

THAME TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee held on 18 February 2014 at 6.30pm in the Upper Chamber, Thame Town Hall.

Present: Cllrs D Bretherton (Vice Chairman), M Dyer (Chairman), L Emery, H Fickling, A Gunn, V Humphries, P Lambert (Town Mayor), J Matelot Green (Deputy Mayor) and M Welply

Officers

H Stewart, Town Clerk
Morag Robinson, Office Administration Manager
A Oughton, Committee Services Officer

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Butler (Medical), Champken-Woods (Unwell) and Dodds (SODC).

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Public Participation

There were no applications to address the Committee.

4 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2013 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5 Budget / Finance Summary

Members received the budget summary up to 31 December 2013. A full set of the accounts were available for Members to view at the meeting.

Expenditure - a query was raised regarding 107 - Grant Expenditure which showed a high percentage figure, this was due to grant money that had been agreed for Thame Players. Income 101 – Central Services showed a 98.8 percent figure although the annual precept payment had been received in full. This was due to the estimated interest from bank accounts to year end.

6 Investments

The Rathbones Portfolio Performance Summary was noted.

7 Reports from Outside Bodies

- a) Citizens Advice Bureau – Cllr Welply reported that following the reorganisation of CAB in Oxfordshire, Thame had enjoyed a period of stability, moral was high and staff and volunteers were working efficiently. Each CAB office was subjected to an audit every three years which covered finance and effectiveness. The Thame CAB had scored 88% for its quality of service which had put it in the top 10% of CAB offices throughout the UK. This achievement truly reflected the excellent service provided by well trained volunteers and staff at Thame.
- b) Thame Museum Trust – Cllrs Emery and Bretherton reported that the Museum was shut for

the first two months of the year to help keep running costs down. There had been concern that lowering the heating during the closure may damage some of the artifacts but regular checks had been carried out and there had been no adverse affect. There had been a couple of issues with the building due to the exceptionally wet weather, the door had swollen and a couple of water leaks had appeared in the roof. The issues had been reported to the council and action had been taken.

The Museum would re-open on 4 March with an exhibition 'Two Hankies and A Ribbon' followed by an exhibition on the First World War which would run from May to August. Finances were good with funding obtained through donations, events and membership subscription. Last Saturday saw the 10th anniversary of the formation of the Museum Trust.

- c) Thame Barns Centre – Cllr Matelot Green reported that the Barns Centre would celebrate its 20th anniversary in October. The hire charges for the large and small barn had been discussed at a recent management meeting. The large barn was booked every weekend until the end of the year.
- d) 21st Century Thame – Cllr Fickling reported that a project leader had been appointed for the equipment bank and Thame for Business. The environment group was looking at pedestrian routes around the town checking signage and had identified some footpaths without names. There were two outstanding grants for the shop front scheme after which it would close.
- e) Thame and District Housing Association – Information about the Housing Association was included under item 16 b).

8 Swimming Pool

An outstanding invoice from the County Council for maintenance costs relating to the swimming pool for the years 2009/10 and 2010/11 was still under dispute. Payment on the invoice would not be made until further clarification of responsibility against the contract implemented in 2009. A request for a meeting with the County Council had been made to resolve the matter before the end of March 2014.

9 Financial Management

Over the past few months there had been six incidents of fraudulent cheques being presented through the council's bank account, due to the vigilance of the bank all attempts had proved unsuccessful.

10 Internal Audit

The Council continued to operate sound and effective financial controls and procedures and no issues had been identified in the report.

RESOLVED:

- j) That the interim Internal Audit Report for 2013-14 be approved.*

11 Members' Allowances

It was a requirement for the Members' Allowance to be taxed at source and subject to PAYE. An amendment had been made to the Scheme in section 3, paragraph 3.3 to reflect this requirement.

RESOLVED:

- i) That the amended terms and conditions of the adopted Scheme be approved.*

12 Chinnor Rugby Football Club

Members agreed in principal to support the project financially by providing a loan, however, the fine detail on the period of the loan and whether interest would be charged would need to be explored in more detail. The Club would be applying for grants from other sources such the Community Infrastructure Fund, Sport England, the Rugby Football Union and the New Homes Bonus with a target date of 2015 for completion ..

13 Community Right to Bid

The Localism Act 2011 introduced the Community Right to Bid, which gives eligible organisations such as town and parish councils the opportunity to nominate assets believed to be important to their community wellbeing.

Possible assets in Thame could include Long Crendon Bridge, the Cattle Market, the Fire Station, land surrounding the Cuttle Brook and the Show Ground. It was suggested that the people of Thame should be invited to submit suggestions through the Council's enewsletter and media coverage. Cllrs Emery, Fickling, Gunn and Welply agreed to be members of the Working Group to identify areas already touched on and others to gather information and report back to the Committee..

14 NALC

The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) represented the interests of town and parish councils in England. Decision making within NALC was made through a democratic structure and individual town and parish councils were members of their local county association and the national association. The Town Council had not had a nominated representative to OALC (Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils) for many years and after discussion it was agreed that it would be beneficial for a councillor to be nominated to attend OALC meetings.

RESOLVED:

- i) That the Chair of the Policy & Resources Committee be nominated as the representative to the county association.*
- ii) That Cllr Gunn attend the 'What Next for Localism' conference.*

15 Cricket Club Lease

The Cricket Club require a longer term lease to apply for funds to redevelop the club house. Members agreed that in principal they were happy to review the terms of lease.

16 For Information

The items for information were noted.

The meeting concluded at 7.46pm

Signed
Chairman, 22 April 2014