

Agenda item number: 10b
Date of meeting: 30th March 2026

THATCHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Full Council Meeting

Report by: Sarah Newman

Job Title: Events Manager

Subject: Heritage Blue Plaque Scheme

1 Purpose of Report

The Heritage Working Party seeks approval from Full Council for the revised voting process for the Blue Plaque Scheme, along with approval of the proposed shortlist for public voting for the 2026 Blue Plaque.

2 Background

The Heritage Working Party met on 3rd March to review the current process and agree a shortlist of candidates for the 2026 Blue Plaque. Ordinarily, these recommendations would be submitted to the Events Committee for approval; however, the next scheduled Events committee meeting is not until June. This delay would not allow sufficient time for a public vote to take place and for the selected plaque to be manufactured and installed in time for unveiling during the Thatcham Festival.

3 Details of project

The proposed updated voting process is attached. The main change is the introduction of an annual public vote, with three shortlisted plaque nominations each year. This change is intended to enhance community engagement and ensure regular recognition of Thatcham's heritage.

The proposed shortlist for the 2026 Blue Plaque is as follows:

The Gush Special - Green Lane Garage

A racing car developed in the 1920's / 1930's raced at Brooklands by Bryan G Gush of the Gush Garage Thatcham. Mr B. Gush developed the Gush Special in the 1930's; it was raced at Brooklands and by 1939 when the war stopped, it held 16 international records.

Prehistoric Thatcham @ Nature Discovery Centre, Lower Way

The importance of the site as a nature reserve and its place in the community. The sites stone age history and the presence of a prehistoric settlement to be recognised.

Gilberts @ The Retrograde, Chapel Street

Mr L Gilbert and his wife lived at 10 Chapel street and ran the local bicycle record and radio repair shop. He set up the first age concern society and allowed meetings to be

held in their house. He also took in evacuees in the war. He died in 1972. Mrs Gilbert was a founding member of the Thatcham WI.

4 Staffing Implications
n/a

5 Financial Implications and Funding Source (consider external funding opportunities)
Included within Budget for 2026/27. FULL/2026/007

6 Environmental Impact Assessment
n/a

7 Risk Management (Strategic, Compliance, Financial, Operational, Environmental, Staffing, Political, Societal)
n/a

8 Reference to Council Strategy
6.7 Heritage - Thatcham has a long and rich history, stretching back to the first known human settlement in the area during the Mesolithic Period. The Council recognises that the town's history should be celebrated and promoted.

9 Reference to Climate Action Plan
n/a

10 Community Engagement Opportunities
By changing the Blue Plaque selection to an annual public vote, and presenting a shorter, more focused shortlist each year, it is hoped that community participation will increase. And that by including this process within the town's yearly heritage calendar it will help create a consistent and recognisable opportunity for residents to engage with and celebrate Thatcham's history.

11 Links to West Berkshire Council Strategies [potential partnership opportunities]
<https://info.westberks.gov.uk/policies>

12 Legislation

13 Officers' Recommendation
