

THATCHAM TOWN COUNCIL
Minutes of a meeting of
Thatcham Town Council
held on Monday 27th January 2025 at 19:00hrs
in the Council Chamber, Brownsfield Road, Thatcham

Present: Councillor Suzanne Adamantos (Mayor)
 Councillors John Boyd, Jeff Brooks, Mike Cole, Iain Cottingham, Owen Jeffery,
 Mark Lillycrop, Dave Lunn, Jay Lunn, Tom McCann, Petra Pemberton,
 Simon Pike, Ben Schiffer-Harte, Stephanie Steevenson and Val Watts

In attendance: Mel Taylor (Town Clerk) and Laura Carlin (Deputy Town Clerk)
 1 Member of public
 1 Member of the press (Newbury Weekly News)

FULL/2025/01 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jeremy Cottam, Lee Dillon and Justin Pemberton.

FULL/2025/02 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

FULL/2025/03 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The following questions were raised:

- i. "West Berkshire Council has commissioned consultants to develop a Feasibility Study for the Thatcham Community Hub project, using external funding that must be fully utilised by March 2025. The Town Council has two interests, both as the leading representative of the community and as a potential asset owner. Could this meeting of Full Council be given an overview of this project and any engagement so far between the consultants and the Council (especially any views expressed on behalf of the Council)?"

The Mayor invited Councillor Jeffery to respond, who duly advised that he had been present at a meeting with consultants on 17th December 2024, alongside the Town Clerk and Place Manager. Appointment of the consultants was funded from a central government grant and their work needed to be completed by the end of March 2025. Councillor Jeffery advised that views expressed on behalf of the Council in the meeting were accurate to what the Council was looking to achieve, including the desire to see the defined town centre extended to include the Memorial Hall and Field, Cricket Club and Medical Centre etc. Councillor Jeffery confirmed that neither he nor Town Council Officers had committed the Town Council to any decisions, and emphasised that no decisions regarding land could or would be made as this was a matter for Council.

- ii. "Following the decision of F&GP to allocate £4000 towards the cost of potentially seeking legal advice in relation to the 'proposed revised Local Plan', which Committee of the Council has responsibility for defining the brief for any legal advice that the Council might wish to obtain?"

The Mayor responded that it was recommended that it would be for the Planning & Highways Committee to draft the brief alongside the existing Local Plan authorisation previously delegated to that Committee.

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FULL/2025/04 MINUTES

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 25th November 2024, having been previously circulated, be taken as read and signed as an accurate record of the meeting.

FULL/2025/05 REPORTS FROM MAYOR AND DEPUTY MAYOR

a) Mayor's Report

Councillor Adamantos reported that from 26th November 2024 to date, she had attended a variety of events including: a visit to Turner House retirement homes, a Name The Bear presentation, Swings & Smiles Carol Service, Daisy's Dream Christmas gathering, Rotary's Santa Fun Run, Carol Service at Thatcham Family Hub, a Christmas dance video with Sonia Brown Dance Studio, Greenham Common Memorial Service, a Vintage Christmas celebration, Trinity School Christmas Concert, Presentation of a D-Day photo album from Newbury Photographic Club, Thatcham Library Christmas event, opening of the Doctor Rudgeley Room, Salvation Army concert at Alice Bye Court, Kennet School Christmas Carol Concert, Cold Ash Brass Christmas Concert, a visit to West Berkshire Community Hospital on Christmas Day, a Men's Breakfast Club, Student Art Exhibition at The Base, Trinity School 6th Form awards, West Berkshire Volunteer Fair, Spurcroft Primary School parents' evening and Thatcham Cancer Support Group's 6th birthday party. As well as the following Town Council activities; judging the town centre businesses Christmas Window Dressing competition, the Christmas Lights' switch-on, the Civic Carol Service, unveiling of the Christmas memory tree at London Road Cemetery and invited residents to design the Mayor's Christmas Card competition.

b) Deputy Mayor's Report

Councillor P Pemberton reported that from 26th November 2024 to date, she had attended a variety of events including: McCarthy Stone coffee morning, wreath making at Jubilee Sensory Garden, Beenham Wind Orchestra Christmas extravaganza, Thatcham Town Council's Christmas Lights' switch-on, Thatcham Christmas market, Santa Fun Run, Christmas decoration workshop, Wantage Band concert at Arlington Arts, the Hungerford Mayor's Carol Service, a Christmas Party at Alice Bye Court, Men's Breakfast Club, Thatcham Cancer Support Group's 6th birthday party and Indian Pongal 2025 at Shaw House.

FULL/2025/06 BUDGET AND PRECEPT 2025/26

- i. At its meeting on 20th January 2025, the Finance and General Purposes Committee reviewed the draft budget 2025/26 v0.6 and resolved to recommend most of the draft (as amended) to Full Council for adoption, with the exception of £20,000 allocated for Professional Fees (nominal code 4060/102) whilst clarity was sought on the purpose of this allocation (FGP/2025/14).
It was noted that this draft sum had subsequently been reduced to £10,000 and was for the provision of professional fees associated with HR & Policy support.

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FULL/2025/06 BUDGET AND PRECEPT 2025/26

- ii. Following confirmation of above (i), Council considered the draft budget 2025/26 v0.6 which required a precept of £1,179,921 to meet the expenditure set out in the draft budget.

For illustration purposes, based upon the proposed precept, the Town Council's element of the Council Tax Band D equivalent for 2025/26 would be £125.98 per annum.

