

THAME TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of Thame Town Council held on 26 February 2019 at 6.30pm in the Upper Chamber, Thame Town Hall

Present: Cllrs B Austin, D Bretherton, N Champken-Woods, P Cowell, M Deacock, D Dodds, M Dyer, L Emery (Deputy Mayor), H Fickling, C Jones, P Lambert, A Midwinter (Town Mayor), M Stiles and T Wyse.

Officers

G Hunt, Town Clerk

G Markland, Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Officer

A Oughton, Committee Services Officer

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Butler (Personal) and Dixon (Personal).

2 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Civic Announcements

This being the first opportunity to note the Civic Attendances since November 2018, the Town Mayor thanked the Town Clerk, Officers and Staff (and attending Councillors) for their hard work in making the Christmas Light Switch On such a successful event.

The Town Mayor thanked the volunteers who helped with the Thame Christmas Lunch served on Christmas Day at the Masonic Hall to members of the community who were spending Christmas on their own.

4 Public Participation and Public Questions

There were no applications to address the Council.

There were no public questions put to the Council.

5 Red Kite Family Centre

Mr John Hulett, Chair of Trustees for the Red Kite Family Centre (RKFC) thanked the Town Council for the opportunity to provide an update on the Centre, both financially and operationally.

In just over a month it will be two years since the RKFC opened with a new leader and staff team in place. The Trustees did not take any funding received for granted and were very grateful to the Town Council for the commitment of £10k for each of the first three years. It was a great vote of confidence from the Town Council to the work RKFC is doing.

RKFC faces two challenges; ensuring the local community recognises the positive impact that the work of the Centre is having on the lives of all parents and pre-school children in the area and secondly, attracting the funding needed to manage the running of the Centres in Thame and Chinnor.

The RKFC is confident, having analysed the data that registration figures demonstrate that 95% of eligible parents have registered with the Centre. A Development Strategy for a sustainable future has been produced. The RKFC is hopeful that the financial support received from the Town Council and other funders will continue but they are not complacent. 'Friends of the Red Kite Family Centre' has been introduced along with a new volunteering strategy. Engagement with the local business community continues and the venue has been advertised for hire for parties and other functions.

Good management of the accounts has enabled some of the funding received in Year 1 to be carried forward and there is an expectation to carry forward funding from Year 2 also. At the end of Year 3 financial support from Oxfordshire County Council and Sharing Life Trust will cease and the Centre will be much more dependent on community raised funds. It is hoped the Town Council will continue to support the Centre.

Amy Spicer, professional staff team lead, thanked the Town Council for the opportunity to talk about the Centre and invited Members to pop in at any time to see what is going on. There is a timetable of activities available to all as well as specialised activities / outreach for those with differing abilities and needs.

To put the registration figures in perspective, 942 children visited the Centre over the course of the last year. To give an idea of the mix of visitors, the Centre has been used by 24 young parents (under 22 yrs old), 35 unemployed parents, 13 lone parents and 300 Fathers.

The Centre provides a one stop shop for parents to access professional support and to support each other. Two and half years ago a mother of four left a violent relationship and moved to Thame with no support or help. Encouraged to visit the centre, two years later the mother now visits 2-3 times a week and has started to volunteer.

After answering a number of questions the Town Mayor thanked John Hulett and Amy Spicer for their very informative presentation and congratulated them on the support the Centre was providing for the families of Thame.

6 Lord Williams's Lower School Design Brief

Mr David Wybron, Head of Lord Williams's School presented the vision for a single school site. The school has always aimed to be the best it can be and this was a very sensible project for all sorts of reasons.

A single site will enable better educational outcomes and removes the requirement to commute between sites. Teachers will have their own classrooms, there will be daily contact with tutors, increased learning time with a broader more creative curriculum and older students will be able to work with younger students.

The single site project is enshrined in the Thame Neighbourhood Plan (TNP). To date progress has been fairly slow but if planning is not secured by 2021 the housing allocation (HA5) in the TNP will be removed and along with it the opportunity for a single school site. With the financial support of Oxfordshire County Council LanPro Planning Consultants were appointed to produce a Design Brief for the redevelopment of the Lower School Site.

