

**CHESHAM TOWN COUNCIL**

**MINUTES** of the meeting of the **POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

held on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> July 2014

**PRESENT**

Councillor	V.M. Abraham	Councillor	Mrs C.M. Michael
"	A.K. Bacon	"	F.S. Wilson
"	Mrs P.R. Cherrill	"	P. W. Yerrell
"	M. Fayyaz		
"	P.J. Hudson		

In attendance: Councillor R. C. McCulloch and Councillor C.H. Spruytenburg.

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mrs C.I. Boxer, T. Franks, Mrs R. Juett and M.W. Shaw.

1. **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN FOR ADMINISTRATIVE YEAR 2014/15**

The Mayor opened the meeting and called for nominations for Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee.

It was

**RESOLVED**

that Councillor V.M. Abraham be elected Chairman for the remainder of the Council year.

*Note: Councillor Abraham took the chair.*

Councillor Abraham called for nominations for Vice-Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee.

It was

**RESOLVED**

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

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Wilson declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 5 as a member of the Chesham Action Partnership.

3. **MINUTES**

It was

**RESOLVED**

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

4. **CESHAM ACTION PARTNERSHIP**

Members received the Minutes of the meeting of the Chesham Action Partnership held on the 18<sup>th</sup> March 2014.

It was

**RESOLVED**

that the Minutes be noted.

5. **TOWN CENTRE WORKING GROUP**

Members received the Minutes of the meeting of the Town Centre Working Group held on the 27<sup>th</sup> March 2014.

It was

**RESOLVED**

that the Minutes be noted.

Arising out of Minute No. 2 (i), it was noted that Peri Peri's sign remained illuminated despite a letter from the Clerk. Councillor Hudson advised that the outlet had still not applied for planning permission and Chiltern District Council was aware of the situation.

The Chairman, Councillor Abraham, advised he had spoken to the Policy and Projects Officer about the viability and usefulness of the group. She had explained that attendance had dropped off significantly in the last two years and, with key members missing, meaningful information sharing and a joined-up approach to issues was becoming very rare. Members noted that other groups such as the Chesham Action Partnership and the Council's own Highways Working Party covered much that was discussed at the Town Centre Working Group, and cognisant of officers' workloads, it was agreed that the Town Centre Working Group be wound up from immediate effect. Councillor Hudson stated he had no objections to this but it would be useful to occasionally raise such matters such as no cycling in the High Street at a future Development Control Committee meeting.

6. **CHESHAM AND DISTRICT TRANSPORT USERS' GROUP**

Members received the Minutes of the meetings of the Chesham and District Transport Users' Group held on the 1<sup>st</sup> April and 13<sup>th</sup> May 2014.

It was

**RESOLVED**

that the Minutes be noted.

Arising out of Minute No. 14/34 of the meeting of the 13<sup>th</sup> May, Councillor Yerrell enquired whether further pressure could be brought to bear on Buckinghamshire County Council in respect to improving the bus service between Chesham and Stoke Mandeville hospital. Councillor Bacon advised he had raised the same matter at the recent Local Area Forum and the Clerk agreed to chase the matter up with the relevant County Council officer.

7. **DEVOLVED SERVICES UPDATE**

The Committee received an update on the current Devolved Services activities.

The Clerk reported he had attended a recent meeting where Buckinghamshire County Council outlined its plans to devolve significant amounts of grass-cutting and highway verge and hedge-cutting to the parishes and this would be a topic for discussion at the next Development Control meeting.

It was

**RESOLVED**

that the Report be noted.

8. **UPDATE ON PETITIONING OF HS2 LTD**

The Committee received an update on the petitioning against the High Speed Two Bill.

It was

**RESOLVED**

1. That the update on the petition on the HS2 Bill be noted.
2. That the Clerk, in liaison with Councillor Franks, be delegated to recommend to the representing counsel, appropriate sites to visit in Chesham pertinent to the Bill.

9. **FORWARD PLAN TO DECEMBER 2014**

The Six Month Forward Plan to December 2014 was presented to the Committee.

Members agreed it was a useful document reflecting both key dates and the variety of work officers undertook. Councillor Mrs Cherrill enquired as to whether the proposed Development Control Committee meeting of the 4<sup>th</sup> August 2014 may stop Members attending the World War I centenary commemoration planned for that evening. The Clerk advised that he was confident the meeting would have finished by then allowing Members to assemble straight at the Clock-tower.

It was

**RESOLVED**

that the Forward Plan be noted.

10. **ADOPTION OF A SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

The Clerk presented a report laying out a possible use of social media policy to the Committee. He explained that the proposals were not meant to be an attempt to monitor Members' personal social media comments but simply to ensure correct usage of Council sites and forums.

