

CHESHAM TOWN COUNCIL

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

held on 15th February 2021

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

Councillor	M.Z. Bhatti MBE	Councillor	R.C. McCulloch
"	Miss E.A. Culverhouse	"	N.T. Southworth
"	M. Fayyaz		

IN ATTENDANCE

Officers: Mr W. Richards, Town Clerk
Mr D. Essex, Chesham Moor Gym and Swim Manager
Mr D. Cooper, Elgiva Manager

An apology for absence was received from Councillor A.W. Franks

29. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no Declarations of Interest that were brought to the Chairman's notice.

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.

30. **MINUTES**

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Community, Assets and Environment Committee held on 30th November 2020, be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

31. **ENVIRONMENTAL ECO-AUDIT REPORT AND DISCUSSION**

The Committee received an update on the Eco-Audit action plan as outlined in the Policy and Projects Officer's report. It was noted that several initiatives had been undertaken since the last meeting including; the purchase of reusable whiteboards to replace flipcharts at the Town Hall and the purchase of recycled plastic refuse sacks, currently being trialled. Moreover, 30 saplings were planted at Codmore Field, as part of the Codmore Field Management Plan and, in Berkhamstead Field Community Meadow, 155 hedging plants had been planted to restore an old hedgerow on the field boundary with Nashleigh Hill Recreation Ground and to fill up gaps on the northern

and eastern boundary hedgerows. The Depot also ran the ‘Chip Your Christmas Tree for Free’ scheme

As part of the Eco-Audit, the Council was recommended to investigate changing the management regimes of its open spaces and the Committee was advised that, in respect to Co-op Field, officers were proposing to alter the mowing regime for 2021, leaving the majority of the field unmown except for walking routes that will be maintained through the field and around its edges. The reduction in mowing will reduce the carbon footprint of the field’s maintenance immediately and provide the opportunity to identify the wildflowers and grasses that will grow during the 2021 season. Members welcomed the initiative but suggested advisory signage may be appropriate to inform the public of the rationale behind this.

Members also considered whether they wished to participate on an on-line eco workshop from the consultant who had undertaken the audit originally. It was agreed to facilitate this and requested that the consultant provide some possible dates.

It was

RESOLVED

1. That the mowing regime of Co-op Field be restricted to mowing paths through and around the edges of the field.
2. That the Committee agrees to have an online workshop provided by the eco-Audit consultant following confirmation of dates.

32. **LOWNDES PARK ‘REWILDING’ PROJECT**

The Committee was asked to consider the concept of the ‘Chesham Wild’ project in the upper park under development by the Friends of Lowndes Park. Members noted that the project would be a community-led tree-planting and habitat creation initiative with input from a specialist in wildlife habitat creation with the intention to plant 1,200 native trees and shrubs to create a natural-looking woodland along with woodland edge and scrub areas. Specific animal habitats will be provided including bat, tit, kestrel and owl boxes, pollinator areas in the form of mini-meadows below and above the site, spider habitats, and log piles and dead wood for invertebrates and fungi.

The Chairman, Councillor Mrs MacBean, while expressing the benefits that more trees within the park would bring to the town’s environment generally, also highlighted the concerns the Policy and Projects Officer had raised on the significant change potentially that this might have on the ecologically important grasslands in Lowndes Park. She opined therefore it might be appropriate for officers and her to sit down with the authors of the rewilding proposal to ensure all aspects of the environmental implications were raised and considered. She also suggested that it would be advisable to have a scoping document undertaken for the whole park in respect to the ecological implications.

A brief discussion ensued on the maintenance implications which, it was agreed, needed to be considered by the Friends of Lowndes Park over the short and medium term. It was also agreed it was important that the Friends needed to ensure a suitable budget was secured.

