

THATCHAM TOWN COUNCIL
Minutes of a meeting of
Thatcham Town Council
held on Monday 25th September 2023 at 19.00hrs
in the Council Chamber, Brownsfield Road, Thatcham

Present: Councillor Mark Lillycrop (Mayor)
 Councillors Suzanne Adamantos, Jeff Brooks, Mike Cole, Owen Jeffery,
 Jay Lunn, Tom McCann, Justin Pemberton, Petra Pemberton, Christine Rice,
 Ben Schiffer-Harte and Val Watts

In attendance: Mel Taylor (Town Clerk)
 1 member of the public
 1 member of the press (Newbury Weekly News)

FULL/2023/78 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors John Boyd, Jeremy Cottam, Iain Cottingham, Simon Pike and Stephanie Steevenson.

FULL/2023/79 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

FULL/2023/80 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No public questions had been received.

FULL/2023/81 MINUTES

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the meeting held on 31st July 2023, having been previously circulated, be signed as a correct record of the proceedings.

FULL/2023/82 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

There were no matters arising from the previous meeting.

FULL/2023/83 REPORTS FROM MAYOR AND DEPUTY MAYOR

a) Mayor's Report

Councillor Lillycrop reported that since the last meeting he had attended events including; Hope, Strength & Courage calendar launch, Thatcham Photographic Society social, Thatcham Youth's school holiday fun days, Reading Pride, Thatcham Rotary duck race, KATS (Kennet Amateur Theatrical Society) modern time music hall, One Community cricket & family fun day and Vintage Adventure 2nd anniversary.
 The Mayor also hosted a barn dance to raise funds for this chosen charities.

b) Deputy Mayor's Report

Councillor Adamantos reported that since May she had attended several events, including; Greenham Control Tower for 79th anniversary of D-Day landings, United Service of Remembrance, 5th anniversary of Greenham Control Tower, Thatcham Court carnival and HomeStart West Berkshire's AGM.

FULL/2023/84 APPROVAL AND ADOPTION OF COMMITTEE MINUTES

The following Committee Minutes were presented for adoption:

RESOLVED **a)** Recreation and Amenities Committee Minutes dated 21st August 2023.
 to adopt the Minutes.

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FULL/2023/84 APPROVAL AND ADOPTION OF COMMITTEE MINUTES continued

RESOLVED b) Planning and Highways Committee Minutes dated 5th September 2023. to adopt the Minutes.

RESOLVED c) Events Committee Minutes dated 4th September 2023. to adopt the Minutes.

RESOLVED d) Staff Committee Minutes dated 26th July 2023 and 31st August 2023. to adopt the Minutes.

FULL/2023/85 NORTHFIELD ROAD POST OFFICE

a) Following discussion at Full Council meetings in June 2023 (FULL/2023/57) and July 2023 (FULL/2023/64), Members noted the following response had been received from The Post Office, regarding the unexpected temporary closure of the branch within Tesco, Northfield Road in May 2023:
"The team have confirmed that unfortunately the branch closed for 4 days in May due to some short-term staffing issues at the store. Since that time the branch has remained open as normal, and we have not received any indication from our operator that they have any plans to change service in the store."
 Correspondence was also sent to the Tesco store, but no response had been received.

b) Notification had been received that this branch would be temporarily closed from 13:00hrs on Thursday 19th October 2023 until 09:00hrs on Saturday 25th November 2023.

FULL/2023/86 THATCHAM TOWN CENTRE POLICING

Following a question regarding night-time policing in the town centre, raised by a local resident and considered by the Town Centre Committee at its meeting on 17th July 2023 (TC/2023/37ii), Members received a response from Sergeant Jo Willoughby, Thatcham Neighbourhood Police Team and noted that Sergeant Willoughby and Inspector Sykes would be attending a meeting with Councillors to discuss town centre policing prior to Full Council on 27th November 2023.

FULL/2023/87 THATCHAM LIBRARY BUILDING IMPROVEMENT WORKS

At a meeting of Council on 26th July 2021 (FULL/2021/76i) Council resolved: "To agree that a voluntary contribution of £24,480 be made to West Berkshire Council, towards the running costs of Thatcham Library for the financial year 2021/22, subject to delivery of option 3ⁱ in the proposal presented and only after instruction to carry out the works had been issued by West Berkshire Council." Subsequent budget restraints resulted in the project being scaled back to installation of an accessible toilet and removal of the canopy.

Now in a position to proceed with the works, West Berkshire Council had requested confirmation that the voluntary contribution for the financial year 2021/22 would be released upon receipt of evidence of the work order being placed.

