

Agenda Item: 3

CHESHAM TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES of the meeting of the Council

held on Monday 16 January 2023

Councillors:

Councillor Parveiz Aslam	Councillor Justine Fulford
Councillor Wilford Augustus	Councillor Paul Harding
Councillor Alan Bacon	Councillor Umar Hayyat
Councillor Joseph Baum	Councillor Francis Holly
Councillor Simon Booth	Councillor Chasey Hood
Councillor Qaser Chaundhry	Councillor Rachael Matthews
Councillor Emily Culverhouse	Councillor Jane MacBean
Councillor Mohammad Fayyaz	Councillor Gareth Williams
	Councillor Fred Wilson

In attendance:

Mr Tony Marmo	Chief Executive Officer
Ms Kathryn Graves	Community, Economy and Environment Manager
Mrs Georgina Fernandez	Democratic Services Officer

72. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Majid Ditta (Town Mayor) and Nick Southworth and were accepted by Council.

In the absence of the Mayor, Councillor Augustus (Deputy Mayor), assumed the position of Chair.

73. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

74. TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES FROM THE LAST MEETING

Minutes from the Council meeting held on 12 December 2022 were noted and approved.

75. REVIEW OF ACTION TRACKER

The Democratic Services Officer confirmed all actions are on track and will be monitored accordingly.

76. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Councillor Wilson posed a question from a local resident with regard to the new car parking machines. The question asked if Chesham Town Council were aware that the machines are difficult to use, give no receipt and give no option to pay in cash. For these reasons the resident and friend are no longer using the car parks as the machines are a disincentive to visiting the town centre. Is the council keeping a track of usage and footfall?

The Chief Executive Office confirmed that Chesham Town Council does not track the usage of the car park. Councillor MacBean confirmed that Buckinghamshire Council monitor the machines on a daily basis and have gone to great pains to leave two cash machines in two of the car parks so

that the public have an option when paying. There is a robust system in place if there is a payment query, with a process of appeal.

77. TO RECEIVE THE MAYORAL ENGAGEMENTS AND ANY OTHER MAYORAL ENGAGEMENTS THE MAYOR MAY WISH TO LAY BEFORE COUNCIL

The Mayor and Councillor Augustus circulated a list of engagements up until December 2022 to the committee prior to the meeting.

78. TO NOTE THE FOLLOWING MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS:

The minutes of the Finance Committee on 19 December 2022 were received.

RESOLVED:

- i) The minutes were noted**

79. ANNUAL STRATEGIC PLAN 2023-4

The Chief Executive Officer presented the Council's strategic aims and projects for 2023-24 to members for consideration, amendment and/or approval. The Council's Annual Strategic Plan should align with the budget presented for the year and identifies the projects that shall be delivered during the year.

The Chief Executive Officer confirmed the draft Annual Strategic Plan for 2023-24 was presented to the CARE Committee on the 21 November 2022 and the Finance Committee on the 19 December 2022. Both the CARE committee and the Finance Committee responded positively to the Annual Strategic Plan strategic aims and projects.

Councillor Baum confirmed he was very supportive of the strategic plan but asked for two amendments to the strategic aims:

- 4. Replace the end of the sentence with, 'whilst ensuring the town remains a destination of choice'
- 6. Replace 'securely managed' with 'properly managed'.

RESOLVED:

- i) That the annual strategic plan be approved with the above amendments.**

80. ANNUAL BUDGET AND PRECEPT 2023-24

The Chief Executive Officer presented the Annual budget and precept 2023-24 for approval by the Council. The Chief Executive Officer confirmed the Council Tax Base has increased from 8,175.53 to 8,288.68.

The Chief Executive Officer confirmed a draft of the Annual Strategic Plan and Budget 2023-24 was presented to Community, Assets, Recreation and Environment (CARE) Committee on the 21 November 2022 and to the Finance Committee on the 19 December 2022. The Finance committee confirmed they wished only an operating budget to be set against the precept, with any projects funded by an ear marked reserve, grant funding or other fundraising programmes.

