



ANNUAL 2024-25 REPORT



#LoveThatcham

www.thatchamtowncouncil.gov.uk
enquiries@thatchamtowncouncil.gov.uk
01635 863592
@ThatchamTC





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MAYOR'S REPORT

Mayor of Thatcham 2024-25 Cllr Suzanne Adamantos

What a year it has been! It has been a real privilege and pleasure to serve as the Mayor of Thatcham. This role has been incredibly busy, highly engaging, and even more enjoyable than I ever expected.

By the end of my year in office, I will have attended 165 events, visiting local schools, charities, clubs, religious groups, and military organisations - many of which I had not encountered before, despite living in Thatcham for 36 years. It has been a true honour to meet so many inspiring individuals of all ages, backgrounds, and beliefs.

In particular, it has been a pleasure to raise awareness of my Mayor's Charities: Thatcham Youth and Cruse Bereavement Support. Thatcham Youth does fantastic work in providing safe spaces and valuable activities for our younger residents; helping them to develop skills, confidence, and friendships. Cruse Bereavement Support offers essential guidance and a compassionate ear to those navigating the difficult experience of loss. Supporting these charities has given me the opportunity to witness the profound impact they have on our community, and I am incredibly grateful for the generosity shown by residents in helping us raise £3,830 which will be split between these vital causes.

One of the most striking aspects of this past year has been witnessing the immense community spirit and kindness that defines Thatcham. Volunteers give their time selflessly, and Carers - whether paid professionals, volunteers, or those looking after family members - perform an incredibly challenging and often thankless job, yet they remain compassionate, patient, and dedicated. They are the true heroes of our town, and I extend my heartfelt thanks to each and every one of them.

A significant highlight of the year was celebrating 50 years of the Town Council's history. We marked this milestone with a special event in the Town Council Offices, bringing together former Mayors to reflect on our town's rich civic heritage.





We remain committed to improving the presentation of Thatcham's town centre to benefit both residents and visitors alike. This year, colourful bunting adorned the streets, and both summer and winter floral displays brightened The Broadway and High Street. These efforts have been well received, and while I have personally received many words of thanks, the credit truly belongs to the hardworking Council Officers who made it happen. A particularly poignant display featured thousands of handmade poppies along The Broadway and at the memorial ground in the lead-up to Remembrance Sunday - my sincere thanks go to the local residents who contributed their time and effort to this beautiful tribute.

Enhancements to the town centre have continued, including the installation of a new water fountain where residents can refill their bottles, promoting sustainability.

Further developments this year include improvements to the cemetery, an increased variety of market events, and more initiatives to enhance the vibrancy of our town. These positive changes reflect our ongoing commitment to making Thatcham an even better place to live, work, and visit.

As my tenure as Mayor draws to a close, I extend my thanks to everyone who has supported me throughout this incredible journey - the Town Council Officers, fellow Councillors, volunteers, and, most importantly, the residents of Thatcham. Your kindness, dedication, and enthusiasm make this town truly special.

Thank you for allowing me the honour of serving as your Mayor. I look forward to seeing Thatcham continue to flourish in the years ahead.

FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Cllr Mike Cole, Chairman



The Finance & General Purposes Committee plays a vital role in managing and monitoring Thatcham Town Council's budget. The Committee meets quarterly to review the Town Council's income and expenditure, while also overseeing earmarked funding, reserves levels, and the Town Council's long-term financial investments.

2024/25 Budget Overview

For the financial year 2024/25, the Town Council's total budgeted expenditure was £1,310,061. Of this, £1,013,615 was raised through Council Tax, with the remaining £296,446 generated through services provided, sponsorship, grants, and the use of reserves.

Investment in the Town's Assets

This year has required significant investment in maintaining the town's community assets, including:

- A contribution towards the purchase of Speed Monitoring Device/s.
- Developing a memorial garden in the baby section of London Road Cemetery.
- Investment in play areas including replacement of 'wetpour' safety surfacing.

Income & Expenditure Management

Inflationary pressures in the last few years, combined with increases in town's responsibilities and commitments have increased the cost of routine expenditure. Prudent use of reserves and cost containment are used to mitigate the effects as far as possible.

Supporting the Community

Despite budgetary challenges, the Town Council remained committed to supporting organisations that provide essential services to the local community.

Citizen's Advice West Berkshire

We continued our £4,981 funding commitment to Citizen's Advice West Berkshire. These sessions are vital for residents seeking advice and support. To book an appointment, visit www.citizensadvicewestberkshire.org.uk.

The Thatcham (Old Bluecoat School) Charity

The Town Council has maintained its Service Level Agreement with The Thatcham (Old Bluecoat School) Charity since 2013, providing an annual grant of £1,000. In return, the Town Council has access to the Old Bluecoat School for up to fifteen days per year, which is primarily used during Thatcham Festival to host exhibitions and events.

RECREATION & AMENITIES COMMITTEE

Cllr Tom McCann, Chairman



The Recreation & Amenities Committee oversees the Town Council's public buildings and community centres, open spaces, play areas, London Road Cemetery, St. Mary's Churchyard, Henleys Allotments, the weekly Friday Market, and various street furniture across the town.

The Committee also manages the Town Council's joint partnerships with West Berkshire Council, which provides funding of £40,000 for Henwick Worthy Sports Ground and £24,061 for Kennet Leisure Centre.

Thatcham Broadway

This year The Broadway was enhanced with colourful bunting and year-round floral displays, which received positive public feedback. A new water drinking fountain was also installed as part of a broader initiative to improve public amenities and support the Plastic Free Charter.

London Road Cemetery

Over the past year, 55 burials took place at London Road Cemetery, with 54 memorial applications processed.

The Memorial Garden in the baby section of the cemetery was completed, offering a peaceful space for remembrance. This project was made possible through the support of local organisations, including The Greenham Trust, Hampshire Hospitals Charity Forget Me Not Fund, and Sands West Berkshire volunteers.

As part of ongoing efforts to improve biodiversity, areas were left to grow during the summer months, and a new wildflower area was created with funding from the Veolia Sustainability Fund. This space has flourished, attracting insects, bees, and butterflies.

