

THAME TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of Thame Town Council held on 18 June 2019 at 6.30pm in the Upper Chamber, Thame Town Hall

Present: Cllrs B Austin, M Deacock, A Dite, D Dodds, M Dyer, L Emery, H Fickling, S Francis, K Gregory, C Jones, A Midwinter (Town Mayor), J Tipping and T Wyse
Officers
G Hunt, Town Clerk
C Pinnells, Community Services Manager
G Markland, Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Officer
K Slater, Office Manager
A Oughton, Committee Services Officer

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Bretherton (Personal), Champken-Woods (Personal) and Cowell (Personal).

2 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

Cllr Midwinter declared an interest in Item 24 as the land owner was her former employer and known to her. Cllr Midwinter did not take part or vote on this item.

Cllr Francis declared an interest in Item 4 as a member of Thame Climate Alliance.

3 Civic Announcements

The Mayor's attendances were noted.

Cllr Midwinter said she was saddened to note the demise of the Thame Gazette which had served the town well. In its heyday it provided local news and was the paper everyone looked forward to reading every Friday.

The Town Mayor noted the imminent retirement of Andy Ford, as On-Call Officer in Charge at Thame Fire Station. Cllr Midwinter extended her thanks to Andy Ford on behalf of the Town Council and residents of Thame for his good service to the town and wished him a happy retirement.

Cllr Midwinter announced the Mayor's Cadet for this year will be Corporal Wil Jenkinson of the Thame Army Cadets. Cllr Midwinter had chosen the Army Cadets in recognition of the 75th Anniversary of the D-Day landings and the part Oxfordshire & Buckinghamshire Light Infantry played, particularly at Pegasus Bridge. Cllr Midwinter will present Corporal Jenkinson with the Mayor's Cadet Badge later this evening.

Finally, Cllr Midwinter thanked 21st Century Thame and everyone who was involved in organising the Carnival on Saturday, it had been a fantastic event.

4 Public Participation and Public Questions

Mr Charles Boundy spoke in relation to the Green Living Plan (GLP). On a personal basis Charles Boundy recognised the major issues related to the climate and the need to respond in a sustainable way. This had been recognised five years ago when work first started on the Green Living Plan.

Last year the draft Green Living Plan went out to public consultation, since then Thame Green Living Project had launched with a number of working groups analysing areas such as footpaths, green spaces and biodiversity. A meeting will be held in the Town Hall on 10 July to deal with the vital issues of clean air and energy and further working groups are expected to form.

Later this year, together with the Town Council and other parties, the Green Living Plan will be further refined with the aim to publish the GLP around Easter 2020. Thame is ahead of the rest of country in producing a GLP. Charles Boundy met with District Council Officers who were extremely supportive. There is a lot of work going on and Charles hoped the climate emergency proposal would not distract / detract in any way from the GLP but complement it. The GLP group will be happy to work those involved in the climate emergency proposal to develop their ideas in conjunction with the GLP.

There being no questions for Charles Boundy the Town Mayor thanked him for the update on the Green Living Plan.

Item 5 – A presentation by Thame Climate Alliance then followed.

Helen Johns and Tony Long spoke on Item 7 – Midsomer Plaques.

Helen Johns said the recommendation in the Town Clerk's report is based on expedience and giving in gracefully. We disagree and ask for the Town Council's support to take the decision to refuse permission made by the District Council to Appeal by an independent planning inspector. The resources needed to progress the Appeal are minimal as I will do most of the work and no further financial resources are required.

At the Midsomer Workshop in 2016 three outputs were agreed, leaflets, tours and plaques. The first two have successfully been delivered leaving the plaques outstanding. This has always been a joint project with 21st Century Thame. It was thought that if the application had been made in their name it would not have carried as much weight as that of the Town Council. If the Town Council do not continue with their support we will lose the ability to appeal.

The case for the plaques is strong, the District's decision is based on their interpretation of the NPPF rules around harm against balance and benefit. We believe our submission, based on minimal reputational harm to the building is wholly acceptable. The plaques offer a gateway to the history of each building. Please support us in taking this case to appeal.

