

CHESHAM TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the RECREATION AND THE ARTS COMMITTEE

held on 21st September 2015

PRESENT Councillor D. J. Lacey – Chairman (presiding)

Councillor	N. L. Brown	Councillor	M.W. Shaw
"	M. Fayyaz	"	Mrs D. M. Varley
"	P. J. Hudson	"	B. R. Whitfield
"	Mrs J.E. MacBean		

IN ATTENDANCE

Councillors A.K. Bacon, M.Z. Bhatti MBE, Miss E. A. Culverhouse and R.C. McCulloch.

Officers: Mr W. Richards, Town Clerk.

Mr D. Essex, Chesham Moor Gym and Swim Centre Manager. (Agenda Item 6).

Dr M. Pegg. (Agenda Item 5)

Mr N. Bennet and Mr T. Worthington. (Agenda Item 10)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Q. Chaudhry, A. W. Franks and S. P. Willmoth.

16. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Mrs MacBean declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 4 as a member of the Elgiva Board of Management and the Chesham Allotments Group.

It was noted that, as agreed, all previously stated Declaration of Interests remained unchanged from the first meeting of the administrative year.

17. **MINUTES**

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Recreation and the Arts Committee held on 8th June 2015, be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

18. **ALLOTMENTS GROUP**

Members received the Minutes of the meetings of the Allotments Group held on the 9th June and 14th July 2015.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted.

19. **ELGIVA BOARD OF MANAGEMENT**

Members received the Minutes of the meeting of the Elgiva Board of Management held on 29th June 2015.

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes be noted.

Arising out of the minutes, Councillor Hudson enquired as to progress on the proposed L.E.D. information sign. The Clerk advised the County Council had only recently made contact and its permission (along with installation costs) was required before a planning application could be submitted.

20. **CODMORE FIELD AND PAVILION**

The Chairman welcomed Dr Mark Pegg to the meeting and invited him to present his report to the Committee on the current state of Codmore Field sport pitches and pavilion and possible measures to improve them.

Dr Pegg thanked Members for the opportunity to consider his report. He explained he had been motivated to undertake this as a coach of Chesham United F.C. under 18s which hired a pitch at Codmore. He opined that, unfortunately, they were worst, in terms of surface, in the league and were a cause of embarrassment when the team played at home. The pavilion too was a very under-utilised facility needing an upgrade and he advised that the proposals he had submitted were centred on separating the changing facilities and the rest of the pavilion, which, he opined, would make it much more attractive to possible regular hirers such as playgroups.

He stated that, while accepting the Council had little in the way of large capital finances to invest in this, he considered the works achievable if broken down into sections and if considerable external funding was obtained. Obtaining grants was, he opined, an area in which he had considerable knowledge and success and to which he would be willing to investigate further.

Councillor Lacey thanked Dr Pegg for his excellent efforts in producing this report and then sought comments and questions from the Committee.

Councillor McCulloch welcomed the report but, having noted the costs to upgrade the pitches, enquired as to the desirability of the optional additional works. Dr Pegg replied that this would be bring the pitches to an 'A' standard as recognised by the Football Association. He accepted that this may not be achievable but emphasised

again the need for proper drainage and highlighted that there was considerable lost revenue with the amount of matches postponed due to a waterlogged pitch between January and March.

Councillor Bacon noted that the pavilion upgrade was considerably less expensive than the upgrade of the football pitches and asked therefore whether it made sense to try and progress this first. Dr Pegg replied that there was merit in this, particularly as he believed the soon-to-be renovated play-area may attract families into the recreation ground and who were a demographic who may wish to utilise the pavilion in the future.

Councillor Mrs MacBean enquired as to whether the Council, with its limited resources, might be better served supporting the proposed 3G AstroTurf pitch in town rather than simply upgrading grass pitches without floodlights. Dr Pegg, in reply, reported that, regrettably, the 3G pitch proposal for Chiltern Hills Academy could not be progressed at the current time as Chesham United F.C. had lost its 'Charter' status and therefore the Football Foundation could not offer financial support.

