

CHESHAM TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the RECREATION AND THE ARTS COMMITTEE

held on 19th September 2016

PRESENT

Councillor	N.L. Brown	Councillor	P.J. Hudson
"	Miss E.A. Culverhouse	"	D.J. Lacey
"	Q. Chaudhry	"	Mrs J.E. MacBean
"	M. Fayyaz	"	Mrs D.M. Varley
"	A.W. Franks		

IN ATTENDANCE

Councillor A.K. Bacon.

Officers: Mr W. Richards, Town Clerk.
Mr P. Isom, Parks and Premises Manager

Mr A. Tilbury and representatives of the Chesham in Bloom Committee.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M.W. Shaw and S.P. Willmoth. An apology for lateness was received from Councillor N.L. Brown.

16. **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN FOR THE REMAINDER OF ADMINISTRATIVE YEAR 2016/17**

The Deputy Mayor opened the meeting and, following the recent resignation of Councillor Lacey as Chairman, called for nominations for Chairman of the Recreation and the Arts Committee.

It was

RESOLVED

that Councillor Mrs J.E. MacBean be elected Chairman for the remainder of the Council year.

Note: Councillor Mrs MacBean took the Chair

Councillor Mrs MacBean called for nominations for Vice-Chairman of the Recreation and the Arts Committee.

It was

RESOLVED

that Councillor P.J. Hudson be elected Vice-Chairman for the remainder of the Council year.

Councillor Mrs MacBean also welcomed Mr Paul Isom, the Council's recently appointed Parks and Premises Manager, to the meeting.

17. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillors Lacey and Mrs MacBean declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 8 as members of the Pond Park Community Association and Asheridge Vale and Lowndes Community Association respectively.

It was noted that, as agreed, all previously stated Declaration of Interests remained unchanged from the first meeting of the administrative year.

18. **MINUTES**

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Recreation and the Arts Committee held on 13th June 2016, be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

19. **ELGIVA BOARD OF MANAGEMENT**

Members received the Minutes of the Elgiva Board of Management meetings of 23rd May and 18th July 2016.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted.

Arising from the Minutes of the 23rd May, Councillor Franks noted and welcomed the success in bar sales at the Charity Boxing Evening. Councillor Bacon highlighted Minute No. 6 which stated that since 2003, the cost to the Chesham taxpayer for the theatre had reduced from £9.62 per annum to £5.51 per annum and opined that the management and Board should be congratulated on this.

Arising from the Minutes of the 18th July, Councillor Bacon stated that he was disappointed that the Elgiva Board's Chairman's own financial figures were no longer going to be provided to the Recreation and Arts Committee and asked why this was. The Clerk replied that the new accounting system the Council was adopting may lead to confusion if the Chairman's own figures, based on the old budgetary system, were circulated but he was happy to provide them to Councillor Bacon and any other Member upon request.

20. **ALLOTMENTS GROUP**

Members received the Minutes of the meetings of the Allotments Group held on the 14th June and 12th July 2016.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted.

Arising from the Minutes of the 14th June, Councillor Bacon enquired as to whether highway verge cutting issues at Cameron Road referred to in the Minutes had now been resolved. The Clerk advised that he believed it had been.

21. **CHESHAM ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP**

Members received the Minutes of the meetings of the Chesham Environmental Group held on the 23rd June and 18th August 2016.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted.

22. **IMPRESS THE CHESS GROUP**

Members received the Minutes of the meetings of the Impress the Chess Group held on the 23rd June and 4th August 2016.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted.

Note: Councillor Brown arrived at the meeting at 8.10pm

23. **FUTURE OF CHESHAM IN BLOOM**

The Chairman welcomed Mr Allen Tilbury, Chairman of the Chesham in Bloom Committee, to the meeting and invited him to address the Committee in respect of the current and future activities of Chesham in Bloom.

Firstly Mr Tilbury introduced the Chesham in Bloom Committee who were also present at the meeting. He then stated that the main purpose of their attendance tonight was to ascertain what enhanced support the Council could provide to the Chesham in Bloom entry to the Thames and Chiltern in Bloom competition in 2017 and beyond. He announced that, for the fifth time, the town had been awarded a

Gold Award and for the second time, Best Large Town winners and also had obtained a number of other new awards this year. While stating this was an excellent achievement, he opined that the Chesham in Bloom initiative would need greater assistance from the Council in future years to sustain this success, particularly with key members retiring from the committee.

Mr Tilbury then cited a few examples of possible greater influence by the Council such as paying for the watering of the flowerbeds in the town centre and on St Marys Way and putting greater pressure on other authorities to agree cutting back in areas requiring a road closure. He also suggested that weed spraying needed to be significantly improved to enhance the general state of the town next year.