Tony Long stated this is a joint project with 21st Century Thame and the Town Council, both parties have whole heartedly supported the project up to now. 21st Century Thame remain enthusiastic, we ask the Town Council to do the same. Only the Town Council can lodge the appeal.

The Town Clerk's report states the decision was purely a planning one and the inspector is likely to take the same view. It is our case that the District Planning Officer's interpretation of the NPPF rules is flawed, the economic benefit far outweighs any harm. We are very keen to make the case and urge the Town Council not to be expedient, not to give in gracefully but to give Helen and myself the opportunity to make our case one more time.

After answering a number of questions the Town Mayor thanked Helen Johns and Tony Long. Discussion of Item 7 then followed.

5 Climate Emergency

Cllr Francis introduced Max Spokes, a member of Oxford Youth Climate Action, Thame Climate Alliance and Head Boy at Lord Williams's School, supported by John Francis a member of Extinction Rebellion and Chinnor Friends of the Earth and Helen Flitton.

Max Spokes called on the Town Council to declare a climate and environmental emergency to include a pathway to carbon reduction and working with the GLP to improve the local environment and examining all areas of council work and responsibilities to reduce carbon emissions and mitigate the town's contribution to anthropogenic climate change.

In the last 50 years the earth, our life support, has been betrayed and mistreated; to pull the plug on our life support will mean self-destruction. Whether or not the Town Council declare a climate

emergency this evening will not alter the fact that there is one but in passing the motion it will send a message that we are not prepared not to see our life support end and will commit to deliver real life changes to the way the town works and lives.

In October last year an inter-governmental panel on climate change warned there were only 12 years left if we are to ensure global temperatures do not rise by more than 1.5deg. Max briefly outlined the consequences of inaction as reported by the IPCC. This was also an environmental and ecological emergency too, referring to the UN Global Assessment Report published last month.

All of us will be judged in two ways, as bystanders or actors. Will we make excuses and let someone else do the work or will we be accepting of the fact that there is no other choice than to make changes to the way we live our lives on a personal and collective basis.

At a local level we can commit to switching to renewable energy in homes and businesses, to offset CO2 emissions by planting trees and buying local produce, make simple, cost effective changes to use less energy, water and purchase fewer fabrics and materials. These changes will not leave a gaping hole in the budget or disadvantage us.

Air pollution levels, as Charles Boundy pointed out at Lord Williams's School are worrying and affecting student's health. If we do not make changes now or in the near future we will be forced to make them in a radical and hurried way later on.

In February students from Lord Williams's school wrote to John Howell, MP telling him why we were striking for the climate. In one break and lunchtime nearly 100 signatures were collected from my Year Group of 200 students.

The Carnival on Saturday had an environmental theme and hundreds of people took part. We should be proud the Town Council is one of the first, if not the first, to develop a Green Living Plan and in declaring a climate and environmental emergency we can act and deliver on that plan. The greatest disservice we can do for the town is to reject the motion and I hope you will consider and pass the motion before you this evening.

After answering a number of questions the Town Mayor thanked Max, John & Helen for their presentation.

Discussion then took place on the motion put before the Council:

To **consider** the motion that Thame Town Council:

- a) Agrees to commit to some immediate actions, and commit to complete a detailed Strategic Action Plan aimed at doing all within its powers to contribute to halving Thame's CO₂ emissions by 2030, and to aim towards reaching net zero carbon in Thame by 2040.
- b) Agrees to report back on this plan and its progress in 6 months' time.
- c) Declares a 'climate emergency' to give the issue the focus and awareness it needs.

It was felt that the whilst Thame Climate Alliance put forward a convincing case, the town and the Town Council was already doing a great deal, including the production of the first Green Living Plan (with a Thame-wide Delivery Strategy and Action Summary being prepared). Feeling was expressed that to declare a climate emergency implied a priority, to act now and count the cost later. It was important that environmental issues should not be put ahead of all else in decision making.

On being put to the vote the motion to declare a Climate Emergency fell.

The Town Clerk committed to organise an internal Town Council meeting, regardless of the outcome, to start the collation of a list of suggested action / steps, within its powers, beyond that which is being done already.

6 P19/S1596/FUL – Park Meadow Cottage, Thame Park Road

Erection of two 2-bed dwellings and four 3-bed dwellings.

The Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Officer presented the report and the reasons for recommendation to object to this application. After a short discussion Members agreed to object.

RESOLVED TO OBJECT

- 1. The proposed dwellings, plus the remaining Park Meadow Cottage, when added to the previous scheme give rise to 16 dwellings on 0.6ha, or 26.7 dwellings per hectare. This is contrary to the allocation under TNP Policy HA3 which sets out 12 dwellings at a density of 20 per hectare.**
- 2. Bicycle parking is referred to within the application but no space suitable for parking is identified, contrary to TNP Policy ESDQ27.**
- 3. Adverse impact on the character of the area, contrary to TNP Policies ESDQ15 and ESDQ16.**

It was also noted that the Planning Authority needed to address the affordable allocation across the whole site and that no pre-application discussions had taken place with the Town Council.

7 Midsomer Plaques

The Town Clerk had provided a report which along with other related pieces of information had been circulated to Members. Helen Johns report had also been circulated.

The success of the Midsomer TV series had resulted in a huge increase in visitor numbers to the town. More guides were being trained to conduct the Midsomer tours. The plaques would enhance the visitor experience. There was no reason for the District Council to conclude the plaques would result in reputational harm to the building.

RESOLVED that:

- i) Helen Johns, acting as the Town Council's agent progresses an appeal.***

8 Report from County Councillor N Carter

Cllr Carter had given his apologies and will submit a report for circulation. [Subsequently circulated on Thursday 20 June].

9 Reports from South Oxfordshire District Councillors

Cllrs Bretherton and Barker had given their apologies. Cllr Gregory briefly summarised the report circulated to Members.

10 Members Questions (under Standing Order 11)

Cllr Francis asked if there was to be a meeting to discuss next steps with regard to a Climate Emergency and the Town Clerk responded that he had already committed to do so earlier in the meeting.

11 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 May 2019 were approved and signed by the Mayor.

12 Planning & Environment Committee

The minutes of the meetings held on 21 May 2019 and 11 June 2019 were noted.

13 Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Committee

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 May 2019 were noted.

14 Internal Audit

The Office Administration Manager reported the Internal Audit had taken place today and the Report 2018-19 – Final Update will follow. The Internal Auditor had flagged a couple of minor issues during his visit but there was nothing major that warranted further action. The Internal Auditor had signed the Annual Governance and Accountability Return. [The full report was subsequently circulated on Friday 21 June].

15 External Audit / Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) / End of Year Accounts 2018-19

The report provided the relevant background to the Financial Statements (unaudited) for the year ending 31 March 2019 and the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR), including the Annual Governance Statement and Accounting Statements for 2018-19.

It is a requirement of Accounts and Audit Regulations for the Town Council to separately approve the Annual Governance Statement in advance of approving the Accounting Statements. To complete the Accounting Statements within the AGAR, the Financial Statement for the year ended 31 March 2019 had been prepared.

The Town Clerk had reviewed the 2018-19 accounts in detail, against the budget and the 12 month forecast at 2019-20 budget setting and there was no particular variance of note. A deficit of £25,451 was budgeted, it was predicted to be £38,352 at budget setting (6 months in) and turned out to be £35,441 at year end. Reported in year overspends and additional spending approvals relating to staff costs, Remembrance Sunday screen, legal expenses, Cuttlebrook haymaking, War Memorial cleaning etc all came to in excess of £21,000, but with underspends and increases in income elsewhere the net overspend was limited to £9,990. This amount is within 1% of overall budget. Earmarked and general reserves remain at a sensible level.

There being no questions the following items were separately voted on and agreed.

Annual Governance Statement 2018-19

RESOLVED that:

- i) The Annual Governance Statement for 2018-2019 be approved.*

Unaudited Financial Statements for the year ending 31 March 2019

RESOLVED that:

- ii) The Unaudited Financial Statements for the year ending 31 March 2019 be received.*

Accounting Statements for 2018-2019

RESOLVED that:

- iii) The Accounting Statements for 2018-2019 be approved.*

16 Mayor Thame Charity Trust

The technical summary of the Mayor of Thame's Charity Trust for the year 2018-19 was noted. The Town Clerk reported that following a Gift Aid and GASDS claim, HMRC had made a payment of £140 to the Charity Account.

