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**CHIPPENHAM
TOWN COUNCIL**

Improving the quality of town life

FULL COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Full Council held in the Town Hall on Wednesday 21 June 2023 at 7.00 pm.

COUNCILLORS:

Desna Allen	Liz Alstrom	James Bradbury
Jenny Budgetell	Clare Cape	Pete Cousins
William Douglas	Robert Giles	Kathryn Macdermid
Conor Melvin (Chair)	Nick Murry	Andy Phillips
David Poole	Nic Puntis	Matthew Short
George Simmonds		

OFFICERS:

Mark Smith, Chief Executive
Nick Rees, Director of Resources
Matt Kirby, Director of Community Services
Lynsey Nichols, Head of Communications & Customer Services
Andy Conroy, Head of Planning
Heather Rae, Head of Democratic Services

PUBLIC PRESENT: There were 5 members of the public present

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were two written and two verbal public questions, a copy of the questions are appended to these minutes at **APPENDIX A**. The responses were not part of the meeting but are appended to these minutes at **APPENDIX B**.

Councillor Jenny Budgetell left the meeting

19. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Declan Baseley due to being away, Councillor Angie Litvak-Watson with no reason given, Councillor John Scragg due to being on holiday, Councillor Hayley Wilson due to being on holiday and Councillor Myla Watts with no reason given.

20. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

21. MINUTES

The minutes from the meeting held on Wednesday 17 May 2023 were proposed by Councillor Clare Cape, seconded by Councillor Desna Allen and with all in favour, it was;

RESOLVED that:

The minutes from the meeting held on Wednesday 17 May 2023 were approved as a correct record and were signed by the Chair.

22. **MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- i. a) The Mayor invited Councillor Liz Alstrom to collect her framed Mayoral Photograph as a memento of her year as Mayor of Chippenham 2022 to 2023. A round of applause was given to thank Councillor Alstrom.

b) The Mayor reminded attendees that Armed Forces Day was being marked on Saturday 24 June, with a short ceremony and the Armed Forces Flag being raised outside the Town Hall at 10am, members of the public were encouraged to join this event.

c) The Chief Executive was informed that Chris Ruck had resigned and is no longer a Town Councillor, notice of vacancy would be published. The Mayor thanked Chris for his service as a Town Councillor over the years and a round of applause was given.
- ii. The list of engagements undertaken by the Mayor and Deputy Mayor since the last Council meeting held on Wednesday 17 May 2023 were noted.

23. **POLICE REPORT**

The Chair noted the Police could not be in attendance due to operational matters, the written report was noted.

RESOLVED that:

The report be noted.

24. **COMMITTEE MINUTES**

- a. **Planning, Environment & Transport Committee**
The draft minutes of the meetings held on 12 May and 01 June 2023 were presented by Councillor Clare Cape with all matters resolved.
- b. **Strategy and Resources Committee**
The draft minutes of the meeting held on 07 June 2023 were presented by Councillor Peter Cousins with all matters resolved.

25. **NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN UPDATE AND APPROVAL**

The Head of Planning updated Councillors on the progress of the Chippenham Neighbourhood Plan since the last update in March 2023. The Plan and supporting documents were presented for approval to be able to submit these to Wiltshire Council, as the Local Planning Authority.

Councillor Nick Murry, in his role of Chair of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, thanked all involved in the development of the Plan, the Head of Planning was thanked specifically along with officers, consultants, Councillors and the community. The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group members were thanked for volunteering their time to the Plan. The long term hard work of multiple parties was recognised. Councillors praised the work involved and thanked the Head of Planning.

With all in favour, it was;

RESOLVED that:

i) The Neighbourhood Plan and supporting documents referred to in the report be approved for submission to the Local Planning Authority.

ii) Any minor amendments required to be made to the Neighbourhood Plan and supporting documents referred to in this Report, prior to its submission to the Local Planning Authority, be delegated to the Chief Executive.

26. **YEAR END ACCOUNTS AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR 2022/23**

The Director of Resources, Responsible Financial Officer, presented the report regarding the year end accounts and financial statements for 2022/23 and the recommendations from the Strategy and Resources Committee held on 07 June 2023. Councillors thanked the Director of Resources and the Finance Team for their work undertaken. With all in favour, it was;

RESOLVED that:

i) The following statements within the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR Form 3) be approved by Full Council and be signed by the Chair and Chief Executive:

- a. The Annual Governance Statement 2022/2023;
- b. The Accounting Statements 2022/2023;

ii) Full Council adopted the unaudited financial statements for the year ended 31st March 2023 for Chippenham Town Council and that these be signed by the Mayor and the Responsible Financial Officer.