Mr Alex Bond, PCMS Design, presented a summary of the work carried out by LanPro and the Design Brief.

LanPro had looked at the site, the relationship with neighbouring properties, where massing on the new site would be appropriate, etc and any environmental constraints. This work led to two potential schemes which were put out to public consultation in November last year. Page 30 of the Design Brief gives more detail on the public consultation process and page 33 gives a summary of the responses received.

Responses received indicated a wish to maintain some sort of community facility on the site, some opposition to a third vehicle access through Chiltern Grove and provision of a new pedestrian access from Cotmore Close. There was a preference for a reduction in affordable housing opposed to an intensification of the site and concern at the proximity of new housing to existing housing, particularly in Towersey Drive.

LanPro considered the community's responses and the concept Masterplan shown on pages 34-35 of the Design Brief seeks to respond, where appropriate and feasible. Community facilities will be

retained, there is more separation between new dwellings and existing ones, housing on the northern side of the site has moved to the western end and vehicle access will be provided by existing access points. Allocation is sufficient to deliver the project but the provision of affordable housing may prove problematic.

After answering a number of questions the Town Mayor thanked Mr Wybron and Mr Bond for their presentation and they returned to the public gallery.

The Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Officer presented his report and stated the Design Brief is very clear about density and development of the site. The Design Brief as tabled is in conformance with the TNP.

LanPro have suggested that some flexibility is permitted to allow for higher housing numbers on the site. This would be contrary to the Thame Neighbourhood Plan Policies H1, H2 and HA5 giving rise to housing density above 25 dwellings per hectare. The Design Brief did not have to be viable in order to be compatible with Policy HA5. In agreeing the Design Brief as it is would permit the gap in viability to be established.

RESOLVED that:

- i) Lord Williams's Lower School Design Brief, as tabled be approved.***

7 Report from County Councillor N Carter

County Councillor Carter referred to his report circulated to Members ahead of the meeting. The main focus has been the budget 2019/20 which was approved at the annual budget meeting last week.

Youth groups will be invited to bid for funding from a £1m fund over a two year period. There is still considerable funding pressure on front line services, with demand rapidly growing for social care for vulnerable children and adults. Oxfordshire is no different in that respect from other parts of the country. The Institute for Fiscal Studies has warned that 'the present system of local government finance is not sustainable, and something is going to have to give'.

A radical transformation of the County Council has just begun and will continue for the next 18 to 24 months. Savings of £50m are possible by changing the way services are delivered.

A Commons select committee has called on the Government to help local authorities regenerate high streets and town centres, along with an overhaul of business rates and planning regulations. We will have to wait and see what the outcome will be.

After answering a number of questions County Councillor Carter was thanked for his report.

8 Reports from South Oxfordshire District Councillors

District Councillor Matelot had given her apologies.

Cllr Champken-Woods said there was nothing further to report following the circulation of the Town and Parish Council Reports. Cllr Champken-Woods fully supported the work of Cllr Dyer and the Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Officer in attending the District Planning Committee and speaking against the planning application for development of Kingsmead Business Park. He further reported that the Licencing Panel had granted Thame Town Cricket Club's Licencing Application today.

Cllr Dodds reported he had been closely involved in drawing up the District Budget 2019/20. In previous years the District Council has received a support grant of £7m annually which was topped up by interest earned from investments the District Council held producing another £6m per annum. The support grant was now zero, which in turn resulted in the District having to draw down on more from Reserves which was both regrettable and not sustainable.

9 Members Questions (under Standing Order 11)

Cllr Austin raised a question 'Can the Town Council please take relevant action following yet another traffic incident at the Kingsey Road / Tythrop Way roundabout?'

The Town Clerk responded that the Town Council had corresponded with local residents, the County Council and the police following the previous incidents at the roundabout and it was appropriate to do so again following the latest incident.

10 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 January 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

11 Policy & Resources Committee

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 February 2019 were noted.

12 Community, Leisure & Recreation

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 February 2019 were noted.