The technical summary, together with the Schedule of Monies received and paid out of the Charity Account for 2018-19 and an Income and Expenditure summary for the year provided transparency through the account.

17 Grants

The Grants Award Panel had received 16 grant applications, 15 were reviewed and one withdrawn as its activities took place outside of the parish. Each application was assessed by the Panel and scored.

Of the 15 grant applications, eight were for capital grants, of which seven were recommended to approve and seven were for revenue grants, of which two were recommended to approve.

RESOLVED that:

- i) The grant awards as recommended by the Grants Award Panel be approved.*

18 Thame Football Partnership / Artificial Pitch

Members noted a further change of scope to the Artificial Pitch planning application had been agreed by Oxfordshire County Council and the Thame Football Partnership Artificial Pitch Working Group (on behalf of the Town Council). The change includes two additional stands, turnstile and toilet upgrades to the main pitch.

19 APP/Q3115W19/3228431 – P18/S3596/FUL – Land at The Elms, Upper High Street

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.

Members noted the above appeal to the Secretary of State against South Oxfordshire District Council's decision to refuse the above planning application.

It was further noted that as agreed at the Planning & Environment Committee meeting on 11 June 2019 the Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Officer (NPCO), with the assistance of other Officers as relevant, had been delegated authority to prepare and submit representations to the appeal on behalf of the Town Council.

The Town Clerk reported the NPCO had done an amazing job going through the old Elms files gathering information which he has sent to the District Appeals Officer. The NPCO is due to meet with District Appeals Officer shortly. Thanks was expressed to the NPCO for all his hard work.

20 Elms Park Improvements

It was noted that the outline planning permission for improvements to Elms Park as granted on 6 August 2015, along with the associated Reserved Matters as granted on 17 November 2016 had now expired.

The Town Clerk stated that the improvement project was significant for the town, Elms Park was the jewel in crown and the community had waited two and half years for improvements to Elms Park to begin. A large part of the funding required was dependent on a £300k s106 contribution from the development of the adjacent site at The Elms / Elms Field.

The Town Clerk reported he and the NPCO had met with the developer who was amenable to discussions relating to an index linked agreement which would increase contributions to approximately £400k if the Appeal is successful. Legally the District Council may not be able to write this into the Appeal. An alternative may be to enter into a 'Deed of Gift' with the developer.

The Town Clerk recommended that the Open Spaces Working Group (OSWG) is reconvened to plan the incremental implementation of the agreed improvements to Elms Park, working in conjunction with the recently reformed Friends of Elms Park and possibly the re-employment of TEP as overall implementation managers. Also that an initial budget of £40k, from the Capital Receipts Reserve be allocated to the OSWG to make a start and establish precise phased funding requirements.

RESOLVED that:

- i) The Open Spaces Working Group is reconvened with a brief to establish a phased project plan for the implementation of improvements to Elms Park, in line with the content of the report.***

21 Civic Regalia

Cllrs Emery and Midwinter explained that some confusion had been generated by the Mayor's Consort Badge of Office being on a chain, while the Deputy Mayor's Badge of Office is on a ribbon. This had led to, on occasion, the Mayor's Consort being thought to be the Deputy Mayor and the importance of the Deputy Mayor not being emphasised, particularly when the Deputy Mayor is substituting for the Mayor. The Deputy Mayor has also sometimes been mistaken for a consort.

It was therefore proposed that the chain and ribbon are swapped.

RESOLVED that:

- i) The current chain and ribbon on the Mayor's Consort Badge of Office and the Deputy Mayor's Badge of Office be swapped.***

22 Bledlow Household Recycling Centre

The Town Council had received a request from a Buckinghamshire County Councillor for the Town Mayor to join a small committee of local leaders in a quest to find a way forward for the Bledlow Household Recycling Centre following its closure.

RESOLVED that:

- i) The Town Council authorises support for the campaign to re-open Bledlow Household Recycling Centre and to allocate a sum of £500 from General Reserves, in the event of any unforeseen expenditure requirements.***

23 Community Governance Review – Thame Wards

Members noted South Oxfordshire District Council will undertake a Community Governance Review later this year and will be contacting all parish and town councils inviting them to submit issues for consideration.

