

THAME TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of Thame Town Council held on 14 February 2017 at 6.30pm in the Upper Chamber, Thame Town Hall

Present: Cllrs B Austin, D Bretherton, D Butler, N Champken-Woods, P Cowell, M Deacock, N Dixon (Deputy Mayor), D Dodds, M Dyer, L Emery (Town Mayor), H Fickling, P Lambert, A Midwinter, M Stiles and T Wyse.

Officers

G Hunt, Town Clerk
A Oughton, Committee Services Officer
L Fuller, Community Project Support Officer

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Jones (Business), County Councillor Carter and District Councillor Matelot Green.

2 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Civic Announcements

Cllr Emery reported that it had been a very busy time with lots of engagements. It was difficult to pull out any one in particular as Cllr Emery had enjoyed them all and met some incredible people.

4 Public Participation and Public Questions

There were no applications to address the Council.
There were no questions to the Council.

There were six members of the public present and Standing Orders were suspended for items 5 and 6 to enable their participation in questions and answers.

5 Thames Valley Police

Inspector Mark Harling and Sergeant Vicky Hoskin of Thames Valley Police provided an update on current policing in Thame.

Sgt Hoskin began by answering questions that had been submitted prior to the meeting. With regard to the installation of CCTV equipment above the Co-operative store. This had been installed by a private individual who had concerns about the safety of his property. The Data Commissioner had given permission for the equipment to be installed.

Concerns about parking on zig zag and double yellow lines in the town. There was a dedicated team of PCSOs who did try to enforce parking regulations where possible issuing £30 fines. However, only police officers could issue tickets that incurred penalty points. Blue badge holders were permitted to park on double yellow lines, however, if the vehicle provided an obstruction on the highway police officers would take action.

With regard to parking on Lashlake, Moorend Lane, Greenway and Webster Close, there was relatively little that could be done as there were no parking restrictions or resident only parking areas. If the vehicle obstructed a driveway or junction a ticket could be issued. Sgt Hoskin agreed to ask traffic management to review the area to see if any restrictions could be implemented. PCSOs had spoken to the owners of the commercial vehicles that regularly parked outside the Town Hall, causing

an obstruction and hopefully this would now stop. Sgt Hoskin advised that the campaign of issuing letters to those abusing the 2 hour free parking regulations in the town centre had proved successful and could be reinstated if needed.

Residents may notice an increase in activity at the old police station in Greyhound Lane as the site had now been sold and would be empty by the end of March. Inspector Harling noted the uneven paving by the visitor's parking bay and would pass this onto the appropriate department for action. He confirmed the site at Wenman Road was permanent and would not be disposed of.

Attention was drawn to the increase in police vehicles driving through the centre of town using sirens and blue lights. Concern was raised that the officers may be using this route as an alternative to the ring road now the police operations were based on the industrial estate. Sgt Hoskin responded that unless specific times and dates could be supplied to enable an investigation to take place there was little that could be done. However, the vehicles could be responding to an incident anywhere, not just in Thame and could be passing through the Town when the call to respond is received.

A Member reported parking problems at Jane Morbey Road / Staggs Road and the location was noted.

Sgt Hoskin drew Members attention to a new initiative 'Shop Watch' which was active in a number of towns in the Thames Valley Police area. An external business sells radio equipment to retail businesses which then allows them to talk to each other and send alerts of shop lifting or inappropriate behaviour. The police also have a radio and it was hoped that a radio could be installed in the Information Centre at the Town Hall. 'Shop Watch' had proved to be very effective in places where it operated. To date 14 shops in the town had signed up to the initiative and equipment was due to be installed next week. Stickers were being produced for display in shops taking part. Members agreed that the Town Council logo should be included on the stickers.

Inspector Harling reported that Thames Valley Police was going through a period of restructuring which had commenced last summer. Looking at how to deliver policing locally involving response, investigation and neighbourhood policing. It was a process of evolution and having analysed where and when response is greatest had led to better resourcing and having higher levels of police on duty when there was greatest demand.

With regard to the old police station site, Thames Valley Police were disposing of various stations. The method of policing had changed with officers issued with smartphones and technology such as tablets and access to Wi-Fi to enable them to work from police vehicles and residents homes without the need to return to the police station.

The neighbourhood team continued to work with local agencies to try to tackle the underlying issues that resulted in crime and antisocial behaviour. This is supported by a dedicated problem solving team. Policing was not just about crime and disorder but also dealt with alcohol, drug and substance abuse, mental health issues, child sex exploitation, etc. Illegal parking also had an adverse impact on the community and the neighbourhood team would do what they could to minimise that impact but it could not be the priority. The best solution would be civil enforcement.

