

THAME TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of Thame Town Council held on 21 January 2020 at 6.30pm in the Upper Chamber, Thame Town Hall

Present: Cllrs B Austin, D Bretherton, N Champken-Woods, P Cowell (Deputy Mayor), A Dite, D Dodds, M Dyer, L Emery, H Fickling, S Francis, K Gregory, A Midwinter (Town Mayor), J Tipping and T Wyse

Officers

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

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Deacock (Personal) and Jones (Personal).

2 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

Cllr Emery declared an interest in Agenda Item 8 as a volunteer at Thame Youth Café.

3 Civic Announcements

The Mayor welcomed Jayne Cole, Thame Town Council's new Town Clerk, to her first Full Council meeting. Cllr Midwinter also expressed thanks to the Officers and Councillors who were involved in the Christmas Lights Switch-On event, which had been a success. Everyone had worked very hard and this had been appreciated.

4 Public Participation and Public Questions

Mr Lay asked the following question to Members:

"The new housing developments built in accordance with Thame neighbourhood plan have seen an influx of young families to the town. Although the neighbourhood plan mentions the need for additional primary school places, as far as I can see there is no mention of the need for early years child care. Currently there is only one nursery in the town operating 'full time' hours (8am-5pm), with the nursery in question currently running at reduced intake due to staff shortages, despite a long waiting of families looking for childcare. What action is the town council taking to support our nurseries and ensure the working parents of Thame can find adequate care for their children?"

Cllr Midwinter thanked Mr. Lay for his question and advised that a written response had been prepared by Town Council Officers, circulated to Members and would be emailed to him following the meeting. Cllr Midwinter advised that the Town Council was aware of the shortages of nursery provision in Thame and various discussions were progressing. The Town Council was doing what it could to increase nursery provision but nurseries are usually run privately.

Cllr Champken-Woods reported that plans for the Health Hub Campus included the provision of a nursery with local and national interest expressed. Members noted the importance of including nursery provision in the next Thame Neighbourhood Plan as there was a recognised shortfall in the supply of suitable premises.

Mr Lay asked whether developers should be contributing to nursery provision in the town?

The Town Clerk advised that she had recently contacted the S106 Officer at South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) to ask about funding allocation for nursery provision. The Town Council is not the responsible authority for nursery provision however the Town Clerk agreed to update Mr Lay with more information when it was available.

5 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2019 were approved and signed by the Mayor.

6 Planning & Environment Committee

The minutes of the meetings held on 26 November 2019, 17 December 2019 and 14 January 2020 were noted.

7 Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Committee

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 December 2019 were noted.

8 Thame Youth Projects Group

Cllr Cowell reported that the TYPG had been very busy and the new Youth Worker was settling in with the various projects the group were undertaking. Three funding applications were in process, with two confirmed as successful from SODC and Oxfordshire County Council. It was hoped the funding would be available within the next few weeks and would be used to replace equipment at the Youth Café. TYPG were planning a 'pop-up' café at Southern Road Recreation Ground (SRRG) as an outreach project as well as an activity day at the Guide HQ on 19 February 2020 during half-term. The activity day would feature circus tricks, street dance and a gaming bus.

Good progress was reported on the design and build tendering for the new youth hub on SRRG. Twelve architects had expressed an interest and six of those are expected to submit a design. The tendering process will close in February and the group hoped to appoint an architect by the end of March.

Cllr Cowell reported that he had also met with Town Council and SODC S106 Officers to clarify the available funding and hoped to receive a response by the end of the week. A committee structure within the group had also been set-up with five work streams identified. The next step was to appoint an architect and create a project plan.

Cllr Midwinter thanked Cllr Cowell and Linda Newton for all their hard work.

9 Budget and Precept for 2020-2021

The Town Clerk introduced the report which outlined the budget and precept setting process for 2020-21. The Budget Working Group and Members had been kept well-informed during the process. A press release had been published in November and the budget had not materially changed since then. A public drop-in session was held in December where it was suggested that a simplified pie chart was produced as part of the budget leaflet which Officers will be producing in February 2020. The budget figures were provided which estimated an increase of £37,337 from last year, requiring a net precept of £762,653.

RESOLVED that:

- i) The 2020-2021 budget be approved.**
- ii) £762,653 be raised for the precept for 2020-2021.**

10 Annual Town Meeting Plan

Cllr Midwinter suggested that from previous Annual Town Meeting experience, there should only be one speaker and one topic with opportunities for residents to ask questions. It should not become an opportunity for Councillors to electioneer. The Town Clerk's report presented an idea of holding a Dragon's Den style presentation for community groups to pitch projects to the Town

Council for Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding. This would enable the community to be engaged in CIL allocation through a voting system at the meeting. The projects would need to be in line with the CIL allocation policy and be deliverable.

Members discussed this idea further commenting that it would need to be well-publicised. It was recognised that the community should be engaged but the Town Council should have the final 'vote' on the CIL allocations. There was also concern that only certain groups may pitch ideas and turnout may be low or unrepresentative, and this would skew the voting, although voting could be done online too.

Various other suggestions for a theme for the Annual Town Meeting (ATM) were put forward including the Community Land Trust (CLT), environmental issues and parking, which were all considered to be important matters affecting the town. Cllr Austin advised that unfortunately the timing might not be quite right for the CLT to do its public launch at the ATM. Members agreed that holding a public forum to discuss matters such as the environment and parking was a good idea and would encourage a more diverse audience, however care needed to be taken to manage expectations as to what the Town Council could legally do within its powers. Previously County Council matters such as a highways had dominated the meeting and Members felt that one topic should not be allowed to dominate.

It was suggested that the meeting should be an open forum, possibly with pre-submitted questions, that focused on town matters.

The Town Clerk reminded members that the ATM was not a Town Council meeting, but a requirement in law and a meeting of the town to ask questions. There was flexibility as to the content of the meeting, which may take the form of a presentations or forums.

Members felt that ultimately the Thame Neighbourhood Plan was the most important matter affecting the town and should be the focus of the ATM this year. It was suggested that the room could be divided into groups with different themes, such as housing and the environment, with people rotating around the groups to ensure that a variety of topics were covered. This would then be followed by an open forum giving the local community the opportunity to ask any questions.

RESOLVED that:

- i) The Annual Town Meeting on Tuesday 24 March 2020 focuses on a review of the Thame Neighbourhood Plan with interactive workshops, followed by an open forum for general questions.**
- ii) The Town Clerk prepares a programme for the Annual Town Meeting and progresses this with Members via e-mail.**

The meeting concluded at 7:42pm

Signed
Chairman, 3 March 2020