



AYLESBURY
TOWN COUNCIL

**Minutes of a meeting of the Communities Committee held on
Tuesday 26 September 2023, in the Council Chamber, Aylesbury Town Hall,
5 Church Street, Aylesbury HP20 2QP at 7pm**

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 7.00pm.

In the Chair: Cllr Tim Dixon

Present: Cllr S Bateman
Cllr M Baldwin (substitute)
Cllr T Hunter Watts
Cllr N Mehta
Cllr A Sherwell
Cllr R King (substitute)

Officers: Ruth Mayhew (Senior Communities and Events Officer, Committee Clerk),
Dan Reynolds (Events Officer)

1. Apologies for absence

To receive and accept apologies of absence from Town Councillors.

Resolved: To accept apologies from Cllr A Christensen (prior commitment), Cllr D Thompson (work commitment), Cllr D Summers (prior commitment) and Cllr M Willis (prior commitment)

2. Declarations of interest

No declarations of interest were raised.

3. Minutes

Resolved: The committee unanimously agreed to accept and sign the minutes of 25 July 2023 as a true record.

4. Matters arising

The Senior Communities and Events Officer reported on the following items.

Preparation of the formal process for allocating funds to external community groups has been delayed due to the delivery of events this will be presented during the November meeting.

To date no formal information has been supplied by Buckinghamshire Council to the decision if a partnership and funding agreement will be made for ATC to deliver

WhizzFizzFest in 2024. Cllrs reported that during Buckinghamshire Councils full meeting, BC had reported on the successful delivery of the events in 2023. Cllrs have requested that officers issue BC with a practical and workable deadline to ensure that officers have enough time to prepare and plan a successful event and implement alternative options should the partnership project not go ahead.

Heritage Open Days were a great success with a wide variety of new talks and locations, thanks and praise given to Daniel Reynolds for his hard work on this project. Full report to be given at the November meeting.

Planetarium Day - Friars Square (FS) are extending the offering on the day and will be creating a comprehensive 'half term activity'. Requirement of ATC remains the same, namely providing a member of staff for the event and sharing across social media channels. Key change is the release of material and information will come from FS, rather than ATC. ATC will be listed as a co-host, with logo appearing on all artwork.

No questions or concerns were raised.

The Chairman suspended the Standing Orders at 7.07pm to allow questions from the public and any reports from the councillors.

M Baldwin and S Bateman raised their concerns over the lack of public benches in the town centre, stating that should additional benches be available they would provide a valuable resource for many residents, especially the elderly and those who simply require a place to sit, giving both physical rest and the opportunity for emotional support from other members of the public. Examples of other towns were given, where specific 'emotional support' benches are successful and it is hoped to replicate a similar opportunity here in Aylesbury. Concerns over vandalism and receiving permission from Buckinghamshire Council to site the benches, along with the funding required were raised. It is acknowledged that the lack of confirmation of a date for start of works in Market Square and Kingsbury could also pose delays from Buckinghamshire Council.

M Baldwin, S Bateman and R King will establish a working group of councillors to drive this project forward.

Cllr Mehta joined the meeting at 7.29pm.

Alistair Marston presented to the committee about his idea to create a Community Pride event as part of the Parklife Weekend 2024, to take place on the Friday prior, during the late afternoon and early evening. Lots of questions were asked and appropriate responses received. Alistair will present a full proposal to the communities committee in November, for consideration.

The Chairman resumed the Standing Orders at 7.44pm.

5. Dementia Activities

Councillors received a verbal update on behalf of the Communities Officer.

Number of dementia friends currently sits at 3070.

As part of their inclusion network, key staff from Fairhive Homes Ltd have now become dementia friends. A follow up session will be taking place with Fairhive residents. This was the biggest attendance for an online session to date - delivered to 23 members of staff.

Feedback from the session:

What a brilliant and engaging session talk - thank you so much Bee!

Thank you for such a wonderful session! It was so engaging and I know our employees thought so too.

Absolutely wonderful - We would love to share about the session on our intranet (Workplace) and on LinkedIn too so more colleagues can see what we spoke about today and join a future session.

Next sessions will be online during National Customer Service Week (2-8 Oct). Promoted via Business Liaison Officer and also scheduled to feature on ATC LinkedIn and as Facebook events. Cllrs are asked to spread the word and promote these two sessions, as currently only one organisation signed up.

Tuesday Tunes saw an upsurge in members at the last session, with 10 new attendees, 4 of whom had dementia. Initial feedback was that the session was really good and sensory scarves were a lovely addition to the session. Partnership with the library is still ongoing.

