

THAME TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee held on 15 July 2014 at 6.30pm in the Upper Chamber, Thame Town Hall.

Present: Cllrs D Bretherton, D Butler, M Dyer (Chairman), H Fickling, V Humphries (Deputy Chairman), P Lambert, and J Matelot Green (Town Mayor)

Non-Voting

Cllr D Laver

Officers

H Stewart, Town Clerk

C Pinnells, Community Services Manager

M Robinson, Office Administration Manager

A Oughton, Committee Services Officer

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Dixon (Personal), Dodds (Holiday) and Emery (Business). Absent without apologies: Cllr Welply.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Public Participation

There were no applications to address the Committee.

4 Staying Alive

Following an application for Grant Funding of £2,000 to Thame Town Council Mrs Baker and Mrs Clark, members of the Staying Alive Thame group, together with Mr Tracey from the Central Ambulance Service gave a presentation on the aims of the Group to purchase 10 defibrillator units to be located around the town.

Mr Tracey explained the benefits of defibrillation being administered within a period of 10 minutes to a person who suffered a cardiac arrest. The survival rate when CPR alone was administered was 4-5% with defibrillation this increased to 85%.

The cost to install a defibrillator was £2268, which included purchase of the box £906, the defibrillator £1212 and installation £150. Ongoing costs included the cost of running electricity to the unit at £3 per year, replacement pads (if the device was used) and replacement battery (every 5 years).

Funds raised to date had allowed the purchase and installation of four defibrillators located at the Barns Centre, the Scout Building on Southern Road, the Masonic Hall and Brothers. Future locations included Wellington Street, The Falcon and both Lord Williams's School sites. The Group was also encouraging businesses in the town that had defibrillators on the premises to make them available on the outside of their buildings for public use.

RESOLVED that:

- i) The grant of £2,000 as recommended by the Budget Working Group be awarded to Staying Alive Thame***

Cllrs Fickling and Matelot Green entered the meeting during this item.

5 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 22 April 2014 and 13 May 2014 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

6 Budget Summary

Members received the budget summary up to 31 May 2014. It was noted that income on 102 - Town Hall showed a 70% above budget estimate, this was due to payment being received in advance from a new regular booking. A full set of the accounts were available for Members to view at the meeting.

7 Investment Update

The investment portfolio was noted.

8 Reports from Representatives on External Organisations

- a) Barns Centre – Cllr Matelot Green reported that the Barns Centre continued to flourish with bookings most weekends. The draft accounts had been presented to the meeting last week ahead of the AGM on 17 July 2014. An event to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Barns Centre would take place in the Autumn.
- b) Citizens Advice Bureau – No Report.
- c) NALC – Nothing to report, next meeting scheduled for October.
- d) Thame Business Forum – Cllr Dyer would prepare a document for next meeting giving Members some background and information on the Business Forum.
- e) Thame & District Housing Association – Cllr Butler reported that a meeting had taken place and an event to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Association was scheduled to take place on 6 August 2014.
- f) Thame Museum Trust – Cllr Laver reported that the AGM had recently taken place and the report from the Chairman and copies of the accounts would be available shortly. The very mild winter had helped keep expenditure on heating down and the financial position remained healthy. New information panels for schools and churches had been installed and the Tudor Room improved. A health check had raised concerns about the possible ingress of bugs and vermin through disused chimneys and the community room. Discussions continued with the Council regarding the leak in the roof and problems with the heating. The World War I exhibition had created a lot of interest increasing footfall through the Museum. A family from Abingdon had read in their local paper about the launch of the Thame Remembers project and visited the Museum bringing along information about their great grandfather whose name appears on the Thame Memorial.

- g) 21st Century Thame – Cllr Laver reported that Sue Martin Downhill had taken on organisation of the equipment bank and was trying to get Thame4Business back on track. Improvements had been made to the website and hosting service. Work was progressing well on the signage for Lea Park with four routes mapped out where signage could be sited, it was felt the paths should be named to aid direction. The Group needed to liaise with Oxfordshire County Council regarding the proposed signage. Helen Harvey from SODC had joined the group suggesting ideas and opportunities for funding. The group expressed their thanks to Thame Town Council for the grant award which had enabled the purchase of a new marquee and generator for the equipment bank. The entire contents of the equipment bank had been used during the Carnival.

9 Code of Conduct

Previously dispensations had been issued by the Standards Committee of the district council but under the Localism Act 2011 town/parish councils were defined as ‘a relevant authority’ and as such were responsible for determining requests for dispensations from local Councillors. Dispensation, for example, would allow a Councillor to participate and vote on such business as budget setting or a precept. Failure to declare a dispensation and then take part in discussion may result in a criminal offence.

