

THATCHAM TOWN COUNCIL
Minutes of a meeting of
Thatcham Town Council
held on Monday 25th March 2024 at 19.00hrs
in the Council Chamber, Brownsfield Road, Thatcham

Present: Councillor Mark Lillycrop (Mayor)
 Councillors Suzanne Adamantos, Jeff Brooks, Mike Cole, Jeremy Cottam,
 Iain Cottingham, Owen Jeffery, Dave Lunn, Jay Lunn, Tom McCann,
 Justin Pemberton, Petra Pemberton, Ben Schiffer-Harte,
 Stephanie Steevenson and Val Watts

In attendance: Mel Taylor (Town Clerk)
 Isabel Esperanca (Citizens' Advice West Berkshire)
 Alice Kunjappy-Clifton (Community United)

Prior to opening the meeting the Mayor expressed the Council's concern and support for King Charles III and the Princess of Wales, Princess Catherine, following their recent cancer diagnosis's.

The Mayor also welcomed newly elected Councillor Dave Lunn, following a by-election on 14th March, and presented him with his Town Councillor badge.

FULL/2024/018 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Simon Pike.
 An apology for lateness was received from Councillor Jeff Brooks.

FULL/2024/019 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

FULL/2024/020 CITIZENS' ADVICE WEST BERKSHIRE

RESOLVED to allow members of public to speak

Council received a presentation from Isabel Esperanca, Chief Officer at Citizen's Advice West Berkshire, on their work over the period of the Service Level Agreement between the Town Council and the Bureau 2021-2024, which was due to expire on 31st March 2024. Isabel answered Members questions.

Isabel advised that Thatcham outreach sessions had not resumed in Thatcham following the Covid-19 pandemic, however, fares were paid, if needed, for Thatcham residents to attend the Newbury office. CAWB did not believe the number of clients being supported had reduced as a result of withdrawal of the outreach service.

Councillors thanked Isabel for her presentation and she left the meeting

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FULL/2024/021 COMMUNITY UNITED

Councillor Brooks joined the meeting during this item

Council received a presentation from Alice Kunjappy-Clifton, Director and CEO at Community United, on the Charity's aims, objectives and achievements. Alice answered Members questions.

There was a strong desire for a community hub and an Equality Forum, as in Wokingham. They were also considering Henwick Worthy Sports Ground for the annual community cricket event.

Councillors thanked Alice for her presentation and she left the meeting

FULL/2024/022 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No public questions had been received.

FULL/2024/023 MINUTES

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the meeting held on 29th January 2024 and the extraordinary meeting on 5th February 2024, having been previously circulated, be signed as a correct record of the proceedings.

FULL/2024/024 REPORTS FROM MAYOR AND DEPUTY MAYOR

a) Mayor's Report

Councillor Lillycrop reported that since the last meeting he had attended events including; KATS production of 'Fiddler on the Roof', Jubilee Sensory Garden's monthly meet, 'Ignite the Stage' school charity event at Arlington Arts, PALS Youth Group, Spring performing arts show at Kennet School, West Berkshire Therapy Centre's 10th Anniversary, Thatcham WI coffee morning, PALS awards dinner and launch of Thatcham Repair Café.

The Mayor also hosted a fundraising bingo night and raised the Commonwealth flag on Commonwealth day.

b) Deputy Mayor's Report

Councillor Adamantos reported that since the last meeting she had attended events, including; Greenham Common half marathon and 10k, West Berkshire Music Festival and Berkshire Mock Trials. As well as assisting the Mayor at the Commonwealth flag raising.

FULL/2024/025 APPROVAL AND ADOPTION OF COMMITTEE MINUTES

The following Committee Minutes were presented for adoption:

RESOLVED

a) Recreation and Amenities Committee minutes dated 26th February 2024. to adopt the Minutes.

RESOLVED

b) Planning and Highways Committee minutes dated 13th February 2024 and 12th March 2024. to adopt the Minutes.

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FULL/2024/025 APPROVAL AND ADOPTION OF COMMITTEE MINUTES continued

RESOLVED c) Town Centre Committee Minutes dated 18th March 2024.
to adopt the Minutes.

