

CHESHAM TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the COMMUNITY, ASSETS AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

held on 30th November 2020

PRESENT Councillor Mrs J.E. MacBean (Chairman – presiding)

Councillor	M.Z. Bhatti MBE	Councillor	P.J. Hudson
"	Q. Chaudhry	"	R.C. McCulloch
"	Miss E.A. Culverhouse	"	N.T. Southworth

IN ATTENDANCE

Councillor A.K. Bacon

Officers: Mr W. Richards, Town Clerk;
Ms K. Graves, Policy and Projects Officer.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M. Fayyaz and A.W. Franks

20. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Hudson declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 6 – Proposed Fees and Charges 2021/22 - as his wife was a regular hirer of the Town Hall.

It was noted that, as agreed, all previously stated Declarations of Interests remained unchanged from the first meeting of the administrative year, either noted on the Register of Interests or reported subsequently.

21. MINUTES

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Community, Assets and Environment Committee held on 7th September 2020, be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

22. ENVIRONMENTAL ECO-AUDIT REPORT AND DISCUSSION

The Chairman, Councillor Mrs MacBean, referred Members to the updated Eco-Audit Action Plan and welcomed the progress already made. She suggested that there were some large environmental aspirational projects in the audit that the Council would need to give consideration to as it set next year's budgets but it was too early to approve them at this meeting as the financial implications needed serious assessment. However, she suggested that the small-scale environmental projects previously circulated namely: portable whiteboards and a timer for the water heater in the Town

Hall; a timer for the immersion heater at Codmore Pavilion and a switch to recycled plastic bin bags across the Council, be financed from this year's budget. This was agreed.

In respect to the offer from the company, which undertook the original audit, to provide a two-hour online workshop for Members, it was agreed that, while desirable, it would be difficult to facilitate before Christmas and perhaps best scheduled when the pandemic had somewhat abated in 2021.

It was

RESOLVED

1. That the Report be noted
2. That the small-scale environment enhancements, as presented, be approved from the 2020/21 budget.
3. That the Eco Workshop be considered again in the new year.

23. **WATER ABSTRACTION REDUCTIONS**

The Policy and Projects Officer presented her paper on water abstraction and reported that, on World Rivers Day in September, Affinity Water announced that it had stopped taking water from its two boreholes at the top of the Chess catchment. She also advised that Thames Water had committed to ceasing their abstraction from the Upper Chess catchment by 2024.

This news was welcomed by the Committee and it was agreed that a vote of thanks be offered to the many volunteer and environmental groups who had lobbied for many years to stop this abstraction from the ecologically important chalk stream river.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Report be noted.

24. **PROPOSED FEES AND CHARGES 2021/22**

The Committee considered the proposed fees and charges for the financial year 2020/21. The Clerk advised that with the current pandemic affecting many people's disposable income, it was proposed that few, if any, increases on fees and charges were being proposed. The principle of a general freeze on price increases was broadly agreed by Members, even though it was noted that there may be a rationale for raising the Cemetery fees after benchmarking with other town councils.

Councillor Bhatti enquired whether there had been noticeably more demand for interments in the Cemetery in recent months. The Clerk advised that, fortunately, this had been not the case despite the original fears that Covid 19 related deaths may put a lot of pressure on the cemetery.

It was

RESOLVED

that the proposed Fees and Charges be agreed.

25. **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.

26. **ENERGY SUPPLIERS**

Members considered options for changing energy suppliers to reflect the Council's commitment to become carbon neutral.

It was noted that comparing prices from the current provider and the preferred 'green energy' company was difficult due to fluctuating prices, particularly with gas, and varying consumption levels during recent pandemic lockdowns. However, there was a general agreement that the Council ought to be prepared to pay an additional premium for 100% green energy if it was committed to reducing its carbon emissions as long as the price difference was not prohibitive. It was also suggested that any new contract be relatively short term so switching providers could be undertaken regularly if so required.

It was

RESOLVED

that officers, in liaison with the Chairman of this Committee, be delegated to confirm the preferred green energy supplier subject to final prices being confirmed.

27. **COVID 19 VACCINATION PROGRAMME**

The Clerk advised that a very recent request had been received from the NHS to undergo a mass vaccination programme at the Town Hall for a number of weeks.

While it was noted that there was a possibility that regular hirers may be lost, the importance to the community was agreed to be paramount and therefore it was

RESOLVED

that the Community Hall be made available for exclusive use by the NHS to undertake Covid 19 vaccinations as soon as practicably possible.

28. **CLOSE OF MEETING**

The meeting closed at 7.08pm.

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CHAIRMAN