

THAME TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee held on 9 April 2019 at 6.30pm in the Upper Chamber, Thame Town Hall.

Present: Cllrs B Austin, N Dixon, M Deacock, M Dyer (Chairman), L Emery (Deputy Mayor), H Fickling, P Lambert (Deputy Chairman), A Midwinter (Town Mayor)

Officers

G Hunt, Town Clerk

K Slater, Office Administration Manager

A Oughton, Committee Services Officer

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Bretherton (Holiday), Butler (Personal), Champken-Woods (SODC) and Dodds (SODC).

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 12 February 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5 Financial Update

Members received the budget summary up to 28 February 2019. The Balance Sheet was noted along with the following:

- a) In line with legislation for precepts of £140,000 or more, a detailed Budget Precept Leaflet for 2019-20 has been produced, published on District and Town Council web sites and widely circulated.
- b) Under Financial Regulation 4.5, the Town Clerk has purchased a replacement laptop plus installation at a total cost of £989 from the Rolling Capital Fund.
- c) Work is underway on preparing the 2018-19 End of Year accounts.
- d) The Office Administration Manager is working on the following contract renewals: Town Hall Security Monitoring; Depot Security Monitoring; Fire Equipment Monitoring; Sanitary / Janitorial provision; Information Centre Till support.
- e) £24,591 has been realised from the investment fund to fund the replacement tractor, as agreed as part of 2019-20 budget setting.
- f) The broadband service to the Town Hall has been upgraded resulting in quadrupled speed for use in the chamber and on public access computers. A new contract was also negotiated which has led to a cost saving of £100 a year for the new improved service.

6 Financial Overspends

Members noted the following financial overspends against budget line items (greater than the agreed de minimis of £100 / 5%) since the last meeting of the Committee:

- a) Given an increase in staff attending conferences / seminars / training / networking meetings, staff travel expenses as at 28/2/19 are currently £198 in excess of the £400 budget.
- b) Through an increase in printing / copying, the overall photocopier spend as at 28/4/19 is £205 in excess of the £2,855 total budget.
- c) Through an increase in Members attending conferences / seminars / training, Members training spend as at 28/2/19 is £290 in excess of the £500 budget.

All of the above will be covered initially by underspends elsewhere and ultimately from the General Reserve Fund.

7 Investment Update

The investment performance summary had not been received in time for the meeting. As soon as it is available the Town Clerk will circulate it to Councillors and arrange for it to be published on the website.

8 Internal Audit

The third visit by the Internal Auditor took place on 13 March 2019 and his report, the Internal Audit Third Interim Update Report is attached as Appendix 1 to the report. No issues have been identified which warranted formal comment or recommendation.

Members received the Internal Audit Third Interim Update report 2018-19.

9 Reports from Representatives on External Organisations

The reports were noted.

A question was raised regarding the current position of the proposed Health Hub. The Town Clerk reported a public consultation had taken place which was very well attended and a lot of comments made. The developer has promised to supply the results of the consultation to the Town Council. The Town Clerk will contact the developer to see when the comments are likely to be received.

10 Fees and Charges

The hiring fees for the Meeting Room, the Upper Chamber and Southern Road Recreational Ground (SRRG) were last reviewed in April 2018.

A review of local organisations has shown they hire out their facilities at a similar hourly charge. It was noted that the Barns Centre has kept its hire charges the same for 2019-20 with a view that there is potentially increased competition from the new Cricket Pavilion.

RESOLVED that:

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

11 Insurance Contract

The current three year insurance contract held with WPS will expire on 30 May 2019. Three insurance companies were approached to do a tender exercise in line with the Council's Insurance Strategy. All three are reputable companies and supplied supporting references related to the Parish Council sector.

As a result of the tender exercise Company C provided the most competitive quotation based on a like for like specification. This will provide an annual saving of £3552.08, equating to a saving of over £10k over the three year contract period.

RESOLVED that:

- i) Company C be appointed as the insurance provider for the next three years.*

12 Kebab Van Licence

The trading arrangements between the Council and the Kebab Van proprietor (as last agreed in April 2014) expired on 31 March 2019.

In reviewing the licence discussions have been held with the proprietor who has asked that the hours, which include set-up and close-down time, be extended to ensure the continued legal operation of the Kebab Van. The new designated hours will be 1730 to 0100 Sunday to Thursday and 1730 to 0200 on Friday and Saturday.

The Town Clerk confirmed the fee charged is comparable with the fee charged to traders at the Tuesday Market and is reviewed on an annual basis as part of the budget setting process. The actual charge was last reviewed in April 2014 when the proprietor introduced the new larger van.

Discussion took place on whether the length of five years for the proposed agreement was too long. It was agreed that a five year term provided the trader with stability and the confidence to continue to invest and improve the business which in turn benefitted the customers.