The 19th-century chapel continues to provide a setting for private services or quiet reflection. More information on the cemetery can be found on the Town Council's website.

Henleys Allotments

Henleys Allotments stay popular, providing 175 tenants with the opportunity to grow their own produce.

The Town Council maintains a strong working relationship with Thatcham Allotment Gardening Club, and thanks are extended to the Allotment Steward for ongoing support. A short waiting list is in place, and applications can be made via the Town Council's website.

Community Buildings

The Town Council's community halls continue to host a variety of activities, including fitness and dance classes, martial arts, arts and crafts, and social clubs.

Burdwood Community Centre accommodates Thatcham Pre-School on weekdays and hosts regular evening classes. Frank Hutchings Community Hall provides a base for the West Berkshire Therapy Centre, which offers a specialist therapy gym for individuals with disabilities.

New activities introduced this year include yoga sessions for adults and teenagers, as well as Tai Chi and Zumba classes. The Town Council also provides space for the Thatcham Community Larder, which runs every Wednesday as a low-cost food scheme and community support network. In addition, the Repair Café meets monthly at Frank Hutchings Community Hall, offering repairs for electrical items, textiles, ceramics, and other household objects.

Thatcham Town Council received recognition as a Bronze "Bog Standard" town following the installation of male incontinence bins at The Broadway, Frank Hutchings Community Hall, Burdwood Community Centre, and Town Council office public toilets. This initiative, developed by PHS Group in partnership with Prostate Cancer UK, aims to provide proper disposal facilities for incontinence products, supporting dignity and accessibility for all residents.

Both community halls are available for private events and regular bookings, with further details and booking options available on the Town Council's website.

Play Areas & Public Open Spaces

Thatcham benefits from 16 children's play areas, 12 of which are managed by the Town Council. A map of all play areas is available on the Town Council's website.

During school holidays, the Town Council welcomed Newbury Bouncy Castles, providing inflatable attractions for families, and hosted football sessions run by Footie Camps on The Moors Recreation Ground.

Afrofest, a one-day family festival celebrating Berkshire's African community, was held on The Moors and received strong support. The festival, organised in partnership with Community United and Avila, a Reading-based African restaurant, is set to return in 2025.

Thatcham Market

Thatcham's weekly Friday Market on The Broadway continues to attract regular shoppers. Offerings include fresh fruit and vegetables, meat, fish, cheese, baked goods, household refill stations, pet food, and gifts. The Barclays Bank Community Van also attended once a month to provide added banking services.

This year saw a change in fruit and vegetable vendors, and efforts continue to expand the market's offerings, particularly in bread, flowers, and household goods.

The market also introduced a series of themed events, beginning with a Christmas Food Market, which proved popular and will return this year. Additionally, Thatcham's first Chinese New Year market was well attended, featuring cultural performances, food stalls, and family activities. Further themed markets are planned for 2025.

Thanks are extended to the Market Manager, Chris, for support in coordinating the weekly market.

EVENTS COMMITTEE

Cllr Suzanne Adamantos, Chairman



D-Day 80 Commemoration Services, 6th June

Thatcham Town Council was proud to support two significant commemorative events marking the 80th anniversary of D-Day on Thursday 6th June. These events honoured one of history's most pivotal military operations and paid tribute to those who sacrificed their lives for the freedom of Europe.

At 11am, the Town Council supported the Royal British Legion Thatcham Branch in holding a remembrance service at Thatcham War Memorial. Following the service attendees were welcomed to the Town Council Chamber for refreshments.

In the evening, the Town Council collaborated with Greenham Parish Council and Newbury Town Council for a special "Lighting of the Tower" event at Greenham Control Tower. The commemoration began at 6pm with entertainment from Kennet Radio, a dance floor, and refreshments, including fish and chips. The official Tower and Beacon Lighting ceremony took place at 9.15pm.

To ensure accessibility for residents wishing to attend Thatcham Town Council provided a free courtesy shuttle bus, operated by Newbury & District Buses, to and from Greenham Control Tower.

These events reflected the Town Council's ongoing commitment to honouring our history and fostering community engagement through meaningful commemorations.

Family Fun Day, 30th June

This year's Family Fun Day welcomed thousands of visitors and helped to raise an estimated £25,000 for local charities, organisations, and independent businesses, further establishing it as Thatcham Town Council's flagship event.

The day featured a variety of activities for all ages. Children enjoyed inflatables, a fun run, a climbing wall, and zorbing, while families had the opportunity to visit the fun fair, classic car show, theatre performances, a Punch and Judy show, circus skills demonstrations, bike displays, creative workshops, and sports challenges.

The music stage, sponsored by Newbury Building Society and hosted by Sion Whiley, showcased performances by local musicians, including the Reading-based samba band Beatroots Bateria, tribute band The Lost Keys, and DJ Hypester, who provided the final set of the day.

The Newbury Pride in Thatcham Parade was a key feature of the event. The parade included the Beatroots Bateria samba band, a giant puppet, a stilt walker, and a group of dancers, celebrating inclusivity and diversity.

With a wide selection of free and low-cost activities, performances, and attractions, Thatcham Family Fun Day continued to provide an accessible community event for residents and visitors.



Thatcham Festival, 11th – 20th October

Thatcham Festival attracted over 4,000 visitors to its programme of events. The ten-day festival featured more than 30 activities and events catering to a wide range of interests and age groups, further establishing it as an important community occasion.

Organised by Thatcham Town Council, the Festival included live music, dance performances, and choir ensembles, as well as history and author talks, nature walks, astronomy sessions, and children's activities. Arts and photography exhibitions were also featured, contributing to a varied celebration of music, culture, and creativity.

Thatcham Town Council is already planning for 2025's festival, aiming to build on this year's achievements and continue offering a diverse and engaging programme for the community.

Remembrance Sunday, 10th November

A 700-strong parade and over 2,000 onlookers lined the streets of Thatcham to honour those who had lost their lives during past wars. Civic and military dignitaries, representatives from the Thatcham Branch of the Royal British Legion, a contingent from the Military Intelligence 67 Coy, representatives from Albert Austin Lodge, Lions Club of Newbury, Thatcham Lodge, the WI and Thatcham Tornados, and over 300 children from Kennet Vale Guiding and Thatcham Scouts and Cubs took part in the parade with services held at Thatcham War Memorial and St Mary's Church.

