

CHESHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the PERFORMANCE REVIEW COMMITTEE

held on Monday 26 January 2009

PRESENT: Councillor M. Fayyaz – Chairman (presiding)

Councillor	Mrs J.C. Fulford	Councillor	F.G. Holly
Councillor	D.J. Lacey	Councillor	Mrs C.M. Michael
Councillor	Mrs M. Molesworth	Councillor	Mrs A.M. Pirouet

IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillor Mr A.K. Bacon

Officers: Ms K.A. Graves – Policy and Projects Officer

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor P.W. Yerrell.

7. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor A.K. Bacon declared a personal interest in Agenda Items 4 and 5 as an attendee of Moor Fitness Gym. Councillor Mrs J.C. Fulford declared a personal interest in Agenda Items 4 and 5 as a regular swimmer at Chesham Moor Gym & Swim and an attendee at meetings of the Friends of Chesham Moor Gym & Swim. Councillor Mrs C.M. Michael declared a personal interest as a regular swimmer at Chesham Moor Gym & Swim. Councillor F.G. Holly declared a personal interest in Agenda Items 4 and 5 as a member of the Friends of Chesham Moor Gym & Swim.

8. **MINUTES**

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Performance Review Committee held on 3 November 2008 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

9. **CHESHAM MOOR GYM & SWIM SERVICE REVIEW**

The Committee considered the report and the minutes of the Service Review Panel held on 20th January 2009. Councillor Bacon queried how the panel was intending to ascertain whether local leisure providers would be interested in managing the centre. The Policy and Projects Officer informed the Committee that this was to be determined at the next panel meeting, but in the previous Best Value Service Review of the facilities, local leisure providers had been written to asking for expressions of interest.

It was

RESOLVED

that the report be noted.

10. **THIRD QUARTER REPORT ON PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

In respect of Corporate performance, a Member queried why the percentage of correspondence dealt with within seven days had decreased from 98.0% in 2007/08 to 90.0%. The Policy and Projects Officer responded that only one letter in the third quarter had taken longer than seven days to reply to. However, due to the small amount of correspondence, this was sufficient to reduce the percentage to 90.0%. Members asked whether this meant that the Town Hall Office receives very little correspondence. The Policy & Projects Officer opined that this was not the case, however, much of the correspondence is in the form of notices that do not require a response and are therefore not included within this category.

In consideration of the allotments, a Member questioned why the percentage of uncultivated allotment land was as high as 2.5% when there is a waiting list of prospective tenants. The Policy and Projects Officer explained that the figure is purely a “snapshot” of tenancies taken on a day at the end of the quarter. The small number of plots making up the 2.5% were at that time being allocated to new tenants, having recently been vacated. A Member asked what procedure was in place if a tenant was not cultivating their plot. The Policy and Projects Officer explained that inspections are undertaken regularly by the Parks and Premises Manager and the Allotments Group to identify plots in a poor state of cultivation. Gentle and serious reminders are issued as appropriate and if a plot is found to be persistently uncultivated, the tenant is issued with a month’s notice to quit. Cllr Mrs Pirouet informed the Committee that the Allotments Group had made proposals to the Recreation and Arts Committee at its meeting of the 24th November 2008 to tighten up the inspections procedure. The Recreation and the Arts Committee had made a number of observations upon the proposals which had been fed back to the Allotments Group for further consideration.

In respect of the Elgiva, it was noted that whilst attendances are down, the income as a proportion of operating costs has increased and the cost to the Council per elector is lower than in the third quarter of 2007/08. A Member queried whether expenditure is likely to rise significantly in the last quarter of 2008/09. Another Member asked whether the renovation works conducted in the summer of 2007 could have contributed to the comparatively higher cost figure for the third quarter of 2007/08, but it was not clear whether expenditure from the Renewals and Repair budget is included within the figures for the cost to Council per elector. The Policy and Projects Officer stated that she did not know, but would ask the finance officers for more information.

[Additional information: The income as a proportion of operating costs has increased in the third quarter for 2008/09 compared to 2007/08 because the income has increased to a greater extent than the expenditure. The income has increased despite the reduction in attendances, because the income is not solely dependent on audience attendance. Hire fees (from non-council productions) form income to the Council that is independent of attendance. There was a substantial increase in hire fees between 2007/08 and 2008/09. In 2007/08 the hire fees at the end of the third quarter were £36,101, compared to £45,996 in 2008/09.