Drug use had become socially more acceptable with drugs easier to acquire but it remained a priority for the police to protect the vulnerable people in our society. It was not easy to remove dealers from the street and as fast as one was removed another will move in to fill the void. The police continued to work on intelligence gathered and Inspector Harling asked that if anyone had any information to contact the police by calling 101 or the crime stoppers number.

Two Councillors praised the police and thanked them for their continued help and support in the community.

Mr Davies drew attention to the problem of parking on double yellow lines and a blind corner on the Chiltern Vale estate. Inspector Harling said he had noted the location and would do what he could.

Mr Newcombe who had lived on Park Street for many years reported that there had been many incidents of drug dealing, criminal damage and anti-social behaviour in the area, especially in the early hours of the morning on Friday and Saturday and he had intervened on a number of occasions to break up fights. There had been no police intervention at any time and there was a noticeable lack of a regular police patrols. When the incidents had been reported he was told there was nothing the police could do.

Inspector Harling didn't disagree with the points Mr Newcombe had made and in some situations events could have been handled differently and more effectively by the police. Thames Valley Police would respond to incidents but did have to prioritise the calls they received. The new shift pattern of working would ensure that there would be extra officers on patrol between the hours of 10pm and 2am. It was stressed that effectiveness is increased by actual patrols, rather than remaining in vehicles.

Cllr Lambert reported that there had been a number of incidents of antisocial behaviour with young people riding motorcycles and driving cars fitted with very noisy exhausts along Park Street and the High Street. Kathy Bacon reported that she had a list of offenders and had reported such incidents on several occasions only to be told there was nothing that could be done. Inspector Harling said this was not difficult to deal with and asked Kathy to provide the information she had gathered after the meeting.

A question was raised as to how the regular meetings at the Co-operative store were going? Sgt Hoskin reported that these sessions were run by community support officers who may not have the same level of knowledge as police officers. The Have Your Say meetings were generally not well attended and discussions were taking place into running a more informal event and invite businesses, local organisations, residents and members of the Town Council to attend.

Cllr Emery thanked Inspector Harling and Sgt Hoskin for attending the meeting, it had been difficult and testing in some places but the opportunity to ask questions was very much appreciated.

6 Thame Community Hospital

Lee Jones and Lesley Perkin from Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust and Dr Martin Thornton from Trinity Practice provided an update on the Thame Community Hospital and the development of community hubs.

A series of public engagement events were held a year ago with regard to establishing a community hub. The meetings were well attended, the clear message was a desire for light airy buildings, providing a centre for multi-functional outpatient clinics and health and wellbeing services. There was a need to expand 'out of hospital care' and plans had been put in place to run pilot schemes in Thame and Marlow to see what might work.

The pilot in Thame would begin in April and use Thame Community Hospital. The eight hospital beds currently in use at the hospital would close whilst the pilot took place and dependent on the success of the pilot may not be reinstated. Staff at the hospital had been informed of the plans and one to one meetings with every member of staff were due to take place to find the best solution for the future for each individual. The hub would provide a single point of access to get the right care at the right time providing a more efficient service, immediate assessment of the frail and elderly, more outpatient clinics and the opportunity to work with the voluntary sector.

It was hoped that during the course of the pilot over 300 hospital admissions would be avoided and services would evolve through talking to people about their experiences and monitoring the impact.

It was confirmed that use of the first floor of the hospital by the community teams would remain unchanged during the pilot and the Thame and District Day Centre would be unaffected. Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust had committed £1m of investment in the pilot schemes across the Trust.

No formal agreement had been made with Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group who were currently undertaking a consultation but discussions had taken place. One of the biggest messages from the public consultation last year was the county border and the difficulties that resulted from it.

Mr Davies asked questions about reinstatement and running costs which were answered by those present.

Dr Ken Burch, President of the Thame District Hospital League of Friends addressed the meeting. He had worked and lived in Thame and had an association with the hospital for over 40 years. The hospital was built in the late 19th century and since that time had helped a great number of local people. In recent times this had dwindled and district hospital beds were now seen as a means to avoid bed blocking in main hospitals.

If the proposed pilot worked it would win in getting the number of ambulant frail elderly people out of hospital and provide a better service to a larger number of people. It was sad that the eight hospital beds had to close. Dr Burch put on record his thanks to all the members of staff and volunteers, both past and present who had worked at the Community Hospital over the 100 years. Their hard work and dedication would not be forgotten.

Dr Burch asked what would happen if the pilot failed? What parts of the original hospital would be reinstated and would the staff be reemployed? Lesley confirmed that there was a need to assess the impact of the pilot and there were risks in running it but if it didn't work the Community Hospital would revert back to providing the service as it had before the pilot commenced. Changes to staff employment contracts would be temporary for the duration of the pilot.