RESOLVED that, as the works were not in line with the original scheme at the time of the resolution, to request that West Berkshire Council undertakes the work from its capital budget.

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FULL/2023/88 COMMUNITY PROJECT FUND APPLICATION – WEST BERKSHIRE ACTION FOR REFUGEES

Members considered an application from West Berkshire Action for Refugees for funding of £300 from the Community Project Fund to run a 'Regency Art Group'.
RESOLVED to award a grant of £300 from the Community Project Fund to West Berkshire Action for Refugees for Regency Art Group.

FULL/2023/89 BANK MANDATES

Members reviewed current bank mandates.
RESOLVED to update bank mandates in line with the recommendations in the Finance Manager's report.

FULL/2023/90 PROPOSED CHANGE TO FREQUENCY OF PLANNING & HIGHWAYS COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Members considered a recommendation from the Town Clerk and a number of key Councillors, including the Committee Chairman, that the Planning & Highways Committee meeting frequency be amended from the current 3-weekly cycle, to a 4-weekly cycle, for a trial period of 6 months, and reviewed in March 2024.
 It was anticipated that there would be little impact on the planning application consultation response period, however, this would be monitored throughout the trial and appropriate action taken as required.
RESOLVED to reschedule meetings of the Planning and Highways Committee to a 4-weekly cycle for a trial period, with a review in March 2024.

FULL/2023/91 RECOMMENDATION FROM THE EVENTS WORKING PARTY – 10K RUN

Members considered a recommendation from the Events Working Party, following its meeting on 18th September 2023, that the Town Council supports the introduction of a Thatcham 10K Run, hoped to be held in March/April 2024 and managed by a community organisation, and that the Town Council underwrite potential losses up to an agreed sum.
 Councillor Schiffer-Harte reported that interested parties were meeting that week to form a community organisation. It was hoped that entry fees would cover costs, but low entry numbers were expected initially. Potential sponsors were showing interest.
RESOLVED to support the initiative in principle, and to underwrite the cost of potential losses to a maximum of £5,000 and the request that a community organisation be in place to present to the Events Committee meeting on 6th November 2023.

FULL/2023/92 APPOINTMENT OF REPRESENTATIVE TO THATCHAM MEMORIAL FOUNDATION

The Annual General Meeting of Thatcham Memorial Foundation was scheduled for Thursday 28th September 2023 and the Town Council was invited to appoint a representative (Trustee position) for a 4-year period.
RESOLVED to appoint Councillor Mike Cole to Thatcham Memorial Foundation as representative of the Town Council, for a period of 4 years.

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FULL/2023/93 REPORTS

a) Reports from Thatcham Town Councillors and West Berkshire District Councillors on Council Surgeries

Council noted a report from Councillors Jeffery and Lillycrop who were present at Council Surgery in The Broadway on Saturday 5th August 2023 and Councillors Jeffery and P Pemberton who were present at Council Surgery in The Broadway on Saturday 2nd September 2023.

b) Reports from West Berkshire District Councillors

The following reports from West Berkshire District Councillors were noted:

Councillor Brooks reported that a lot of work was ongoing regarding the Local Plan, working with Kennet School Academy Trust and developers of the proposed north-east Thatcham development.

Councillor Brooks also reported that West Berkshire Council budgets were under severe pressure, with little reserves. A forecast £8.7m overspend had been reduced to £6.3m.

On 5th October, West Berkshire Council's Council Strategy and delivery plan would be launched.

Some asylum seekers were leaving the Regency Park Hotel, adding additional pressures on West Berkshire Council, through a challenging transition process.

Councillors Brooks and Steevenson were working with West Berkshire Therapy Centre on a proposal.

c) Outside Body Reports

RESOLVED

that, to aid delivery and receipt of reports from appointees, all outside body reports would now be presented to Full Council, rather than Committees, and preferably received in writing in advance.

There being no further business the Mayor declared the meeting closed at 20:11hrs.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Option 3:

Install an accessible toilet for public use within the premises in the current entrance lobby area;
 Relocate the entrance of the library from the south of the site to the north elevation within the garden of Walnut Close;

Remove canopy above current entrance and make good the pitched roof where necessary;

Build up the pavement area outside the current entrance on the south of the building with raised pebbles set in mortar to make the area unsuitable for sitting or walking on. This would discourage the use of the area as a meeting place and hopefully reduce anti-social behaviour;

Fit new emergency exit door on the east elevation of the current building (exit would be into the Walnut Close garden).