It was

RESOLVED

- 1 That the committee support the progression of the 'Chesham Wild' plans whilst requesting that further scoping work be completed and a formal project plan and full budget be brought back prior to final land owner permission being granted.
- 2 That wildlife surveys be investigated with a view to creating a biodiversity baseline for the whole of Lowndes Park.
- 3 That once the baseline is established a new management plan be developed for the whole of Lowndes Park that accords with the aims of the Council's eco audit whilst ensuring full accessibility and enjoyment by its users.

33. **BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL – TOWN AND PARISH CHARTER**

The Buckinghamshire Council's draft Town and Parish charter was presented to the Committee for its consideration with a view to the Council formally signing up to it later in the year. The Clerk advised he had been part of a working group reviewing it as it progressed and suggested there were commitments in it from the Principal Authority which should be beneficial to this Council in future years.

It was agreed that Buckinghamshire Council should be commended in attempting to deliver a charter enhancing communication and working practices between the two tiers of local government in the county. It was accepted that the Council should respond to the consultation document and it was proposed the document be circulated to all Members for their comments to be collated by the Clerk and the Chairman of this Council.

Councillor Southworth enquired to whether there had been any progress on further devolvement of services by the Principal Authority. The Clerk advised he had a meeting with the lead officer in October who had agreed to come back with further proposals but nothing more had been forthcoming to date

After a short, further discussion, it was

RESOLVED

1. That the Committee commends the draft Charter and considers signing up to it once the final draft is received.

2. That the Committee prepares a submission to the consultation and all Members be encouraged to submit comments and responses to the Clerk to be added in to a final submission.

34. **CONSULTATION ON PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDERS**

The Committee was asked to consider whether it wished to respond to the current consultation being undertaken by Buckinghamshire Council on Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs) in respect to anti-social behaviour in car-parks.

Members were of the view that it was right to support the extension to the current orders but Councillor Miss Culverhouse questioned what additional powers they actually provided which currently were additional to the powers possessed by the police. It was suggested that such a question be posed in a response to the consultation and agreed this response be delegated to officers, in liaison with the Chairman on this Committee.

It was

RESOLVED

That the Committee responds to the consultation expressing its wish to see the PSPOs in Chesham being continued which the submission delegated to officers in liaison with the Chairman of the Committee.

35. **WAR MEMORIAL MAINTENANCE**

The cleaning and maintenance recently undertaken on the War Memorial in the Broadway was reported to the Committee. Members expressed their gratitude to the volunteers who had done an excellent job in cleaning the Unknown Soldier. Following a query, the Clerk reported that the volunteers had indicated they would be willing to continue with on-going maintenance as required.

Councillor Fayyaz stated he had assisted with the works and opined that, to complement this, it would be desirable for the pavers, lighting and chain link fencing to be upgraded as well. Councillor Mrs MacBean advised that much of the infrastructure of the High Street was being looked at by the Principal Authority and any potential upgrades around the Broadway would be reported back in due course.

It was

RESOLVED

1. That the Report be noted
2. That a vote of thanks is recorded to the team of volunteers who cleaned the War Memorial in 2020.

36. **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.

37. **UPDATE ON SERVICES DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

The Committee received an update from the Service Heads as well as a full report on operations during the current pandemic.

The Gym and Swim Manager advised that, during the lockdown period, he had been overseeing basic maintenance works to ensure the facility was ready to re-open as soon as allowed to by the government. He had also been liaising with the current gym equipment suppliers in respect to potentially upgrading the equipment. The Elgiva Manager reported he had been overseeing the update of the risk assessments as well as looking at the development of a more community-based programme in the future. He was also hopeful that the Pantomime could be rescheduled for later in the year.

The Chairman thanked the two Service Heads and their teams for their on-going efforts as well as paying tribute to the Parks and Premises team continuously working in very difficult circumstances.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Report be noted

38. **STAFFING STRUCTURE CONSULTATION**

It was

RESOLVED

that the recommendations within the circulated Report be agreed.

39. **CLOSE OF MEETING**

The meeting closed at 7.25pm.

CHAIRMAN