27. **ANNUAL REPORT**

The Head of Communications and Customer Services presented the draft Annual Report 2022/23 for approval. With all in favour, it was;

RESOLVED that:

The Annual Report 2022/23 be adopted and approved for publication.

28. **STANLEY PARK DEPOT PROJECT**

Councillor Jenny Budgell joined the meeting

The Director of Community Services presented the report updating on the Stanley Park Sports Ground Depot project and regarding approval for additional capital expenditure to enable its completion. It was noted that there would be savings made on rent payments to Wiltshire Council.

Councillor Matthew Short raised the possibility of diverting the solar produced at Stanley Park to electric vehicles at the depot in future. Councillor Matthew Short requested clarification on the Capital/Earmarked Funds (C/EMF) from the Director of Resources, who confirmed that the Finance Sub Committee receive regular updates on C/EMF programme and progress. The balance in March was c.£802,000 if all projects were completed, factors had changed as income and expenditure last year allowed a transfer of c.£97k which allows additional required budget for the depot. It was noted that Community Infrastructure Levy income was c.£60k lower than expected.

Councillor David Poole noted building costs and inflation had increased but providing this internally was supported as the Council have the funds available.

Councillor Nic Puntis questioned the detail of the lease and whether there was a break clause and what the plan with the long-term saved costs would be. The Director of Community Services noted that there was a six month notification period, the Director of Resources noted the budget presentation included detailed costs that the Council incurs.

With all in favour, it was;

RESOLVED that:

i) An additional £99,725 of Capital Expenditure to complete the build of the depot be approved.

ii) The Chief Executive be delegated authority to commission the lead property consultant to project manage the build on behalf of the Council.

29. **OUTSIDE BODY REPRESENTATION: CHIPPENHAM COMMUNITY PARISH AREA FORUM**

The Head of Democratic Services presented the report regarding a request for a Town Councillor representative on the Chippenham Community Area Parish Forum.

Councillor Pete Cousins noted there was not enough information to make a decision. Councillor Jenny Budgell noted past involvement and a link to Chippenham. Councillor Desna Allen updated on the background of the forum and that it was a good opportunity to engage and formalise the structure of meetings if required.

With the majority in favour, it was;

RESOLVED that:

i) Councillors agreed to appoint a Councillor representative to this outside body.

ii) Councillor Jenny Budgell be nominated to this outside body.

30. SIX MONTH RULE: CONSIDERATION OF REASON FOR ABSENCE

The Head of Democratic Services updated that this item was no longer required.

31. COUNCILLOR MOTION

Councillor Matthew Short presented the Councillor motion regarding a letter from the Chief Executive to protect and enhance the special environmental characteristics of Island Park. It was noted this was not to affect the development of Emery Gate or the Chippenham One Plan project but to mark the importance of these trees and green spaces. The motion was seconded by Councillor Clare Cape.

Councillor Nic Puntis recognised the environment agency's lead on the Chippenham One Plan project with a focus on the radial gate, and would highlight the statement to the Wessex Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC) where this project was first suggested. Councillor Nic Puntis proposed an amendment to the motion, 'to also write to the Chair of the RFCC Committee referencing the reason behind this being because of the protection of trees and ensuring that they have that at the top of their agenda as well'. The amendment was seconded and accepted by Councillor Matthew Short, all were in favour of the amendment.

Councillor Jenny Budgell supported the motion and highlighted that there would be future planning applications for which the Town Council would be a consultee and should raise the point again at that point in the process.

Council noted that Chippenham's Island Park is a much loved community asset valued for its green space, public amenity, woodland shading, and wildlife conservation. The small woodland and line of approximately 100 trees at the border of Island Park and Emery Gate provide a visible screening of the Emery Gate shopping centre. This line of trees includes some historic trees and is shown on the Ordnance survey map as early as 1844. With all in favour, it was;

RESOLVED that:

The Chief Executive writes to the Chief Executive at Wiltshire Council and the Chair of the Wessex Regional Flood and Coastal Committee requesting any future development that adjoins Island Park seeks to protect and enhance the special environmental characteristics of the Park.