Councillor Lacey advised the Committee that, currently, only one team hired a pitch at Codmore and asked whether this was likely to change. Dr Pegg replied that he suspected this was because of the poor condition of the pitches and their regular waterlogged state which put clubs off hiring them.

Councillor McCulloch enquired whether, following Dr Pegg's last presentation to the Committee, he had given further thought to setting up a Sports Trust to manage and administer this and other facilities. Dr Pegg responded by saying that this was really a decision for the Council rather than himself.

Councillor Whitfield stated that it would be very desirable to see a breakdown of possible increased revenue for both pitches and the pavilion before the Council committed itself to any financial support. Dr Pegg replied he would happy to try and supply this in due course in liaison with officers.

Summing up, Councillor Hudson thanked Dr Pegg again for his diligence in this matter and suggested that further suggestions and figures from Dr Pegg, particularly in respect to possible external funding, would be welcomed by the Finance Working Party which was charged at looking at the implications of major capital projects and possible revenue implications. Dr Pegg responded by saying he would be willing to present further figures and meet with the Finance Working Party if desired.

It was

RESOLVED

that the proposals be referred to the Finance Working Party for further consideration in respect to grants and revenue and the matter be then subject to a further report to this Committee.

Note: Dr Pegg then left the meeting.

21. **CHESHAM MOOR GYM AND SWIM CENTRE UPDATE**

The Committee firstly considered the officers' report on the current financial situation at the Chesham Moor Gym and Swim Centre facility and the recommendation in respect to increasing the Winter Swimming Season Ticket price. It was agreed that the financial position be noted and the recommended season ticket prices, as presented, be implemented.

The Chairman then requested that Mr Danny Essex, the Chesham Moor Gym and Swim Centre Manager, address the Committee in respect to updates on the Business Plan devised by officers and the Friends' group back in 2013. The Centre Manager highlighted how much of the proposals had actually been implemented in the following two years but advised that other initiatives would be forthcoming shortly.

Several Members commended the Manager and his team for their on-going income generation and innovative projects. It was noted that the current Friends' group had, regrettably, ceased to function and the hope was expressed by the Committee that this could be rectified in the future. It was also noted that the Centre Manager, along with other section heads, had recently met with the Finance Working Party to look at future projects and their financial implications in more detail.

Mr Essex then gave details on the three quotations he had obtained for the repair of the spring fed well, a project which had previously been agreed in principle at the last Recreation and Arts Committee. Members reiterated their support for the project on environmental and marketing grounds and agreed that the lowest quotation be accepted subject to final ratification from the Finance Working Party.

It was

RESOLVED

1. That the financial position be noted.
2. That the Winter Swimming Season Ticket prices, as recommended, be approved.
3. That the updated Business Plan and projects achieved, be noted.
4. That the quotation, listed as 'Quotation A', to repair the well be accepted, subject to ratification by the Finance Working Party.

Note: Mr Essex then left the meeting.

22. **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND THE PRESS**

It was moved by the Chairman and

RESOLVED

that the public and the Press, save for Messrs Bennet and Worthington, 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.

23. **FENCING BETWEEN COUNCIL AND PRIVATE LAND**

It was

RESOLVED

that the Clerk be authorised to proceed in connection with this matter in the terms expressed at the meeting.

Note: The Chairman then re-opened the meeting to the Public and the Press.

Note: Mr Bennet and Mr Worthington then left the meeting.

24. **PLAY AREA STAGE VII REDEVELOPMENT**

The Committee considered the report from the Town Clerk in respect to current developments pertaining to the Council's play-areas.

Firstly, Members congratulated the Botley Playing Fields Association (BPFA) on its excellent fund-raising efforts to date to renovate Codmore Play Area. The Clerk advised that the Association had set a cut-off date as the end of December for its fund-raising and thereafter would be commissioning the chosen play company to install new equipment before the end of March.