Dr Birch thanked the representatives for their promise to revert as much of the services back as possible if the pilot failed. It was a very brave move to carry out the pilot and he respected the Trust for their decision and wished them every success.

Dr Thornton said it had been interesting to listen to the conversations during the meeting. The local GPs saw the pilot as a positive move. Practices were having to deal with more and more elderly patients and the eight hospital beds had not served the people of Thame well in recent years. The pilot would try to provide a better service that local GPs would work together to help shape.

7 Report from County Councillor N Carter

The Town Clerk reported that Cllr Carter had given his apologies due to a budget meeting at the County Council. As the County budget would not be approved until the meeting Cllr Carter would submit his report to the Town Council by the end of the week to better reflect on the outcome and implications of the Budget meeting.

8 Reports from South Oxfordshire District Councillors

Cllrs Champken-Woods and Dodds had nothing further to add to the SODC Report for Parish Councils circulated to all Councillors on 9 January 2017.

9 Notices of Motion

There were no Notices of Motion.

10 Members Questions (under Standing Order 11)

There were no questions.

11 Minutes

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 17 January 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

12 Policy & Resources Committee

The minutes of the meeting on 7 February 2017 were noted.

13 Community, Leisure & Recreation Committee

The minutes of the meeting on 24 January 2017 were noted.

14 Planning & Environment Committee

The minutes of the meetings on 29 November 2016, 20 December 2016, 10 January 2017 and 31 January 2017 were noted.

15 Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Committee

The minutes of the meetings on 20 December 2016 and 31 January 2017 were noted.

16 Effectiveness of Internal Control / Financial Risk

The review of the effectiveness of internal control was an annual requirement. The Office Administration Manager had reviewed the risk assessments, together with the Town Clerk and had made some minor changes.

RESOLVED that:

- i) The measures taken to mitigate financial risks be approved.*
- ii) The effectiveness of internal control be approved.*

17 Internal Audit Programme

Good corporate governance required an annual review of the Internal Audit Programme of Work to be carried out. The Internal Auditor was appointed in April 2015 on a five year contract of a total of 28 hours work spread over a period of four days per year.

RESOLVED that:

- i) The Annual Internal Audit Programme of Work for 2017-18 be approved.*

18 Thame and District Day Centre – External Organisation Representative

Given the financial support provided to the Thame and District Day Centre in the 2017-18 budget, Members agreed that a Councillor be nominated for the Thame and District Day Centre (as another external organisation), to report into the Community, Leisure and Recreation Committee.

Cllrs Butler and Midwinter put themselves forward for consideration as the Councillor Representative. It was agreed that both nominations would be put forward to the Thame and District Day Centre Trustees for consideration at their next meeting.

RESOLVED that:

- i) Cllrs Butler and Midwinter be put forward to the Thame and District Day Centre Trustees for consideration as Councillor Representative.***

[Post meeting note: At the meeting of the Thame and District Day Centre Trustees held on Wednesday 15 February it was agreed that Cllr Midwinter should be the Councillor Representative].

19 Unitary Authority “Consultation” – A Fresh Start for Oxfordshire

Members noted that Cllrs Dyer, Fickling and Stiles had met with the Town Clerk to formulate a response to the “consultation”. It was agreed that the set of bullet points in the email from the Town Clerk to the three Councillors, following the meeting, should form the basis of the response. Members thanked those involved for their hard work.

RESOLVED that:

- i) The Town Clerk be delegated responsibility for the submission of a response, by the deadline of 28 February 2017, in consultation with Cllrs Dyer, Fickling and Stiles.***

20 Town Centre Sports Event

Following on from the successful town centre street cricket event in June 2016, it was noted that discussions were underway on the potential for a more wide ranging sporting event, on a similar basis, on the evening of Friday 23 June 2017. As before, this would require mid-afternoon closure of the High Street Car Park.

21 Community Facilities Working Group – Requirement Gathering Consultation

Members noted that the engagement of Leap Design Group by the Community Facilities Working Group to professionally establish up-to-date requirements for a Community Facility, (as approved by the Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Committee on 31 January 2017), required the waiving of Financial Regulation 11.1 (i). It was not possible to obtain three separate priced quotations as the work required builds on separate work already executed by Leap Design Group within Thame and was therefore more cost effective than starting from scratch with another supplier. Such waiving of regulations is required to be formally reported to Council in line with Financial Regulation 11.1 (d).

The meeting concluded at 8.23pm

Signed
Chairman, 25 April 2017