local police service had been reorganised and he was the now the Inspector for the Chiltern Local Policing Area. He introduced his colleague, Sgt James Ellis, who also covered the area.

He then gave a synopsis of recorded crime in the area. Before doing so however he emphasised that it was proving hard to hit the set targets as they had been falling year-on-year in any case. Moreover, the area was already one of the safest places to live in the country and therefore the likelihood of experiencing any sort of crime was low. He was pleased to report that burglary was down by 5%. This, he opined, was because the police had been targeting location hotspots and keeping checks on repeat offenders. Violent crime (excluding domestic violence) had fallen from last year's figures as had car theft. Unfortunately theft from vehicles had risen slightly and he reminded people of the importance of keeping their valuables well hidden within parked cars.

He stated that he had been converted to the advantages of appointing a Police and Crime Commissioner for the Thames Valley Area and opined that the current incumbent, Anthony Stansfield, had done a good job tackling rural crime. He also paid tribute to the Chiltern District Council Community Safety Partnership in assisting tackling crime, along with the local authorities and the many volunteer and Neighbourhood Watch teams.

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

Councillor Mrs Juett asked the first question, namely, that as domestic violence figures were up nationally, did local crime figures reflect this? Inspector Vine replied that they were, in fact, down but there was always a concern that assaults were not always reported. Sgt Ellis added that many victims were repeat callers and there was a multi-agency approach to tackling this repeat offences. He continued that he believed that the recently appointed Domestic Abuse Officer was having a very positive effect in helping to alleviate these crimes.

Both Councillors Spruytenburg and Wilson queried whether the police could act upon the statistical evidence being gathered through the Council's recent use of the Movable Vehicle Activated Signs (MVAS). Sgt Ellis replied by saying that Lye Green Road was already being considered for further monitoring by the police following a number of complaints. In general however he opined that it was important the police were seen to be balancing their limited resources between tackling speeding and undertaking the many other crime prevention measures they were tasked with and therefore could not guarantee total resolution of speeding issues.

Councillor Mrs Cherrill stated she wanted to congratulate Inspector Vine on the work of the Police Community Support Officers locally. Inspector Vine thanked her for her compliment and agreed to pass this back to his officers.

District Councillor Bhatti asked whether the burglary figures were up-to-date as he was led to believe they had risen. Inspector Vine confirmed they were accurate up to the end of March 2014. He expressed that had been on the rise when he took over 12 months previously, but was pleased to report this rise has been halted. In answer to a further query from Councillor Bhatti, he reported that, in the last year, there had been 10 persons either formally charged or receiving restorative justice as a result of burglaries. Inspector Vine also confirmed to Councillor Bhatti that the local police force remained vigilant in respect to illegal drug sales and use and recently undertook a high profile operation with warrants based on information received.

There being no further questions, the Mayor thanked Inspector Vine and Sgt Ellis again and invited them to remain for the rest of the meeting.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP AND CHESHAM MUSEUM

Councillor Littley, on behalf of the Environmental Group, gave a verbal report on the Group's activities for 2013/14. Firstly, however, she paid tribute to the work of the group's Chairman, Mr Phil Folly, who was currently away but had worked tirelessly on behalf of the group during the last 12 months. He was, she opined, a very worthy winner of the 'Pride of Bucks Community Champion' Award.

Among the projects last year were:

- Ñ Two all day Sunday works to clear arisings from Berkhamstead Field to allow the wildflowers to grow.
- Ñ Twice monthly litter-picks and clean-ups across town.
- Ñ Clearance of planters in St Mary's Way.
- Ñ Removal of Himalayan Balsam from riverside habitats.
- Ñ Continued and regular maintenance of the River Chess, working alongside the River Chess Association.

Ñ Active involvement in ‘Chesham in Bloom’.

Councillor Littley also advised that the Environment Group had finally purchased high visibility jackets with the group’s name printed upon them to make members both safer and to increase their profile in town. The Group had also become an official partner of Chesham Town Council through the ‘Town Partner’ scheme and was therefore seeking an official Council representative on its group. Councillor Mrs Littley concluded by saying that Mr Folly had asked that his thanks be passed onto his colleagues in the group and officers at the Town Council and Chiltern District Council in what was another productive year.

Councillor Spruytenburg then gave a brief update on the progress of Chesham Museum. He reported that the Museum had celebrated its tenth anniversary this year and was growing in terms of both exhibitions and visitor numbers. The Museum had received a major refit this year which, he opined, could only help to increase its popularity. It was also attempting to increase its professionalism by working towards proper museum accreditation as set by the Arts Council. The Museum was also leading on the Town Bell Restoration project and had obtained significant funding to allow it to be operational by the 3rd August to mark the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War. He then concluded by saying that the Trustees were seeking further volunteers, particularly anyone with fund-raising experience and business acumen to assist with the Museum’s on-going development.

The Mayor offered his congratulations and appreciation for all the works the Environmental Group and the Chesham Museum had undertaken during the administrative year.

7. INTRODUCTION OF NEW TOWN CRIER

The Mayor welcomed Mr Anthony Church, member of the Ancient and Honourable Guild of Town Criers and current Town Crier of Oxford to the meeting and asked him to formally introduce Chesham’s latest Town Crier.

Mr Church said he was honoured to introduce the new person to the post but, before doing so, said he would like to put on record his appreciation and admiration of the former Town Crier, Mr William Ellis. He stated that Mr Ellis had done much to enhance the cause of those with learning disabilities and Mr Ellis’s dedication and enthusiasm in the role has greatly impressed his fellow guild members.

He then formally introduced Ms Jane Dodd who had been selected as the new Town Crier by a panel appointed by the Town Council. He stated he was delighted another female was to be joining the ranks of the Guild of Town Criers and presented her with an official badge.

Ms Dodd, in turn, thanked Mr Church and the Council for putting their faith in her and promised to serve the town to the best of her ability as she fulfilled this very important role.

The Mayor thanked Mr Church for his attendance and offers of further support and guidance and stated he believed Ms Dodd would be an excellent ambassador for the town.

8. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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

Mr Roger Smith from the Chesham Society asked if the Council would continue to lobby Chiltern District Council to implement infrastructure improvements as part of the Delivery Development Plan Document it was delivering and, if necessary, press the case at the Public Examination in the autumn.

The Mayor replied that he was aware that Buckinghamshire County Council was intending to provide increased educational and day care places in the area but opined that this Council would always fight for its residents where it perceived a problem. The Clerk added that the Council had already raised concerns on inadequate infrastructure improvements to complement the proposed increased housing in Chesham and he had no reason to believe that his Members would not continue to reiterate these concerns.

9. TOWN MAYOR'S CLOSING REMARKS

Councillor Shaw thanked all those present for their attendance. He also stated his appreciation of the Town Clerk, the Town Council's officers and his wife, Mary, for their support during the year. He wished his Deputy, Councillor Fayyaz every future success in his likely role of Mayor in 2014/15.

Finally Councillor Shaw advised that his Mayor's Mayoral Allowance expenditure for 2013/14 had been printed off for tonight's meeting and encouraged anyone interested to take a copy for examination.

10. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 8.30pm.

Town Mayor