

THAME TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee held on 18 February 2020 at 6.30pm in the Upper Chamber, Thame Town Hall.

002 **Present:** Cllrs B Austin, D Bretherton, N Champken-Woods, P Cowell (Deputy Mayor), D Dodds, M Dyer (Chairman), L Emery (Deputy Chairman), H Fickling, S Francis, C Jones and A Midwinter

Officers

J Cole, Town Clerk
C Pinnells, Community Services Manager
K Slater, Office Administration Manager
L Fuller, Committee Services Officer

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Tipping (Unwell).

2 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

Cllr Dyer declared an interest in Agenda Item 15 as he had been assisting the Thame History Festival organiser with advice and support.

3 Public Participation and Public Questions

There was no public participation.
There were no public questions put to the Committee.

4 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 November 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5 Financial Update

Members received the budget summary and balance sheet up to 31 December 2019 and noted the financial updates.

7 Investment Update

The Investment Summary was noted. The portfolio continued to perform well and followed the market. A question was raised regarding the re-investment of the Town Council's income from the Rathbones Portfolio. It was explained that currently the Town Council takes the accumulated interest and dividends (income) but the capital growth remains in the portfolio. Rathbones continue to manage to portfolio and its investments / reinvestments in line with the agreed level of risk.

A possible error in the figures / commentary had been highlighted which the Town Clerk would look into.

8 Investment Strategy

The report was noted. Cllr Dyer added that he, Cllr Francis and the Town Clerk were due to

meet with Rathbones to discuss their 'Green Bank' scheme. Cllr Francis had investigated the Town Council's various investments following the Rathbones presentation in November, and raised concern about the ethicality of one of the Town Council's investments. It was advised that details of specific investments would be required for this to be looked into, however Cllr Dyer advised that it could be discussed at the meeting with Rathbones.

RESOLVED that:

- i) The Investment Strategy be approved for the next twelve months.**
- ii) The Loan Policy be reviewed in the line with the Investment Strategy.**

9 Reports from Representatives on External Organisations

The reports were noted. Cllr Dyer thanked members for all submitting their reports.

Cllr Francis added that the Volunteer Fair organised by 21st Century Thame on Saturday had been a great success, despite Storm Dennis. 1,000 saplings had been given out as part of the Thame Trees initiative which had been sponsored by businesses including Lucy Electric. Cllr Champken-Woods added that the Thame and District Day Centre had 12 people express an interest in volunteering.

Thame Carnival had a new co-ordinator, Matt Bowler, and Cllr Francis reminded Members that the Carnival was on Saturday 13 June themed 'Heart of Thame'.

10 Free Use / De Minimis Delegated Authority

Members noted that the Town Clerk, through De Minimis Delegated Authority, had granted free use of the Town Council's Upper Chamber for Thame & District Day Centre (10 hours) and Red Kite Charity Auction (5.5 hours), and the Meeting Room for Thame Youth Projects (6.5 hours).

11 Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy

The Office Administration Manager explained that the policy had been updated to replace the Data Protection Act with the 2018 Act.

RESOLVED that:

- i) The Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy be adopted.**

12 Play Area Strategy

It was decided that it was more appropriate for this item be deferred to the next meeting of the Community, Leisure and Recreation committee.

13 Equality and Diversity Policy

The Town Clerk explained that under the Equality Act 2010 local authorities should adopt an Equality and Diversity Policy. The Town Clerk had prepared a simple policy in line with the legislation and that confirms the Town Council will not discriminate against any person based on the protected characteristics.

RESOLVED that:

- i) The Equality & Diversity Policy be adopted.**

14 Grant Awards Policy

The Community Services Manager explained that a request last year for a grant award to be

redirected had highlighted the policy did not contain clear guidelines for this. An additional paragraph had been included in Section 5 of the policy to provide guidance.