The Chief Executive Officer confirmed that the total funding to be levied on Buckinghamshire Council for 2023-24 would be set at £1,117,894. This represents a 9.06% increase in the precept.

Councillor Booth was keen to voice that no-one is complacent about the pressures the people of Chesham are under due to inflation levels currently. Councillor Booth continued that Chesham Town Council face pressure on its budget due to this inflation, particularly in utilities and staff costs. The Council have managed to deliver a balanced operating budget, with ear marked reserves being used to deliver key projects such as the Chesham Neighbourhood Plan and Gym and Swim development. The Council are investing in people and the future of our town. When the budget came to the finance committee it was pleasing that it was well received across all party members.

Councillor Bacon commented that we already have very reduced reserves which means we have less scope to be prepared for things that hit us. Councillor Bacon continued that he was worried about the 10% increase in fees and charges as being shown as a 10% income as some people will decide to stop spending on the basis of an increased charge. Councillor Bacon felt the Council should delay spending reserves on projects until we have a better picture of how the budget is standing up in 2023-24.

RESOLVED:

- i) **That the Budget for 2023/24 is approved.**
- ii) **That the total funding to be levied on Buckinghamshire Council for 2023-24 be set at £1,117,894.**

81. THE ANNUAL RESERVES POLICY AND PROGRAMME 2023-24

The Chief Executive Officer presented to Council a draft Reserves Policy and Programme 2023-24 for members for approval. He confirmed that he had been working with the auditor who has advised that reserves should be at a minimum 25% and not much higher than 50% of net revenue expenditure. Ear marked reserves should be realistically deliverable and proportionally correct for the project. He confirmed the draft reserve level of £620,000 at the 31 March 2023 cannot be confirmed until the accounts for 2022-23 have been closed.

Councillor Wilson asked if the Chief Executive Officer could explain what net revenue expenditure is. The Chief Executive Officer confirmed that this is the total Council revenue expenditure, less income from fee's, charges and grants. The net revenue expenditure is the amount we request as a precept from Buckinghamshire Council.

Councillor Bacon asked if the wording on the reserves policy could be firmed up so as to ensure that the council does stick to the agreed minimum level of general reserve. As such an amendment was proposed to replace 2.1, 'The general reserve will be replenished as part of the budget process for the next financial year' with 'The general reserve will be replenished to at least the agreed 25% minimum level in the next financial year'. This was seconded by Councillor Fayyaz. Councillor Booth and Councillor Wilson opposed this amendment, arguing that the council needed flexibility. Councillor MacBean argued that the 25% figure was not obligatory, but just guidance to councils. A vote was taken, and the amendment was lost.

RESOLVED:

- i) **The annual reserves policy and programme 2023-24 is approved.**

82. COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL)

The Community, Economy and Environment Manager presented a report to approve a process and policy for managing Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) receipts received by the council.

RESOLVED:

- i) The policy and process for CIL expenditure is approved.

83. COMPLAINTS PROCEEDURE

The Chief Executive Officer presented for approval a revised complaints procedure. It was highlighted that a new tier had been added in the formal process which had been used effectively recently.

RESOLVED:

- i) The complaints procedure is approved.

84. ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

The Community, Economy and Environment Manager presented a revised Environmental Policy for approval. Councillor Fulford thanked The Community, Economy and Environment Manager for the revised policy and for her efforts and stated that everything she hoped would be in the policy was.

RESOLVED:

- i) The environment policy is approved.

85. SCHEDULE OF PAYMENTS

The Chief Executive Officer presented a schedule of payments to the council for approval.

RESOLVED:

- i) The schedule of payments is approved.

OTHER NOTICES

Councillor MacBean requested the Council congratulate the Elgiva and all the staff for being recipients of 3 industry awards for the recent pantomime.

The meeting closed at 8.34pm