

**CHESHAM TOWN COUNCIL**

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

held on Monday 17<sup>th</sup> February 2014

**PRESENT** Councillor Mrs C.M. Michael – Chairman (presiding)

Councillor	A. K. Bacon	Councillor	P. J. Hudson
"	Mrs P. R. Cherrill	"	Mrs R. Juett
"	M. Fayyaz	"	M. W. Shaw
"	T. Franks	"	P. W. Yerrell

In attendance: Councillors D. J. Lacey, R. C. McCulloch and C.H. Spruytenburg.

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors V. M. Abraham, Mrs C.I. Boxer and F. S. Wilson

55. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest that were brought to the Chairman's notice.

56. **MINUTES**

It was

**RESOLVED**

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on the 9<sup>th</sup> December 2013 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

57. **FINANCE WORKING PARTY**

Members received the Minutes of the meeting of the Finance Working Party held on the 27<sup>th</sup> November 2013.

It was

**RESOLVED**

that the Minutes be noted.

Arising out of Minute No. 3, Councillor Yerrell enquired as to the situation with the investment deposit with the Co-operative Bank. The Finance and Contracts Manager advised that the investment would mature imminently and there were no other Council monies deposited with the Co-operative Bank.

58. **TOWN CENTRE WORKING GROUP**

Members received the Minutes of the meeting of the Town Centre Working Group held on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2013.

It was

**RESOLVED**

that the Minutes be noted.

Arising out of Minute No.2 (ii), Councillor Littley asked whether the Town Clerk could write to Peri Peri to request that its internally illuminated light could be switched off as it was in a conservation area. The Clerk agreed to do so.

Arising out of Minute No.6 (ii), Councillor Bacon enquired as to whether there had been any further news on the restoration of Lords Mill. The Clerk stated that there appeared to be no progress on the matter of ownership and the overall prognosis in respect to the restoration looked gloomy.

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

Members received the Minutes of the meetings of the Chesham and District Transport Users' Group held on the 17<sup>th</sup> December 2013 and the 7<sup>th</sup> January 2014.

It was

**RESOLVED**

that the Minutes be noted.

60. **DEVOLVED SERVICES UPDATE**

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

It was

**RESOLVED**

that the Report be noted.

Councillor Yerrell enquired as to whether persons who were illegally fly-posters could be

fined. The Clerk advised that his officers did not have this power but opined that unauthorised posters appeared less frequently as it had become apparent the Council was vigilant in removing them.

61. **CALENDAR OF MEETINGS**

The Committee received the proposed calendar of meetings for the administrative year 2014/15.

It was

**RESOLVED**

that the calendar of meetings for 2014/15 be noted and adopted.

62. **TACKLING LITTER CAMPAIGN**

Members had a long debate over possible initiatives and actions designed to reducing litter and increasing recycling within the town.

There was a general consensus amongst the Committee that it would be beneficial for the Council to lead on any initiatives and education campaigns. It was noted that the local schools were proposing a 'Green Day' event on the 21<sup>st</sup> May and it was agreed that the Council should try and be involved with that and perhaps organise a week long campaign of education and initiatives during that period. It was also agreed that Chiltern District Council and its waste contractor and the police should be involved with the campaign, the latter in respect to potentially empowering the Police Community Support Officers to issue on-the-spot fines to those caught littering. It was also accepted that the supermarkets and shop-owners had a major role to play in this initiative.

After some discussion, it was agreed that a working party should be set up to make recommendations upon the scope of the anti-littering campaign and report back to a future meeting.

It was

**RESOLVED**

that Councillors Fayyaz, Hudson, Mrs Juett and Spruytenburg be appointed upon an Anti-Litter Working Party to make recommendations upon a campaign on this topic.

63. **CHILDCARE VOUCHER SCHEME**

The Finance and Contracts Manager reported that he had been approached by an employee asking whether the Council would agree to sign up to a salary sacrifice childcare voucher scheme. He explained that the government endorsed scheme was a way of helping working

parents save money on the cost of their childcare. The recommended company providing these vouchers makes a 5.5% charge, on top of any vouchers taken up by the employee, but the Finance and Contracts Manager advised that this charge should be more than offset by the savings made on employer's national insurance contributions relating to the voucher under a salary sacrifice scheme.

