

**Annual Town Meeting
Thursday 25th April 2024 at 6.30pm
in the Council Chamber, Thatcham Town Council Offices,
Brownsfield Road, Thatcham, RG18 3HF**

Present: Councillor Mark Lillycrop (Mayor)
Thatcham Town Councillors: Suzanne Adamantos, Owen Jeffery, Tom McCann,
Petra Pemberton, Simon Pike, Ben Schiffer-Harte, Stephanie Steevenson
Inspector Matthew Gow & Sergeant Jo Willoughby (Thatcham Neighbourhood
Policing Team)
12 members of public

In attendance: Mel Taylor (Town Clerk) & Laura Carlin (Deputy Town Clerk)

Councillor Mark Lillycrop welcomed everyone to the meeting, explained the purpose of the meeting and how it would be conducted.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Thatcham Town Councillors Mike Cole, Dave Lunn, Jay Lunn, Val Watts and Town & District Councillors Jeremy Cottam & Justin Pemberton.

2. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 23rd March 2023 were taken as read, confirmed and signed as an accurate record of the proceedings.

3. PRESENTATION OF COMMUNITY AWARDS

The Mayor presented the following community awards:

Lifetime Community Award to Sue Dillon

“In recognition of her long and dedicated career in teaching. Sue has taught at Parsons Down School, Thatcham for almost 50 years, she holds the record for the longest serving contracted teacher in West Berkshire - however teaching is SO much more than a job to Sue. Sue has always been completely committed to ensuring children are given the best education. Sue has always placed a huge value on kindness, consideration and respect in the classroom, values that she feels should stay with you for life and transfer from school into the community. An unsung hero who just turns up, does her wonderful thing and has had a huge (but maybe not so obvious) impact on the citizens and therefore community of Thatcham.”

Other awards had been presented by the Mayor in the community, as follows:

Environmental Champion Award to Parson's Down School Pupil Eco-Committee

“For their amazing on going work achieving various awards through both eco schools and plastic free communities. They are the 1st school in Thatcham to achieve plastic free school status. They cram so much in to each term and are a real inspiration. The children and teachers are passionate and enthusiastic.”

Inspiring Young Person Award to Michael Jenkins

“Michael has been an amazing volunteer since the age of 12 until he turned 18. Now he has joined an adult Cadet unit and continues to volunteer. Michael has been a peer educator at our unit and has helped 20 new cadets to complete the membership award and to teach them first aid. He has also been on many first aid duties where he assisted the adult unit.

Michael became a Sergeant in our unit and shown leadership qualities that we value. He carried our flag at the Remembrance parade last year and we were so proud of him.”

Inspiring Young Person Award to Max Danskin: Year 10 Kennet School

“Max Danskin embodies all the qualities you could ask for in a young person and is an integral cog in the wheel of Kennet School life.

- Max supports in our physical disabilities resource weekly.
- Max attends every event that Kennet runs, be it school productions, open evenings or community events.
- Max is a key part of the lunchtime clean up team: an initiative he set up without being asked to ensure that Kennet is a clean and welcoming space for all.
- Outside of school, Max volunteers at Swings and Smiles on a weekly basis and he is a Young Leader for Cubs and Beavers.”

Inspiring Young Person Award to Callum Harrison: Year 13 Kennet School

“Callum is a Scout Leader at the 2nd Thatcham Scout Group and reflects the attributes and values you would expect from a Scout Leader: he does a huge amount of volunteering through the Scouts programme. Last year, Callum was awarded ‘Explorer of the Year’, and he has maintained, if not expanded his exploring portfolio this year”

Inspiring Young Person Award to Sophia McKay: Year 9 Kennet School

“Sophia is one of those young people whose humility and duty means that she sits below the radar in terms of celebrating her own achievements. During February Half term, Sophia raised £302 for charity by completing a sponsored triathlon that she, herself, designed and organised. Sophia is an exceptional student who doesn’t ask for rewards or praise, but can always be relied upon to do the right thing with integrity and authenticity.”

Community Contributor Award to Alice Cole

“Alice is a great youth leader, she really cares about the cadets and has helped many children to learn first aid and become first aiders. She organises the get to know you sessions that we run, she organises the Christmas lights stall every year and is a genuine asset to St John Ambulance. Alice is a key individual in our unit, she makes the unit run smoothly.”

Community Contributor Award to Ann Dibble

“Ann has been part of the Thatcham Girl Guides Association for 30+ years. She has helped countless girls learn about themselves, grow in confidence and be part of the community. Ann is generous, kind, well rounded and brilliant testimony of character. She is testament to this town and to the Girl Guides”

Community Contributor Award to Thatcham Refillable

“Jenny and Tom work tirelessly to bring a refillable service to customers that want to use it. Helping us to help the planet.

