

CHESHAM TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the RECREATION AND THE ARTS COMMITTEE

held on 13th June 2016

PRESENT

Councillor	N.L. Brown	Councillor	D.J. Lacey
"	Miss E.A. Culverhouse	"	Mrs J.E. MacBean
"	A.W. Franks	"	M.W. Shaw
"	P.J. Hudson	"	S.P. Willmoth

IN ATTENDANCE

Councillors B.R. Whitfield and P.W. Yerrell

Officer: Mr W. Richards, Town Clerk.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Q. Chaudhry and Mrs D.M. Varley.

1. **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN FOR ADMINISTRATIVE YEAR 2016/17**

The Mayor opened the meeting and called for nominations for Chairman of the Recreation and the Arts Committee.

It was

RESOLVED

that Councillor D.J. Lacey be elected Chairman for the remainder of the Council year.

Note: Councillor Lacey took the Chair

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

It was

RESOLVED

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

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Mrs MacBean declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 5 as a member of the Chesham Allotments Group, Impress the Chess and the Chesham Environmental Group.

Councillors Hudson and Willmoth declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda items 5, 6 and 8 as members of the Friends of Chesham Moor Gym and Swim Centre should it reform.

Councillors Brown and Shaw declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 7 as Members of Buckinghamshire County Council. Councillor Shaw also Councillor Miss Culverhouse declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 8 as a regular user of the Chesham Moor Gym and Swim Centre.

3. **MINUTES**

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Recreation and the Arts Committee held on 7th March 2016, be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

4. **ALLOTMENTS GROUP**

Members received the Minutes of the meeting of the Allotments Group held on the 15th March 2016.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted.

5. **FRIENDS OF CHESHAM CEMETERY**

Members received the Minutes of the Friends of Chesham Cemetery meetings of 24th March and 14th April 2016 and the A.G.M. held on 14th April 2016. It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted.

6. **CHESHAM ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP**

Members received the Minutes of the meetings of the Chesham Environmental Group A.G.M. and group meeting held on the 21th April 2016.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted.

7. **IMPRESS THE CHESS GROUP**

Members received the Minutes of the meeting of the Impress the Chess Group held on the 17th May 2016.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted.

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

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

In respect to the matter of new financial reporting, Councillor Whitfield opined that, contrary to the suggestion in the officers' report, comparisons with previous years should not be too onerous to determine.

It was

RESOLVED

that the financial position be noted.

9. **DEVOLVED SERVICES UPDATE**

Members considered the report from the Town Clerk and Parks and Premises Manager on the current position in respect to verge cutting and other verge side maintenance that the Council had taken on from Buckinghamshire County Council.

The Clerk also took the opportunity to announce that he had received a letter from the Parks and Premises Manager which confirmed he would be retiring towards the end of July. While Members were disappointed that Mr Ayres would be leaving the Council and this was likely to adversely affect the devolved services and general parks and open spaces maintenance provision in the short term, the Committee expressed its gratitude for the years of service and professionalism Mr Ayres had provided the authority and it was agreed that some formal recognition should be made by the Council. In the meantime, it was agreed that the Staffing and Strategy Working Party quickly begin the process of deciding how best this position be filled in both the short and long term and whether Parks and Premises team's structure needs reviewing.

In regards to the current provision, the Committee expressed general satisfaction with the results to date, being cognisant that the poor weather and staff absences had slightly hampered the operation, though a view was expressed that there should not be an over-reliance on volunteers to assist with the works.

A query was raised about weed clearance but it was accepted that the Parks and Premises team needed to concentrate on grass cutting in this intense growing period and weeding would need to be tackled later.

The Clerk mentioned that a representative of the Chesham and District Natural History Society had held a recent meeting with Councillor Mrs MacBean, the Parks and Premises Manager, the Chairman of the Chesham Environment Group and himself about the possibility of leaving some verges and small open spaces as natural wildflower areas. Some concern was raised as to whether this would be universally popular with residents but the representative was invited to submit proposed roads and sites for further consideration.

It was therefore

RESOLVED

That the Report be noted and the Parks and Premises team be congratulated on progress to date.

10. **CHESHAM MOOR GYM AND SWIM CENTRE STRUCTURAL REPAIRS**

The Committee debated the report from the Chesham Moor Gym and Swim Centre Manager and Town Clerk on works required at the Chesham Moor Gym and Swim Centre.

Councillor Willmoth enquired as to the brief for the surveyor. The Clerk advised that he had originally enquired as to whether a full structural survey was required but, as outlined in the report, the surveyor was of the view that the building was structurally sound and instead had offered his services to inspect the site with officers and Councillor Whitfield from the Finance Working Group to an idea of costs to bring the building up to what would be considered a reasonable appearance and ensure safer working practices. Councillor Willmoth opined that he believed that a full dilapidations report should be undertaken which should include a full facility 'health check' and report and it should be done on the whole building and environs not just the pool and the gym. He added that this ought to include, as a matter of priority, statutory checks on matters such as gas safety and electrical wiring amongst others.

The Committee agreed that such a dilapidations report should be undertaken as suggested by Councillor Willmoth and Chiltern District Council be approached for advice as it was noted it was going through a similar exercise with its leisure centres. A brief discussion then ensued as to what works should proceed before the report was commissioned and received. It was noted that the Centre Manager had already commissioned essential health and safety works in respect to the walls, fascia and poolside slabs to make safe. It was agreed that officers continue with works, if necessary, under £5,000, in adherence with the Council's Financial Regulations on

the understanding it was in the Repairs and Renewals budget.
It was therefore

RESOLVED

1. that, following advice from other statutory and non-statutory bodies, a full dilapidations and health and safety brief for the Chesham Moor Gym and Swim Centre be designed and presented for approved by the Council.
2. that officers be authorised to carry out necessary repairs under £5,000 in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations.

11. **SKOTTOWES POND, LOWNDES PARK**

The current and future issues and problems facing Skottowes Pond was presented to the Committee in a comprehensive report produced by the Policy and Projects Officer - most notably in respect to siltation; the condition of the island and over-abundance of wildfowl.

Members agreed that a comprehensive, long term plan was required to tackle these issues and it was

RESOLVED

that a Working Party consisting of Councillors Hudson, Lacey and Mrs MacBean be set up to develop a plan to renovate Skottowes Pond.

12. **ALLOTMENT UPDATE AND CONSIDERATION OF NEW TENANTS**

The Committee was advised that the waiting lists for both Cameron Road and Asheridge Road allotment sites had disappeared, save for existing tenants wanting extra plots near to their current plots. Accordingly the Committee was asked whether it wished to change the policy which allowed only Chesham residents to hire an allotment.

Members had no real opinions on the matter either way and, instead, suggested this decision be based around the view of the Allotments Group.

It was

RESOLVED

that the reduction on the allotment waiting list be noted and a decision as to whether to allow non Chesham residents to rent allotments be determined by the Allotments Group.

13. **LOWNDESBOURNE TOWN PICNIC**

The Committee noted the proposals for a third 'Lowndesbourne' concert and second Town Picnic to be organised jointly by the Friends of Lowndes Park and the Council in Lowndes Park in September.

The Committee was keen to support the event again and it was

RESOLVED

that a grant amount of £500 and the direct hiring of portable toilets be agreed to support the Lowndesbourne and Town Picnic event in September.

15. **CLOSE OF MEETING**

The meeting closed at 9.10pm.

CHAIRMAN

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