

THATCHAM TOWN COUNCIL
Minutes of a meeting of
Thatcham Town Council
held on Monday 26th January 2026 at 19:00hrs
in the Council Chamber, Brownsfield Road, Thatcham

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

In attendance: Laura Carlin (Town Clerk)
 James Wilcox (Fairclose Centre)

FULL/2026/001 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jeff Brooks, Owen Jeffery, Simon Pike and Stephanie Steevenson.

FULL/2026/002 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

No declarations of interest were received.

FULL/2026/003 WEST BERKSHIRE COMMUNITY HOSPITAL

Members received a presentation from James Wilcox of Fairclose Centre on the plans for a Dementia Unit in the grounds of the West Berkshire Community Hospital.

James Wilcox left the meeting

FULL/2026/004 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No public questions had been received.

FULL/2026/005 MINUTES

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the meeting held on the 24th November 2025, having been previously circulated, be signed as a correct record of the proceedings.

FULL/2026/006 REPORTS FROM THE MAYOR AND DEPUTY MAYOR

a) Mayor's Report. The Mayor, Councillor Petra Pemberton, provided a detailed account of their public engagements since December 2025, including attending numerous community events and charity functions. The Mayor mentioned a number of festive Carol Services, Thatcham Town Council's very own Christmas Lights Switch-On and the Thatcham Rotary Santa Fun Run. The Mayor was honoured to attend a special Christmas morning visit and service at West Berkshire Community Hospital. In the New Year, the Mayor attended the Thatcham Cancer Support Group's 7th birthday, the V365 Recruitment Fair hosted by the Volunteer Centre, and she also met members of the Tamil community at Community United's 'Pongal' celebration at Shaw House.

b) Deputy Mayor's Report Councillor Lillycrop reported that from December 2025 to date, he had attended a variety of events including Thatcham Town Council's Christmas Lights Switch-On, the Civic Carol Service and the opening of the new cricket nets at Kennet Leisure Centre. Special mention was given to Berkshire Farm Girl's Tractor Run which took place in December 2025 and made a request for Officers to write a letter of congratulations and make contact to offer support for the event in future years.

FULL/2026/007 BUDGET AND PRECEPT 2026/27

i. At its meeting on 19th January 2026, the Finance and General Purposes Committee reviewed the draft budget 2026/27 noting the decrease to the

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FULL/2026/007 BUDGET AND PRECEPT 2026/27 continued

Tax Base and resolved to recommend in principle to Full Council for adoption with the shortfall being covered by Reserves.

- ii. The Finance & General Purposes Committee requested a meeting between its Chair and the Clerk to make a final review of the draft budget and present their findings to Full Council. The review highlighted the subsidiary increase to the Henwick Worthy JMC, the tree survey will include an area not previously surveyed, the decision to maintain the Events programme in full along with weekly playground safety inspections. Other factors around an assumed inflation of 3% and the need for £7,832 to be made available from reserves to cover the shortfall of the reduced Tax Base were also discussed.

RESOLVED

to defer a discussion about Devolution to the Finance and General Purposes Committee as more detail is needed of the potential costs to be incurred from additional dog bin emptying.

Following confirmation of above (i), and having considered all factors outlined (ii), Council considered the draft budget 2026/27 v0.5 which required a precept of £1,252,552 to meet the expenditure set out in the draft budget. For illustration purposes, based upon the proposed precept, the Town Council's element of the Council Tax Band D equivalent for 2026/27 would be an increase of £9.93 per annum.

RESOLVED

to adopt the draft budget 2026/27, as presented (appendix I), and that a precept of £1,252,552 be issued in accordance with the requirements of Section 150 (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 to meet the expenditure as set out in the budget.

FULL/2026/008 APPROVAL AND ADOPTION OF COMMITTEE MINUTES

The following Committee Minutes were presented for adoption:

RESOLVED

a) Recreation and Amenities Committee Minutes dated 8th December 2025.
to adopt the Minutes

b) Planning and Highways Committee Minutes dated 16th December 2025 and 13th January 2026.

RESOLVED

to adopt the Minutes of 16th December 2025 and make an amendment to the 13th January 2026 minutes to show Cllr Val Watts was in attendance. The minutes for 13th January 2026 will be adopted at the next Full Council meeting on 30th March 2026.

FULL/2026/009 CONCLUSION OF EXTERNAL AUDIT 2024/25

It was noted that the External Auditor's Report for the year ended 31st March 2025 states that 'on the basis of our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR), in our opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the AGAR is in accordance with Proper Practices and no other matters have come to their attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met.' PKF LITTLEJOHN LLP 25th September 2025

FULL/2026/010 FREEDOM OF THE TOWN

RESOLVED

Members considered a report from the Events Manager and to formally confer the Freedom of the Town to 67 MI Coy of Denison Barracks with a ceremonial parade on Thursday 4th June 2026, symbolising the town's appreciation and granting the unit the historic right to march through Thatcham.

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FULL/2026/011 COMMUNITY AWARDS PANEL

RESOLVED

to appoint Councillors Suzanne Adamantos and Jeremy Cottam to join the Mayor and Deputy Mayor on the Community Awards Panel, which will meet week commencing 23rd March 2026 to agree the Community Awards 2026, which will be presented at the Annual Town Meeting on 23rd April 2026.

FULL/2026/012 MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR SIMON PIKE

Motion withdrawn by Councillor Pike prior to the meeting.

FULL/2026/013 REPORTS

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

Council noted a report from:

- i. Councillor Adamantos who was present at Council Surgery in The Broadway on Saturday 6th December 2025

b) Reports from West Berkshire District Councillors

The following report from West Berkshire District Councillor Cottingham was received:

As mentioned in local press recently, the finances of West Berkshire Council are under stress and an Extraordinary Meeting will be held this week regarding the Fair Funding Review. Due to changes in methodology WBC will suffer a £28m shortfall in funding over the next 3 years. WBC will be making some difficult choices and making recommendations to central Government.

Cllr Cottingham also noted that West Berkshire are 1 of only 3 councils to be awarded "green" status for road conditions due to their proactive approach to repairing potholes.

c) Outside Body Reports

- i. Representative nominations were received and voted upon for 2 current vacancies:

RESOLVED

to appoint Councillor J Pemberton to the Thatcham Memorial Foundation and Councillor Watts to Lady Frances Winchcombe's Thatcham Foundation

- ii. Council received a request from Berkshire Music Trust to become an Outside Body of Thatcham Town Council and

RESOLVED

to agree in principle subject to further information being received as requested by Councillor J Lunn as to what would be required of the representative.

RESOLVED

- iii. Reports from a number of appointees to outside bodies were noted and that the rent paid at Henley's Allotments would remain as per calendar year, as requested by the Thatcham Allotment Gardening Club. Councillor Watts highlighted the urgent need for volunteer drivers on behalf of the Thatcham Volunteer Bureau.

FULL/2026/014 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

that, in view of the commercially sensitive nature of the business to be transacted (FULL/2026/015), it was advisable in the public interest that the press and public be temporarily excluded, and they be instructed to withdraw.

FULL/2026/015 PROPOSED HYDROTHERAPY POOL

RESOLVED

to create a Working Party to make recommendations to the Finance & General Purposes Committee for financial and risk management.

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FULL/2026/015 PROPOSED HYDROTHERAPY POOL continued

RESOLVED to appoint Councillors Suzanne Adamantos and Jeremy Cottam to the Working Party, joining Councillors Owen Jeffery, Stephanie Steevenson and Jeff Brooks, the Town Clerk and Place Manager.

There being no further business the Mayor declared the meeting closed at 20:43.

Signed: _____ Date: _____