

**THATCHAM TOWN COUNCIL**  
**Minutes of a meeting of the**  
**Finance and General Purposes Committee**  
**held on Monday 24<sup>th</sup> July 2023 at 7pm**  
**in the Council Chamber, Brownsfield Road, Thattham**

Present: Councillor Mike Cole (Chairman)  
 Councillors Iain Cottingham, Mark Lillycrop, Jay Lunn, Tom McCann,  
 Justin Pemberton, Petra Pemberton (substituting for Jeremy Cottam) and  
 Stephanie Steevenson (substituting for Owen Jeffery)

In attendance: Mel Taylor (Town Clerk)  
 Representative of ION Systems  
 1 member of the press (Newbury Weekly News) (remotely)

**FGP/2023/034 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**  
 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jeremy Cottam  
 (Petra Pemberton appointed as substitute) and Owen Jeffery (Stephanie  
 Steevenson appointed as substitute).

**FGP/2023/035 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**  
 There were no declarations of interest.

**FGP/2023/036 MINUTES**  
**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2023, having been  
 previously circulated, be taken as read, confirmed, and signed as an  
 accurate record.

**FGP/2023/037 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING**  
 There were no matters arising from the previous meeting.

**FGP/2023/038 IT UPGRADE**  
 Following initial consideration at the last meeting (FGP/2023/026) and  
 subsequent deferment to post-election, Members considered a report  
 from the Town Clerk regarding a proposed IT upgrade. A representative  
 of the Town Council's IT support contractor was in attendance and  
 answered Members' questions.

**RESOLVED** to agree in principle to proceed with the 'future proof' option comprising of  
 the purchase of 8 laptops plus 5 PC memory upgrades, equipment  
 refresh and file migration, subject to:

- i. confirmation of internet download/upload speeds;
- ii. the cost of upgrading the laptop specification from 256GB to 512GB  
 and whether additional memory was justified;
- iii. and Councillor Cottingham obtaining a second opinion and sanity  
 check from West Berkshire Council's IT Officers.

And to delegate authority to the Chairman, Vice Chairman and Town  
 Clerk to review and approve the information requested, and issue  
 agreement to proceed, funded from the Rolling Capital Fund.

*Members thanked the ION representative for attending and he left the  
 meeting*

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- FGP/2023/039 BUDGET REVIEW 2023/24**
- a) Members reviewed a report for the whole Council budget for Q1, April to June 2023.
- b) Members noted a report on Reserves and CIL/s106 funds held.
- FGP/2023/040 RESOLVED APPOINTMENT OF WORKING PARTIES**
- to approve Terms of Reference and appointment of members to serve on the Investment Working Party as follows:
- To facilitate a dynamic response to fluctuating investment markets, the Investment Working Party shall have delegated authority\* to manage the general reserve investments in accordance with the adopted Treasury Management Plan.*
- Membership: 4 Members – Councillors Cole, Lunn, McCann and P Pemberton*
- Quorum: The quorum shall be a minimum of three of the elected Members\*\**
- \* subject to Full Council approving delegation of authority at its meeting on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2023.*
- \*\* pending discussion at Full Council on 31<sup>st</sup> July to review Working Party quorum.*
- RESOLVED**
- to refer adoption of Terms of Reference and appointment of members to serve on the Community Engagement Working Party to Full Council when it meets on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2023:
- Recommended Terms of Reference:*
- To review existing, and develop new, policies and practices to maximise the Council's community engagement and raise the Town Council's profile.*
- To assess the Council's current Branding and Profile and develop practices that provide a consistent, recognisable approach across all elements of the Council.*
- The Working Party may co-opt such members of the community as it deems appropriate to assist and advise.*
- The Working Party shall make recommendations for consideration by the Finance and General Purposes Committee.*
- Membership: 6 Members*
- Quorum: The quorum shall be a minimum of three of the elected Members \**
- \* pending discussion at Full Council on 31<sup>st</sup> July to review Working Party quorum*
- RESOLVED**
- with the time at 9pm, to continue the meeting beyond 2 hours duration, in accordance with Standing Order 6.3.10.
- FGP/2023/041 BUILDING CONDITION SURVEYS**
- Members considered a quotation to commission condition surveys of the Council Offices, Frank Hutchings Community Hall, Burdwood Community Centre, Pavilion and Workshop, Cemetery Chapel & Buildings and The Broadway public conveniences, to provide a 5-year maintenance schedule with current estimated costs. All surveys would be visual, non-intrusive.
- RESOLVED**
- to commission Anchor Design to produce condition surveys as stated above, at a cost of £4,332.51.