The contingents marched from the Kingsland Centre car park, along The Broadway and High Street to the War Memorial accompanied by Cold Ash Brass, who were joined by St Mary's Church Choir. Revd Mark Bennet led the Act of Remembrance at the War Memorial before its completion at St Mary's Church.

On Monday 11th November, Armistice Day, a service was held in the War Memorial Garden, which was attended by retired service personnel, Town Council dignitaries and members of the public.



KidsFest, 29th August

Organised by Thatcham Town Council in discussion with local businesses to replace the previously popular Fun on the Broadway event, KidsFest 2024 was designed to provide families with a fun and affordable day out at the end of the school holidays. The event proved to be a big success, transforming the High Street, The Broadway, St Mary's Church, and Turnfields into a vibrant centre of activity.

Visitors were treated to a wide variety of exciting activities, including cupcake decorating, t-shirt printing, crafts and live theatre performances. Families, with food from local vendors or homemade picnics in hand, gathered in the picnic area to relax, and enjoy the live music.

Turnfields Open Space was particularly lively, with crowds gathering to enjoy the circus skills and Punch and Judy, inflatables, and Howden's activity tent which kept attendees of all ages entertained.

The Watermill Theatre hosted free drama workshops in St Mary's Church.

Warming Up for Christmas, Christmas Lights Switch-On, 6th December

Thatcham's Warming Up for Christmas Lights Switch-On took place despite forecasts of wet and windy weather. Fortunately, conditions remained dry long enough for an estimated 2,500 residents and visitors to attend and enjoy the festive event.

2024's event featured several new elements, including the closure of High Street as well as The Broadway, which allowed a record number of traders and local community and charity stalls to participate. A new position for the main stage and an updated festive lighting scheme in the town centre were also introduced. These changes were well received, with positive feedback shared on social media expressing appreciation for the improvements.

The stage programme included dance performances from Dance with Sonia Brown and Thatcham All Stars Theatre Company, alongside traditional carols sung by the choirs of Spurcroft Primary School, St Mary's Church, and Kennet School.

My Mayor's welcome message was delivered in song, followed by the countdown and the illumination of the town's festive lights, accompanied by stage pyrotechnics and artificial snow falling over the 40-foot Christmas tree on Broadway Green.



Local businesses contributed to the festive atmosphere, with many staying open late. Thatcham Kitchen Design hosted a 'design a Santa Claus face with cookies' activity, which attracted over 100 children, while numerous businesses decorated their shopfronts in line with the event's Victorian theme. Picture It Framed won first prize in my Mayor's Window Dressing Competition.

The Victorian theme was further reflected in the presence of costumed stilt walkers and a fairy queen bubble maker. The event also welcomed Newbury Lions, who arranged for Santa and his sleigh to make a special visit to Thatcham.

Warming Up for Christmas, Christmas Market, 7th December

Unfortunately, due to high winds and wet weather the decision was taken to cancel the Christmas Market. It will be returning in 2025.

Civic Carol Service, 10th December

I presented the Civic Carol Service which took place at St Mary's Church. Music was provided by St Mary's Church Choir and The Barfield Handbell Ringers, with readings from Kennet School & Trinity School and seasonal refreshments served afterwards. Over £200 was collected in donations for my chosen charities, Thatcham Youth and Cruse Bereavement Support.

PLANNING & HIGHWAYS COMMITTEE

Cllr Simon Pike, Chairman



The Planning & Highways Committee reviews a variety of planning and highways-related matters, most of which involve engagement with West Berkshire Council.

Planning

Thatcham Town Council serves as an advisory consultee to West Berkshire Council for planning applications, with final decisions made by West Berkshire Council as the Local Planning Authority. In 2024-25, the Committee considered 35 planning applications, maintaining the same level as the previous year.

Over the past year the Committee has reviewed a range of applications, including major developments, commercial projects, flood prevention schemes, new dwellings, large-scale extensions, changes of use, and premises licence applications. Each application is assessed for its scale, suitability for the area, impact on neighbouring properties, and parking provision. In most cases where the Committee has raised objections, West Berkshire Council has reached the same conclusion, often citing legal considerations beyond the Committee's remit.

Under current policy, minor impact applications - such as conservatories, garage conversions, and single-storey extensions - are not reviewed by the Committee unless they receive objections from neighbouring properties or are specifically requested for review by a Committee member.

This year, three major applications were reviewed:

- **Hambridge Lake Holiday Chalets**
Objected to by the Committee and refused by West Berkshire Council (this is the third application for holiday chalets on this site; the previous two were refused by West Berkshire Council and on appeal).
- **Land West of Heath Lane (& North of Bowling Green Road) Development**
Objected to by the Committee (this application was withdrawn, but the site has now been added to the proposed Local Plan update).
- **Thames Valley Police Logistics Hub (Colthrop Industrial Estate)**
Supported by the Committee (the Committee had previously objected to an application for warehousing on this site).

Additionally, the Committee supported the construction of the flood defence scheme at the Memorial Playing Field, while making comments on its design; this was approved by West Berkshire Council on 6th March 2024.

The Committee also considers applications related to alcohol licensing and tree preservation orders.

Over the past year, the Committee has provided feedback on the following consultations:

- Cold Ash Neighbourhood Development Plan Pre-submission
- GWR changes to ticket retailing
- West Berkshire Council Draft Licensing Policy 2023-2028
- West Berkshire Council Draft Parking Strategy
- West Berkshire Council Draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan
- West Berkshire Council Consultation on Spending Proposals for 2024/25

Responses to these and other consultations are available on the Town Council's website.

A significant portion of the Committee's time has been dedicated to engagement with the West Berkshire Draft Local Plan 2022-2039. The Planning Inspector held two groups of sessions for examination of the draft Local Plan, during May and October 2024; the Town Council was invited to participate in most of these sessions, and was represented by the Chairman of the Committee.