It was proposed that a group of interested Members / Officers are called together for an initial discussion and that group will then formulate a response to the Community Governance Review of issues for consideration, in discussion with all Members / Officers.

RESOLVED that:

- i) A group of interested Members / Officers are called together to progress any relevant aspects with regard to ward / parish boundaries, in discussion with all Members / Officers.***

24 Land Covenant

In July 2008 the Town Council transferred a small piece of land (16sqm) at nil consideration to enable a resident to extend their home for their newly disabled son. On legal advice a covenant was added to the transfer. The transferee had notified the Town Council of their intention to sell and asked how much they owe.

The Town Clerk reported that he suspects the legal advice in 2007 was incorrect. It is his view that the land disposal falls into the social well-being category, helping to ensure the inclusion of all. The piece of land was insignificant in terms of its use to the community and there has been no negative impact on community provision through its disposal.

RESOLVED that:

- i) The Town Council does not enforce the 'First Disposal' covenant on the Land Registry Transfer dated 7 July 2008.***

It was proposed, seconded and agreed that discussion of this item be moved to the last item on the agenda. Cllr Midwinter left the meeting during discussion of this item, Cllr Emery took the Chair.

25 Monthly Councillor Drop-In

Cllr Stiles organised the monthly Councillor Drop-In rota from 10am-12noon on the first Saturday of the month. As Cllr Stiles stood down at the elections, a replacement 'Lead Councillor' is required.

RESOLVED that:

- i) Cllr Gregory be elected as the Lead Councillor in line with the Councillor Drop-In procedure.***

The time was approaching 8.30pm but it was agreed to continue to the end of the agenda.

26 CCTV Working Group

The CCTV Working Group's current main function is for selected Members to attend the six monthly CCTV Management Meeting at Didcot, and to assist in the final stages of the renegotiation of the new five year CCTV Agreement.

There are three Councillors on the CCTV Working Group, but two stood down at the recent elections.

RESOLVED that:

- i) Cllrs Dite and Francis be elected to work alongside Cllr Wyse on the CCTV Working Group.***

27 P17/S4441/O – Land North of Rycote Lane, nr Thame

The erection of up to 180,000 square feet (up to 16,722 square metres) of B2/B8 with ancillary B1(a) and B1(c) together with parking, drainage, landscaping (structural and incidental) and highway works.

Cllr Gregory reported South Oxfordshire District Council had granted outline planning permission for this application at the Planning Committee meeting on 12 June 2019.

28 Town Carnival

Cllr Emery, External Organisation Representative for the Carnival reported it had been a terrific event, with huge participation from the residents of Thame. The theme 'Save the Planet' was close to everyone's heart. Numbers were a little down due to the weather. All the stall holders were happy.

Sue Martin-Downhill had done an incredible job as Chair of the Carnival Committee, along with Sharon Smit as secretary.

Thanks was to given to the Community Services Manager, the Community Project Support Officer and the Market Town Co-ordinator for pulling together the Town Council's entry in the parade. The Community Services Manager thanked all the Councillors who took part and reminded everyone there was a chance to volunteer to help with the Christmas Event on Friday 6 December.

29 Thame Town Music Festival

The Community Services Manager reported arrangements for the Town Music Festival on Friday 12 & Saturday 13 July 2019 are well advanced. The organisers have asked the Town Council to help with publicising the Festival and in particular the classical concert at St Mary's Church on Friday 12 July and the song writer's competition on Saturday 13 July.

30 Thame Sports Club – Community Loan

Thame Sports Club aim is to rebuild the pavilion at Queens Road over the winter of 2019 /20. The hope is that the Club will ultimately secure full funding, but in the event of that not being possible in the timescales, the Club have asked the Town Council to consider providing a community loan to underwrite the current shortfall on the funding for the rebuild.

RESOLVED that:

- i) A community loan facility of up to £40k is made available to Thame Town Sports Club, subject to the detail in the supporting report.***

The meeting concluded at 8.43pm

Signed
Chairman, 6 August 2019