Supporting other local businesses who want to make a difference but don't know where to start. Supporting groups like Eco Friends and SAS (Surfers Against Sewage). Helping to make Thatcham a plastic free town.”

Mayor’s Awards (presented at the Mayor’s Civic Reception)

Brian Woodham, Sally Mitchell, Community United, Garry Poulson and Newbury Pride in Thatcham.

4. PRESENTATION FROM THAMES VALLEY POLICE

Sgt Jo Willoughby provided the following report:

The Team

There had been a few changes to the set up of the team, which currently consisted of Inspector Matt Gow, Sgt Jo Willoughby, 3 PCs (Paul South, Sally Meineke, Alasdair Ferrie) and 2 PCSO's (Jon Coffman & Sherrie Cranstone) with a vacancy for a 3rd PCSO to cover the Thatcham area. Sgt Willoughby introduced the Safeguarding Team led by Alex McIntyre, Problem Solving Team made-up of an Officer-and-a-half, to work on persistent, resistant and social behaviour and solving issues that might become entrenched in the community, and Mental Health Police Officers heavily involved in trying to alleviate some of the pressures from the Police service and help the Policing of the mental health crisis. The teams were there primarily to support the neighbourhood Policing teams with the individual roles associated with their teams.

Strategic Plan

The strategic plan for 2024-25 sets out the force priorities for the year ahead. This was a public document available to everyone. The 4 pillars of that strategic plan were serving victims - improving victim satisfaction and ensuring victims needs were met, including improving call handling; fighting crime - bringing more offences to justice with an emphasis on charges, improving outcomes for violence against women and girls, pursue and actively managing repeat offenders and target and disrupt serious organised crime; building trust - developing a greater understanding of public trust and confidence in Thames Valley Police., increasing visibility through patrols, improve local community engagement with consideration for seldom heard communities. strengthening local policing and ensuring transparent use of powers and; valuing our people – regarding retention and the recruitment process.

Engagement

TVP regularly attended Council Surgery alongside Councillors in The Broadway, but were also going to do that on a regular basis on Fridays, when the market was on, to increase engagement opportunities with the community. Facebook live would be introduced which gave people the opportunity to ask any questions they may have.

Crime Report

Priorities in the area – Antisocial behaviour remained a challenge in Thatcham, TVP would continue to act as early as they could to prevent that becoming entrenched in certain areas and targeting them through the patrol plan.

Crime figures include 289 incidents of antisocial behaviour last year compared with 324 this year - an increase of 13% which does include crime related antisocial behaviour. For example, if criminal damage also involved antisocial behaviour, that included crime as well. The figures without a crime were 208 last year and 237 this year.

There were 30 incidents of personal crime this year, community crime = 188 and environmental = 19.

E-Scooters continued to cause a problem within all areas. More legislation was required from Government and assistance from retailers to reiterate the laws surrounding them. Regular operations were carried out which resulted in issuing warning letters, speaking to the parents of children using E-Scooters on the highway, and seizing E-scooters from individuals.

Many closure orders had been carried out mainly related to drug issues, dealing and related antisocial behaviour.

Shoplifting incident figures = 36 since January. TVP had increased patrols, educated staff and continued to support retailers.

Violence against women and girls – TVP had educated staff regarding the “Ask Angela” campaign, a code phrase which indicated to staff that the person required help, in local pubs. Bystander training, could be given to any groups within the community, contact Sgt Willoughby for further information.

A new app had been launched called “Police UK” which could give residents information about crime in their area and also enable them to make contact with the Police directly through it.

Representation from the team at any community events was offered, pending operational commitments.

6. THATCHAM TOWN COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24

The Mayor presented Thatcham Town Council’s Annual Report 2023/24.

7. OPEN FORUM

The Town Mayor invited questions from those present in an open forum.

Q: Sovereign Housing (now SGN) are selling properties or leaving them sitting empty whilst housing homeless in hotels. Why aren’t these properties being renovated and used to house people?

A: [Whilst this is a question for SGN, District Councillors were able to provide the following response] When a house becomes available, a survey on the property must be carried out to check against current standards and new legislation. The cost to bring some of those houses up to meet those standards is sometimes too high and so the property is sold, using these funds to renovate other properties or build new houses.

8. CLOSING REMARKS BY THE MAYOR

The Mayor thanked everyone for attending and for their questions.

There being no further business the Mayor declared the Annual Town Meeting 2023/24 closed.

Signed: _____ Date: _____