Following the June sessions, the Inspector issued a document of questions to stakeholders, titled Matters, Issues and Questions and Written Statements. The Committee submitted a detailed response to the questions relating to Thatcham, including 19 out of 23 questions on the North East Thatcham Strategic Site (Policy SP17).

The Inspector found that the draft Local Plan under examination was not sufficient to deliver the allocation for housing specified by Government. He therefore advised the Town Council to increase the size of the allocation of the North East Thatcham Strategic site from 1500 to 2500 dwellings and to add two new allocations to the north of Bowling Green Road and west of Heath Lane, of 225 and 45 dwellings.

In December, West Berkshire Council published for consultation the Schedule of Main Modifications proposed by the Inspector to the draft Local Plan and the Town Council's updated Sustainability Appraisal reflecting those modifications. The Main Modifications include several improvements suggested by the Town Council, most importantly that the Masterplan for the North East Thatcham site will be "prepared in collaboration with the applicant, relevant town and parish councils, the community and other stakeholders." The Inspector is currently considering the responses to those consultations, and is expected to publish his final report shortly. West Berkshire Council will then decide whether to accept the report in full, or to reject it (it cannot amend the Inspector's proposals).

Highways

The Committee gave advice to West Berkshire Council on the location of new bus shelters and electric vehicle charging points. Throughout the year, the Committee has responded to resident queries regarding road conditions, signage, cycleways, visibility, and obstructions by raising these issues with West Berkshire Council. Residents are encouraged to report concerns directly via the West Berkshire Council 'Report a Problem' page. A Planning Tracker is available on the Town Council's website, providing residents with an accessible way to view planning applications in Thatcham and their current status.

Committee Meetings

The Planning & Highways Committee take place every four weeks in order to comment on planning applications within the statutory timescale. Residents are encouraged to attend. Information on upcoming meetings is available via the Town Council's website, social media channels, newsletters, and public noticeboards. For those unable to attend in person, recordings of meetings are available on the Town Council's YouTube channel.

GRANTS SUB COMMITTEE

Cllr Mike Cole, Chairman



Thatcham Town Council appreciates the value of supporting local organisations and the difference this funding makes. In 2024/25 the Town Council provided £83,033.08 of funding to support the local community.

Partnership Contributions

Thatcham Town Council has formal agreements with West Berkshire Council to provide partnership contributions towards the running costs of two significant local services - Kennet Leisure Centre and Henwick Worthy Sports Ground. Our contributions for 2024/25 were:

Kennet Leisure Centre: £24,061

Henwick Worthy Sports Ground: £40,000

In-Kind Grants

Thatcham Town Council proudly supports local charities, businesses and organisations to get started on their journey with free hall hire, borrowing equipment, and free weeks at Thatcham Friday Market.

This year we have donated the following in-kind:

Thatcham Community Larder: £7,889

Project Salama: £736

Pub Watch: £75

Afrofest: £150

Community Grant Awards

The Grants Sub Committee oversees the allocation of our Community Grants. This is done through bi-annual funding awards in February/March and September/October. We have a matched funding agreement with Greenham Trust where every £1 awarded by the Town Council has the potential to be matched by Greenham Trust. Applications are administered through The Good Exchange, which ensures recipients receive the matched funding.

The Sub Committee considers applications that serve the Thatcham community, to ensure residents of Thatcham benefit from the grant awarded. Applicants are often invited to attend a meeting to present their project and take questions.

During 2024/25 Thatcham Town Council awarded the following grants, most of which were doubled up with valuable matched funding from Greenham Trust:

Cold Ash Brass	£800	Annual Retainer (not match funded)
Citizens Advice West Berkshire	£4,981	Contribution towards Operational Costs
The Newbury Community Resource Centre	£500	Cost of Living Crisis - Essential Household Goods Scheme 2024
All Yours Period Box C.I.C	£456.50	2024 West Berkshire Period Boxes (Cost of Living Application)
West Berkshire Therapy Centre	£500	Replacing Power-Assisted Exercise Machines Phase 2 2024
Time to Talk West Berkshire	£900	Time to Talk Thatcham Outreach 2024
Pied Piper Preschool	£400	Garden Project
ABC to Read	£500	Transforming Lives: Support Children's Reading with ABC to read 2024-2025
Thatcham Bowling Club	£250	Bowling England Approved Training for Club Volunteers
Response Organisation	£1,000	Thatcham Wellbeing Hub
Time to Talk West Berkshire	£750	Counselling in Schools
Kennet Amateur Theatrical Society (KATS)	£500	Modernisation of lighting equipment
2nd Thatcham Scout Group	£500	Scout Hut - Toilet Refurbishment
Daisy's Dream	£900	Increasing social and emotional support for bereaved children in West Berkshire - Greenham Escalator Project
Thatcham 10k CIC	£1,000	Henwick Sports Field - Distance Marker Course
Swings & Smiles	£750	Play Leader to support Disabled Children

Committed Community Support Grants

Thatcham Town Council has a number of funding agreements with local organisations. Providing funding to support these organisations ensures a commitment to serve Thatcham's community. This year we've provided the following funding:



Friends of Thatcham Library	£533.43	Public Liability Ins, scatter cushions and padlocks
Friends of Thatcham Library	£533.96	Gazebo, rugs, games, art course, shelf
Friends of Thatcham Library	£351.98	Art classes and camouflage netting
Friends of Thatcham Library	£189.14	Folding tables & chairs, strimmer & safety glasses
Friends of Thatcham Library	£1,510.80	Soft furnishings recovered
Friends of Thatcham Library	£280	Activities
Old Bluecoat School	£1,000	Use of Old Bluecoat SLA
Thatcham Litter Pickers		Public Liability Insurance

Community Project Fund

As well as the Community Grants, the Town Council also has a mechanism for distribution of smaller grants. The Community Project Fund is administered directly by the Town Council and is in place to support organisations where a smaller amount is sought but will make a big difference. When an application is made by an organisation to the Community Project Fund, it is considered by the next appropriate Council meeting, thus allowing these awards to be considered swiftly throughout the year, rather than on the bi-annual basis of our larger grant scheme.