RESOLVED d) Events Committee Minutes dated 5th February 2024.
to adopt the Minutes.

FULL/2024/026 INTERIM INTERNAL AUDIT 2023/24

Council considered the Internal Auditor's Interim Report 2023/24, following an interim audit carried out on 6th February 2024.

Councillor Cottingham suggested that monthly reconciliations should be independently undertaken.

RESOLVED to adopt the Internal Auditor's Interim Report 2023/24.

FULL/2024/027 THATCHAM TOWN CRICKET CLUB LEASE

Councillor Cottingham declared a non-pecuniary interest in this agenda item as Chairman of Thatcham Town Cricket Club

At an extraordinary meeting of Full Council on 5th February 2024 (FULL/2024/015), Council resolved to offer Thatcham Town Cricket Club a new 50-year lease [to 2074] for use of the Browns Sports Field, with a 15-year notice period and a caveat that the primary use of the site must be for cricket. The Town Council's solicitor advised caution on providing a 15-year notice period, but it was understood that this was the condition required to satisfy an objection to a planning application relating to the site by Sport England. It has subsequently come to light that, contrary to the Town Council's understanding, in correspondence between Sport England and the Planning Officer, Sport England state that an extension to the lease should be sought, with a 15-year break-clause.

In light of this new information, Council considered whether it wished to amend the draft Heads of Terms offered to Thatcham Town Cricket Club from a 15-year notice period to a 15-year break clause.

RESOLVED to seek clarification from the Town Council's solicitor on the frequency of break clauses and revised notice period.

FULL/2024/028 ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE – AUTOMATIC FIRE ALARMS CONSULTATION

Notification had been received that The Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service was consulting on proposed changes to the way it responded to automatic fire alarms.

RESOLVED to refer the consultation to the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting on 29th April 2024 and delegate authority to the Committee to respond to the consultation, due to close on 13th May 2024, and request that Councillors provide comments to the Town Clerk.

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FULL/2024/029 REPORTS

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

- i. Council noted a report from Councillors Boyd and Jeffery who were present at Council Surgery in The Broadway on Saturday 3rd February 2024.
- ii. Council noted a report from Councillors Cottingham and P Pemberton who were present at Council Surgery in The Broadway on Saturday 2nd March 2024.

b) Reports from West Berkshire District Councillors

The following reports from West Berkshire District Councillors were noted:

Councillor Cottam reported: the new accessible toilet at Thatcham Library was being well used.

Councillor Jeffery expressed West Berkshire Council's disappointment at the Government Minister's instruction not to withdraw the Local Plan from examination.

Councillor Brooks reported: a budget for the new financial year had been set, with attempts to build up reserves; a proposal for redevelopment of Walnut Close was progressing through the Council; WBC aiming to improve the condition of roads and transforming the way services were delivered.

Councillor Cottingham reported: social services were under a lot of pressure and fundamental change was needed; it was predicted that the Council would have 8 days of reserves at the end of the financial year; WBC provide 700 services; it would make a big difference if local authorities were able to retain more of the business rates (£95m collected, £30m retained).

c) Outside Body Reports

Reports from a number of appointees to outside bodies were noted. It was reported that Volunteer Centre West Berkshire and West Berkshire Heritage Forum no longer existed.

RESOLVED in accordance with Standing Order 6.3.10, to continue the meeting beyond 21:00hrs.

FULL/2024/030 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED that, in view of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, it was advisable in the public interest that the press and public be temporarily excluded, and they be instructed to withdraw.

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FULL/2024/031 OFFICE ACCOMMODATION

Councillor Cole declared a non-pecuniary interest in this agenda item as a Trustee of the Charities.

RESOLVED Council considered a report and recommendation from the Town Clerk regarding office accommodation.
due to imminent increased staff numbers and a lack of office accommodation, to issue notice to Thatcham Parochial Almshouse Charity and Thatcham Relief In Need Charity to terminate the lease of office space within the Council Offices, Brownsfield Road.
Councillors Cole and Cottam abstained from voting

There being no further business the Mayor declared the meeting closed at 21:16hrs.

Signed: _____ Date: _____