Members raised concern that, given the grant budget is not usually all allocated each year, it was unfair that there were not opportunities for the community to apply for the remainder of the funding. It was important that the grant awarding scheme remained competitive and fair, but allowing organisations to apply at any time or to reallocate their grant would undermine the policy. Requests for 'emergency' grants would be considered outside of the policy on a case-by-case basis. The additional wording in the policy ensures that grants are only used for the purpose(s) specified in the application and as determined by the Grant Awards panel.

RESOLVED that:

- i) The amended Grant Award Policy be adopted.**

15 Thame History Festival

Thame History Festival would be a new event for the town on Saturday 7 June 2020 supported, but not run, by Thame Museum. The event would celebrate the history of the town with a range of activities and guided tours of historical buildings. It would engage the community and involve local organisations such as Thame Historical Society and other regional organisations as listed in the report. The organiser was seeking seed-funding of £1,000 and free use of the Town Hall for the event, similar to that provided by the Town Council for the first Thame Arts & Literature Festival and Thame Food Festival. It was recognised that further detail on the event plans was needed.

RESOLVED that:

- i) Financial support of £1,000 be released from the Grants 2019/20 Budget and free use of the Town Hall be approved for the Thame History Festival 2020.**

16 Thame Museum

It was noted that a number of roofing contractors, specialising in lead work, have been approached and confirmed their interest to quote for the repairs to the Museum Roof. It is hoped a contractor will be appointed shortly and work will begin as soon as practically possible.

17 Economic Development

The Community Services Manager was disappointed to report that the Town Council had been notified by SODC's Economic Development Team of the decision to withdraw their funding. The Town Council's Market Town Co-Ordinator (MTCO) and the projects they are working on and due to deliver will be impacted without this funding. A meeting with SODC's grants team to explore alternative funding options was unsuccessful. The Town Council continues to await a response to its questions from the Cabinet Member for Economic Development at SODC.

It is proposed that the Town Council allocate £3,375 of the unspent 2019/20 Grants budget to ensure the continuity of the MTCO's work.

RESOLVED that:

- i) The financial support of up to £3,375 be released from the Grants 2019/20 Budget, subject to scoping venue suitability and monitoring by the Community Services Manager.**

18 CCTV

It was noted that the CCTV agreement had been signed and sealed. The Community Services

Manager added that the agreement had been through 14 revisions and the Town Council had signed the best available deal.

It was proposed that a new CCTV camera be installed on the entrance to Southern Road Recreational. This had been requested by the Scouts and was supported by the Police. The camera would be monitored as part of the town-wide CCTV circuit and as such would fill a gap in existing CCTV coverage.

Members were unanimously supportive of the installation of CCTV in this location, but felt it was unfair that the Town Council was being expected to cover the capital and revenue costs associated with it, which are usually shared between the Town Council, South Oxfordshire District Council and the Police.

RESOLVED that:

- i) The installation of a CCTV Camera at the entrance of Southern Road Recreational entrance be approved.**

19 Localism Fund

The Community Services Manager reported that for the last five years, 21st Century Thame had successfully ran Tidy Thame and Muck-Out Moreton. The lead organiser had stepped down and the newly-formed OX9ERS volunteered to take on the organisation this year, however they were not fully aware of the tasks and requirements involved. In addition to this, SODC have reduced their allocation of litter-pickers from 100 to 60 per town / parish which created an additional challenge.

The Town Council had seed-funded this event in 2013/14. To cover the costs this year, the OX9ERS are requesting £250, half of the project cost, which could be covered by the Town Council’s unallocated balance in the Localism Fund.

RESOLVED that:

- i) Financial support of up to £250 for the Thame Tidy and Muck-Out Moreton Day on Saturday 18 April 2020 be released and approved from the Localism Fund.**

20 Staffing Update

It was noted that the Project Officer role will be advertised shortly with a timeline to commence employment in the new financial year.

The meeting concluded at 7:47pm.

Signed
Chairman, 14 April 2020