32. COUNCILLOR'S FEEDBACK

- i. There were no updates from Town Councillors on significant work they are involved with.
- ii. There were no updates from Town Councillors nominated to outside bodies on significant work they are involved with.
- iii. Councillor Clare Cape updated as a Wiltshire Councillor that the enquiry day around the Heath and Care Integrated Board would take place in early July.

Councillor Kathryn Macdermid updated as a Wiltshire Councillor that ongoing work was undertaken for a resolution with Wiltshire Council relating to the Malmesbury roundabout.

- iv. The following Committee membership change was noted:
 - Councillor Angie Litvak-Watson replaced Councillor Matthew Short on the Amenities, Culture and Leisure Committee.
- v. No potential CIL projects were suggested to be funded by the 85% of CIL that Wiltshire Council retain.

33. ITEMS FOR COMMUNICATION

Councillors requested communications with the Youth Council on the Chippenham One Plan project and the amended motion that was supported.

34. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of Full Council will be held at 7pm on Wednesday 27 September 2023.

The Chair closed the meeting.

The meeting closed at 8.06 pm.

These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting.

Signed on behalf of the Town Council as a true record of the meeting.

Signature

Date

Appendix

Public Questions - APPENDIX A

Public questions at Full Council on Wednesday 21 June 2023:

1. “During the past few weeks I have received a number of comments from concerned residents in relation to the grass cutting in my Cllr division of Cepen Park and Hunters moon especially in Cepen Park South, Queens Crescent and the Derriads area. The main issue is around the public open spaces and the ability of the general public to access them because of the length of grass residents are concerned about unpicked up dog faeces due to the grass being long and the ability to move freely around and play sports and picnic because of the length of grass and weeds. I must also confirm that the local community I represent fully understands the councils steps to support the wildlife and improve the environment but it also needs to understand the needs of its local residents.

Question 1, Would the town council consider reviewing the current policy on grass cutting in relation to the Public open spaces to ensure all the community needs are being met?

Question 2, When will the whole grass cutting policy come up next for review?

Question 3, How will the town council ensure that the community and local residents can actively be part of the next review of the grass cutting policy to help the council not only develop its policy but to ensure the community has its support but has identified areas where the policy can or should be amended?”

2. I am, at this moment in time, very unclear about what the future holds for the Island Park, but I have grave concerns that the redevelopments that are proposed for Emery Gate, by Acorn Developments, could result in removal of trees and paved terracing areas extending towards the riverside.

Our beautiful Island Park is a well-used community space where the folk festival, the River Festival, Pride, and other events during the year take place. It offers a shaded green space to relax in during the summer. I have talked to young people who use this area in the evenings and those who use it as a place to have a relaxed lunch break in the fresh air. It is valued by many who live here and those who come to visit.

It contains a range of mature, varied and beautiful trees along the riverside and that screen the park from the shopping centre. (see below) Together with the native hedging, which in my opinion could be extended the full length of the fence, and the grassed areas, the Island park also supports a

range of wildlife which helps maintain and increase our biodiversity and contributes towards reducing carbon.

Please could you all support the motion proposed by Councillors Matt Short and Gemma Grimes which will hopefully help to stress to Wiltshire Council how important and valued our Island Park is to so many of us, and ensure that it remains the beautiful, natural and community asset that it is.

3. “When I became aware of climate change, I learnt about the importance of trees as the greatest living capture of carbon as well as being the lungs of the planet. We have lost so much forest already; we can’t afford to lose one more tree. Trees help keep soil healthy, trees can benefit your mental health, trees are home to hundreds of species that help our ecosystems, trees give oxygen, trees are natural air conditioning units - the evaporation from a single tree can produce the cooling effect of air conditioners operating 20 hours a day. Trees can live forever so we should not kill them.

Trees are one of the things that keep us alive, without trees breathing would be dangerous, the air left for marine plants would be filthy and we would have to wear gas masks for the rest of our lives. If you want to help our group, vote for the trees.”

4. “Has anyone looked at Cepen Park North recently? Cycle paths: There are only two signs indicating Cycle Paths, they are in the Willowbank/Blackberry Close area. Nothing noticeable is anywhere else. Most people are unaware that the ‘Red’ paths are actually cycle paths and pedestrian paths and when you are cycling along and you do get some strange looks and some objectional calls like you’re on the pavement but you’re not, you’re on a cycle path - there is no signage around where they are. Whilst cycling on some of them yesterday (20th June) we had to duck under overgrown trees, brambles, and swerving around overgrown hedges on these paths, in some cases less than a metre wide on what should be a 3-metre path and the normal pedestrian paths are just as bad.

