

Minutes of the First Meeting of the Chelmsford Garden Community Council held on Thursday 6th April 2023 at 7pm at the Beaulieu Community Centre, 17 Centenary Way, Beaulieu Square, Chelmsford Essex

Present: Councillors: Andrew Wright
Melanie Williamson
Ruth Cooper-Gibson
Stephen Robinson
Jo Bowman
Brian Jeapes
City Councillors: Mike Mackrory and Rose Moore
Clerk/Executive Officer: Suzanne Walker

Two members of the public were present.

23/01 Election of the Chairman for civic year

Councillor Robinson proposed that Councillor Wright is elected Chair of the Council which was seconded by Councillor Jeapes and **agreed** by all Councillors. Councillor Wright signed the declaration of acceptance of office form in the role of Chair.

23/02 Apologies for absence

Received from Councillor Tron.

23/03 To note the signing of the Declaration of acceptance of office forms and agree a date by which any absent Councillors must make their declarations.

All Councillors present had signed the declaration of acceptance of office forms to act as Councillors and it was **agreed** that Councillor Tron may sign her form within 14 days of the date of this meeting.

23/04 To agree style and title of the Council

It was unanimously **agreed** that the Council shall be known as the Chelmsford Garden Community Council.

23/05 To formally appoint the Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer for the Council

It was formally **agreed** by all Councillors to appoint Suzanne Walker to act as the Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer for the Council upon the terms offered to her. It was also **agreed** that her formal job title shall be the Executive Officer.

23/06 Ethical Framework

It was unanimously **agreed** to adopt the Code of Conduct which is in the new format and consistent with the Code adopted by Chelmsford City Council.

23/07 Planning applications

It was unanimously **agreed** to advise Chelmsford City Council that the Chelmsford Garden Community Council wishes to be consulted on all planning applications effecting this Parish.

23/08: Financial Arrangements

23/8.1 To note the funding arrangements for the Chelmsford Garden Community Council for financial year 2023 – 2024

Councillors noted that the shadow council had carried out a strategic review of the needs of the new Council and in that review had considered specific priorities such as community safety as priorities. Councillors therefore **agreed** to formally adopt the budget that had been formulated by the shadow council and **noted** that the precept for the year is £195,000.00.

23/8.2 To formally appoint the bank for the Council

It was unanimously **agreed** to appoint Unity Trust as the bank for the Council and it was noted that the account is now open and available for use.

23/8.3 To appoint the signatories for banking arrangements, corporate card

It was unanimously **agreed** to appoint Councillors Tron, Williamson and Wright as signatories upon the Unity account and any subsequent corporate card.

23/8.4 To formally agree insurance arrangements for the Council and authorise payment of the premium

An insurance quote from BHIB had been obtained and as well as covering all the needs of the Council offers free access to the Parish online mapping service. It was therefore unanimously **agreed** to accept the quotation and the payment of the premium was authorised.

23/8.5 To agree appointment of external payroll services provider and authorise any initial set up costs.

It was **agreed** to appoint Richard Edwards LLP as the external payroll provider for the Council and the payment of the requested set up fee was authorised.

23/8.6 To note any assets transferred to the Council

It was noted that the following assets have been transferred to this Council and will be added into an asset schedule – one bench, four bins and a noticeboard.

23/8.7 To discuss arrangements in relation to pension entitlement for employees

A notice will have to be issued and a formal resolution passed at the May meeting but Councillors **agreed** that any resolution shall not just apply to the Executive Officer but any future employees of the Council who are eligible to join the scheme.

23/8.8 To authorise payments relating to staffing costs and expenses, Councillor expenses, office equipment and stationary

Regarding employment costs, over and above the 25 hours a week that is contractually due to the Executive Officer it was **agreed** to pay for 16 hours of overtime for work carried out in the preparation for the start of this Council and to pay the legally required tax and National Insurance contributions.

A report prepared by the Executive Officer as to office equipment required was considered and the amounts set out to purchase a laptop, printer and filing cabinet were all **agreed**. Regarding virus protection and software, the Executive Officer is due to meet with the Chair to discuss this and it will be considered what is cost effective at that meeting.

Regarding the telephone system, further consideration will be given to having a mobile phone and a number that can be forwarded to land lines and mobiles and will be considered at a future meeting.

Regarding expenses it was **agreed** to reimburse the Executive Officer for the cost of key cutting for the keys for the noticeboard transferred from Springfield Parish Council to this Council.

A quote from Wellers Hedley Solicitors for advice on the transfer and future management of the lease of the Beaulieu Community Centre was **accepted**.

23/9 To nominate Councillor Representatives to be Trustees on the Beaulieu Community Trust

Councillors **agreed** to nominate Councillors Williamson, Wright and Tron as the representatives upon the Trust.

23/10 Policies

23/10.1 To consider and adopt Standing Orders for the Council

Standing Orders based on the NALC document were presented by the Executive Officer with recommendations on some of the clauses. The document was **agreed and adopted** by all Councillors. Councillor Robinson made the point that all policies should be expressed in gender neutral language and in particular the Chairman should be referred to as the Chair which was unanimously **agreed**.

23/10.2 To consider and adopt Financial Regulations for the Council

Financial Regulations based on the NALC document were presented by the Executive Officer with recommendations on some of the clauses. The document was **agreed and adopted** by all Councillors.

23/10.3 To consider and adopt a co-option policy for the Council.

A draft co-option policy was presented by the Executive Officer which was considered and **agreed** by all Councillors.

23/11 Information Technology

The shadow council had carried out a body of work to consider appropriate IT for the Council which was not just fit for purpose but could be scaled up as the Council grows. Councillors **agreed** to proceed with the Zoho system which provides not just emails but also provides hosted collaboration and secure cloud storage tools. An invoice had been received for a subscription for a 3 years period at a reduced rate which Councillors accepted and authorised the payment to be made.

23/12. Subscriptions

23/12.1 To agree to subscribe to the Essex Association of Local Councils, Rural Community Council of Essex including their village halls section.

Councillors **agreed** to subscribe to the EALC as this also provides access to the resources of NALC as well as training for Councillors. The Executive Officer was asked to obtain information about training for Councillors following the election including costs.

Councillors also **agreed** to subscribe to the RCCE and in particular the village hall section in view of the fact that in due course the Council will be managing halls.

23/12. To agree the date for the Annual Parish meeting

Councillors **agreed** that the Chairman calls the Annual Parish meeting for Thursday 18th May 2023 at 7pm at the Beaulieu Community Centre.

23/13. To agree meeting dates for the remainder of 2023

The schedule of meeting dates of the Council for the remainder of 2023 were **agreed** being the first Thursday of each month except the meeting in May which shall take place on 18th May following the Annual Parish Meeting.

23/14. To note items for the May agenda

The Executive Officer was asked to add an agenda item to consider appropriate committees, sub committees and working groups to enable the Council to effectively function together with draft paperwork.

Councillor training also to be added to the agenda.

It was also requested that name plates on the table are provided for Councillor at meetings.

Meeting concluded at 19.44pm