

## THAME TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of Thame Town Council held on 25 February 2014 at 6.30pm in the Upper Chamber, Thame Town Hall

**Present:** Cllr D Bretherton, D Butler, N Champken-Woods, A Dite, D Dodds, M Dyer, L Emery, H Fickling, V Humphries, P Lambert (Town Mayor), D Laver, J Matelot Green (Deputy Mayor) and M Stiles

**Officers**

H Stewart, Town Clerk

A Oughton, Committee Services Officer

**1 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Dixon (Family), Gunn (Holiday) and Welphy (Unwell).

**2 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**3 Civic Announcements**

The Civic attendances were noted.

**4 Public Participation**

There were no applications to address the Council.

**5 Thames Valley Police**

This item was deferred to the next meeting.

**6 Report from County Councillor N Carter**

Cllr Carter reported that the main concern for the Council over the last few months had been budget setting and dealing with the recent flooding. The budget had been set with a 1.99% increase in Council Tax which fell just below the rate set by Government. In setting this budget cuts would need to be made across all the services provided by the County Council. Following a question from the Town Council in December regarding the Red Kite Children's Centre, Cllr Carter reported that the Children's Centres across the County would be subject to a two year review but for the moment it was business as usual.

The recent flooding had presented several challenges with a long list of road repairs being added to the maintenance programme. However, repairs could not take place until the roads that needed repairing had dried out.

The Oxfordshire City Deal had recently been announced making available £55m of Government funding for Oxfordshire creating jobs, driving the local economy and improving local roads and public transport.

The Town Council thanked the County for the repairs made to the pavement outside the Cooperative store which had stopped large amounts of water collecting there during wet weather. Cllr Carter reported he was very pleased that the work had finally been carried out.

## **7 Reports from South Oxfordshire District Councillors**

Clr Bretherton reported that the budget had been set last week and that the Governance Review was due to come forward shortly.

Clr Dodds reported that the budget had been set with a 2.5% cut in council tax, this had been achieved without any cuts being made to services. However, the budget would allow for significant spending commitments where required. For example the refurbishment of the Leisure Centre, including the flooring had been identified and support for Town Co-ordinators would continue. Cllr Dodds was pleased the Town Council were making good use of the SODC team to promote tourism within the town.

Didcot was a growing town which required community facilities, it was hoped the majority of the projects would be funded by the private sector but a substantial amount of money would be needed to ensure adequate facilities were provided. The Communities Capital Grant fund was currently open for applications, this fund was formally known as the Community Infrastructure Fund (CIF).

The majority of staff at the Vale of the White Horse Council had now relocated to offices at Crowmarsh with a small team from the planning department remaining at Abingdon. The space vacated by Vale of the White Horse had been occupied by staff from the County Council.

Flooding had proved a challenge in the District particularly at Sonning where residents had not had a waste collection since Christmas. Council staff continued to work hard to restore services and were now on top of the situation.

## **8 Notices of Motion**

There were no notices of motion.

## **9 Questions**

The response to the question raised in December regarding payment of the Living Wage was noted.

## **10 Minutes**

**RESOLVED that:**

- i) The minutes of the meeting held on 22 January 2014 be approved as a correct record and be signed by the Mayor.*

## **11 Policy & Resources Committee**

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 February 2014 were noted.

## **12 Culture, Leisure & Recreation Committee**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2014 were noted.

Item 9 – Information Centre

**RESOLVED that:**

- i) £3,000 from the Capital Rolling Fund to support the proposals to improve the Information Centre be approved.*

Item 11 – Elms Park Lighting

**RESOLVED that:**

- i) ***The additional expenditure of £730 which was unavoidable when placing the order be noted.***

Item 13 – Christmas Event

**RESOLVED that:**

- i) ***Should there be a deficit of funding for the event it will be met from the General Fund be approved.***

Item 14a – Commemoration of First World War

**RESOLVED that:**

- i) ***The budget of £2000 from the General Reserve to commemorate the First World War be approved.***

Item 14b – Commemoration of First World War

**RESOLVED that:**

- i) ***The Council enters into a Partnership Agreement be approved.***
- ii) ***Up to £5,000 financial support be given to the Thame Remembers project be approved.***

### **13 Planning & Environment Committee**

The minutes of the meetings held on 17 December 2013, 14 January 2014 and 4 February 2014 were noted.

