

CHESHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the TOWN COUNCIL

held on Monday 27th February 2012

PRESENT: Councillor D.J. Lacey - Town Mayor (presiding)

Councillor	V.M. Abraham	Councillor	R.C. McCulloch
"	A.K. Bacon	"	Mrs C.M. Michael
"	Ms J.E. Bramwell	"	Mrs A.M. Pirouet
"	N.L. Brown	"	M.W. Shaw
"	Mrs P.R. Cherrill	"	C.H. Spruytenburg
"	P.J. Hudson	"	F.S. Wilson
"	Mrs C. Littley	"	P.W. Yerrell

Officer: W. Richards - Town Clerk

In Attendance: Mr M. Parkes and Mr M. Carling – Better Chesham.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Miss R.K. Bhatti, M. Fayyaz, T. Franks and Mrs G. Walker.

83. **MINUTES**

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on the 9th January 2012 be confirmed and signed by the Town Mayor as a true record.

84. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillors Mrs A.M. Pirouet and M.W. Shaw declared a personal interest in agenda item 6 in light of their representation on the Youth Council.

Councillor F.S. Wilson declared a personal interest in agenda item 7 in light of his membership of the Chesham Chamber of Trade and Commerce.

Councillors Ms J.E. Bramwell, P.J. Hudson and Mrs C.M. Michael declared a personal interest in agenda item 9 in light of their representation of the Friends of Chesham Moor Gym and Swim Centre. Councillor A.K. Bacon declared a personal interest in agenda item 9 as a regular user of the centre.

Councillors R.C. McCulloch, Mrs A.M. Pirouet and M.W. Shaw declared a personal interest in agenda item 9 in light of their representation on the Jubilee Committee.

Councillors A.K. Bacon, N.L. Brown, P.J. Hudson, D.J. Lacey, A. M. Pirouet, C.H. Spruytenburg and F.S. Wilson declared a personal interest in agenda item 12 as Members of Chiltern District Council.

85. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

The Town Mayor invited questions from the public. No questions were forthcoming.

86. **MAYORAL ENGAGEMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Members had before them and duly noted the list of the Town Mayor's engagements from 10th January – 27th February 2012.

The Mayor reported on a very successful Antiques Valuation evening he had attended organised by Chesham Museum and held at the Town Hall on the 16th February. He then duly presented a fund-raising cheque from his Mayoral Allowance to Councillor Spruytenburg as a Trustee of the Museum.

The Mayor, Councillor Lacey, then raised the matter of Buckinghamshire County Council's proposed re-surfacing of roads in town. He opined that those proposed to be undertaken shortly, namely Brockhurst Road; Severalls Avenue; Britannia Road and Essex Road, did not require resurfacing and he asked for the Council's support in his intention of advising Buckinghamshire County Council of this. After some Members suggested they had not viewed the roads so could not comment, he requested a formal vote on the proposal to request that the County Council do not resurface those roads under discussion.

This proposal was **CARRIED** by 9 votes to nil and therefore it was

RESOLVED

that the Council support the Mayor's plan to write to Buckinghamshire County Council requesting that the planned resurfacing at Brockhurst Road, Severalls Avenue, Britannia Road and Essex Road not be undertaken.

Note: In accordance with Standing Order 8(b), Councillor Ms Bramwell requested a recorded vote. The voting was as follows:

In favour: Councillors Abraham, Bacon, Ms Bramwell, Mrs Cherrill, Mrs Littley, Mrs Michael, Mrs Pirouet, Spruytenburg and Yerrell.

In abstention: Councillors Brown, Hudson, McCulloch, Shaw and Wilson.

87. **CHESHAM YOUTH COUNCIL**

The minutes of the Youth Council meeting on the 19th January 2012 were presented and noted.

Councillor Mrs Pirouet advised that the meeting of the 17th February was not quorate so no minutes were taken. Those who did attend received a presentation from an officer at Chiltern District Council about a possible proposal to install 'parkour' equipment in the Co-op Field and it was felt that the Youth Council may be able to assist with this.

88. **PRESENTATION FROM REPRESENTATIVES FROM 'BETTER CHESHAM'**

The Mayor introduced Mr Martin Parkes and Mr Mick Carling from Better Chesham.

Mr Parkes opened the presentation by thanking Members for giving them an opportunity to address the Council. He explained that it was his and Mr Carling's intention to explain a little more about Better Chesham and to seek the Council's support in forming a 'Town Team' following the recently published 'Portas Report' on the state of Britain's town centres.