Members agreed that the adoption of such a policy was desirable, but there was a reluctance to adopt it until it had been considered in more detail due to its implications for all Members. Accordingly it was agreed that a small working party should review the proposed policy and report back its findings to the next Policy and Resources Committee. Councillor Hudson also suggested that Chiltern District Council's recently devised Social Media policy be studied as a possible template.

It was therefore

**RESOLVED**

that Councillors Bacon, Mrs Cherrill and Hudson be delegated to review the draft policy and report back to a future Committee.

11. **CONSULTATION POLICY REVIEW**

The Committee considered the revised Consultation Policy document.

It was

**RESOLVED**

that the revised strategy, as presented, be adopted.

12. **OVERVIEW OF HEALTH AND SAFETY AT CHESHAM MOOR GYM AND SWIM CENTRE**

The revised Health and Safety policy for the Chesham Moor Gym and Swim Centre was presented and considered by Members.

While its breadth and detail was welcomed by the Committee, Councillor Mrs Michael raised her concerns that the growing catering side of the facility was not alluded to. Moreover she opined that it would be advantageous for the list of first-aid and safety equipment to be documented.

Members agreed with Councillor Mrs Michael's comments and it was

**RESOLVED**

that the Health and Safety policy for the Chesham Moor Gym and Swim Centre be revised in light of the Committee's observations and be represented for formal adoption.

13. **FINANCIAL REPORT – OUT-TURN 2013/14**

The Chairman, Councillor Abraham, expressed his appreciation for the work undertaken by the Finance and Contracts Manager in compiling the end of year figures for Members' consideration. The Chairman then sought observations and queries from Members on the report.

Members congratulated officers on the major reduction on the actual out-turn while not compromising services. Particular praise was given to the staff at the Elgiva and Chesham Moor Gym and Swim Centre and it was agreed a letter of appreciation be written to the respective managers. Councillor Wilson suggested that, while the figures for the Elgiva and the Chesham Moor Gym and Swim Centre were indeed excellent, there may be a case when preparing budgets, to set these centres more realistic targets which were likely to be more reflective of actual year-end figures whilst having a contingency fund to cover any unforeseen problems. He opined that too cautious budgets for each service centre meant that monies were tied up during the year and could not be utilised elsewhere. It was agreed that this was something the Finance Working Party could consider when it next met.

Councillor Bacon referred to the report in respect to the Council's Lodges. He asked that it be noted that, contrary to the wording in the report, the Council had simply agreed to look at renting options anew when a property became vacant rather than look to rent at a commercial rate.

He also highlighted the paragraph within the report that alluded to reduction of the Local Council Tax Support Grant and emphasised again the significance of the District Council not passing over the government's mitigating grant to the Council's finances. He opined that this Council needed to keep lobbying the principal authority to pass over the full amount it received from central government since it was clear Chesham was being more greatly affected by this than the rest of the District.

After a brief, further discussion, it was

**RESOLVED**

1. That the report be noted and that the works not completed in 2013/2014 (including the Renewals and Repairs) be carried over to

2014/2015.

2. That the net sum of £32,000 representing the net overall improvement be transferred to the Renewals and Repairs budget, with the transfer to be carried out within the 2014/15 accounts.

14. **FINANCIAL STATEMENT AND ANNUAL REPORT 2013/14**

The Finance and Contracts Manager reminded the Committee that, following changes in the banding levels regarding the type of published accounts, the Council decided at its meeting held on the 18<sup>th</sup> April 2011 to publish an Annual Return rather than the Statement of Accounts as it had done previously, thereby saving around £12,000 on external audit fees. The Council also decided to produce a set of new Financial Statements similar to the previous accounts for management information but which were not to be audited.

The Finance and Contracts Manager highlighted a slight typographical error in the Annual Report which was duly noted by Members.

Members congratulated the Finance and Contracts Manager on the clarity of the figures and it was

**RESOLVED**

that the Financial Statements and Annual Report, as amended, be approved and signed by the Town Mayor, Town Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer as appropriate and be made available to the public with copies also being placed at the principal authorities and libraries.

15. **FINANCIAL REPORT TO 31<sup>ST</sup> MAY 2014**

The Financial Report for two months to 31<sup>st</sup> May 2014 was presented.

It was

**RESOLVED**

that the Report be noted.

16. **INTERNAL AUDITOR'S REPORT**

The Committee considered the latest Internal Auditor's report.

Having been advised that there were no major issues raised, it was

**RESOLVED**

that the report be noted.

17. **RIGHT TO REQUEST FLEXIBLE WORKING TIME POLICY**

The Committee considered a proposed Flexible Working Time Policy document in light of recent changes in government legislation.

The Committee agreed to one-line change as proposed by Councillor Yerrell to avoid repetition.

It was

**RESOLVED**

that the proposed policy, as amended, be adopted.

18. **CLOSE OF MEETING**

The meeting closed at 8.45pm.

CHAIRMAN