

THATCHAM TOWN COUNCIL
Minutes of a meeting of the
Finance and General Purposes Committee
held on Monday 22nd July 2024 at 19:00hrs
in the Council Chamber, Brownsfield Road, Thattham

Present: Councillor Mike Cole (Chairman)
 Councillors Owen Jeffery, Mark Lillycrop, Iain Cottingham, Tom McCann,
 Justin Pemberton and Ben Schiffer-Harte (substituting for Jay Lunn)

In attendance: Mel Taylor (Town Clerk), Miri Willan (Finance Manager) and Karen
 Tangney (Finance Officer)

FGP/2024/21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Jay Lunn (Ben Schiffer-Harte appointed as substitute).

FGP/2024/22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

FGP/2024/23 MINUTES
RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting held on 29th April 2024, having been previously circulated, be taken as read, confirmed, and signed as an accurate record.

Councillor Cottingham joined the meeting

FGP/2024/24 BUDGET REVIEW 2024/25

- a) Committee reviewed an income and expenditure report for all Council budgets, for the period 1st April 2024 to 30th June 2024.

Councillor Schiffer-Harte acknowledged the good work being done by Friends of Thattham Library from the grant awarded by the Town Council.

Councillor McCann acknowledged the hard work of staff facilitating events on the day and recommended increasing event budgets for casual staff to ease the burden on staff.

Councillor Cottingham requested a standing agenda item to report on external grants received.

Councillor McCann requested a standing agenda item to report on vandalism expenditure with comparisons to previous years.

Councillor Cottingham queried why nominal code 4038, Grounds Maintenance Contract, was not in line with expected expenditure after Q1 and after discussion it was agreed that accruals/pre-payments over £10,000 should be accounted monthly.

- b) Committee noted a report on Reserves and CIL funds held and confirmed that £5,000 of Reserves committed to underwrite the Thattham 10k 2024 was no longer required with the event having successfully taken place on 1st April 2024.

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- FGP/2024/24** **BUDGET REVIEW 2024/25 continued**
- c) Committee considered the following recommendations, deferred from the last meeting (FGP/2024/13):
- i. to allocate funding of £7,611.28 from the £7,710.40 underspend on the Community Grants budget 2023/24 (transferred to EMR 310 General Fund Working Reserve at year end 2023/24) to the London Road Cemetery Baby Memorial Garden project.
Total project cost: £30,325 less £17,088.72 raised to date and £5,625 pledged/expected, leaving funding required of £7,611.28.
- RESOLVED** to transfer £7,611.28 from EMR 310 General Fund Working Reserve to EMR 349 Baby Memorial Garden Earmarked Reserve.
- ii. to transfer £10,000 of the £15,524.72 underspend on the Detached Youth Work service delivery budget 2023/24 (transferred to EMR 310 General Fund Working Reserve at year end 2023/24) to a Youth Work earmarked reserve.
- RESOLVED** to transfer £10,000 from EMR 310 General Fund Working Reserve to EMR 350 Youth Projects Earmarked Reserve.
- iii. to transfer £13,000 from the General Fund Working Reserve to top up the Rolling Capital Fund.
- RESOLVED** to transfer £13,000 from EMR 310 General Fund Working Reserve to EMR 315 Rolling Capital Fund.
- iv. to transfer £70,000 to an earmarked reserve for anticipated repair costs for St. Mary's Churchyard boundary wall.
- RESOLVED** to transfer £70,000 from EMR 310 General Fund Working Reserve to EMR 322 Major Projects Earmarked Reserve for anticipated repair costs for St. Mary's Churchyard boundary wall.
- FGP/2024/25** **ADDITIONAL IT INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT HYBRID WORKING**
- Committee considered a quote from the Council's IT contractor for an additional laptop and peripherals to support a request from the Community Engagement Manager for infrastructure to support hybrid working.
- RESOLVED** to approve expenditure of £620.90 for an additional laptop and peripherals, funded from EMR 315 Rolling Capital Fund.
- FGP/2024/26** **APPOINTMENT OF WORKING PARTIES**
- RESOLVED** to agree terms of reference and appoint Members to serve on the Community Engagement Working Party for the municipal year 2024/25, as set out in appendix I to these minutes.
- FGP/2024/27** **CITIZENS' ADVICE WEST BERKSHIRE**
- Councillor Cottingham declared a non-pecuniary interest in the following item as the West Berkshire Council representative to Citizens' Advice West Berkshire*
- Following consideration at the last meeting (FGP/2024/18) of expiry of a three-year funding agreement with Citizens' Advice West Berkshire on 31st March 2024, Councillors Cole and J Pemberton provided an update on a recent meeting with the Community Engagement Manager to consider potential funding options, along with supporting data provided by the CAWB.

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- FGP/2024/27** **CITIZENS' ADVICE WEST BERKSHIRE continued**
 Councillors were disappointed that the Town Council was not notified that the Thatcham Outreach service had not resumed following Covid-19, a service provided under the now expired Service Level Agreement (for the reasons set out in appendix II to these minutes), but recognised that the service continued to be provided at the Newbury office, with travel costs reimbursed for those in need.
- RESOLVED** to offer a three-year funding agreement at the 2023/24 rate plus RPI, with annual RPI increases and an annual presentation to Full Council, and to request that the outreach service be reinstated as resources allow, and to request that the Community Engagement Manager helps raise awareness of CAWB's need for volunteers.
- FGP/2024/28** **REVIEW OF FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**
 Following referral of the draft, overhauled Financial Regulations at the last meeting (FGP/2024/19) for review by Councillors, Committee considered a draft of the revised Financial Regulations prepared in line with feedback from Councillors Cottingham and Pike. The Town Clerk and Finance Manager answered questioned. Committee acknowledged that the proposed revisions provided Officers with delegated authority to bring flexibility to operations, whilst maintaining appropriate segregation of duties. Budgets would continue to be regularly monitored by Committee, along with annual audit spot-checks, and the Regulations were subject to annual review. Committee was therefore minded to support the draft, with two minor amendments.
- RESOLVED** unanimously, to recommend the draft Financial Regulations to Full Council for adoption at its meeting on 30th September 2024, subject to the following two amendments:
- i. Paragraph 3.4 – removal of '...and relevant basic amount of Council tax'.
 - ii. Paragraph 6.5 – add 'cannot approve the payment in question'.
- FGP/2024/29** **FINANCIALS**
- i. Committee considered proposed BACS payments due from the current account.
- RESOLVED** to approve the proposed BACS payments (appendix III).
- ii. Committee retrospectively approved payments made from the current account on 21st May 2024, and supported approval of the payments by the Town Clerk and Finance Manager under delegated authority in accordance with Financial Regulation 5.5a, to ensure payments were made in a timely manner due to there being no appropriate Committee meeting in May (appendix IV).
 - iii. Committee noted details of pre-authorized payments made from the current account, Soldo pre-paid debit card and Clerk's account during the period 1st April 2024 to 30th June 2024 (appendix V).
 - iv. Committee noted a bank reconciliation report, and requested that bank reconciliations be checked and signed off by a Councillor prior to reporting to Committee and Councillor Cottingham offered to undertake this.
 - v. Committee noted an Aged Creditor report.
 - vi. Committee noted an Aged Debtor report.

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FGP/2024/29

FINANCIALS continued

- vii. Committee approved an annual list of suppliers paid by direct debit (appendix VI).

- viii. Committee approved continuation of the Town Clerk's authority to approve card refunds for service deposit returns.

- ix. Committee authorised payment of salaries for the coming year.

There being no further business the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 20:50hrs.

Signed _____ Date _____