

CHESHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the TOWN COUNCIL

held on Monday 23rd March 2020

PRESENT Councillor Q. Chaudhry – Town Mayor (presiding)

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|------------|-------------------|------------|-----------------|
| Councillor | P.J. Hudson | Councillor | Mrs D.M. Varley |
| " | D. MacBean | " | N. Varley |
| " | Mrs J. E. MacBean | " | F.S. Wilson |
| " | R.C. McCulloch | | |

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A.K. Bacon, J.L. Baum, M.Z. Bhatti MBE, N.L. Brown, Miss E.A. Culverhouse, M. Fayyaz, A.W. Franks M.W. Shaw, N.T. Southworth, S.P. Willmoth and P.W. Yerrell

90. **MINUTES**

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on the 20th January 2020 and be confirmed and signed by the Town Mayor as a true record.

91. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interests that were brought to the Mayor's notice.

92. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no questions that were brought to the Mayor's notice.

93. **MAYORAL ENGAGEMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Members had before them and duly noted the list of the Town Mayor's and Deputy Mayor's engagements from 21st January – 23rd March 2020.

94. **PLANNING COMMITTEE**

It was moved by Councillor R.C. McCulloch and seconded by Councillor Mrs J.E. MacBean and

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 3rd February 2020, be received and approved.

95. **RECREATION AND ARTS COMMITTEE**

Arising from Minute No. 50 of the meeting of the Recreation and the Arts Committee of the 17th February 2020, Councillor Mrs MacBean advised that she had proposed that the new name of this committee was to be 'Community, Assets and Environment' and this had been resolved to recommend. This was agreed.

It was moved by Councillor Mrs J.E. MacBean and seconded by Councillor P.J. Hudson and

RESOLVED

that the Minutes and recommendations of the meeting of the Recreation and Arts Committee, as amended, held on 17th February 2020, be received and approved and adopted.

96. **FINANCE COMMITTEE**

It was moved by Councillor D. MacBean and seconded by Councillor F.S. Wilson and

RESOLVED

that the Minutes and recommendations of the meeting of the Finance Committee held on 2nd March 2020, be received, approved and adopted.

97. **CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) - EFFECT ON FINANCES AND OPERATION**

A discussion took place on the current coronavirus crisis and its possible effect on the Council's finances, operation and services. It was noted that while both the closed Elgiva and Gym and Swim were under monthly review, a lot of theatres nationally were already extending their respective closure dates.

It was agreed that the Council's robust financial position meant that it could continue to offer a limited service to the public even with the loss of income from the closure of the Elgiva Theatre and Gym and Swim Centre and it was agreed that (subject to monthly reviews) the Council should guarantee that the staff, including the regular 'casuals', were paid for the next three months. However, with the Elgiva and Gym and Swim Centre operating as businesses, it was also agreed that officers should seek to get 80% of the wages back from these staff members through the government's emergency payment for employees who were furloughed (i.e. placed on leave of absence).

The previously circulated coronavirus emergency measures protocol was agreed to be implemented by Council.

Councillor Mrs MacBean gave a brief update on local initiatives and the creation of a volunteer group in Chesham to tackle the impacts of the virus locally.

It was

RESOLVED

that the actions and recommendations agreed in the meeting be implemented.

98. **STAFFING RESTRUCTURE PROPOSALS**

The Council considered the ‘The Case for Change’ paper produced by the Town Clerk and recommendations of the Staffing and Strategy Working Party thereof.

Foremost to the paper and recommendations was that the Town Clerk’s post be reassessed and to become a Chief Executive Officer with much more of a strategic role. Councillor Wilson opined that this was overdue as, with the pressures of the many different activities and services of the Council, the Clerk was currently having to react to many day-to-day issues, when the post would be better served dealing with bigger strategic issues, particularly with the imminent new Buckinghamshire Council.

Councillor McCulloch replied that, while he had no problem with the concept of the creation of the Chief Executive Officer post, he believed the implications of a reorganised second tier of staff and cost implications thereof should be considered first, along with a proper timetable. However, other Members argued that it should be down to the postholder to consider any new staff and recommend to Council a structure that fits his or her vision. Moreover, it was argued that in-depth consultation with staff and their representatives would need to be undertaken first in any case.

After a further short debate, it was moved and

RESOLVED

that the Council agrees to the creation of the position of a Chief Executive Officer.

Note: Councillor McCulloch requested that his vote against this resolution be recorded.

99. **UNITARY AUTHORITY PARISH CHARTER AND UPDATE ON OPERATION**

Members considered the report written by the Town Clerk pertaining to developments in the commencement of the new Buckinghamshire Council on the 1st April 2020.

Central to the report was the proposed ‘Town and Parish Council Charter’ developed by Buckinghamshire County Council officers in consultation with some town and parish clerks. With the coronavirus virus being pre-eminent, it was accepted that few Members had an opportunity to digest it and therefore proposed that comments be circulated by email by individual Members, for the Clerk, in liaison with the Mayor and Chairman of the Community, Assets and Environment Committee, to draft a response to Buckinghamshire Council.

The response from the Leader of Buckinghamshire County Council to the concerns previously raised by this Council were also noted.

It was

RESOLVED

that Members be requested to circulate their comments on the draft Charter by email for the Clerk, in liaison with the Mayor and Chairman of the Community, Assets and Environment Committee, to draft a response to Buckinghamshire Council.

100. **CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2020/21**

It was

RESOLVED

that the adoption of the calendar of meetings be deferred for further consideration.

101. **POLICY REVIEWS**

It was

RESOLVED

that the updated version of the Council’s policies on Risk Management, Training and Violence at Work be agreed and the principle of setting up a small working party to review policies on a half-yearly basis be further agreed.

102. **VE DAY COMMEMORATIONS**

Following government advice on public gatherings during the current coronavirus pandemic, it was

RESOLVED

that the proposed VE Day commemorations be postponed until VJ Day in August.

103. **TARGETED HABITAT IMPROVEMENT IN CHESHAM CEMETERY**

The Council considered a proposal from the Chiltern Rangers to improve the environment in the Cemetery.

It was

RESOLVED

that the principle of targeted habitat improvement in the Cemetery in partnership with the Chiltern Rangers and Friends of Chesham Cemetery be agreed.

104. **PAYMENTS NO. 6**

Following consideration of Payments Sheet No. 6, it was

RESOLVED

that Payments Sheet No. 6 in the grand total of £207,465.92 be approved and the various payments and transactions set out therein be confirmed.

105. **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.

106. **ELGIVA PANTOMIME**

Members considered a change to the existing contract for the following two years outstanding with New Pantomime Productions.

It was

RESOLVED

that a revision to year two of the remaining three-year contract to New Pantomime as set out in the report, with year three to be considered anew, be agreed.

107. **CLOSE OF MEETING**

The meeting closed at 8.10pm.

CHAIRMAN

27th March 2020