The open spaces around Cepen Park North are completely overgrown by tall grasses, some have been cut in the middle but access to them is virtually impossible because even the paths leading onto them are overgrown. When these are cut, if they are cut, the grass is just normally left there, it’s not grass it’s just tall bits of weeds, that kills whatever is left behind. It’s just a mess.

The landscaping appearance has declined over the last twenty years due to the actions of Wiltshire and this Town Council wasting money outsourcing the work and then bringing back the work. We’ve seen it, we’ve been there, we’ve been complaining about it for those 20 years. This has left us with

brambles, chickweed, nettles and it is completely destroying Cepen Park North's "Award Winning Landscape" as mentioned in the national press, it doesn't anymore. There are pockets of tidiness where some of the local residents do appear to try and keep their area clean and tidy but most people have probably given up because they are fighting a losing battle due to the disgraceful landscaping.

You cannot believe how frustrated everyone feels. We are not asking for it to look like John Coles park, just something that looks as if it is cared for. We used to have yearly 'Litter Picks' which used to be a great gathering of the local residents but you can't do it nowadays because you can't actually get in there to see any litter.

We were promised change 15 years ago and more recently when the Town Council took over the landscaping, it hasn't happened and to us, no one appears to accept the responsibility of actually clearing it up. We are willing to meet with any councillors that are willing to come and have a look and we will show you a lot of desolation. Thank you. Can I just say that I am ashamed of where I live, I don't want to live in Chippenham anymore and I don't want to be in Cepen Park North, it's appalling."

Not Part of the Meeting - APPENDIX B

Responses to Public Questions - Full Council 21 June 2023

1. Thank you for your comments and questions asked at Full Council on 21 June 2023. The grass cutting strategy was adopted in May 2022, small reviews are undertaken at the end of each season. Please note that the strategy is affected by weather conditions, the impact of delays is that it takes time to catch up due to continuous growth. The strategy is an ongoing document and small reviews are undertaken at the end of each season. This will be based on evidence and knowledge of the practical grass-cutting regime as it has developed, this will include residents' views. The Town Council encourages feedback through the reporting system 'Report it'.
2. Thank you for your comments and questions asked at Full Council on 21 June 2023. Council supported the Councillor motion for the Town Council Chief Executive to write to the Chair of Wiltshire Council and the Chair of the Wessex Regional Flood and Coastal Committee to protect and enhance the special environmental characteristics of Island Park.
3. Thank you for your comments at Full Council on 21 June 2023. Council supported the Councillor motion for the Town Council Chief Executive to write to the Chair of Wiltshire Council and the Chair of the Wessex Regional Flood and Coastal Committee to protect and enhance the special environmental characteristics of Island Park.
4. Thank you for your comments and questions asked at Full Council on 21 June 2023. Chippenham Town Council only undertake the grounds maintenance of these pathways, this includes cutting back encroaching undergrowth from the pathway and low hanging branches, the main cutting back is undertaken during the Autumn/Winter maintenance programme any spring and summer growth is given a light cutting back due to the bird nesting season should you see any encroachment this can be reported on the Town Council's 'Report it' system, this can be found on our website here: <https://www.chippenham.gov.uk/report-it/>. These reports are monitored by the Head of Environmental Services who then prioritises works following inspections.

Two members of the Environmental services team are currently cutting back encroaching undergrowth from paths in Cepen Park North following other reports.

Signage for cycle paths, repairs or new markings that are required remain the responsibility of Wiltshire Council and should be reported on the Mywilts app or emailed to: westernhighways@wiltshire.gov.uk

The Town Council adopted a grass cutting strategy in 2022, this is an ongoing document and small reviews are undertaken at the end of each season, your comments have been noted and will be considered for the next review. Chippenham Town Council have made improvements to the estate since taking over the Grounds Maintenance responsibility from Wiltshire Council in 2019. As the grass cutting strategy outlines, Chippenham Town Council are working towards finding a balance of regular maintained areas and areas that benefit wildlife.

Pavements that are overgrown by private residents' hedges or shrubs can be reported to westernhighways@wiltshire.gov.uk. Should encroachment endanger pedestrians using the highway, Wiltshire Council can instruct residents to cut this back.

Chippenham Town Council have a street scene team as well as a grounds maintenance team who work tirelessly emptying bins and litter picking all the housing estates within the Chippenham boundary, but this unfortunately does not deter ongoing littering.

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