

**THAME TOWN COUNCIL**

Minutes of a Meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee held on 10 December 2013 at 6.30pm in the Upper Chamber, Thame Town Hall.

**Present:** Cllrs D Bretherton (Vice Chairman), D Butler, N Champken-Woods, D Dodds, M Dyer (Chairman), H Fickling, V Humphries, P Lambert (Town Mayor) and J Matelot Green (Deputy Mayor)

**Non-Voting**

Cllr Laver

**Officers**

H Stewart, Town Clerk

A Oughton, Committee Services Officer

M Robinson, Office Administration Manager

**1 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Emery (Holiday), Gunn (Personal) and Welply (Personal).

**2 Declarations of Interest**

Cllr Lambert declared an interest in agenda item 15 as an allotment holder and left the room during this item.

Cllr Fickling declared an interest in agenda item 12 as a Church Warden of St Mary's Church and did not take part in the discussion.

**3 Public Participation**

Rev Alan Garratt thanked the Council for the opportunity to speak and expressed his thanks on behalf of St Mary's Church for the support received from the Council over the years. There had been a long standing agreement between the church and the Council regarding the maintenance of the churchyard which continued to this day.

The maintenance of the churchyard was divided into three areas a) grass cutting, b) tree pollarding (every three years) and miscellaneous ad hoc repairs. In addition there was the hidden cost of administering the churchyard . Although there appeared to be sufficient funds in the church accounts, a large percentage was 'restricted funds' with specific limitations on what they could be used for. It was unlikely that the churchyard would remain open if it lost the financial support received from the Council.

Cllr Laver entered the meeting

**4 Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2013 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**5 Budget Summary**

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

Members noted the summary; Cllr Matelot Green raised a question regarding expenditure on 304. The Town Clerk agreed to provide a response by email.

## 6 Investments

The Portfolio Performance Summary as of 30 September 2013 was noted.

## 7 Reports from Outside Bodies

- a) Citizens Advice Bureau – nothing to report
- b) Thame Museum Trust – Cllr Laver reported that the cost of the utilities was running higher than expected but it was hoped that the planned closure during January and February would balance it out. The meetings and talks held over the year had been well attended and a full programme of events for 2014 was planned. There was a selection of new gift items for sale all with photographs of different town landmarks.
- c) Thame Barns Centre – Cllr Matelot Green reported that the Barns Centre continued to thrive with a good number of bookings. A defibrillator was now available for use and a fund raising group ‘Staying Alive’ had been formed to raise money with the aim of purchasing defibrillators to be located around the town. Thanks were expressed to the members of the staff who continued to do a wonderful job.
- d) 21<sup>st</sup> Century Thame – Cllr Fickling reported that the equipment bank continued to be well used. There was a need to recruit someone to book the equipment in and out. The campaign to raise the profile of the Loyalty Card continued. A group was looking at the signage around the town to encourage people to use the footpaths and cycle ways. A review of the leaflets would take place for accuracy and then they would be reprinted, however, it was difficult to keep the Shopping Guide completely up to date. The group was working with the Council to standardise A-boards use in the town.
- e) Thame and District Housing Association – Cllr Butler gave some back ground on the Association. It was formed in 1964 and currently had 110 tenants. The age upon entry ranged from 55yr upwards. The Association offered support but not care and enabled residents to live independent lives. A board of 10 volunteer members had overall responsibility for the Association with a paid Chief Executive responsible for the day to day operation assisted by a Facilities Manager and two Scheme Managers responsible for day-to-day contact with tenants and their support.

## 8 Internal Audit Report

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

### RESOLVED:

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

## 9 Code of Governance

The members reviewed the current Code of Governance and agreed that no amendments were necessary.

**RESOLVED:**

- i) That the Code of Governance be adopted as presented.*

**10 Banking**

In the light of the current uncertainty surrounding the Co-Operative Bank, Members were asked to consider whether the banking arrangements should be reviewed. Whilst there was no immediate concern as to the bank being used Members were of the opinion that reviewing the banking arrangements regularly was considered good practice and should be done in the middle of every four year administration.

**RESOLVED that:**

- i) A review of the banking arrangements be undertaken.*

**11 Insurance Strategy**

The Insurance Strategy was adopted in 2010 and was presented for consideration to ensure it was still appropriate and could be used when tendering for the new insurance contract due in 2014.

**RESOLVED that:**

- i) The Insurance Strategy was still appropriate and should be retained.*

**12 St Mary's Churchyard**

Keeping the churchyard open and in good order was recognised as being important for the town. The PCC was seeking a firm commitment of 45% of the costs from the Council towards the maintenance of the churchyard because without such the PCC would not be able to afford to keep it open. The Council's contribution had been a long term arrangement but without any formal agreement. Not having a maintenance plan and identifying where the contribution was due did not help when estimating budgets.

**RESOLVED that:**

- i) The Council continues to contribute 45% towards agreed maintenance costs of the churchyard.*
- ii) That a 5-year maintenance plan be developed, identifying the Council's responsibilities and used to inform budget estimates.*

**13 Thame Community Bank**

The Thame Community Bank is a branch of the Swan Credit Union and was launched in November. Corporate membership allows companies to offer staff the opportunity to make deposits through payroll deductions. There was no expense or financial risk attached to being a corporate member.

**RESOLVED that:**

- i) Corporate membership of Thame Community Bank be approved.*

**14 Conservation Area Advisory Committee**

It was agreed that this item should be considered by the Planning & Environment Committee.

**15 Stones Close Allotments**

**RESOLVED that**

*i) The ground rent for 2013-14 be retained at £300.*

**16 Councillor Surgery**

Following the decision to stop the Saturday Surgery and replace it with an appointment system there had been six requests to make an appointment to see a Councillor. Of the six four were for the County Councillor and two for District Councillors. No request to see a Town Councillor had been received.

**17 For Information**

Members noted the two items for information.

Meeting concluded at 7.28pm

Signed.....  
Chairman, 18 February 2014