RESOLVED to adopt the draft budget 2025/26, as presented (appendix I), and that a precept of £1,179,921 be issued in accordance with the requirements of Section 150 (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 to meet the expenditure as set out in the budget.

- iii. Council was asked to consider increasing EMR312 – Minimum Reserve – for the financial year 2025/26, in line with the budget adopted above.

There was no prescribed level of Minimum Reserve but between 25% to 30% of the annual precept was considered adequate provision in the event of any unforeseen occurrence which would affect cash flow. £220,000 was currently held in the Minimum Reserve.

RESOLVED to defer this matter to the Finance and General Purposes Committee for risk-based analysis.

FULL/2025/07 APPROVAL AND ADOPTION OF COMMITTEE MINUTES

The following Committee Minutes were presented for adoption:

- a) Finance and General Purposes Committee Minutes dated 7th January 2025 and 20th January 2025.

RESOLVED to adopt the Minutes.

- b) Recreation and Amenities Committee Minutes dated 2nd December 2024.

RESOLVED to adopt the Minutes.

- c) Planning and Highways Committee Minutes dated 19th November 2024, 10th December 2024 and 14th January 2025.

RESOLVED to adopt the Minutes.

- d) Events Committee Minutes dated 4th November 2024.

RESOLVED to adopt the Minutes.

FULL/2025/08 WEST BERKSHIRE LIBRARY SERVICE

Council considered a request from West Berkshire Council for a financial contribution towards the library service for the financial year 2024/25.

RESOLVED not to make a financial contribution towards the library service for the financial year 2024/25.

Councillors Brooks, Cottingham, Jeffery and Steevenson abstained from voting

FULL/2025/09 CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

Council considered a recommendation from the Recreation and Amenities Committee that the draft Climate Action Plan v0.5, prepared by the Environmental Working Party, be adopted.

RESOLVED to adopt the Climate Action Plan v0.5, as presented.

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FULL/2025/10 CONSULTATION ON THE WEST BERKSHIRE LOCAL PLAN REVIEW 2022-2039 PROPOSED MAIN MODIFICATIONS

The West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2022-2039 (LPR) was being independently examined by a Planning Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State. The Inspector's role was to assess whether the LPR had been prepared in accordance with the Duty to Cooperate, legal and procedural requirements and whether it was sound (positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy). If the Inspector concluded that the LPR was sound, and met the necessary tests, it could then be adopted by West Berkshire Council and would form the Local Plan for the District.

The Inspector issued his preliminary findings on 31st July 2024, and a note on the Main Modifications consultation on 24th October 2024. The findings were without prejudice to his final report but set out the Main Modifications he considered were required in order to make the LPR sound. These proposed Main Modifications were now subject to an 8-week public consultation from 6th December 2024 to 31st January 2025.

West Berkshire Council invited representations on the following documents:

- Schedule of Proposed Main Modifications to the West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2022-2039 (November 2024)
- Schedule of Proposed Changes to the Policies Map (November 2024)
- Updated Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment (SA/SEA) Report – Proposed Main Modifications (November 2024)
- Addendum to the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of the Proposed Main Modifications (November 2024).

Council considered a draft response to the consultation, prepared by Councillor Pike, and thanked Councillor Pike for his hard work.

RESOLVED to approve submission of the draft response to the consultation, as presented.

FULL/2025/011 REPORTS

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

It was noted that there were no council surgeries conducted in December 2024 or January 2025.

b) Reports from West Berkshire District Councillors

The following reports from West Berkshire District Councillors were noted:

Councillor Brooks reported on West Berkshire Council's budget pressures with savings of £14m required in 2025/26 and a further £11m in 2026/27, despite this there would still be investment in road resurfacing and pothole filling, and the criteria for pothole filling being reduced from 50mm to 40mm. £200,000 would be invested in Kennet Leisure Centre, and a masterplan developed for Henwick Worthy Sports Field. West Berkshire Council's property at Walnut Close had been reprovisioned for homeless people.

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FULL/2025/011 REPORTS continued

b) Reports from West Berkshire District Councillors continued

Councillor Steevenson reported attending sub-group meetings on children and young people's mental health and would report to that group on the new youth hub proposed by Response Organisation in The Hub at The Priory.

c) Outside Body Reports

Reports from a number of appointees to outside bodies were noted.

**FULL/2025/12
RESOLVED EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

that, in view of the commercially sensitive (FULL/2025/13) and confidential (FULL/2025/14) nature of the business to be transacted, it was advisable in the public interest that the press and public be temporarily excluded, and they be instructed to withdraw.

FULL/2025/13 GROUNDS MAINTENANCE CONTRACT TENDERS

Council considered a recommendation from the Grounds Maintenance Working Party regarding award of a new grounds' maintenance contract commencing 1st April 2025. Council thanked staff for the enormous amount of work put in to the tender process.

RESOLVED to award the Grounds Maintenance contract commencing 1st April 2025 to Scofell Commercial Landscapes, for a period of 3 years with the option to extend for up to 2 years, at an annual charge of £176,738.69.
Councillor Schiffer-Harte abstained from voting

FULL/2025/14 RECOMMENDATION FROM THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Council considered a recommendation from the Finance and General Purposes Committee, from its meeting on 20th January 2025 (FGP/2025/16), to write off a deficit balance of £2,444.59 against cost centre 101.

RESOLVED to write off a deficit balance of £2,444.59 against cost centre 101, funded from the Rolling Capital Fund.
Councillor Brooks abstained from voting

There being no further business the Mayor declared the meeting closed at 20:49hrs.

Signed: _____ Date: _____