Several Members offered congratulations to the Chesham in Bloom team and paid particularly tribute to Mr Tilbury and Mr Vince Crompton, who were both stepping down from the Chesham in Bloom committee this year. It was suggested, that as an act of appreciation, the Committee agree at this meeting that the Council should pay for the entry fee next year, both for the main category and the separate entering of Lowndes Park into the Parks judging (having obtained a Silver Gilt award this year).

In respect to specific additional Council involvement, it was agreed that it would be beneficial for the Chesham in Bloom to elect a new Chairman in the first instance and then for this person to meet with the Chairman of the Recreation and the Arts Committee, the Town Clerk and the Parks and Premises Manager to discuss individual initiatives and the implementation thereof.

It was therefore

RESOLVED

1. That the Committee agrees to fund the cost of the entrance fee to the Thames and Chilterns in Bloom 2017 judging competition and the entry of Lowndes Park into the Parks judging competition.
2. That Councillor Mrs MacBean, the Town Clerk and the Parks and Premises Manager be delegated to discuss, with the new Chesham in Bloom Chairman and other members, a possible enhanced role for the Council and report back to this Committee on the implications thereof.

The Chairman thanked the Chesham in Bloom Committee members for their attendance and they duly left the meeting.

24. **CHESHAM MOOR GYM AND SWIM CENTRE UPDATE**

The Committee considered the officers' report on the current financial situation and the recent dilapidations report undertaken at the Chesham Moor Gym and Swim Centre facility.

It was

RESOLVED

1. That the Gym and Swim financial position is noted.
2. That the current position in respect to matters on the building's structure and health and safety be noted and that the dilapidations report be considered by the Gym and Swim Working Party at the earliest opportunity.
3. That the roofing survey commissioned for the Elgiva be noted.

25. **PURCHASE AND LOCATION OF COUNCIL BENCHES AND STREET FURNITURE**

Members considered the report from the Town Clerk on various requests for new seating across the town. It was noted that the Council had originally earmarked £2,250 for seat/bench replacement in 2016/17.

The first request was from the Pond Park Community Association for a bench in Marston Field following representations from residents. The cost of such a bench would be in the region of £650 -700 and the Community Association was prepared to make a match-funding contribution of £100. This was agreed by the Committee.

Members also agreed to a second request from the Chesham Allotments Group for a contribution of up to £300 for a bench at Cameron Road allotments recognising, with appropriate engraving, the efforts of the retiring Chairman and former Chairman of the Allotments Group. The cost was estimated to be around £400 and the Allotments Group would be contributing £50 and a local Member £50 as match funding.

The Committee then had a lengthy debate on the principle of providing seats and street furniture on land which was not the Council's, most notably footpaths and pavements, following a request from the Asheridge Vale and Lowndes Community Association to restore a public bench in both Bellingdon Road and Asheridge Road, previously located on Buckinghamshire County Council land. It was noted that during the 1980s, an audit of all benches was undertaken in Chesham and the ownership of many of these in the town was inconclusive as to whether they belonged to this Council or Chiltern District Council.

Members generally agreed the principle of effectively deciding to provide and maintain all street furniture across the town, both now and in the future, was a major decision and should be subject to a further report following a full audit and attempting to ascertain genuine demand.

It was therefore

RESOLVED

1. That an amount of up to £600 be agreed for a new bench at Marston Field.
2. That an amount of up to £300 be agreed for a bench at Cameron Road allotments.

3. That a further report, following a full audit of existing benches and an assessment of demand for any existing and new street furniture, be brought to a future Committee meeting.

26. **NATURAL HABITAT SITES FOR TOWN VERGES**

Following on from the Recreation and the Arts Committee meeting in June, Members considered proposals and sites put forward by the Chesham and District Natural History Society in respect to certain roadside verges being left as natural wildflower areas and therefore cut once a year.

Councillor Bacon opined that initial consultation he had undertaken in his ward had suggested that many residents were against this initiative and he also highlighted that the Principal at the Chiltern Hills Academy had expressed his reservations. The Chairman, Councillor Mrs MacBean, replied that she was aware that some residents would wish to receive more information and proposed therefore that the recommendation be amended to '*That the Committee agrees to investigate and potentially support a one year trial at these sites...*'. This was agreed.

Councillor Bacon remained of the view that this still merited further discussion and, in accordance with Standing Order 26(d), requested that the matter be considered at full Council.

It was therefore

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND

that the Committee agrees to investigate and potentially support a one-year trial at the listed sites during the summer of 2017, with a review period in September 2017 to assess the feasibility of making them permanent natural habitat sites.

27. **CLOSE OF MEETING**

The meeting closed at 8.55pm.

CHAIRMAN