

CHESHAM TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES of the ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

HELD ON THURSDAY 15 MAY 2008

PRESENT Councillor Mrs M. Molesworth, Town Mayor (presiding)
Councillor Mrs A.M. Pirouet, Deputy Town Mayor

Councillor	E.L. Bamford	Councillor	F.G. Holly
"	M.Z. Bhatti	"	Mrs C. Littley
"	M.E. Brand	"	Mrs G. Walker
"	Mrs J.C. Fulford		

Officer: W. Richards - Town Clerk

In Attendance:

Police Constable K. Flint and 63 members of the public, including representatives from outside organisations.

1. TOWN MAYOR'S WELCOME

The Town Mayor, Councillor Mrs Merrin Molesworth, welcomed everyone present to the Annual Town Meeting.

The Town Mayor gave a brief outline of Town Council's policies and actions during the council year 2007/08. These included:

- Renovation of Meades Water Gardens. Major re-alignment of chalk stream completed.
- Took over direct management of Chesham Moor Gym and Swim centre and re-equipped the Moor Fitness gym there.
- Mayor organised highly successful 'Family Fun Day' to promote seasonal opening of outdoor pool.
- Key partner in the highly successful 'Chesham Medieval Day' in Lowndes Park celebrating 750 years of town's Charter.
- Major partner in town attaining Silver Gilt Award in 'Britain in Bloom' competition.
- Renovated Woodland View Play Area.
- Submission of Lowndes Park 'Parks for People' Heritage Lottery Fund bid seeking £1m funding.
- Continued financial support for, and proactive involvement in the tasking of the Police Community Support Officers.
- Record attendance for the Elgiva pantomime 'Wizard of Oz'.
- Development of new Council website which is much more 'user friendly' for public.

She indicated that next year's projects were likely to include:

- Possible management of the contract for Chesham market.

- Stage 2 Submission of Heritage Lottery Fund bid for Lowndes Park subject to achieving stage 1 award.
- Continued restoration of the River Chess through the ‘Impress the Chess’ campaign.
- Support heritage weekend and celebration of 150th anniversary of Chesham Cemetery.
- Online ticketing for The Elgiva.
- Marston Pavilion – develop scheme to re-build.

Councillor Mrs Molesworth further reported that, regrettably, there had been some slippage in some of her environmental commitments. She advised that this was primarily due to the overwhelming number of civic events she had been delighted to have been invited to in her capacity as Mayor.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Town Councillors Ms. J.E. Bramwell, N.L. Brown and Mrs P.R. Wilkinson; Mr and Mrs Duke; Mr and Mrs D. and S. Carter and Mr B. Meldrum.

3. MINUTES OF LAST ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

The Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 17 May 2008 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. MAYORAL AWARD SCHEME

The Mayor gave details on the fourth Mayoral Award scheme. She offered her thanks to the Council’s Policy and Projects Officer and the judging committee for their hard work and thanked the sponsors, the Buckinghamshire Examiner and the Chesham Chamber of Trade and Commerce. She then read out the achievements of the nominees.

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

- *The People’s Award* - **Mrs Christine Stanners** for her voluntary work over many years with COPAG (the Chesham Over-50 Positive Action Group), promoting the health and welfare of older people.
- *Rafe Chiles Young Person’s Award* – **Paige Lacey-Akers** for her project work at Chesham Youth Centre.
- *Business Award* – **The Drawingroom art gallery and café** in Francis Yard, for its outstanding commitment to community life.

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

6. 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 affect the Town.

Mr Vince Crompton, Chairman of the Allotments Group, questioned why the Council was not prepared to invest in security fencing at Cameron Road Allotments site in light of considerable monies being received from allotment land sales in 1980s.

The Town Clerk advised that the Council had expressed its wish to work with the Allotments Group in improving security but did not feel palisade fencing, as requested by the group, was either desirable or necessary. Moreover he referred to the guest speaker at the recent Allotments Group open meeting who also opined that security fencing could be counter productive.

County Councillor Steve Adams enquired whether the Council was still prepared to take on further devolved services from Buckinghamshire County Council.

