

THAME TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee held on 13 February 2018 at 6.30pm in the Upper Chamber, Thame Town Hall.

Present: Cllrs B Austin, D Bretherton, N Champken-Woods (Deputy Chairman), D Dodds, M Dyer (Chairman), H Fickling, C Jones and P Lambert

Officers

G Hunt, Town Clerk
J Howells, Asset Manager
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), Dixon (Business), Emery (Personal) and Wyse (Personal).

2 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

There were no declarations of interest.

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 meeting held on 31 October 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5 Financial Update

Members received the budget summary up to 31 December 2017. The Balance Sheet was noted.

6 Financial Overspends

Members noted that Oxfordshire County Council had invoiced the £11,395 (plus index-linking) s278 Maintenance Charge related to the Thame Football Partnership, as authorised by the sealing of the agreement at the Council meeting on 24 August 2010. The final charge of £12,915.09 would be met from General Reserves as an unbudgeted cost.

7 Investment Update

The summary of the investment performance was noted. Members were pleased with the continued good management of the portfolio by Rathbones.

8 Investment Strategy

The Council was required to approve the Investment Strategy on an annual basis, it was last approved on 7 February 2017 by the Policy & Resources Committee. Having reviewed the Investment Strategy, the Officer's view was that no changes were necessary.

RESOLVED that:

- i) ***The Investment Strategy as presented be approved for a further year.***

9 Fixed Term Deposits

Members noted that in line with the Investment Strategy, and specific past resolutions re Treasury Management, that:

- a) On 1 December 2017 the Council invested £100,000 in a 12 month fixed term deposit at United Trust Bank at 1.45% (in line with intention reported on 31 October 2017).
- b) On 25 January 2018, the Council gave notice on its 32 day notice account to transfer £50,000 of its £450,000 core balance to assist with cash flow / forward funding of cricket pavilion.

10 Internal Audit

The Internal Auditor's visit took place on 17 January 2018, following which no issues were identified which warranted a formal comment or recommendation. Members received the Internal Audit Interim Update Report 2017-18.

11 Reports from Representatives on External Organisations

- a) Barns Centre – Cllr Dodds reported that the Barns Centre continued to do very well and was well managed. The Town Clerk added that the Centre had just had its Annual Health Inspection and received a Category 5 rating which was very pleasing.
- b) Citizens Advice – report noted.
- c) Health Hub – Cllr Champken-Woods reported that with regard to the Community Hub a meeting had taken place yesterday evening and he would circulate the notes to Councillors. Regarding the Health Hub, Cllr Champken-Woods had not had chance to speak to the Manager of the Rycote Practice but would provide an update once he had done so.
- d) NALC – report noted.
- e) Red Kite Family Centre – Cllr Fickling reported John Hulett's thanks to the Town Council for the continued funding for the Red Kite Family Centre. A recent Race Night Event had raised £1,000 for the Centre.
- f) Thame Business Forum – report noted.
- g) Thame & District Day Centre – Cllr Champken-Woods reported the Day Centre's thanks to the Town Council for the continued funding. The Centre had managed to secure 40% of County Council funding which was good but meant that the remaining 60% funding would not be available. A meeting was planned to try and get a reduction in the rent. All this week White Stuff were running fundraising activities in the shop with all the proceeds going to the Centre.
- h) Thame & District Housing Association – nothing reported.
- i) Thame Youth Memorial Trust – Cllr Lambert stated there was nothing to report. The Trust continued to look after the memorial and receive applications for names to be added.
- j) 21st Century Thame – report noted.
- k) Welfare Trust – nothing to report.

12 Replacement Boiler for the Town Hall

The current gas boiler was installed over 16 years ago and was now unreliable and required frequent repair. It was proposed to replace the gas boiler with a condensing type gas boiler. This would have a high impact on the energy performance of the building and meet one of the high impact recommendations contained within the Energy Performance Audit and Advisory Report undertaken on the Town Hall in 2015.

RESOLVED that:

- i) £2,500 be allocated from the Rolling Capital Fund to provide a replacement gas boiler for the Town Hall.***

13 Replacement Radio System for the Maintenance Team

The current radio system was purchased in 2007 and had become ineffective in both its functionality and health and safety use. It was proposed to purchase a new digital radio system which had been tested around the town to ensure it provided complete coverage and fitted the requirements of the Maintenance Team. The new system would also be used for Council events and could be supplemented by hiring additional handsets.

RESOLVED that:

- i) £4,336 be allocated from the Rolling Capital Fund to provide a replacement radio system for the Maintenance Team.***

14 Display Screen Equipment Policy

The Town Council last reviewed the arrangements for staff deemed as Display Screen Equipment (DSE) users at the Personnel Committee meeting on 4 November 2014. The new DSE Policy set out clear guidelines for staff to follow.

DSE regulations applied to staff who used DSE as a significant part of their normal work (one hour continuous and two and half hours intermittent per day). The Town Council would be in breach of the Health and Safety (DSE) Regulations if it did not offer staff, who were classed as DSE users, a free eye test and reimbursement (to an agreed maximum cost) towards corrective glasses.

RESOLVED that:

- i) The Display Screen Equipment Policy be approved.***
- ii) The Council pay for eye tests for staff who are considered DSE users and reimbursement of up to a maximum limit of £70 towards a pair of basic frames to staff who require them purely for DSE work.***

15 Holding an Event on Town Council Land Policy

Members reviewed the policy related to Holding an Event on Town Council Land. The policy had been in place since 2014 and had been used effectively by Council Officers. The policy provided flexibility to the Town Clerk to make a decision and also seek formal agreement when required.

