

## THAME TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee held on 1 August 2017 at 6.30pm in the Upper Chamber, Thame Town Hall.

**Present:** Cllrs D Bretherton, N Champken-Woods (Deputy Chairman), N Dixon, M Dyer (Chairman), H Fickling, C Jones, P Lambert and T Wyse (Town Mayor)

**Officers**

G Hunt, 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 Butler (Unwell), Austin (Holiday), Dodds (Holiday) and Emery (Holiday).

### 2 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

There were no declarations of interest or dispensations.

### 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 meetings held on 11 April 2017 and 9 May 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### 5 Financial Update

Members received the budget summary up to 30 June 2017. The Town Clerk stated that additional budget lines had been added to the budget summary and some zero revenue lines removed to allow space.

The Balance Sheet was noted. Some discussion took place on ear marked reserves (line 320) for the provision of toilets in Elms Park. The Town Clerk confirmed that the requirements for Elms Park had been established through public consultation and that the £3,000 set aside in the reserves could be put towards the cost of the redevelopment of the Park once the development on The Elms commenced and triggered the s106 funding.

The ear marked reserves shown against lines 301 through to 344 had either been set aside for a specific purpose or the result of a Council resolution. They are reviewed as part of budget setting. The Town Clerk suggested that Councillors may like to think about whether some of these reserves should be closed down and to let him know. The reserve would then be looked at in more detail to see if the item was still relevant.

### 6 Financial Overspends

Members noted that the locks had failed on both the Chamber Cabinet and the Fireproof Safe. In the interests of security both items of equipment had been replaced which resulted in a financial overspend of £345. This would be funded from General Reserves.

## **7 Investment Update**

The summary of the investment performance was noted.

## **8 Fixed Term Deposits**

It was **noted** that in line with the Investment Strategy, and specific past resolutions re Treasury Management, that the Council had transferred the £200,000 that matured on 6 July 2017 into a 32 day notice account at 0.32%. Interest rates would be watched closely and the opportunity taken to transfer again should there be a better offer that materialises.

## **9 Members Allowances**

Members noted the outcome from the District Council Independent Remuneration Panel, which met in January 2017, wrote its report in February 2017 and was ratified by the District Council in May 2017.

The Town Clerk reported that it was frustrating that the Town Council then had had to wait a further two months to receive the outcome on 18 July 2017 for implementation from 1 April 2017. Having looked at the report the Town Clerk had emailed Councillors earlier today and suggested that, as the latest report was only a recommendation that the Town Council continue to pay Members allowances as is, in line with the 2008 report.

## **10 Thame Barn Centre**

The Annual Report and Accounts were noted. As one of the Trustees, the Town Clerk reported that there had been a slight fall in revenue due in part to: a) a reduction in wedding reception bookings, this followed a national trend as couples were choosing to celebrate their wedding in different ways and b) a change in the way deposits were accounted for.

The Barns Centre continued to show a good profit and was good for the community. The surpluses accrued during the year would be used to improve the Centre's facilities.

## **11 Reports from Representatives on External Organisations**

- a) Barns Centre
- b) Citizens Advice
- c) Health Hub
- d) NALC
- e) Red Kite Family Centre
- f) Thame Business Forum
- g) Thame & District Day Centre
- h) Thame & District Housing Association
- i) Thame Youth Memorial Trust
- j) 21<sup>st</sup> Century Thame
- k) Welfare Trust

All the reports were noted.

## **12 Depreciation of Fixed Assets**

The Town Council's Asset Register is maintained and updated DCK Beavers Ltd as part of the annual financial administration work that they undertake on behalf of the Town Council. The Council's assets are depreciated annually in line with the agreed policy.

The Policy had been revised to take account of changes in accounting practices that happen periodically and out of date regulations that no longer applied to town councils had been removed.

**RESOLVED that:**

- i) The Fixed Asset Depreciation Policy be adopted.*

### **13 Sponsorship Policy**

The Sponsorship Policy was last reviewed in 2013. In reviewing the Policy the principles had not changed, one minor cosmetic amendment to 3.3vii had been made.

**RESOLVED that:**

- i) The Sponsorship Policy be adopted.*

### **14 Social Media and Media Relations Policy**

In reviewing the adopted Media Relations Policy and Social Media Policy it seemed appropriate to merge the two Policies into one document. The new Policy defined the parameters within which all Council Representatives: Elected Members, Council Employees and other Third Parties can operate to achieve positive engagement and corporate expectations and protected the Town Council's reputation from inappropriate use of Social Media.

**RESOLVED that:**

- i) The Social Media & Media Relations Policy be adopted.*

### **15 Promotional Signs and Structures on the Highway Policies**

Promotional Signs Policy:

The Town Council had been delegated authority by Oxfordshire County Council in 2008 to remove unauthorised signs on the highway and procedures were put in place and a stringent approach taken. The new Promotional Signage Policy formalised these procedures.

**RESOLVED that:**

- i) The Promotional Signs Policy be adopted.*

Structures on the Highway Policy:

Concerns had been raised regarding business signage ('A' Boards) and other obstructions including commercial waste bins and tables and chairs on the highway. The Town Council had no power in relation to such structures, but was seen by the community as the arbiter when concerns were raised. The Structures on the Highway Policy set out acceptable standards for the placing of structures, within the 30mph speed restriction boundary of the Town and the Town Council would seek a sensible solution when notified of a problem.