The cost to the Council is lower at the third quarter 2008/09 than in the previous year because the deficit is lower (£65,647 in 2007/08 and £64,299 in 2008/09) and the number of electors has increased from 15,598 to 15,762, reducing the cost from £4.21 per elector to £4.08 per elector.

The profile of expenditure year on year reflects increased expenditure in the final quarter due to financial accruals and 2008/09 will be no different.

Renewals and repairs expenditure, such as the renovation works, are not included within these figures.]

It was noted that the attendance for matinee film screenings was very low and a Member asked whether these screenings were cost effective. Cllr Bacon explained that it is necessary to run the films through before the evening screening, so the Elgiva was obtaining additional revenue by allowing the public to attend. Cllr Mrs Fulford stated that the film costs a standard price to hire regardless of the number of screenings, so the only additional costs for the matinee would be for staffing. A Member queried whether there had been an increase in the number of online bookings. The Policy and Projects Officer agreed to find out.

[Additional information: The number of online bookings over the past five months is as follows:

August – 129

September 136

October – 173

November – 149

December 239

As of the 22nd January, there have been 182 online bookings.]

In reference to the Town Hall, it was noted that the number of lettings for the Town Hall was less than that for the third quarter of 2007/08 and a Member asked whether this was the result of a decline in block bookings. The Policy and Projects Officer stated that she was aware of one block booking that had ceased during the course of the year, but that at least one new block booking had started. It was noted that, similar to the Elgiva, bookings are down on last year, but the income as a proportion of the operating costs has increased and the cost to the Council per elector is lower than in the third quarter of 2007/08.

[Additional information: The relationship between the number of bookings and the income is not directly proportional. Bookings vary in length and facilities used, and thus in the fees charged. Therefore, it is possible for the number of bookings to decline, whilst the income increases.]

Concerns were raised over the decline in the number of marriage/partnership ceremonies compared to last year. The Policy and Projects Officer explained that couples are no longer able to pay an all-in-one fee to the Chiltern Hills Register Office that covers both the registrar's services and the hire of the Lowndes Suite. Couples now have to pay for the registrar's fee and the hire of the Lowndes Suite separately. This appears to be deterring some people from getting married at the Town Hall. Concern was raised over the possibility that it is more expensive to get married at the Town Hall than at other local venues. Members asked the Policy and Projects Officer to report back with the comparative costs of getting married at the Town Hall compared to Beaconsfield Chambers. A discussion was held on the possibility of changing the hire fees for the Lowndes Suite to encourage weddings to be booked at the Town Hall. There was a consensus of opinion that the matter should be discussed further once the figures have been obtained.

[Additional information: The registrar fees for a ceremony held at a licensed venue (e.g. Chesham Town Hall and Beaconsfield Chambers) from 1st April 2008 to 31st March 2009 are as follows:

*Monday to Thursday: £285
Friday and Saturday: £385
Sunday and Bank Holidays: £460*

*The fee for hiring the Lowndes Suite: £61.65
Fees for hiring Beaconsfield Chambers: Monday to Saturday £85
Sunday and Bank Holiday weekend Saturdays: £ 150*

*The fees (including registrar) for getting married at Wycombe Registration Office:
Monday to Thursday: £40
Friday to Saturday: £130
Sunday: £270]*

In reference to Chesham Moor Gym & Swim, Members requested that two new performance indicators are added for 2009/10: income as a proportion of operating costs and an indicator measuring attendance at the gym.

It was noted that the actual third quarter figure for the cost to the Council per elector for Democratic Services and Corporate Management is approximately half the target figure. A Member queried whether the final cost for the year would be under target. In response to the Policy and Projects Officer's statement that she believed that the final figure was expected to be on target, a Member asked what was going to happen in the final quarter that would incur costs equalling approximately half of the target figure for the year. The Policy and Projects Officer said that she would ask the finance officers and report back.

[Additional information: One component of the Democratic Services and Corporate Management budget is audit fees. The budgeted expenditure for the audit fees for 2008/09 is £10,870. However, the Council has not been invoiced for the previous two years' worth of fees (£19,700). This figure will, therefore, be accrued in the final quarter. Taking this in to account, Democratic Service and Corporate Management is expected to be on target at the end of the fourth quarter.]

Some Members expressed their dissatisfaction with the number of unanswered questions resulting from the report.

It was

RESOLVED

that the report be noted.

11. **CLOSE OF MEETING**

The meeting closed at 7.55 pm.

CHAIRMAN