Beneficiaries of this fund during 2024/25 were:

Thatcham Bowling Club	£250	Community Engagement Project
Eco-Friends West Berkshire	£230.27	Maintain website
Jubilee Garden Volunteers	£250	Garden tools for volunteers
Alice Bye Court	£350	Dementia friendly garden
West Berks Heritage Forum	£50	Operational costs
Life Education Wessex	£555	Helping children make healthy choices
Hidden Gem Cafe	£280	Set up a chatty café table
Angels Outreach	£250	Empowering marginalised communities in Thatcham

ENVIRONMENTAL WORKING PARTY

Cllr Justin Pemberton, Chairman



We are pleased to provide you with an update on the progress made by the Environmental Working Party. We continue to make strides towards sustainability and environmental improvement within our community. Below are some of the key developments:

Climate Action Plan

Throughout 2024, the Climate Action Plan was drafted and amended, with final approval granted and adopted by full council on 27th January and can be read on the Town Council's website.

LED Lighting Upgrade

All lighting at the public convenience in The Broadway has now been successfully upgraded to LED lighting, enhancing energy efficiency and reducing carbon emissions.

Plastic-Free Charter & Water Refill Station

Our commitment to the Plastic-Free Charter continues. As part of this initiative, we have installed a water refill station to the exterior of the public toilets in The Broadway to promote the reduction of single-use plastics.

Thatcham and Newbury Repair Café

The Repair Café is now in full operation in Thatcham, providing a valuable service to reduce waste by promoting the repair and reuse of items.

Hot Desking Facilities

Hot desking facilities are also available at the Town Council office to the general public, encouraging shared resources and reduced energy consumption.

We are proud of the progress made so far and remain committed to our environmental goals. We urge all those who live or work in Thatcham to look at their personal carbon emission, work out how to reduce them to zero and put their personal plan into practice. We will keep you informed of further developments as we continue our journey toward a more sustainable future.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT WORKING PARTY

Cllr Mark Lillycrop, Chairman



The Community Engagement Working Party was established to develop more effective ways of connecting with residents, ensuring they have a voice in local decision-making. Over the past year, we have introduced new initiatives and refined existing communication channels to enhance transparency, accessibility, and engagement with the community.

Newsletters & Digital Communication

The Town Council newsletter is delivered to all 11,000+ homes in Thatcham three times a year, providing key updates from the Town Council and local organisations. Past editions are archived online, ensuring easy access to previous reports and information.

This year, we:

- Increased the newsletter from 4 to 8 pages – allowing for more in-depth content.
- Refreshed the design to a modern magazine-style format.
- Saw an increase in resident responses and positive feedback.

Due to its success, we will return to four editions per year in 2025.

Alongside the printed newsletter, we actively maintain Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Nextdoor, and YouTube, keeping residents informed of events, decisions, and opportunities to participate.

E-Newsletter Performance

In 2024, we launched a monthly e-newsletter, which is now sent to 485 contacts. The average engagement rates are:

- 30% open rate (compared to the public sector average of 27%)
- 6% click rate (above the sector average of 5%)

We will continue to grow our subscriber list and explore new ways to increase engagement in 2025/26.

Social Media & Online Engagement

Facebook remains our primary social media platform, with 3,858 followers. Notably, 44.9% of our followers live in Thatcham, with others in Newbury, Reading, and nearby towns.

We also maintain a presence on Instagram, Nextdoor, and X (formerly Twitter).

All Council and Committee meetings are recorded and uploaded to YouTube, ensuring transparency and accessibility.

2024/25 YouTube stats:

- 1,500 video views
- 62.4 hours of total watch time
- 38,200 video impressions (people who saw our content)
- 2% click rate
- Average watch duration: 2 mins 35 seconds

Our aim for 2025/26 is to increase viewer engagement by improving video accessibility and promotion.



Surgeries & In-Person Communication

In addition to these online and printed communications, our Community Engagement Manager actively seeks new opportunities to bring Council members and Officers together with local residents, in order to discuss local issues and find out about local concerns.

The monthly Council Surgeries take place on the first Saturday of each month at 10am in Thatcham Broadway. Two Councillors are available at each session to discuss residents' concerns and answer queries. We also have a Council stand at various civic events, and would urge members of the public to join us for a chat.

Community Events

Alongside the Town Council's own civic events programme (managed by our Events Manager and her team), it is part of the remit of the Community Engagement Working Party to support and encourage external bodies to run their own events for the benefit of the town. Recently we have helped Community United to stage the first Afrofest at The Moors Playing Field, assisted the organising committee of the Thatcham 10K, and worked with Newbury Pride to hold social events in Thatcham.

All of these recent events have been extremely successful, and Thatcham Town Council is keen to support and publicise other events and activities across the town.

Future Plans

Looking ahead to 2025/26, we are committed to further enhancing engagement by:

- Expanding community presence at local events.
- Strengthening our accessibility and inclusivity efforts.
- Finding new and effective channels of communication, including digital displays.

We encourage all residents to get involved, attend meetings, put on events and share their views. If you would like to help shape the future of community engagement in Thatcham, please contact us at enquiries@thatchamtowncouncil.gov.uk.

HERITAGE WORKING PARTY

Nathan Gregory, Chairman



The Heritage Working Party is committed to preserving and promoting the rich history of Thatcham. It oversees the town's blue plaque scheme, which celebrates local figures and buildings of historical significance.

The Working Party has the discretion to co-opt community members to assist and provide guidance. All co-opted members have voting rights within the Working Party, which meets quarterly. Residents are welcome to attend these meetings and contribute to discussions on local heritage.

Looking Ahead

The Working Party has exciting plans for 2025/26, aiming to further enrich the town's historical narrative and continue raising public awareness of Thatcham's heritage.

For more information, visit the Town Council's history webpage:

www.thatchamtowncouncil.gov.uk/history

Get Involved

If you are passionate about Thatcham's history and would like to join the Heritage Working Party or simply attend a meeting, please email: enquiries@thatchamtowncouncil.gov.uk.

