

**THATCHAM TOWN COUNCIL**  
**Minutes of a meeting of**  
**Thatcham Town Council**  
**held on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2023 at 7pm**  
**in the Council Chamber, Brownsfield Road, Thatcham**

Present: Councillor Jeff Brooks (Mayor)  
 Councillors Steve Ardagh-Walter, John Boyd, Mike Cole, Lee Dillon, Paul Field,  
 Richard Foster, Owen Jeffery, Mark Lillycrop, David Lister, Simon Pike and  
 Christine Rice

In attendance: Mel Taylor (Town Clerk)  
 4 members of public

**FULL/2023/17 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jeremy Cottam,  
 Lourdes Cottam, Ellen Crumly, Richard Crumly and Keith Woodhams.

**FULL/2023/18 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**FULL/2023/19 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

The following question was received from Councillor Simon Pike:  
*“When our MP Laura Farris attended a meeting of Full Council in 2021, we drew  
 to her attention an anomaly in expenses that can be claimed by Councillors.  
 Principal Authorities are able to reimburse caring expenses to enable a Member  
 to attend meetings, but Town and Parish Councils are prohibited by law from  
 doing so. Baroness Scott of Needham Market, the President of NALC, has tabled  
 an amendment to the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill to address this  
 anomaly, but this was not supported by the Government Minister.*

*Can the Mayor confirm that the Council still supports the ability of Town and  
 Parish Councils to pay caring expenses to enable Councillors to attend meetings,  
 and will he ask the Clerk to write to Laura Farris, to ask her to encourage  
 Ministers to support this amendment at future stages of consideration of this Bill?”*  
 Having confirmed that the Council remained supportive, it was agreed to refer  
 this matter to the Town Clerk to write to Laura Farris MP.

**FULL/2023/20 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED**

that the Minutes of the meetings held on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2023 and 28<sup>th</sup> February  
 2023, having been previously circulated, be signed as a correct record of the  
 proceedings.

**FULL/2023/21 REPORTS FROM MAYOR AND DEPUTY MAYOR**

**a) Mayor’s Report**

The Mayor reported that during the period 31<sup>st</sup> January 2023 to date he had  
 attended events, including; Kennet School Performing Arts, opening of  
 William House and Turner House, KATS panto, Ginger Jive, Kennet Radio  
 5<sup>th</sup> year anniversary, Engaging Potential charity, unveiling of postbox at West  
 Berkshire Crematorium, Berkshire Maestros concert and an Armed Forces  
 Day breakfast.

The Mayor had also performed the Town Council’s Commonwealth Flag  
 Raising, hosted a fundraising quiz raising over £900 for his chosen charities  
 and hosted the Annual Town Meeting.

**Full Council  
27<sup>th</sup> March 2023**

**FULL/2023/21 REPORTS FROM MAYOR AND DEPUTY MAYOR continued**

**b) Deputy Mayor's Report**

The Deputy Mayor reported that during the period 31<sup>st</sup> January 2023 to date he had attended; the Mayor's charity quiz, the Commonwealth Flag Raising, Children Helping Children music and dance evening, the schools' mock trial competition at Reading Crown Court and Berkshire Maestros concert at The Anvil, Basingstoke.

Councillor Lillycrop expressed how honoured he had been to serve as Deputy Mayor and he had thoroughly enjoyed the experience.

**FULL/2023/22 APPROVAL AND ADOPTION OF COMMITTEE MINUTES**

The following Committee Minutes were presented for adoption:

**a)** Recreation and Amenities Committee Minutes dated 27<sup>th</sup> February 2023 and 20<sup>th</sup> March 2023.

**RESOLVED** to adopt the Minutes.

**b)** Finance and General Purposes Committee Minutes dated 9<sup>th</sup> March 2023.

**RESOLVED** to adopt the Minutes.

**c)** Planning and Highways Committee Minutes dated 31<sup>st</sup> January 2023, 21<sup>st</sup> February 2023 and 14<sup>th</sup> March 2023.

**RESOLVED** to adopt the Minutes.

**d)** Town Centre Committee Minutes dated 6<sup>th</sup> March 2023.

**RESOLVED** to adopt the Minutes.

**e)** Events Committee Minutes dated 6<sup>th</sup> February 2023.

**RESOLVED** to adopt the Minutes.

**f)** Community Awards Panel Minutes dated 15<sup>th</sup> March 2023.

**RESOLVED** to adopt the Minutes.

**FULL/2023/23 ROYAL MAIL POSTAL DELIVERY SERVICE ACROSS THATCHAM**

Members noted a response from Royal Mail, following agreement at the last meeting to write to raise the issues being experienced with the postal delivery service across Thatcham and its impact on residents and businesses. Royal Mail recognised that mail deliveries to addresses in Thatcham had been below the standards expected and unreservedly apologised, citing resourcing issues and recent strike action. A thorough review of the Thatcham Delivery Office had taken place and changes implemented. Royal Mail were confident that local operation was now functioning as it should, and the backlog had been cleared.