Members agreed that, as good employers, they ought to be seen to support such schemes, particularly as it was cost-neutral, and it was

**RESOLVED**

that the Council joins the Childcare Voucher Scheme on a salary sacrifice basis.

64. **ABSTRACTION REFORM CONSULTATION**

The Policy and Projects Officer's report on the current DEFRA consultation, "Making the Most of Every Drop", on abstraction reform was considered by the Committee.

Councillor Bacon reminded the Committee that the Council had raised its objections to over-abstraction many times and therefore it was important that it do so again officially here. Councillor Yerrell highlighted that the sink-holes reported across the country during the recent floods had been linked to abstraction and opined that this was worrying and that it emphasised the need for the Council to raise its concerns. It was agreed that the Council should make a response to this important matter rather than leaving it solely to the Impress the Chess Group. Nevertheless Members accepted that there were some complicated technical issues and therefore agreed that the final response be delegated to the Policy and Projects Officer who had a great deal of knowledge in this area.

It was

**RESOLVED**

that the Committee agrees to respond to the DEFRA "Making the Most of Every Drop" consultation and that the final response be delegated to the Policy and Projects Officer.

65. **FORWARD PLAN TO SEPTEMBER 2014**

The Six Month Forward Plan to September 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 Hudson suggested the anti-litter campaign could now be added to the plan.

It was

**RESOLVED**

that the Forward Plan be noted

66. **FINANCIAL REPORT TO 31<sup>ST</sup> DECEMBER 2013**

The Financial Report for nine months to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2013 was presented.

The Finance and Contracts Manager reported that, further to his report to the last Council meeting, there was an additional £17,000 surplus that could now be added to the Renewals and Repairs budget. This was welcomed and agreed by the Committee. He also reported that the Elgiva and Chesham Moor Gym and Swim Centre were still performing strongly while the latter had indeed obtained its highest ever recorded monthly income for the gym in January. Moreover, he advised that the two unforeseen, potentially expensive items mentioned in his report were likely now to be less of a strain on the Council's finances than originally envisaged.

Members welcomed the generally positive news on the finances and the decision of the government not to 'cap' town and parish councils in 2014/15. However Councillor Bacon warned that the reduction of the grant passed down by Chiltern District Council from government to mitigate the effects of the Localisation of Council Tax legislation has had a negative effect on the Council's finances. He stated that it was likely that this funding shortfall would be increased next financial year, which, he opined was unfair on the residents of Chesham with its higher number of benefit claimants than the rest of the District. He also expressed concern on the information supplied by Councillor Hudson that Thames Valley Police may not continue to fund CCTV provision and opined that this Council could ill-afford to take over the costs.

Councillor Hudson responded by saying that Chiltern District Council considered it permissible to reduce the amount of the grant passed over to town and parish councils to match its own reduction received from the government's Revenue Support Grant and suggested that, regrettably, in future, the Council may have to consider implementing the sort of savings measures forced upon the principal authorities.

It was

**RESOLVED**

that the report be noted and the revised Renewals and Repairs budget be agreed.

67. **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.

68. **NEWSLETTERS**

Members discussed officers' recommendations that the Council use local magazine 'YourChesham' to replace the current publications utilised as Council Newsletters.

A brief discussion ensued over what languages the Council's articles should be offered in, should a translation request be forthcoming. It was agreed that, as the articles would only be part of a bigger publication, officers would need to liaise with the publishers of 'YourChesham' to decide collectively what would be logistically and financially practicable in respect to translation.

The Committee was happy with the officers' recommendation as outlined within the report and it was

**RESOLVED**

that the proposal to continue with monthly Council news reports in 'YourChesham', with the addition of four extended newsletter articles per year, at the reported cost, be confirmed.

69. **CLOSE OF MEETING**

The meeting closed at 9.00pm.