Cllr Dixon informed the committee that Benedicta Lasoye (Communities Officer) will be leaving ATC at the end of this month. Cllr Dixon praised all the work that Benedicta has done for dementia awareness within our community on behalf of ATC, and would like to formally thank her for all of her time with us. Benedicta is a big part of what we as an organisation have managed to achieve in this field. Benedicta has an all-encompassing enthusiasm for all that she does and will be deeply missed by everyone at the council.

Cllr Sherwell, echoed Cllrs Dixons comments and added that from his conversation with organisations and residents who have come across Benedicta, it is obvious that she is universally loved and respected. People think very highly of her energetic and willing personality.

Cllr Dixon noted that ATC were lucky to find Benedicta at the launch of it's dementia initiative, she has been the perfect ambassador and advocate for ATC. The 3000+ dementia friends which she has created, is testament to her hard work and dedication. The committee unanimously thanked Benedicta for her hard work and wish her well in her new role.

No further questions or concerns were raised.

6. Garden Competition

Councillors received a verbal update on behalf of the Communities Liaison Officer (Environments)

Throughout June, July and August, the judges and I visited a wide range of gardens. It was great to see some long-standing participants enter again, but likewise

welcome residents new to the competition. We were also fortunate to welcome a new judge, the current Chair of Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust.

This year saw a rise in people growing vegetables in their gardens. As well as the usual Tomatoes and Beans, we saw a wide range of herbs being grown for both culinary and medicinal purposes and attempts to grow more exotic produce such as melons and avocados.

Perhaps most striking of all, we saw firsthand just how important gardens can be to peoples wellbeing. The communal gardens that entered ranged from those affiliated to the Hospital, a Church, retirement living complex and even a pub. What is very apparent is how gardens bring people together and provide an opportunity for people to be outdoors and meet new people. We spoke to people who shared that being able to volunteer in the communal garden had benefitted their mental health, improved their confidence and led to the making of new friendships.

The residents and organisations award ceremony was held on 21 September at Aylesbury Canal society and was attended by over 60 people. Overall we awarded 54 medals and trophies across the various categories. Residents had the opportunity to listen to guest speaker Bill Richards from Florence Nightingale Hospice who spoke about the open garden scheme. Representatives from Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust were also present with an information stand and all who attended enjoyed the opportunity to network over refreshments.

Feedback from the event was positive with one resident emailing to say 'I just wanted to say thankyou very much for having me along this evening and the awards truly do mean a lot to me, along with the recognition, it's a lovely event you guys put on this evening'. We look forward to Aylesbury in Bloom 2024!

Cllr Bateman reported that she had attended the event and that there was a wonderful 'buzz' of happiness from all those in attendance. Cllr Bateman wishes to pass thanks to Emma El Badaoui (Communities Liaison Officer, Environment) and the judges for creating such an enjoyable experience for all those who took part. Cllr Dixon seconded this praise.

No questions or concerns were raised.

7. Upcoming events, budget updates and planned formats

Councillors reviewed and agreed budgets and formats for the following events

- i) Christmas on the Cobbles
- ii) Rolling event - production of A Christmas Carol
- iii) Carolfest

Cllr Bateman asked that the Mayoral charities be actively involved in each of the events. Officers reassured members that full encouragement and support is always given, however they can not force the charities to attend events.

Cllr Bateman proposed, and Cllr Sherwell seconded, to agree the proposed event budgets.

Resolved: The committee unanimously agreed to the above proposal.

8. Proposed event dates for 2024

Councillors discussed the suggested event dates for 2024 to enable officers to start planning in principal, pending on final budget approvals by the Council.

Cllr Metha proposed, and Cllr Baldwin seconded, to agree the proposed event dates.

Resolved: The committee unanimously agreed to the above proposal.

9. Communities budget 2024/25

Councillors reviewed and discussed the proposed Communities budget for 2024/25.

Committee members were confused as to why the budgeting and reporting of the floral schemes and garden competition have been removed from the communities committee for 2024-25. Cllr Dixon to ask the Town Clerk so that a response can be brought back to the committee.

Members discussed the increase costs required to cover insurance of the Soapbox Derby. It was agreed that this event should continue and for officers to investigate ways for potential participants to be supported by professional event ‘sponsors’ to provide practical guidance and support in building a kart.

Cllr Dixon proposed, and Cllr Hunter-Watts seconded, to agree the proposed event budgets to be taken to full council.

Resolved: The committee unanimously agreed to the above proposal.

10. Budget

The committee reviewed the current budgetary position to August 2023 (month 5). Councillors did not raise any concerns.

11. Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting is Tuesday 28 November 2023 at 7pm.

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.18pm

Signed: _____ Date: _____
Chairman