

THAME TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee held on 16 February 2016 at 6.30pm in the Upper Chamber, Thame Town Hall.

Present: Cllrs B Austin, D Bretherton, D Butler (Deputy Chairman), D Dodds, M Dyer (Chairman), L Emery (Deputy Mayor), C Jones and T Wyse
Officers
G Hunt, Town Clerk
A Oughton, Committee Services Officer

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Champken-Woods (Holiday), Dixon (Business), Fickling (Personal) and Lambert (Business).

2 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

Cllr Dyer declared an interest in item 20 as a member of the organising committee. The Town Clerk confirmed that a general dispensation was in place.

The Town Clerk had granted a dispensation to Cllr Bretherton with regard to item 19 and confirmed Cllrs Dyer and Dodds had a dispensation in place as Trustees of the Museum. Cllrs Butler and Emery had a general dispensation in place as Council Representatives.

3 Public Participation and Public Questions

There were no applications to address the Committee.
There were no questions put to the Committee.

4 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2015 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5 Budget Summary

Members received the budget summary up to 31 December 2015.

Item line 302: Investment Activities, the Town Clerk would review how in future this item could be amended so as not to be confused by movements in the Capital Reserves.

6 Investment Portfolio

The Investment Portfolio Performance Summary and the draw down of funds was noted.

7 Reports from Representatives on External Organisations

- a) Barns Centre – report noted.
- b) Citizens Advice Bureau – Cllr Austin reported that Mr Tom Fox, Bureau Director would retire at the end of March. Interviews to find his successor would take place at the end of February.
- c) Health Summit – report noted.
- d) NALC – report noted.

- e) Thame Business Forum – Cllr Dyer reported that the Forum had met last week and continued to be well supported by the larger businesses in Thame. The timescale for delivery of Fibre Broadband to some of the industrial estates was still being pursued with some degree of success.
- f) Thame & District Housing Association – Cllr Butler reported that tenants had the opportunity to purchase their home which may present a ‘thorny’ problem for the Housing Association.
- g) 21st Century Thame – report noted.
- h) Welfare Trust – Cllr Champken-Woods had sent his apologies - no report received.

8 Internal Audit

Members noted the Internal Audit Interim Update Report 2015-16 and congratulated the Town Clerk and Officers on the hard work that had been undertaken to achieve the good report.

9 External Audit

It was noted that a new sector led body had replaced the Audit Commission and that the Town Council would use the services of that body to procure future External Audit provision.

10 Investment Strategy

The Investment Strategy was last adopted in March 2015 with a requirement for the Strategy to be reviewed on an annual basis. The only significant change to the Strategy tabled was the additional bullet point on page one which read ‘Other recognised funds specifically targeted at the Public Sector’. This would allow the Council wider choice when making decisions on short term investments.

RESOLVED that:

- i) The Investment Strategy be approved.*

11 Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy

Minor cosmetic changes had been made to the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy which was last adopted in 2011.

RESOLVED that:

- i) The Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy be adopted.*

12 Financial Regulations

It was noted that NALC had supplied the required updates to the Model Financial Regulations (on which the Town Council’s Financial Regulations were based) for the new procurement regulations. The Town Council had registered with Contract Finder as legally required and had published two tenders (although both were below the legal limit of £25,000), and so were already working to the spirit of the new regulations. Formal revision of the Financial Regulations would be prepared for the Annual Meeting of the Council in May.

13 Fixed Term Deposits

Members noted that in line with the Investment Strategy, and specific past resolutions re Treasury Management, that the Council had deposited fixed term funds with Lloyds Bank as follows:

- a) £100,000 9 month deposit maturing 10.10.2016 at 0.85%

- b) £200,000 12 month deposit maturing 9.1.2017 at 1.05%.

14 Health and Safety Visit Outcomes

The first inspection by the Health & Safety Consultant of the Town Hall, Maintenance Depot and Southern Road Recreational Ground had taken place on 26 November 2016. Following the inspection the Council had received the General Risk Assessment Report and the Safety Action Plan detailing all aspects of the visit.

It was pleasing to note that the issues highlighted in the report were of a minor nature and Officers would take forward the actions as required.

15 Local Parish Elections Costs 2015

Prior to the 2015 election the District had provided an estimate of likely costs of around £9,000. This had been received in January after the budget had been set for 2015-16 and before agreement that the Counts would be split across different locations.

An invoice for £7,000 had been received from the District Council, the detail of which had been checked and verified. It was clear that the Town Council had under budgeted for the 2015 local parish election costs which had resulted in an over spend of £4,579.90. The total cost equated to around 70p per elector.