The Committee then considered the petition garnered by Councillor Bhatti from Newtown residents requesting that Nashleigh Hill Recreation Ground play-area be upgraded in the near future. Members suggested that Councillor Bhatti try and form a Play Association similar to that of the BPFA to progress this. Councillor Mrs MacBean stated that the recent Volunteers' Day organised by the Mayor had elicited some names of people interested in forming a Newtown Community Association and Councillor Shaw advised that he and Councillor Chaudhry had made contact with the former Chair of the Friends of Nashleigh Hill Recreation Ground and she, and a number of other local residents, were keen to re-energise support for a play-area upgrade through a local community organisation. Councillor Bhatti replied that he was pleased to hear about these developments and stated he would be happy to work with any fledging group alongside other Members. It was also agreed in principle to restore a football goal to the field but Councillor Mrs MacBean suggested that if it was to be located by Berkhamstead Field, officers liaise with Chesham Environment Group to ensure there would be no damage to the wildflower area.

In consideration of Co-op Field Play Area, Councillor Mrs MacBean expressed surprise that a possible site in the field had been suggested by the representative of the Council's preferred play area contractor since the Asheridge Vale and Lowndes Community Association had made no decision on this. Councillor Bacon advised that his meeting with the representative had been a preliminary one and was a follow-up to the residents' survey undertaken by the previous Council.

Councillor Hudson opined that the next play-area to be developed should not necessarily assumed to be either Nashleigh Hill Recreation Ground or Co-op Field as he was aware of a group wishing to see fitness equipment/trim-trail installed in Lowndes Park and Waterside Community Association was keen to see Woodland View upgraded. Moreover he stated that the Finance Working Party needed to consider whether the continued commitment of £20,000 per annum from the Council for play-area regeneration could be justified in view of possible budgetary constraints.

It was

RESOLVED

1. That Newtown residents be encouraged, and supported where possible, to form an association or group to work with the Council to redevelop Nashleigh Hill Recreation Ground.
2. That the current position in respect to Codmore Field and the Co-op Field play-areas be noted.
3. That the Finance Working Party consider the implications of further financial commitments to play area regeneration before a decision is taken on the next play-area to be redeveloped.
4. That a goalpost be purchased and erected in Nashleigh Hill Recreation Ground abutting Berkhamstead Field, subject to liaison with the Chesham Environment Group.

25. **COMMUNITY EVENTS 2016/17**

Members considered a request from the Lord Lieutenant of Buckinghamshire for the Council to involve itself with a possible street party celebrating the Queen's 90th birthday in June. The Committee agreed that, in principle, it should lead on this, subject to potential costs and logistical matters, but should seek town partners to assist where possible. The Mayor agreed he would be happy to take a lead in helping to organise this if required.

The Town Clerk also advised that the Chesham Action Partnership had been approached to organise some sort of celebration commemorating St Georges Day and it had been mooted from some of its members that the Council should be involved in some way. The Committee was of the view that some support could be forthcoming but clearly further details were required before the Council could commit itself.

The Mayor also requested that, due to the overwhelming success of the inaugural Mayor's Volunteer Day, it be granted complimentary use of the Town Hall in future years. This was agreed.

Finally the Committee was informed that the Friends of Lowndes Park had requested additional monies to cover the costs of the recent Lowndesbourne/Town Picnic as the Friends did not receive as much grant funding from the District Council as they were expecting. Members were of the view that, generally funding events

retrospectively was not good practice but, since the Town Picnic proved to be a fine day for the local community and the fact that the Friends had originally only requested half of the annual community events budget, a further £500 be awarded on the understanding that some of this monies would be used for an enhanced Town Picnic next summer.

It was

RESOLVED

1. That the Council agrees in principle to lead on a community event celebrating the Queen's 90th birthday in June, subject to costs and logistical matters.
2. That the Chesham Action Partnership be encouraged to develop its plans for a St George's Day event for the Council to consider what, if any, support it could offer.
3. That the Mayor's Volunteers Day become an annual event with complimentary use of the Town Hall agreed to accommodate this.
4. That a further contribution of £500 be agreed to be made to the Friends of Lowndes Park to cover the costs of the recent Town Picnic event.

26. **CLOSE OF MEETING**

The meeting closed at 9.40pm.

CHAIRMAN