

Thame Town Council

Meeting of the Thame Alliance Group (TAG) – 7 October 2025

Present: Phil Stratton (Sharing Life Trust) – Edward Fox (Sharing Life Trust) – Maria Scott (Red Kite Family Centre), Val Symonds (TSFC & Dementia Café), Ann Millar (TSFC & Dementia Café), Katie Hammond (Thame Churches), Ruth Taylor (Debit Centre & Grace Church), Anna Burniston (Rycote Practice), Andy Gilbert (Thame Mayor), Mike Parks (SoHA) & Cassie Pinnells (Thame Town Council).

1. **Welcome** – Phil Stratton
Phil welcomed all to the meeting asking everyone to introduce themselves to everyone. Ten years ago and is a gathering of the community groups within the town that help and proactive to work for the good of Thame and Community.
2. **Apologies:** Linda Newton (TYPG), Hannah Kape (TYPG), John & Sarah Hurrell (urHome), Fr Michael Puljic (St Josephs Church), Roy Calcutt, Emma Teasdale, & Mandy Sturdy
3. **Minutes from last meeting were agreed.**
4. **Street of Light Initiative** – Ruth Taylor

To bring hope and positivity in Thame over the half term, the Streets of Lights are being organised by Grace Church for the second time. With the aim for residents, schools, churches, shops & businesses to create a window display, incorporating the words: Love, Hope & Light, the window display should be lit up from 5.30pm to 9.30pm and last over half term commencing from Saturday 25 October to Sunday 2 November 2025. Participants are asked to register to take part by 15 October 2025.

Grace Church will be holding a creative session to aid with inspiration at Lee Court in Thame. Anyone interesting in attending the session please contact Ruth.

5. **Thame Church Christmas Plans and running sessions about handling grief** – Katy Hammond reported that Thame Churches are preparing for a busy and welcoming Christmas season, starting with their presence at the Thame Light Switch On, where they'll be handing out chocolate and asking visitors about their favourite Christmas carols. Alongside their contemporary services featuring haybales, they'll also hold a special *Blue Christmas* service for those who find the season difficult. On 21st December, there will be a traditional carol service, followed by three Christingle Services on Christmas Eve at 2pm, 3:30pm, and 5pm, plus two midnight masses and two Christmas Day services. The churches are also trialling open discussions about grief, death, and dying — including sessions on “Living with Loss,” for anyone grieving a loved one or pet, led by Rev. Graham Choldcroft. An African Choir will also be performing as part of the celebrations.
6. **Are you Ready for Winter** – Graham Slaven (SSE), Apologised for not coming to the meeting or informing us he would not be attending. He has been informed that his organisation is not the power provider for the Thame area, which is instead supplied by UK Power Networks (UKPN). It would therefore be appropriate to contact UKPN directly to enquire whether they operate a similar community support scheme. He apologises for any confusion this may have caused.

7. Updates/Questions

Red Kite Family Centre - A range of community focus sessions and activities took place over the summer, including Renboga and Diversity Days, as well as a Teddy Bears' Picnic held in partnership with Cuttlebrook Care Home. The Community Market Day was also well attended and received positive feedback. First Aid training sessions were offered at the centre, with both 6-hour and 12-hour paediatric courses available. Representatives attended the LL Regional Gathering, providing valuable opportunities to network and explore potential collaborations with other organisations, including Herland. Financially, the Red Kite Family Centre remains stable but continues to be reliant on grant funding.

Memory Café and Dementia Support - Ann Millar has now taken over as Chair. Membership of the Memories Café is increasing rapidly, and the service is currently operating at break-even level, with a waiting list likely to be introduced soon. The first café session is dedicated to individuals living with dementia, while the second session supports both those with dementia and their carers, who have developed strong bonds through shared experiences and memories. Rycote Support has developed a dementia pathway to outline the services available within the local area and is happy to meet individuals in their own homes to offer guidance and support.

Senior Friendship Centre - Membership at the Friendship Centre is gradually increasing, though further growth is still needed. Transport is provided for attendees, along with a hot meal. The Centre is seeking sponsors to support its activities and possibly sponsor an attendee. The Rycote Practice can aid members with applications for Attendance Allowance and will help complete the necessary forms. Monthly themed information talks are held on Tuesdays, with recent topics including scams and dementia awareness.

The Senior Friendship Centre is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year, with an ambition to raise £40,000 to mark the occasion. Activities include visits from a pet therapy dog, and there is an ongoing need for additional volunteers and a driver to support the Dementia Café. Promotion of volunteer opportunities is being planned through local schools and community channels.

The Red Kite Manager has offered guidance on accessing funding from bordering counties and villages, such as Haddenham, Tiddington, and Wheatley, particularly where members of the Senior Friendship Centre are travelling from these areas to attend.

Rycote Practice - Patient transport services are unable to make bookings on behalf of patients. Queries were raised regarding transport availability, noting that the Community Car service is often booked well in advance, with a suggested donation of £27 quite expensive for some patients and Taxi in the region of £. They have been unable to contact the Thame Good Neighbourhood Scheme via the website to ask for drivers to take patients to appointments. The volunteer driver service continues to be advertised on Facebook, and information is being shared locally. Recent Covid & flu injection clinics have resumed, with the first taking place last Saturday. Patients are being encouraged to walk or car share where possible, as parking is limited. Unfortunately, the Unity GP Practice does not notify Rycote GP Practice in advance of

their Saturday clinic schedules, and last Saturday proved challenging when both Clinics took place. New eligibility criteria have been introduced for Covid vaccinations, currently covering those aged over 75 and individuals with specific health conditions.

The Rycotewood newsletter is now produced quarterly, with hard copies available. It includes information on local services and team support, and efforts are being made to increase engagement through the Practice's Facebook page.

It was also noted that NRS has ceased operations, with Oxfordshire Milbrook now providing equipment services. However, there have been reports of referral issues and delays in the supply of items such as walking aids, toilet raisers, handrails, and continence products.

Thame Town Council - The Mayor held a charity golf day that was rather soggy. It was suggested that attracting volunteers for community groups is a challenge and that perhaps the Town Council should follow up in the new year with –fund raising with a soggy golf day for his charities. Attracting a Volunteers Fairs within the Town Centre an idea to follow up in the new year. The Mayor's Civic Service will be held on Sunday, 12 October at St Mary's Church.

SOHA – Has a Community Funding available to aid local organisations, with an online process with up to £3k can be applied for. However, within the application there must be evidence to show how SOHA tenants will benefit.

There has been an increase in distraction burglaries within the area. Practical safety advice and how SOHA deal with anti-social behaviour has been provided within a leaflet to tenants.

Barns Centre – Community Lunch on a Sunday once a month is going to be trailed at the Barns Centre. South Oxfordshire District Council and Vale of white Horse offering grants for organisations that help people through the winter.

Sharing Life – Food bank has been quiet early part of the year and has taken off with 102 September 2024 delivered, 1,110 food parcels delivered this year. Sharing Life are looking for delivery drivers to help.

Thame Town Council –The complaint to the Independent Assessor regarding Links Assessment that Thame does not qualify for a Banking Hub has not been upheld, with the Assessor stating that access to cash is adequate within the town.

8. AOB – there was no other business.

Date of next meetings:

Tuesday 3 February 2026 2pm

Tuesday 2 June 2026 2pm