

THATCHAM TOWN COUNCIL
Minutes of a meeting of the
Town Centre Committee
held on Monday 17th July 2023 at 7pm
in the Council Chamber, Brownsfield Road, Thatcham

Present: Councillor Owen Jeffery (Chairman)
 Councillors Jay Lunn, Tom McCann, Simon Pike (substituting for Councillor Jeremy Cottam), Christine Rice, Ben Schiffer-Harte, Stephanie Steevenson and Val Watts

In attendance: Mel Taylor (Town Clerk)

TC/2023/28 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Jeremy Cottam (Councillor Simon Pike appointed as substitute).

TC/2023/29 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Lunn declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 6 (TC/2023/33) as the owner of a town centre business.
 Councillor Schiffer-Harte declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 7 (TC/2023/34) as a resident in the vicinity of the memorial playing field.
 Councillor Steevenson declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 9 (TC/2023/36) as a member of the Royal British Legion Thatcham branch.

**TC/2023/30
 RESOLVED**

MINUTES

to take as read and confirm as accurate the Minutes of the meeting held on 6th March 2023.

TC/2023/31

MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

TC/2023/20: Councillor McCann requested an update following the resolution that the Town Clerk was to investigate the process for requesting extension of the conservation area. The Town Clerk advised that she had not yet had an opportunity to pursue but would endeavour to obtain details for the next meeting.

TC/2023/21: Councillor Schiffer-Harte thanked Councillor Jeffery for his work trying to address issues with local pharmacies.

TC/2023/25: Councillor Steevenson enquired on the location and maintenance of the silent soldiers. The Town Clerk advised that the Town Council had awarded a grant to the Royal British Legion to purchase the silent soldiers, and understood that they had been sited in the war memorial garden and that the Town Council was not involved in the maintenance.

TC/2023/32

INCOME / EXPENDITURE COSTS

Councillors noted income and expenditure for this Committee's budgets for the financial year to date.

Town Centre Committee
17th July 2023

- TC/2023/33 THATCHAM TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY**
 The Town Clerk presented a report on the background of the Town Centre Strategy and advised that the newly formed Steering Group had met that afternoon. Councillors were keen that proposals should be subject to further consultation with the public, businesses and residents of the town centre.
 It was agreed that the Chairman and Town Clerk would meet to consider how the Town Council could best consider proposals and liaison with the Steering Group.
- TC/2023/34 CENTRAL THATCHAM FLOOD ALLEVIATION SCHEME**
 Members noted that West Berkshire Council had opened a public consultation on plans for the Central Thatcham Flood Alleviation Scheme, within the Memorial Playing Field and Browns Field Cricket Field, on 26th June 2023 running until 6th August 2023 and that as the Town Council owned the Browns Field site, the relevant West Berkshire Council Officer and consultant had been invited to attend a meeting on 31st July 2023 to discuss the plans.
- TC/2023/35 TREE PRESERVATION ORDER – KINGSLAND CENTRE**
 Members noted that West Berkshire Council had issued a provisional Tree Preservation Order (201/21/1070) on 27 trees within the Kingsland Centre car park, effective from 6th June 2023.
- TC/2023/36 VICTORIA CROSS MEMORIAL STONES**
 Following recommissioning and relocation of the Victoria Cross Memorial Stones in The Broadway, Members considered a suggestion from Reverend Mark Bennet, Team Rector, that the original stones, that had been lifted from the central hardstanding of The Broadway and were in storage, be relocated to St Mary's Church.
 Committee was supportive of the proposal and agreed that Officers liaise with Church representatives to investigate this and other potential locations and bring back to a future meeting.
- TC/2023/37 CORRESPONDENCE FROM RESIDENTS**
 Members considered the following matters received from residents:
- i. Motorcycle and Scooter parking in the Town Centre**
 24th March 2023: "I regularly ride my motor scooter into the town centre to go shopping. However, as far as I can see, there is only 1 parking spot for 1 motorbike or scooter, and that is in the Broadway. This spot is usually always taken. Parking in Newbury for '2' wheels is so much more user friendly. All of the town centre carparks have slots, and the signs say that parking is free. Could some consideration be given to equal up the parking facilities in Thatcham please?
 I presume that this may fall to West Berks council to consider, but by asking via Thatcham Town Council, maybe this request may gain more impetus if coming from yourselves. Thank you in anticipation."
 It was agreed to feed this information into the Town Centre Strategy Steering Group.

**Town Centre Committee
17th July 2023**

TC/2023/37 CORRESPONDENCE FROM RESIDENTS continued

ii. Town Centre Policing

18th May 2023: "With the recent three break ins (Bakery, Sue Ryder & now a unit at the Crowd Mead precinct last night [17th May], surely our Town Council need to be raising their concerns regarding the lack of policing at night in the Town? It is not just Hungerford that has a problem."

Councillor Steevenson advised that the Neighbourhood Police Team had recently been deployed to several high-profile events in the east of the county and had written to the Police and Crime Commissioner to raise concern.

RESOLVED to write to the Neighbourhood Police Team to request an enhanced evening presence in the town centre.

iii. Planter at junction of Park Lane and A4

6th April 2023: "Part of the suggested improvement ideas to the Town was enhancements to the main entrance points & of the North South divide along the A4. One very low cost and high impact improvement (on WBC Highways land which they do not maintain) will be a robust / no maintenance planter (not positioned over the two service manholes) with magnificent floral display which volunteers can maintain (at no ongoing cost to the Town Or West Berks Council) at the corner of Park Lane and the A4. Would make a significant enhancement would it not? Please note the land is West Berkshire Council highways land and the cars parked there have no right to park there, creating a muddy unattractive area often littered. Just imagine how much better this entrance would look! Here is how it looks currently. uninspiring and hardly a great advert for our historic town. The cafe patrons and all those passing (thousands per day) on the A4 will notice what a nice feature. cannot see any reasons for not doing so as part for the improvement package. Great for contributing to the climate and biodiversity crisis. Please add this a low cost and easy to implement idea to your plan."

Whilst Members were supportive of the suggestion, there were a number of factors that could be impeded, such as; delivery access to businesses and parking for the local businesses and residents.

It was agreed to feed this information into the Town Centre Strategy Steering Group.

TC/2023/38 ACTION PLAN

Members reviewed the town centre action plan. It was agreed that the Chairman and Town Clerk would meet to review and update into priority order, reappoint new lead members for actions and identify links to the town centre strategy.

Town Centre Committee
17th July 2023

TC/2023/39 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

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

TC/2023/40 PUBLIC TOILETS – THE BROADWAY

Members received a report from the Town Clerk providing background and an update on proposals to install a Changing Places facility in the public toilets in The Broadway. Committee was supportive of the proposal and West Berkshire Council's request for a financial contribution.

RESOLVED to refer to the Finance and General Purposes Committee with a recommendation that financial support be provided, with the sum and funding source at that Committee's discretion.

There being no further business, the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 9.20pm.

Signed: _____

Date: _____