**RESOLVED that:**

- i) The Structures on the Highway Policy be adopted.*

### **16 Thame Museum Building Improvement Project**

Cllr Bretherton reported that the project cost identified in the Quantity Surveyor's report had come in higher than expected. It had proved difficult to obtain costings from suppliers but the Museum were now close to getting the final figure.

To date the Council had committed funds of £7,898.74 towards the project from the agreed financial contribution of up to £10,000.

## **17 Town Council Website**

The Community Services Manager confirmed that the order for the integrated business solution for the Town Council's website had been placed and a detailed specification was being drawn up.

## **18 Upper Chamber Acoustics**

The Town Clerk reported that having reviewed in detail the recommendations from the survey of the acoustics in the Upper Chamber it was clear that further clarification of the recommendations was required. In the short term an interim solution, such as covering each table with heavy duty baize material may be implemented.

## **19 Memorial Bench at Southern Road Recreation Ground**

Cllr Bretherton provided an update on the production and installation of the memorial bench at Southern Road Recreation Ground which he is now managing in a personal capacity. A meeting had taken place with the company producing the bench to iron out some uncertainties, the company had also agreed to provide a new quotation. The material for the base was being investigated as from experience with the Thame Youth Memorial, marble would not be practical.

The location of the bench had been revised to an open grass area adjoining the Cuttle Brook Nature Reserve, away from the housing along Moreton Lane. Relocating the bench would also reduce the need for frequent cleaning by the Town Council and be more pleasant for users of the park.

The estimated funding of £10,000 had been raised by the group to cover all financial requirements for the manufacture and installation of the bench. The bench would be formally procured by the Town Council and listed as a Council asset. The management of the installation would be the responsibility of the representatives of the fundraising group.

There were still some things that needed to be addressed but the aim was to have the bench installed by 1 November 2017 which would have been Megan Biddle's 21<sup>st</sup> birthday.

## **20 Flag Flying**

Members noted that the new Town Flag was raised on 26 July 2017.

The Red Ensign will be flown on Merchant Navy Day, 3 September 2017.

Following a number of occasions recently when the Union Flag had been flown at half mast, the Town Clerk requested delegated authority (in discussion with the Town Mayor) to fly the Union Flag at half mast when it was deemed appropriate. The Town Clerk further reported that the County Council had offered to inform the Town Council when such circumstances may be considered and this offer had been accepted.

### **RESOLVED that:**

- i) The Town Clerk be given delegated authority (in discussion with the Town Mayor) to fly the Union Flag at half mast when it is deemed appropriate to do so.***

## **21 Free Use / De-Minimis Delegated Authority**

It was noted that the Town Clerk, through De Minimis delegated authority, had granted the following:

- a) Offered 2 x 3 hour free use (8am-11am) of Upper Chamber to SODC Economic Development Team for Small Business Workshops – the first of which would be held on Friday 22 September 2017.
- b) Free use of meeting room (1.5 hours) for Red Kite Community Forum on 8 June 2017 and 11 September 2017.
- c) Free use of the Upper Chamber for Briefing for Thame Town Music Festival (TTMF) on 6 July 2017
- d) Free use of the Upper Chamber & Meeting room plus parking facility at Southern Road Recreation Ground for TTMF on 8 July 2017
- e) Free use of meeting room (3 hours in evening) for Citizens Advice Trustee meeting on 18 July 2017
- f) Free use of Upper Chamber for electric blanket testing on 19 October 2017
- g) Regular free use of the meeting room for Shopwatch - Police and Retailers
- h) Waived £90 scout contribution to Cess Pit clearance at the changing rooms at Southern Road Recreation Ground
- i) Support with rubbish clearance at St Mary's Churchyard on 22 June 2017, including provision of two skips at a cost of £350
- j) Free use of Upper Chamber for Florence Nightingale Hospice Festive Fun Run on 3 December 2017
- k) Offered Upper Chamber at charity as opposed to commercial rate for non-charitable NHS Diabetes Prevention Programme – to be confirmed
- l) Free use of Upper Chamber (3 hours in evening) for Stones Close Allotments AGM on 25 September 2017
- m) Free use of Upper Chamber (3.5 hours in evening) for Sinaia Twinning Wine Tasting event on 29 November 2017

## **22 Parking Attendant**

The Saturday Car Park Attendant's last day of employment was 22 July 2017. The recruitment process was underway and it was hoped to fill the vacancy as soon as possible. In the interim Saturday cover would be provided where possible by members of the Car Parking team.

## **23 Open Doors Event**

Cllr Dyer reported that as a result of businesses not signing up early enough the organisers of the Open Doors Event had taken the reluctant decision to cancel the event planned for 1 July 2017.

## **24 For Information**

- a) The CCTV Quarterly Update was not available in time for the meeting and would be circulated to Councillors when it arrived.
- b) The Summary of Insurance Schedule 2017-18 was noted.

The meeting concluded at 7.25pm

Signed .....  
Chairman, 31 October 2017