Blue Plaque Scheme

Thatcham's 7th Blue Plaque was unveiled at Bradley Moore House by the Mayor of Thatcham, Cllr. Suzanne Adamantos, alongside Mr. Roy Patel, the current owner of the building.

The plaque commemorates the historical significance of Bradley Moore House, a building believed to have been constructed in 1744. Over the centuries, it has been home to several notable families, including the Baily and Brown families, and has played an integral role in the town's medical history.

For nearly 70 years Bradley Moore House served as a doctors' surgery, becoming the first medical practice in Thatcham to offer NHS services. Among its most influential residents was Dr. Bradley-Moore, one of the district's pioneering female doctors, who practiced there until her retirement in 1977. The building has been known by various names over time, including The Cedars, Walnut House, and The Poplars, before officially becoming Bradley Moore House. The unveiling was followed by refreshments and an insightful historical talk by Dr. Nick Young at the Town Council offices.

The 8th Blue Plaque will be honouring the history of the Military Depot at Moorside.

Keep an eye out for a public consultation to nominate future sites for Blue Plaques.

OUTSIDE BODY REPORTS

THATCHAM PAROCHIAL CHARITIES

There are two principal charities – Thatcham Parochial Almshouse Charity and Thatcham Relief in Need. The Board of Trustees comprises representatives from Thatcham Town Council and the Parish Councils of Cold Ash, Midgham and Greenham, with the Rector and three churchwardens as ex-officio members. Thatcham Town Council is currently represented by Councillor Mike Cole and Chris Druce. The Trustees normally meet four times per year. Both charities are assisted by ancient endowments granted over many centuries, the first recorded one being in 1594.

Thatcham Parochial Almshouse Charity

The object of the Charity is to provide almshouse accommodation for elderly people in need within the parishes of Thatcham, Cold Ash, Greenham and Midgham (the ancient Parish of Thatcham). There are 14 almshouse flats in Thatcham. Maintenance works highlighted in the Quinquennial report continue alongside general maintenance and improvement. The latter half of 2023 saw 2 almshouse flats become available which is quite rare. The Trustees sanctioned some remedial work on both flats before the vacancies were advertised locally. Any new applicants must meet the charity qualifying criteria to be considered.

Thatcham Relief in Need

The object of the Charity is to relieve, either generally or individually, persons resident in the Ancient Parish of Thatcham, who are in conditions of need, hardship or distress, by making grants of money or providing items or services to reduce that need. The Trustees have a wide discretion regarding the allocation of those funds. During 2024 the charity made grants amounting to £15,033 for a variety of requests including: 2 wheelchair upgrades; flooring and bedding (especially for those moving into Housing Association properties); financial support to enable some children to attend their school residential trip; furniture items and a contribution to BBOWT to support the re-opening of the dementia café at the Nature Discovery Centre.

Cllr Mike Cole

THATCHAM ALLOTMENT GARDENING CLUB

Henleys Allotments are managed by Thatcham Town Council. We currently have 189 plots. Allotments are very popular and if a plot is not immediately available, there is a waiting list that your details can be added to. The allotments are used by a wide variety of people, covering all ages and backgrounds. As a plot holder you are also enrolled in the Thatcham Allotment Gardening Club who produce seasonal newsletters and arrange social activities, including seasonal coffee mornings, where people meet to chat and share gardening tips, with delicious homemade cake on offer too. This is a really great way to meet friendly, like-minded gardeners and get tips and advice for advancing your plot. To apply for an allotment, please contact Thatcham Town Council on 01635 863592 or email: enquiries@thatchamtowncouncil.co.uk

Cllr Petra Pemberton

FLOOD FORUM & SURFACE WATER MANAGEMENT PLAN (SWMP)

The Flood Forum and SWMP Funding Committee were formed in the wake of the devastating floods that affected hundreds of households across the town in 2007.

The SWMP continues to oversee the delivery of the flood alleviation scheme, working with West Berkshire Council, the Environment Agency and the Town Council to bring protection to all areas that are potentially vulnerable to flooding. Schemes at Dunston Park, Dunstan Green, Siege Cross, Cold Ash Hill and Tull Way now protect around 85% of Thatcham's residents from the effects of surface water flooding.

Of the remaining three schemes, those at North and East Thatcham are now almost complete, protecting the properties to the west and south of Northfield Road and those at the eastern end of the town.

The final project, on the Memorial and Brown fields, has proved in many ways to be the most challenging, involving compensation for a number of recreational groups and temporary loss of footpath access to houses north of the town centre. Officers and contractors are now putting the finishing touches to this last leg to restore the surrounding areas, after which we can truthfully say that the whole scheme – and the protective benefits it offers – will be in place.

A big thank you to the members of the Thatcham Flood Forum and SWMP, and the Thatcham Town Council and West Berkshire Council Officers involved, who have worked so hard to see our flood alleviation scheme reach this stage. It is one of the very few schemes of its kind to have been completed nationwide, and we should be proud (not to mention reassured) that it is now ready to do its job.

Cllr Mark Lillycrop

THE GREENHAM AND CROOKHAM COMMONS COMMISSION

Established under the Greenham and Crookham Commons Act 2002, which formally restored the commons to public access, the Town Council has the right to nominate one of the twenty Commissioners. The duties of the Commission are defined in the Act, and include:

- conserving the Common as a peaceful place of natural beauty.
- conserving its flora and fauna, and any parts that are Sites of Special Scientific Interest.
- promoting and improving grazing animals on the Common, including the rights of commoners.
- managing the Common as a public open place open to the public for recreation.

The Commons are managed for West Berkshire Council by Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT). An important role for the Commission is managing the balance between conservation, public access (especially for large organised events) and grazing.

The Regulations for the Commons have now been approved by Government (DEFRA). These define the rights and obligations of 'Graziers' (people who have commoners' rights to graze animals on the Commons, or who lease them from those who do). I am a member of the Governance Working Group, one of whose roles is to oversee these Regulations.

The 25th Anniversary of the opening of the Commons to the public was the 8th April 2025.