RESOLVED that:

- i) The Terms and Conditions (as attached to the report), enabling the Kebab Van to trade in the Upper High Street car park for a further five years be approved.*

13 Procurement Policy

The new Procurement Policy set out clear simple guidelines for staff and Members to follow when purchasing goods or services. It is important that the Town Council uses a 'Best Value' approach whilst being fair to all suppliers, local or national.

Cllr Fickling raised a question on behalf of a member of the public as to whether the Procurement Policy should include an environmental impact assessment associated with the supply of goods or services. After a short discussion it was agreed that any environmental aspects would be considered as part of the procurement decision and, where relevant would be part of any scoring mechanism.

Discussions have taken place previously that the Town Council considers the implementation of an Environmental Policy. With the publication of the draft Green Living Plan for Thame this might be an opportune time to commit to such a Policy.

RESOLVED that:

- i) The new Procurement Policy be adopted.*

14 Member / Officer Protocol

The Member / Officer Protocol was introduced in 2013 and last reviewed in April 2015. The Town Clerk had thoroughly reviewed the policy and saw no need for any changes to be made.

RESOLVED that:

- i) The unchanged Member / Officer Protocol be re-adopted.*

15 Driving and Towing at Work Policy

The Driving and Towing at Work Policy was last reviewed in 2015. The Asset Manager had thoroughly reviewed the policy and saw no need for any changes to be made.

RESOLVED that:

- i) The unchanged Driving and Towing at Work Policy be re-adopted.*

16 Thame Museum Lease Extension

It was noted that following on from the Council discussion re the potential museum lease extension on 22 January 2019, the Town Clerk met with museum representatives on 4 March 2019 where a variety of potential ways forward were discussed. The Chairman of the museum has subsequently reported that at the Museum Trustees meeting on 11 March 2019, it was decided to concentrate on other things (rather than the museum extension) for the time being, so the need for the lease extension is put on hold.

17 Health & Safety Visit

A General Risk Assessment Inspection and full Health & Safety Audit was carried out at the Town Hall and Maintenance Depot on 15 February 2019 as part of the three year contract with Ellis Whittam.

A full report was received at the end of February with an overall score of 74%. The report identified 181 of 216 risk areas are all in order and raised 57 observations in 35 risk areas identified as needing further work. All the observations are of 'medium risk' and action is suggested within three months.

The Town Clerk, Asset Manager and Office Administration Manager have met to agree an action plan. Some actions have already been completed and all remedial action will be executed by 29 May 2019.

18 Parking Enforcement – 2 hour On-Street Free Parking

The Town Clerk provided an update on the latest discussions relating to Parking Enforcement.

Following a meeting with Oxfordshire County Council on 26 February 2019 two possible future options were discussed. Subsequent discussions and communications have established a further two options.

These were outlined at the Annual Town Meeting and in summary include; 1) install free parking meters for on street, 2 hour parking spaces, 2) if parking is decriminalised the Town Council could put in a proposal to take control of all parking in Thame. The Town Council would need to prepare a parking strategy in advance of power being devolved to SODC, 3) The police precept has recently been increased by a large amount, this may mean more officers available to enforce parking and 4) Newquay Town Council are attempting to use the Sustainable Communities Act to give Town Councils the direct power to enforce on-street parking.

None of the options are short term measures and no decision is needed until the Town Council know what option(s) are available.

19 Free Use / De-Minimis Delegated Authority

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

- a) Free use of Town Hall for a Charity Cycling Event on 12/5/19
- b) Free use of SRRG for Emergency Services Day on 10/8/19
- c) Charity rate for Urban Orienteering event on 1/9/19

It was also noted that the Town Clerk, through De Minimis delegated authority, has allowed Barley Hill School to define the Town Hall as a holding point for school children in the event of a critical incident impacting on the school premises, as is already in place for St Joseph's School.

20 Staffing Update

The Town Clerk reported that arrangements are in place for three students from Lord Williams's School to spend a week on work experience placement with the Town Council commencing Monday 8 July 2019. Experiencing a 'day in the life of' the Town Clerk, the grounds team, planning with the Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Officer, the Market Town Co-ordinator and the Information Centre Officer.

Members appreciated the extra work this placed on staff and commended them for providing the opportunity and supporting the work experience initiative.

21 Compliments & Complaints

The report was noted.

Members raised concern at the number of complaints related to taxis. The Town Clerk reported a meeting had taken place with the Police, SODC Licencing, County Highways, District Councillors and Town Council Officers. At the meeting SODC agreed to conduct a public consultation on extending the taxi rank from two to four spaces by converting two on-street parking spaces.

The meeting concluded at 7.20pm

Signed
Chairman, 30 July 2019