### **14 Personnel Committee**

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 October 2013 were noted.

### **15 Parking – Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE)**

South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) had been considering applying to take over the enforcement of on-street, as well as off street, car parking regulations, Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE), for some time. Having gained the support of Didcot, Henley and Wallingford Town Councils it now left Thame isolated in its pursuit of town council responsibility for enforcement.

After discussion it was agreed to support the County Council and District Council's intention to make an application to the Department of Transport for Civil Parking Enforcement but strongly caveated that support would only be given if the new arrangements reflected the requirements of Thame on specific issues.

**RESOLVED that:**

- i) ***Support would be given to the introduction of CPE by the district council only if it was assured that:***

- a) Free parking is retained in the two High Street car parks.*
- b) The markets in the town can continue and are managed by the Town Council.*
- c) There are no financial repercussions as a consequence of the introduction of CPE on the events held in the town centre.*
- e) Agreement is reached with Thame Town Council on any other important issues particular to Thame.*

## **16 SODC Market Towns Fund**

SODC supported by the Town Council had commissioned Tourism Angels to identify how tourist information could be made easier to find, ensure council staff were up to date in terms of tourism knowledge, recommend improvements to the Information Centre and how visitor information could be presented to improve the visitor experience. A presentation was made to the Culture, Leisure & Recreation Committee and a report submitted.

It was proposed to improve the Information Centre by modest spending on new fixtures, signage, labeling, display boards and product training. A new information board would be located externally at the front of the Town Hall and the Walking Guides reprinted. The District Council's Market Towns Fund would contribute 62.5% of the total cost of the above projects providing added benefit to the Town Council's investment and the economic development of the town.

**RESOLVED that:**

- i) £5,000 for the projects detailed in the Resource Appraisal of the report be funded from the Capital Rolling Fund be approved.*

## **17 Neighbourhood Plan**

There had been some confusion for developers as to what was meant by Publicly Accessible Open Space, the Guidance Note sought to clarify the policy wording. Subject to approval it would be submitted to SODC officers and all developers with an interest in a site in Thame.

**RESOLVED that:**

- i) The Guidance Note for Publicly Accessible Space be approved.*

## **18 Skate Park**

Three companies had submitted tenders for the refurbishment of the skate park and presented their plans to members of the Working Group, Councillors and skate park users. Following a meeting of the working group the tender had been awarded to Wheelscape.

Planning permission for the new skate park had been submitted and once approval had been received an application to the Communities Capital Grant fund at SODC would be submitted. The project cost was £250,000 and all funding opportunities would be explored.

## **19 Effectiveness of Internal Control**

The measures to mitigate financial risk had been in place for two years and had worked effectively based on the clean audits received to date.

**RESOLVED** that:

- i) ***The measures taken to mitigate financial risks be approved.***

**20 Internal Audit**

The Internal Auditor had been appointed in 2010 on a five year contract with an agreed programme of work. Good corporate governance required an annual review of the programme to ensure it was appropriate to the needs of the Council.

**RESOLVED** that:

- i) ***The Annual Internal Audit Programme of Work for 2014-15 be approved.***

**21 Health & Safety**

Following the award of the Health & Safety contract to Ellis Whittam it was a legal requirement to agree the Safety Policy Statement.

**RESOLVED** that:

- i) ***The Health and Safety Policy Statement be signed by the Town Mayor and Clerk.***

**22 Ham Wood**

At the meeting of the Culture, Leisure & Recreation Committee members were supportive of taking on the lease subject to further details being made available. These details were now provided in the attached Report for members consideration.

**RESOLVED** that:

- i) ***The leasing of Ham Wood reflecting the terms and conditions in the report be approved.***
- ii) ***That an increase of £350 in the revenue budget to cover the ongoing maintenance costs be approved.***

**23 Thame Players Theatre**

A request from Thame Players Theatre for the Council to consider providing an interest free loan had only been received yesterday. The loan would enable the Theatre to start work in May and ensure that grant funding from SODC would not be lost having not been used in the timeframe of the SODC grant terms and conditions. Thame Players had loaned money in the past from the Town Council and the Council were confident the repayments would be met.

The Council was aware that other organisations in the Town may approach the Council with similar requests for financial assistance and agreed that it would be good practice to draw up a policy to cover such requests.

The meeting concluded at 8.45pm

Signed .....  
Chairman, 29 April 2014