Cllr Simon Pike

WEST BERKSHIRE SUICIDE PREVENTION ACTION GROUP

The West Berkshire Suicide Prevention Action Group is a multi-agency action group. The organisation concentrates its efforts on training in two ways. Firstly, a half day accredited first aid suicide prevention course for the voluntary and community sector and small businesses. Secondly, it now offers a full day accredited suicide prevention course for those that work with and support young people.

Member organisations are Volunteer Centre West Berkshire, Samaritans, Thatcham Town Council, West Berkshire Public Health, Dingley Play Therapy, West Berks Action for Refugees, Citizens Advice West Berkshire, Thames Valley Police, Newbury Soup Kitchen, Rev Gary Collins, St Johns Newbury, Sue Bennett, Health Watch West Berkshire and others on an ad hoc basis.

The Chair undertakes campaign work and lobbying and with the support of partner organisations has secured the mounting of signs in sensitive places such as road, railway and motorway bridges, multi-story car parks and footways. The group, along with Samaritans, are currently engaged in working with Network Rail and West Berkshire Public Health around fatalities at Thatcham Railway Station.

The group is also represented by the Chair on the Berkshire Wide Group where policies and strategies are considered along with the real time surveillance statistics supplied by Thames Valley Police. Another area that the group is trying to establish is a post suicide bereavement group in order to support family and loved ones left behind by suicide.

Finally, the group has also created QR codes that are placed on the rear of toilet doors in pubs with the kind sponsorship of Apple Print. The QR code takes the user to the organisation's website which is designed to steer those with suicidal thoughts to sources of immediate and non-immediate help.

www.westberkshiresuicideprevention.org

Cllr Suzanne Adamantos

THATCHAM VOLUNTEER BUREAU

Thatcham Volunteer Bureau are a well-used service appreciated by the residents of Thatcham. Although they have enough volunteers working in the office, they always need more volunteer drivers. Some members of the Committee have been serving for many, many years as volunteers for this very worthwhile local driving service.

Cllr Stephanie Steevenson

WEST BERKSHIRE THERAPY CENTRE

The West Berkshire Therapy Centre are progressing their plans to create a new building, still to be called The West Berkshire Therapy Centre, but incorporating a shallow pool for water-based therapy. Plans are drawn up awaiting submission for Planning consent. The site will be alongside the current Frank Hutchings Community Hall and the play area will be moved but not lost. This will be a very exciting development once it is in place as very few other centres of this type exist in the UK. The current centre is thriving and is always busy, with a dedicated team of staff in attendance.

Cllr Stephanie Steevenson

THATCHAM PARISH HALL

I am delighted to report that the Hall's finances are in good shape and the Hall is making money, adding to our funds such that we can embark on further investment in the Hall in the months to come. I must thank Chrissie Watson-Taylor very much for all she does to keep the Hall running – she takes the bookings and manages the finances as well as many other tasks that we don't always see, and we are indebted to her.

During the last year we had a new boiler installed and so, within the space of 18 months we have found the money to undertake the necessary electrical work and a new boiler. These works will now not need to be done again for at least ten years and probably longer.

We would like to press on and replace the radiators and pipework as phase two of the heating system works and replace the front doors which would then enable us to move to a different locking system which would be by key code. We would like to look at replacing the windows as well and, with a combination of some grant bids and general reserves, these projects should be affordable over the next twelve to eighteen months.

Cllr Simon Pike has continued to oversee property matters and continues to help make sure the guttering is secure as an example and Simon spends many hours fixing small emergency works.

We have the design drafts of a new website that will include an ability to pre-book a session online and subject to Chrissie as Treasurer and Booking secretary confirming the booking with the terms and conditions.

As I said earlier, I am deeply indebted to Chrissie as Treasurer and Booking Secretary. I am also very grateful to Simon for his work

and to Petra Pemberton as our Secretary. The trustees all contribute to the good running of the Hall, and I thank them all for their determination to run the Hall well.

We are always seeking people to join the Trustees and welcome interested parties to contact us.

So, in conclusion, the finances of the Hall are robust; new hirers are using the Hall – both one-time hirers and regular hirers; the Hall is making a surplus each month and I am delighted to tell you this as it is very good news.

Cllr Jeff Brooks

DEMENTIA FRIENDLY WEST BERKSHIRE

The group brings together local organisations, businesses, volunteers, and individuals to promote awareness and understanding of dementia and to support people living with dementia and their carers. DFWB are committed to working with people living with dementia as well as their carers to make sure their voices are heard.

The group meets bi-monthly at the Thatcham Town Council offices and aims to raise awareness of dementia by increasing the range and diversity of the services available in West Berkshire. On their website, key information and signposting are all pulled together to help navigate the journey with dementia a little easier.

There is so much useful information available on the website, including how to care for a loved one living with dementia.

www.dementiafriendlywestberkshire.co.uk

If you do have any questions or need advice please email the team at DFWBerkshire@AgeUKBerkshire.org.uk

Cllr Petra Pemberton

HOME-START WEST BERKSHIRE (HSWB)

Home-Start is a local community network of experts and trained volunteers helping families with young children through their challenging times. They provide families with emotional and practical support and friendship. HSWB's motto is 'We are there for parents when they need us most, because childhood can't wait.' This friendly parent-to-parent support is a simple yet effective way of enabling families to get back on track.

In Thatcham the number of families supported remains at about 40, and that number is steadily rising. The demand for this work continues to increase, while resources at professional levels are reducing, putting more pressure on the voluntary sector. HSWB's highly valued work is limited only by funding and the availability of volunteers.

HSWB carefully match volunteers with an appropriate family. The volunteers visit families within their own home and provide support in times of need. They also organise group meetings and provide a Baby Bank service.

There are multiple ways that you can help Home-Start West Berkshire in a voluntary capacity. Volunteers are at the heart of Home-Start. They offer invaluable friendship, emotional reassurance, and practical help, making a meaningful difference in the lives of parents and children in need. If you or anyone you know wishes to volunteer, please get in touch with the charity.