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- FGP/2023/042      APPRAISAL OF ST MARY'S CHURCHYARD BOUNDARY WALL**  
 Members considered a quotation to commission an appraisal of the boundary wall of St. Mary's Churchyard following concerns about the condition of the wall. The appraisal would involve a visual examination, including taking measurements of height, height of retained ground and verticality of the wall, and provide an opinion as to the immediate safety and risk of potential collapse, as well as a general assessment and broad recommendations for further action and timescales.
- RESOLVED**      to commission Bennington Green to undertake an appraisal of St Mary's Churchyard boundary wall as stated above, at a cost of £1,125 plus disbursements.
- FGP/2023/043      RECOMMENDATION FROM THE TOWN CENTRE COMMITTEE**  
 At its meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> July 2023, the Town Centre Committee was supportive of a request from West Berkshire Council for a funding contribution towards the proposed installation of a Changing Places facility in the public conveniences in The Broadway.  
 Estimated project cost £80,000, funding secured £35,000 (£20,000 central government grant, £15,000 WBC), shortfall £45,000.  
 The Town Centre Committee recommend that a contribution be approved, with the value and funding source at the discretion of this Committee.
- RESOLVED**      to support the proposal in principle and to await the outcome of West Berkshire Council's approach to Greenham Trust seeking grant funding.
- FGP/2023/044      THATCHAM LIBRARY**  
 Members noted an update from West Berkshire Council on plans to install an accessible toilet within the library, along with a background report from the Town Clerk.
- FGP/2023/045      COMMUNITY PROJECT FUND APPLICATION – NEWBURY AIR CADETS**  
 Members considered an application from Newbury Air Cadets for funding of £210 for 'replacement of navigational compasses'. It was noted that 35% of the current total unit membership of 42 resided in Thatcham and that this was the only Air Cadet unit in the local area, the next closest being Aldermaston and Burghfield
- RESOLVED**      to award Newbury Air Cadets a grant of £210 from the Community Project Fund for the purchase of replacement navigational compasses.
- FGP/2023/046      FINANCIALS**
- RESOLVED**      i. Members received proposed BACS payments due from the current account.  
 to approve the proposed BACS payments (appendix I).
- ii. Members noted details of pre-authorized payments from the current account, Soldo pre-paid debit card and Clerk's account during the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2023 (appendix II).
- iii. Members noted the bank reconciliation (appendix III).
- iv. Members noted an Aged Creditor report.
- v. Members noted an Aged Debtor report.

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**FGP/2023/046 FINANCIALS continued**

- vi. Members noted payments made from the current account during the period 27<sup>th</sup> April 2023 and 5<sup>th</sup> June 2023, approved by the Town Clerk and Finance Manager in accordance with Financial Regulation 5.5a, due to there being no appropriate meetings to seek payment approval whilst the new Council was established following the local election on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2023 (appendix IV)
- vii. Members noted a sundry debtors report for the Jubilee Legacy Tableau project, underwritten by Committee at a meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2023 (FGP/2023/018).
- viii. Members approved an annual list of suppliers paid by direct debit (appendix V).
- ix. Members approved continuation of the Town Clerk's authority to approve card refunds for service deposit returns.
- x. Members authorised payment of salaries for the coming year.

**FGP/2023/047 REPORTS FROM TOWN COUNCIL APPOINTEES**

The following verbal reports were noted:

**Home-Start West Berkshire**

Councillor P Pemberton reported that they were awaiting responses to a couple of grant applications and that 40% of the families supported were from Thatcham.

**Thatcham Relief in Need Charity and Thatcham Parochial Charities**

Councillor Cole reported that grants continued to be issued, generally for the purchase of carpets and curtains.

**Thatcham Welfare and Support Society**

Councillor J Pemberton reported that he had met with the Chairman of the Society on 9<sup>th</sup> June, who advised that, following appointment, Councillor Pemberton would be entered as one of the charity's trustees, and the Charity Commission's records had been updated.

The Chairman had provided Councillor Pemberton with information on the society's history - how it was founded, the changes to its operations and funding structure, and criteria for offering assistance.

The biggest demand on the service was for residents moving into Housing Association accommodation - there wasn't currently a joined-up approach to the move in process, and social housing tenants often found themselves with the keys to their new home but unable to furnish.

They've had found new and innovative ways to help residents - for example, providing 'slow cookers' to eligible users of the Thatcham Food Bank. Numbers of grants offered to eligible individuals were often slightly disappointing, but the society continued to publicise its work, and would appreciate any assistance the Town Council could provide to spread the word.

If any Councillors had come across constituents in financial need and/or suffer from a medical condition, applications for support were simple and accepted through 'gatekeepers' (e.g., a social worker, GP, health professional, education professional, occupational health, police partnership representative etc..).

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**FGP/2023/047      REPORTS FROM TOWN COUNCIL APPOINTEES continued**

**Volunteer Centre West Berkshire Steering Group**

Councillor J Pemberton advised that a meeting was held on 15<sup>th</sup> June but unfortunately he had been unable to attend due to a clash of meetings.

There being no further business the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 9.57pm.

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