Councillor Jeffery urged residents to advise the Town Council if they were still experiencing issues with mail delivery.

Council thanked Councillor Jeffery for his efforts.

**Full Council  
27<sup>th</sup> March 2023**

**FULL/2023/24 COUNCIL STRATEGY 2021 - 2025**

Councillor Dillon provided an update on the Council Strategy to date, highlighting achievements since 2021 whilst acknowledging that there were still tasks to be met. It was agreed that the Strategy be reviewed once the new Administration was in place, following the local election on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2023, to reflect and address how things had evolved over the past two years. Quarterly reviews would be undertaken going forward.

**FULL/2023/25 GRANTS BUDGET 2022/23**

Council considered a recommendation from the Grants Sub-Committee, arising from its meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2023 (G/2023/010iii) that £2,167.75, remaining in the Community Grants budget for the financial year 2022/23 (£17,000 budget less £14,832.25 awarded), be transferred to the Community Project Fund Earmarked Reserve.

**RESOLVED** to vire £2,167.75, remaining in the Community Grants budget (4701/107) for the financial year 2022/23, to the Community Project Fund Earmarked Reserve (EMR 351)

**FULL/2023/26 VIREMENT OF RESERVES**

Council considered a recommendation from the Leader of the Council, Councillor Dillon, that £12,000 from the General Reserve Working Balance, currently earmarked for 'Traffic Flow Consultants', and £2,000 of a £6,380 underspend on the annual contribution to Kennet Leisure Centre, be vired to an Earmarked Reserve for potential future grants to Friends of Thatcham Library.

**RESOLVED** to vire £12,000 from the General Reserve Working Balance, currently earmarked for 'Traffic Flow Consultants', and £2,000 from a £6,380 underspend on the annual contribution to Kennet Leisure Centre, to an Earmarked Reserve for grants to Friends of Thatcham Library and that a 3-year Service Level Agreement be drawn up to provide Friends of Thatcham Library with an operating budget, to fund projects that were not part of West Berkshire Council's statutory service expenditure.

**FULL/2023/27 FINAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE SETTLEMENT**

Council noted that confirmation that local councils would not be subject to council tax referendum principles in 2023/24 was made by DLUHC's (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) Secretary of State, Michael Gove MP, in his statement to Parliament on the final local government finance settlement. This had been a key campaign for NALC (National Association of Local Councils) to ensure local councils retain the flexibility to increase precepts without being required to hold a referendum.

**FULL/2023/28 PRE-ELECTION PERIOD**

Councillors received guidance produced by the Local Government Association regarding the pre-election period, which commenced on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2023.

Councillor Dillon, Leader of the Council, and Councillor Jeff Brooks, Mayor, thanked all Councillors for their service over the past four years, especially acknowledging those that were not standing for re-election.

**Full Council  
27<sup>th</sup> March 2023**

**FULL/2023/29 REPORTS**

**(a) Reports from Thatcham Town Councillors and West Berkshire District Councillors on Council Surgeries**

Council noted a report from Councillors L Cottam and R Crumly who were present at Council Surgery in The Broadway on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> February 2023, and that Council 'Ward' Surgery scheduled for Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> March 2023 at Henwick Worthy Sports Ground did not take place due to unavailability of Councillors.

**(b) Reports from West Berkshire District Councillors**

The following reports from West Berkshire District Councillors were noted:

Councillor Ardagh-Walter reported that Newtown Road recycling centre was now providing a paint recycling service whereby part-used pots of paint were available to the community for free, and 50 tonnes of soil conditioner from food and garden waste collections was recently given away during a promotion at Padworth Recycling Centre. Councillor Ardagh-Walter also advised that the Master Plans for Thatcham and Hungerford had been approved by the West Berkshire Council Executive.

**(c) Reports by Town Council Appointees to Outside Bodies**

The following report from Town Council Appointees to outside bodies was noted:

Councillor Cole advised that **Thatcham Parochial Charities** had refurbished one of its Almshouses following the resident moving out, and that **Thatcham Relief in Need Charity** were having issues giving away grants but were working with referral partners to raise awareness of the grants available.

There being no further business the Mayor declared the meeting closed at 7.51pm.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_