<https://home-startwestberks.org.uk/>

Cllr Petra Pemberton

WEST BERKSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORT

**Cllr Justin Pemberton,
Thatcham West Ward**

It has been a privilege to continue to serve the residents of Thatcham West Ward over the last 12 months. I am fortunate that the West Berkshire Ward also falls within a small part of Cold Ash Parish Council to its north westerly boundary. Having been a Councillor in Thatcham West for both Thatcham Town and West Berkshire Councils since elected in 2023, it ensures that the residents on the northern side of Bowling Green Road and Florence Gardens can speak to me about issues affecting them at West Berkshire Council.

In respect of the Thatcham West Ward at Thatcham Town Council, I regularly attend the relevant meetings and bring my knowledge and experience of West Berkshire Council to the Planning & Highways Committee, Finance & General Purposes Committee, and Environmental Working Party meetings (the latter of which I Chair) about all West Berkshire Council matters relating to the area.

Over the past year I have dealt with numerous queries from residents, all of which I have been able to respond to within a short period of time with support from both West Berkshire Council's Officers and my fellow Portfolio Holders. The issues raised by residents are wide ranging – anything from traffic and highways; the new Persimmon development site on Lower Way; planning queries; bus services and the removal of the fare 'cap'; Housing Association complaints from tenants; complaints from customers about Thames Water; anti-social behaviour; parking; overgrown hedges; and on one rare

occasion, I even received a query about West Berkshire Council's investment and procurement strategies relating to organisations linked to Israel.

In August 2024 I was delighted to be appointed to West Berkshire Council's Executive, taking over from a previous Portfolio Holder, Cllr Lee Dillon, who is now the Newbury Constituency's MP. Initially I was appointed to deal with Public Safety and Community Engagement – covering a wide range of issues from Licencing; Food Safety; Environmental Health; Housing Standards; Building Control; Scams and Fraud, all the way through to West Berkshire Council's strategy towards issues such as Domestic Abuse and Extremism. In recent months, I have also taken on additional responsibilities for Economic Development and Regeneration; to really drive the district forward in terms of our business liaison and investment, as well as encouraging our villages and rural communities to thrive. I continue to work closely with Portfolio Holders, where appropriate, and thank them for the support and assistance they have provided.

Clearly the last year has been a challenge for West Berkshire Council financially, and I have looked to provide assistance to local residents in any way I can. Whilst the challenging funding situation which West Berkshire Council finds itself has taken time and patience to address, it is a testament to the community spirit that our residents and workers continue to rise to the challenge of ensuring that Council (and voluntary/

community) services continue to operate; in many cases providing valuable provision and outreach for some of our most vulnerable residents. I would also like to thank West Berkshire Council's Officers, who do a fantastic job in often very difficult circumstances. I am grateful to you all for your efforts.

As I write this, I think we are all wondering what the Government's announcement of Local Government Reorganisation means for West Berkshire Council, as well as the implications for Thatcham Town Council. Our Towns and Parishes form the backbone of our communities and are often closest to our residents; seeing first hand the issues, events and services which are important to them. In recent months, West Berkshire Council has engaged with all of our Parishes to explore ways in which we can work together in the most efficient way possible; where possible, looking at areas in which Thatcham Town Council may wish to review existing arrangements for certain services to improve how they are delivered. As the newly enlarged 'unitary' authorities emerge over the coming years, those conversations will become increasingly important as Thatcham Town Council is very much a part of that evolving landscape.

I will continue to do all that I can to support Thatcham Town Council, and other voluntary groups and our stakeholders. The key issue facing Thatcham Town Council going forward is also around ensuring its finances remain on a firm footing and are fit for the future. The gap in the costs of providing services

and maintaining our public open spaces continues to be of concern, and all Councillors and Officers are keen to ensure that our residents receive value for money. I regularly receive correspondence from Thatcham residents with suggestions for events, the use of our green space, and initiatives to improve our Town Centre and increase footfall into the town itself.

I believe the Town Council is in a strong position to continue making the town a great place to live, work and visit; with a dedicated, passionate and energetic Officer team, many of whom were recently recruited to ensure we have all the talent we need to drive initiatives forward.

In the end, nothing works better than being visible around the Ward, and town, and talking to those you meet. Listening to our local residents when they have come to me with concerns, thoughts and ideas has allowed me to see how we are doing, what we are doing well, and where we can do even better.

COMMUNITY AWARDS

Every year Thatcham Town Council seeks nominations from members of the public for individuals, groups, organisations and businesses who have demonstrated outstanding service to the community, made a significant contribution to public life in Thatcham and have shown real dedication in helping local residents.

A panel of Councillors met on the 1st of April to consider all of the nominations and the winners are announced as follows:

- This year the Committee recognised two winners of the **Community Contributor Award**. The Therapy Gardening Group was selected as winner for Group/Organisation, and Helen Randall was selected as the individual winner. The committee highlighted Helen's 10 years working with disabled children with PALS, and appreciated her dedication to guides and volunteer work beyond her duties.
- Charmaine Buckley from 'Factors' salon was unanimously selected as **Environmental Champion**. The Committee praised her zero waste policy and recycling of hair clippings
- Georgia Tully was selected as **Inspiring Young Person**. Georgia raised funds for Bliss charity on her own initiative
- Committee decided on Mo Rice as their **Volunteer Champion**. Mo is the longest-serving RSPCA charity shop volunteer in the district (14 years).
- Sue Dobinson was selected for the **Lifetime Achievement Award** for achievement of volunteering for 40 years with Girl Guiding.

MAYOR'S AWARDS

Each year the Mayor of Thatcham recognises residents who have gone above and beyond to support them in their Mayoral year. This year, Mayor Cllr Suzanne Adamantos presented a Mayor's Award to the following people:

Sonia Brown

For her enthusiasm and hard work at a variety of Town Council events throughout the year.

Lin and Peter Congerton

For an incredible 25 years of fundraising efforts, during which they have raised more than £50,000 for local charities.

Ellen Hicks

For many years of volunteering at the RSPCA Charity Shop in Thatcham.

Andy Pocock

For providing fantastic support at events with a special mention of the wonderful job done compèring at this year's Thatcham 10K race and Christmas Lights Switch On.

Pat Runacres

For her unwavering support at Mayoral events over the year.