RESOLVED that:

- i) A General Dispensation is granted to all Members to speak and vote where they would otherwise have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest on the grounds that it is in the public interest and appropriate to grant a dispensation to allow all Members to participate fully in the following matters:***
- a) An Allowance, travelling expense, payment or indemnity for Councillors.***
 - b) Any ceremonial honour given to Members.***
 - c) Setting the Council Tax or a Precept.***
- ii) The Council delegates the power to grant dispensations to the Town Clerk under section 33(1) of the Localism Act 2011, the basis being set out under section 33(2).***

10 Loan Policy

The Town Council had recently been approached by two community organisations requesting a loan. The loan policy provided a framework for openness and fairness for those applying for a loan and ensured that council funds were used effectively.

RECOMMENDED that:

- i) The final draft loan policy be taken to Full Council for approval with the figures in red being adopted and the word ‘usually’ inserted into 1.7 to read ‘Loan applications usually up to £50,000’***

11 Freedom of Information

The Freedom of Information Policy ensured that Council officers were aware of their responsibilities and that the Council adhered to the Freedom of Information Act (2000).

RESOLVED that:

- i) The Freedom of Information Policy be adopted.***

12 Disposal of Amenity Land

The Council had received two separate requests from residents to purchase amenity land:

- a) 54 Cromwell Avenue - a request had been received to purchase land to the rear of the property in order that the garden be extended. After discussion it was felt that if this purchase were to go ahead the pathway would become long and narrow leaving only a small triangle of amenity land on which trees had been planted in memory of Princess Diana. It was the Council's intention to use the revenue from the sale of amenity land at the rear of 10 Chalgrove Road to improve this area for the benefit of all the residents.
- b) 28 Youens Drive – a request had been received to purchase a 'triangle shaped' piece of amenity land at the rear of the property in order to 'square off' the garden. Shrubbery completely filled the amenity land in question and was not used by members of the public.

RESOLVED that:

- i) The land to the rear of 54 Cromwell Avenue is not eligible for disposal.***
- ii) The land to the rear of 28 Youens Drive could be considered for disposal since it did not affect the area of publically accessible space.***

13 Fees & Charges

The fees and charges were reviewed annually to comply with good financial management of the Council's assets. Following refurbishment of the meeting room at the Town Hall it was proposed to charge a set hourly fee to include use of equipment and refreshments. Current charges for similar facilities within the town and locally had been taken into consideration when reviewing the hire charges for all the Council's assets.

RESOLVED that:

- i) A charge for hiring the Meeting Room be agreed at £12 per hour.***
- ii) The charge for hiring the Upper Chamber to remain at £27 and £14 per hour.***
- iii) The charge for hiring SRRG football pitch to remain at £32 and £35 (inclusive of VAT) per game.***

14 Artisan Market

A proposal had been received to hold an Artisan Market on the fourth Saturday of the month to further enhance the economic vitality of the town centre. The market would consist of 60-80 stalls selling a range of food, drink and crafts that would compliment but not compete with goods sold by existing retailers in the town. The market would be held in the Upper High Street car park spread over 65 parking spaces. After discussion Members felt further investigation should take place to ascertain the possible detrimental effect on parking and sales in existing retail outlets.

15 SODC Market Towns Economic Plan

The draft Economic Development Action Plan for Thame 2014-15 was noted.

Discussion took place on the proposal to support the project 'Dressed for Success – Thame 2014' in which 15 independent retail businesses would be offered training and support to enhance their shop windows culminating in a competition to find the best dressed window. It was felt the independent retailers already provided a good display and were a credit to the town.

A second proposal to support free wi-fi in the town centre was considered, however, Members felt unable to support the proposal without knowledge of the ongoing revenue costs. It was agreed to invest the ongoing costs and bring back a proposal to next Committee meeting.

RESOLVED that:

- i) The £1,550 revenue funding to support 'Dressed for Success – Thame 2014' be refused.***

16 Community Engagement Strategy

Members were requested to review the draft strategy and forward comments to the Town Clerk. A final draft would be presented at the next Committee meeting for consideration.

Cllr Laver left the meeting during this item.

17 Barns Centre

The draft Report and Accounts for year ended 31 March 2014 were noted.

18 For Information

The items for information were noted.

The meeting concluded at 8.25pm

Signed
Chairman, 14 October 2014