RESOLVED that:

- i) The Holding an Event on Town Council Land Policy be adopted.***

16 Thame Museum Building Improvement Project

It was noted that Thame Museum Trust had submitted a grant request to the Heritage Lottery Fund for £452,000. Cllrs Bretherton and Dodds reported that no response from the Heritage Lottery Fund had yet been received.

17 Town Council Website

The update of the Town Council's website had gone well, both the Community Project Support Officer and the Market Town Co-ordinator had worked hard reviewing and testing the new functionality of the test site which went live on 1 February 2018.

Officers along with the website contractor continued to monitor the website for any issues. Members were urged to inform Officers if they found something that was not working correctly. The business database needed populating and it was planned to publicise this to encourage businesses to upload information.

18 Upper Chamber Acoustics

The Asset Manager reported that following a check with the District Council's Planning Department Listed Building consent would be required for any works undertaken. A site meeting had taken place with a local specialist who could supply and install the required solution. A proposal was expected to be received shortly.

19 Memorial Bench at Southern Road Recreation Ground

Cllr Bretherton reported that the Memorial Bench was progressing well. The manufacturer had encountered some problems with the double curvature design of the bench but that had now been resolved. The bench was currently away being powder coated after which an artist would apply the final detailed design.

Cllr Bretherton would meet with the young people who raised the funds for the bench to discuss the surface as the proposed marble surface would be too dangerous. It was hoped that installation of the bench at Southern Road Recreation Ground would take place in April.

20 Disposal of Amenity Land at Cromwell Avenue / Webster Close

A request had been received from the residents of 54 Cromwell Avenue about the possibility of purchasing land at the rear of their property to extend the garden. The residents of the 15 properties in Webster Close that were close to the area of amenity land were advised by the Council of the approach from 54 Cromwell Avenue and invited to provide their opinion to enable the Council to fully consider the request.

On the basis of the responses received, the Town Clerk was of the view that the amenity land should not be disposed of. Some responses suggested that the area should be improved and used for a community orchard or garden.

RESOLVED that:

- i) The identified piece of land did not meet the criteria for disposal as set out in the Land Acquisition and Disposal Policy and should not be sold.***

21 Health and Safety Visit Outcomes

The third annual General Risk Assessment Inspection took place on 25 January 2018 as part of the Council's three year contract with Ellis Whittam. Site visits were made to the Town Hall, Maintenance Depot and Southern Road Recreation Ground.

The General Risk Assessment Report 2018 acknowledged that a number of robust practices were in place which the Management Team oversaw to ensure high standards continued to be achieved. This was reflected in the number of priority actions raised which had decreased over the last three years.

Members noted the General Risk Assessment Report 2018 and that the Safety Action Plan 2018 had been updated since the visit to reflect completion of three of the actions.

22 Citizens Advice Business Continuity

The Town Council had received a request from Citizens Advice to use the Town Hall for a short period in the event of an emergency which resulted in Market House being unavailable. The Council already provided a lesser service for two other organisations (the Upper Chamber as a holding point for St Joseph's School children / the Depot in Lupton Road as a secondary option for the Fire Service).

RESOLVED that:

- i) The Citizens Advice be allowed to use the Town Hall for a short period in the event of an emergency which resulted in Market House being unavailable.***

23 Free Use / De-Minimis Delegated Authority

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

- a) Charity rate offered for new community orchestra initiative – not yet a charity
- b) Free use of meeting room for Safari – 2 hours on 10/11/17
- c) Free use of Upper Chamber for Business Forum on 5/12/17
- d) 4 stalls free of charge at minimal Farmers Market on 9/1/18
- e) Free use of Upper Chamber for 21st Century Thame on 18/1/18
- f) Permission for WI filming in Upper Chamber, subject to £50 donation to Mayor's Charity on 18/1/18
- g) Free use of Upper Chamber for Taste of Thame public meeting on 15/3/18
- h) Annual Emergency Services Day – SRRG on 29/7/18
- i) 50% discount to regular bookers WI for a one-off all day event on 17/9/18
- j) 50% discount to charitable external organisation Citizens Advice for monthly team meetings

24 High Street Car Parks

It was noted that Officers were progressing the remarking of lines in the Upper High Street and High Street car parks which would take place without any loss of daytime parking. It was proposed to hatch some areas in the Upper High Street car park, near to the trees that did not meet the required width / length for a parking space. This would result in the loss of three to four spaces.

25 Staffing Update

The staffing updates were noted.

- a) Mr Christopher Truran (Chris) and Mr Anthony Collingwood (Tony), commenced employment as Maintenance Assistants in the Maintenance Team on 2 January 2018 and 1 February 2018 respectively.
- b) Mr Roy Edwards retired as Town Hall Caretaker on 31 December 2017 and that Mr Mikael Holopainen commenced employment as Town Hall Caretaker on 5 January 2018.
- c) The Saturday Car Park Attendant Roberta Silva's last day of employment was 27 January 2018. The replacement recruitment process is underway. In the interim Saturday cover will be provided where possible by other members of the Car Parking team.

26 Oxfordshire Pension Fund Administration Strategy Statement – Service Level Agreement

Members noted the Oxfordshire Pension Fund Administration Strategy Statement - Service Level Agreement (as initially approved by the Personnel Committee on 4 November 2014 and then Council on 17 March 2015) was being revised following a consultation process. The Office Administration Manager and the Town Clerk (as Proper Officer) would progress as relevant.

27 For Information

The CCTV update was noted. The Town Clerk reported that the updated CCTV agreement had been received from SODC and was likely to be an item for discussion on the agenda for the next Full Council meeting on 27 February 2018.

The meeting concluded at 7.15pm

Signed
Chairman, 17 April 2018