The Town Clerk responded by saying that, while no formal decision had been taken, he had no indication that his Members were unhappy with the current arrangements in respect of devolved services.

Mr Keith Fletcher asked whether the Council was happy with the three storey addition to 122 High Street.

Councillor Mrs Fulford, on behalf of the Council, responded by saying that planning permission was the domain of Chiltern District Council and this particular development had received planning approval some years ago.

7. POLICING IN CHESHAM 2007/2008 REPORT

Police Constable Kevin Flint gave a brief overview of policing in Chesham for the last financial year.

He was pleased to report that the levels of policing had been significantly increased over the last year. The town now had two sergeants and a dedicated team of beat officers together with seven Police Community Support Officers. In addition, the town and surrounding area had been divided into Neighbourhood Action Group areas and each of the four areas would have a specialist neighbourhood area officer tasked with tackling crime in that area.

PC Flint further advised that crime figures for Chesham remained at a similar level to last year but it appeared anti social behaviour had declined. However there had been anti-social behaviour 'hot-spots', notably in The Backs and at the Moor car-park. He opined that while the police had been active in the area, it was inevitable that such behaviour would be displaced to another part of town. He also reported that a number of Acceptable Behaviour Contracts had been issued in Waterside.

He finally reported that the police had invested in the purchase of a community support van which would have CCTV attached to it and, which, should help to increase conviction rates particularly at incidents of disorder.

The Mayor then enquired as to whether anyone in attendance had specific questions for PC Flint.

In respect of a query as to whether the new policing arrangements would result in Chesham Police Station being open longer, PC Flint replied that the hours would remain between 10.00am – 2.00pm on weekdays based on the rationale that it was better to have police constables on the beat.

The apparent lack of police officers patrolling the streets was raised by a resident. PC Flint expressed surprise that this was a perception since patrols had been increased and, of course, supplemented by the Police Community Support Officers who were the ‘eyes and ears’ of the beat officers.

In response to a question about increased monitoring of speeding, PC Flint reported that all officers had now been trained in the use of a speed gun. In addition, he advised that the public could request a particular road to be monitored so long as it was safe to do so. A further query followed as to how often Hivings Hill was checked for speeding vehicles and PC Flint replied by saying it was done periodically but priority was inevitably given to accident black-spots across the county.

A question was asked about the level of drug possession and dealing within town. PC Flint responded that it was obviously a matter of sensitivity to discuss in an open meeting but he could report that a number of drug warrants had been issued over the last twelve months and he believed that the police had made significant progress in curbing criminal activity in this area.

There being no further questions, the Mayor thanked PC Flint for his time and very encouraging report.

8. ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP

Mr Phil Folly, Chairman of the Environmental Group, gave a verbal report on the Group's activities for 2007/08. Among the projects this year was:

- Removal of excessive oak saplings at Lowndes Park.
- Major clean-up of River Chess from Queen's Head public house to Holloway Lane.
- Large-scale clearance of the Pond Park area in association with BCTV.
- Development of new pond at Chesham Bois School.
- Re-establishment of pond at Amersham and Wycombe College Chesham campus.
- Removal of Himalayan Balsam by Duke of Bedford allotments.
- Support for ‘Chesham Plastic Bag free’ campaign.
- Attendance of two members at a pond survey training day at Oxford Brookes University.

Mr Folly paid particular tribute to his predecessor Mr Ian Freeman, who had served the group so well as Chairman over a number of years

The Mayor offered her congratulations and appreciation for all the works the Environmental Group had done during the financial year and added her thanks, on behalf of the Council, to Mr Freeman.

9. TOWN MAYOR'S CLOSING REMARKS

Councillor Mrs Molesworth thanked all those present for their attendance and lively contributions throughout the meeting. She expressed her pleasure at seeing so many people representing so many different organisations and, particularly singled out Mr Kevin Patrick, head teacher at Chesham Park Community College, who she opined was making great efforts to link the college into the wider community.

10. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 8.30pm.

Town Mayor