Mr Carling then informed Members that Better Chesham had been formed over a year ago with the intention of improving the High Street both commercially and environmentally. At the present time it consisted of a mixture of High Street traders and representatives from both statutory and non statutory organisations and was affiliated to both the Chesham Action Partnership and the Chesham Chamber of Trade and Commerce. Its aims specifically were to generate more footfall in the town centre; attract new traders and restaurants into town; make Chesham a destination shopping area and promote a support group to help traders adapt to 21st Century trading conditions.

Though the group had pre-dated the Portas Report, there was now extra incentive to progress with town centre regeneration as an opportunity had arisen to put forward a bid as a pilot town and potentially obtain a grant of up to £100,000. To be able to bid for this grant, the town needed to set up a 'Town Team' to facilitate changes in the town centre. Even without the grant, Mr Carling opined that it would be advantageous to set up a Town Team to provide more effective management of town centre space; more effective use of budgets and resources and greater engagement by the diverse communities in the town.

Mr Parkes then concluded the presentation by saying that Better Chesham was seeking the formal endorsement of the setting up of a Town Team from the Council and agreeing on Member representation upon it.

The Mayor thanked Mr Parkes and Mr Carling for their presentation and then sought the questions from Members.

Councillor Hudson commended Mr Parkes and Mr Carling for their presentation and asked whether the Town Centre Working Group ought to be involved with the Town Team. Mr Carling replied that the Town Centre Working Group was excellent at tackling

problems at an operational/infrastructure level but the Town Team was proposed to be more strategic in outlook.

Councillor Pirouet noted that there was no mention of either the Chesham Youth Council or Chesham Youth Club in the list of possible organisations assisting and enquired as to whether young people would be consulted. Mr Parkes replied that the list was by no means comprehensive and assured Members young people were considered very important to the fabric of town centre life by Better Chesham.

Councillor Bacon stated that Better Chesham was highly deserving of the Council's support. However he had attended the recent open meeting called by the group and had noted the number of different organisations significantly involved with the town centre. He therefore enquired whether Mr Carling or Mr Parkes could explain how the Town Team would add value to these groups and how duplication of roles would be avoided. Mr Carling explained that a 'Town Team' was essential to comply with the Portas Report's possible funding criteria and it would merely be a small executive committee, in many ways simply co-ordinating the excellent work already done by organisations such as Chesham Action Partnership and the Chesham Chamber for Trade and Commerce.

Councillor Ms Bramwell said that, while she was sure this initiative would be good for retailers, she was failing to see how it would benefit the town generally. She stated she would be happier to express support if she could be convinced that actual schemes to help the disadvantaged would be forthcoming. Mr Parkes responded by saying that the group had every intention on making a real difference to those currently struggling in the current economic climate. He gave examples of work already being undertaken such as liaison with the Job Centre and working with bodies associated with apprenticeships and skills training. Moreover he opined that the town centre was not just about retail but a hub for the community and advised that Better Chesham was keen to organise arts and cultural events in the High Street.

Councillor Yerrell questioned whether a Town Team ought to be trying to control what sort of retail outlet came to Chesham and whether this was best left to market forces. Mr Carling responded by saying that many towns did actually regulate what came into the town centre to ensure diversity and sustainability. However he stated that Better Chesham preferred to try and persuade rather than coerce and advised that they had already convinced an Italian restaurant to open up in the Broadway as an example of this.

Councillor Wilson stated that he believed an innovative idea was more likely to obtain funding and therefore asked whether Better Chesham had considered a bid to the Portas pilot scheme based around performing arts and the Elgiva. Mr Carling stated that Better Chesham agreed the Elgiva was an essential part of any town centre regeneration strategy but they had not finalised the focus of the bid thus far.

Councillor Mrs Cherrill enquired if the representatives saw any possible clash between the many independent and chain coffee shops in town over the direction the Town Team may recommend in a Portas pilot bid. Mr Carling replied by saying he was confident a

strategy would satisfy both sort of coffee outlets and not give weight to either as both seemed to be thriving.

The Council then considered Member representation on the Town Team. One Member from each of the main political parties was mooted, along with officer support when and if required. However, the tight timescale for a bid was noted and it was agreed that Better Chesham should be assured of the Council's support in the setting up of a Town Team and that they be encouraged to return to the Council to clarify what Member/officer representation they envisaged for the committee in due course.