RESOLVED that:

- j) The overspend of £4,579.90 in regard to the 2015 local parish election costs for Thame be approved and allocated from General Reserves.***

16 Recruitment Costs

It was noted that under Financial Regulation 4.5, the Town Clerk had authorised emergency expenditure of £2,075 in total for the specialist recruitment advertising required for the Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Officer vacancy.

17 Health and Safety Remedial Works

At the Policy & Resources committee meeting in September it was noted that emergency expenditure had been executed to undertake a fixed wire electrical test of the Town Hall, an Asbestos survey of the Town Hall and Southern Road Recreation Ground (SRRG) and a Legionella assessment of SRRG. The inspections had now been carried out and remedial work was required to meet the current Health and Safety requirements.

It was estimated that the cost of completing the remedial work would be in the region of £5.5k which may result in an over spend in the budget. Further quotations would be sought.

RESOLVED that:

- j) The expenditure with regard to the remedial works required following the Legionella, Asbestos and Fixed Electrical Wire Test of the Town Hall and Southern Road Recreation Ground be approved with excess over budget being allocated from General Reserves.***

18 Town Hall Secondary Glazing

In 2015 an energy performance audit and advisory report had been undertaken and a number of recommendations made within the report. One of the recommendations was to fit secondary glazing

to the windows in the Information Centre and Meeting room which would result in positive impact on energy performance.

Members agreed it was a sensible and prudent to fit the secondary glazing as recommended in the report.

RECOMMENDATION:

- i) To Full Council that £2,800 be released from the Capital Rolling Fund to install the secondary glazing as detailed within the report.***

19 Thame Museum Building Improvement Project

Cllr Bretherton reported that a progress meeting had taken place with members of the Museum Trust, the architect and the Town Council's Asset Manager. As a result of the meeting a number of additional reports had been identified.

The work could be commissioned after the planning application had been submitted but for completeness it was felt sensible that the reports be done prior to submission of the planning application. The Museum Trust had not anticipated coming back to the Council so soon with a further funding request and anticipated that the cost of the additional work would be significantly lower than that estimated.

RECOMMENDATION:

- i) That the request from Thame Museum Trust for additional funding up to £5,000 for professional fees, as detailed in the report, be approved.***
- ii) To recommend to Full Council that £5,000 be released from the Capital Rolling Fund.***

20 Business Forum Open Doors Event

A second Open Doors Event was planned for 9 July 2016 following the successful event held last year. The working group had sent out letters to all the large businesses in the town and had received a number of confirmed bookings. Businesses would be asked to make a small contribution towards the cost of running the event.

The working group had requested assistance from the Town Council in the form of free use of the Town Hall kitchen and foyer, access to electricity supply through the external electricity points and closure of the Lower High Street Car Park on the day of the event.

Members felt the event had proved to be a very successful showcase for the businesses of Thame and the request for assistance with the 2016 event was considered a sensible use of Town Council resources.

RESOLVED that:

- i) Free use of the Town Hall, electricity supply via the external electricity points and closure of the Lower High Street Car Park for the Open Doors Event on Saturday 9 July 2016 be approved.***

21 Depot Maintenance Work

As a result of the Health and Safety visit to the Works Depot a number of actions had been identified. The main items, as detailed in the report could not be completed from existing budgets.

Members agreed it was important that the work be carried out in accordance with Health & Safety recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION:

- i) ***To Full Council that £2,274 be released from the Works Depot Capital Fund to undertake the works detailed in the report.***

22 SODC Economic Development Projects

Members noted the progress of the SODC Economic Development Projects.

23 Swimming Pool Update

It was noted that solicitors letters had been sent to the contractor GLL and Oxfordshire County Council in December to advise them that any outstanding maintenance payments should be settled between them as the payments were not the responsibility of the Town Council. To date no response had been received.

24 Oxfordshire County Council

A meeting had taken place with the Operational Development Manager from Oxfordshire County Council, the Town Clerk and the Town Council's Asset Manager to discuss the possible devolution of services from OCC.

No concrete proposals had been received from OCC as yet and the Town Council would be under no obligation to take on a service once identified. The Town Council was keen to take on services that would directly benefit the community and would bring back any suggested proposals to Council for consideration.

The report provided with the agenda was noted.

25 Town Hall Closure

It was noted that the Town Hall would be closed on Thursday 25 February 2016 to enable some members of staff to visit the Poppy Factory, in conjunction with Thame Remembers. Telephone calls would be answered.

26 For Information

Members noted the CCTV summary report for Q2 – 2015-16 and the CCTV Management Group – TVP Funding report.

The meeting concluded at 7.35pm

Signed
Chairman, 19 April 2016