13 Planning & Environment Committee

The minutes of the meetings held on 27 November 2018, 18 December 2018, 8 January 2019, 29 January 2019 and 19 February 2019 were noted.

14 Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Committee

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 December 2018 and 29 January 2019 were noted.

15 Effectiveness of Internal Control / Financial Risk

It was a statutory requirement that the Town Council reviews, on an annual basis the effectiveness of its internal control including arrangements for the management of risk. The nine separate risk assessments had been thoroughly reviewed by the Office Administration Manager and the Town Clerk and minor amendments highlighted in red.

RESOLVED that:

- i) The measures taken to mitigate financial risks be approved.*
- ii) The effectiveness of internal control be approved.*

16 Internal Audit Programme

Good corporate governance required an annual review of the Internal Audit Programme of Work to ensure it is appropriate to the needs of the Town Council. 2019-20 will be the final year of the five year contract agreed in 2015. There are four visits per year, each looking at difference aspects.

RESOLVED that:

- i) The Annual Internal Audit Programme of Work for 2019-20 be approved.*

17 Thame Football Partnership / Artificial Pitch

Following the decision to proceed with the project to install a new artificial pitch by the Thame Football Partnership at Meadow View Park various resolutions were made, including the necessity for a new formal partnership / working together agreement and the creation of a project Working Group.

RESOLVED that:

- i) The Terms of Reference of the Project Working Group be approved.*
- ii) The new partnership / working together agreement, subject to further legal work and final agreement by the Working Group be approved.*

18 Thame Town Cricket Club

The redevelopment of the Cricket Pavilion necessitated the relocation of the cricket nets. The re-provisioning of the cricket nets had always been outside of the re-build project, to be funded separately by Thame Town Cricket Club for full re-instatement in advance of the 2019 cricket season.

Thame Town Cricket Club have so far raised approximately £25k towards the total cost of £60k and are continuing their efforts to secure further funding. In the event that full funding is not possible in the timescales, the Cricket Club have asked the Town Council to consider lending funds. Any loan would be subject to the Town Council's Loan Policy and Investment Strategy.

RESOLVED that:

- i) A community loan facility of up to £35k is made available to Thame Town Cricket Club, subject to the detail in the supporting report.*

19 P18/S3143/O - DAF Trucks Ltd, Eastern Bypass Hybrid planning application with:

Outline planning permission (all matters reserved except for access) sought for demolition of existing buildings and development of 1511 sqm (gross) of offices within Class B1 and up to 129 dwellings within Class C3 and associated works.

Full planning permission sought for erection of a 68 bed care home within Class C2 and associated access, vehicular parking, landscaping, ancillary infrastructure and other works.

The Town Mayor thanked Cllr Dyer and the Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Officer (and Thame District Councillors) for their hard work preparing for and making representations at the District Planning Committee meeting on 20 February 2019. The District Planning Officer had recommended to the Committee to grant permission. After some discussion the District Planning Committee resolved to refuse permission.

The Town Clerk reported following the meeting consideration was being given to the next steps. A meeting has been arranged with John Howell, MP and the Council continued to seek advice from Counsel as to the validity of the arguments should the decision be taken to Appeal. The Town and District Councils now needed to work together, to assist with this the Town Council has offered to share advice it receives from Counsel.

20 P18/S3596/FUL – Land at The Elms, Upper High Street – Amendment No. 1 – dated 25 January 2019 and Amendment No. 2 – dated 8 February 2019.

The erection of a 'Housing with Care' development (Use Class C2) and a communal residents centre; the creation of new public open space; the provision of new pedestrian / cycle links from Upper High Street to Elms Road and Elms Park; repairs and alterations to the boundary walls and entrance of Elms House, and associated infrastructure works and landscaping.

The amendments refer to details on Landscaping & Trees and Design & Amenity – following comments made by the Conservation Officer, the Urban Design Officer and the Crime Prevention Design Adviser. Also to waste management, drainage, affordable housing and marketing.

It was noted that after reviewing the additional information it is the Officer's view that the amendments would not alter the Town Council's Objections to this planning application.

The meeting concluded at 7.54pm

Signed
Chairman, 16 April 2019