Councillor Lacey thanked Mr Parkes and Mr Carling for their attendance and positive presentation and re-emphasised the Council's support for the setting up of a Town Team.

89. **DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE**

It was moved by Councillor V.M. Abraham and seconded by Councillor Mrs A.M. Pirouet and

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Development Control Committee held on 16th January 2012, be received and approved.

It was moved by Councillor V.M. Abraham and seconded by Councillor Mrs T.M. Michael and

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Development Control Committee held on 6th February 2012, be received and approved.

90. **RECREATION AND THE ARTS COMMITTEE**

It was moved by Councillor Mrs C.H. Spruytenburg and seconded by Councillor Mrs A.M. Pirouet and

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Recreation and the Arts Committee held on 16th January 2012, be received and approved.

91. **POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

It was moved by Councillor Mrs C.M. Michael and seconded by Councillor A.K. Bacon and

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on 6th February 2012, be received and approved.

92. **CHESHAM MOOR GYM AND SWIM CENTRE OPENING AND CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS**

The Council considered a request from the Friends of Chesham Moor Gym and Swim Centre to agree free swimming for the planned hundredth anniversary of the open air pool celebrations on the 5th May and a proposal from the Centre Manager to open on the 16th April, subject to it being at no cost to the Council. Both requests/proposals were agreed.

Members also agreed that any cost for the erection of bunting during the Jubilee and Olympic celebrations should be funded through the Council's reserves if necessary.

It was therefore

RESOLVED

1. That the opening of the open air pool for the last two weeks in April 2012 be approved subject to advance ticket sales ensuring it will reach a break-even figure.
2. That the request for free swimming for the public on the 5th May to coincide with the Pool's 100th anniversary celebrations be agreed.
3. That the Council agrees to underwrite the putting up and taking down of bunting in the town centre during the summer events in 2012.

93. **CONSULTATION ON REMOVAL OF TIME RESTRICTIONS ON WEDDING CEREMONIES**

The Council noted that the Protection of Freedoms Bill was currently progressing through the parliamentary process and it included a clause which removes the time restrictions on when a civil ceremony can take place. Accordingly Buckinghamshire County Council was running a consultation on the possible removal of time restrictions for wedding ceremonies such as those offered at the Town Hall to gauge opinion.

Members were broadly supportive of the idea of removing the time restrictions on ceremonies if it resulted in greater income for the Council and therefore officers were instructed to reply to the consultation accordingly.

It was

RESOLVED

1. That the Council agrees to the principle of offering marriage and civil partnership ceremonies outside of the current times of 8am-6pm and report this to Buckinghamshire County Council before the consultation deadline of the 1st March 2012.
2. That officers be granted the authority to agree to hosting ceremonies outside of the current hours as and when they arise, subject to accommodating existing bookings; availability of staff and the change in legislation being implemented.

94. **REDUNDANCY POLICY**

Members were asked to confirm the adoption of the redundancy policy.

Having noted that there were no further comments from staff on the draft policy agreed at the Policy and Resources Committee on the 13th June and being assured there was no reference to enhanced pension provision, it was

RESOLVED

that the draft Redundancy Policy be adopted.

95. **EASEMENT REQUEST – 5 BELLINGDON ROAD**

Members were informed that the Council had been approached by Chiltern District Council's Estates Officer over a joint access arrangement between the two parties following 5 Bellingdon Road being put up for sale. The Council was advised that the potential purchaser of the property was looking for a permanent access over Chiltern District Council and the Council's land.

Having clarified that an Easement gives a permanent right of way for vehicular access and is linked to the property rather than the owner and is therefore acceptable to mortgage lenders, Members debated the request. Councillor Ms Bramwell suggested that, in view of the size of redevelopment being planned, it would be prudent for the Council not to necessarily accept half of the amount of a market value estimation from an independent Valuer, but rather agree to an Easement in principle and then negotiate a figure with Chiltern District Council.

This was agreed by Council and it was

RESOLVED

that the Council agree to an Easement for 5 Bellingdon Road in principle, with the fee to be negotiated.

96. **PAY SCHEDULE NO. 5**

Following consideration of Pay Schedule No. 5, it was

RESOLVED

that Pay Schedule No. 5 in the grand total of £275,361.67 be approved and the various payments and transactions set out therein be confirmed.

97. **CLOSE OF MEETING**

The meeting closed at 9.00pm.

TOWN MAYOR

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