

THATCHAM TOWN COUNCIL
Minutes of a meeting of
Thatcham Town Council
held on Monday 30th November 2020 at 7pm
remotely via video conferencing¹

Present: Councillor Mike Cole (Mayor)
 Councillors Steve Ardagh-Walter, John Boyd, Jeremy Cottam,
 Lourdes Cottam, Ellen Crumly, Richard Crumly, Lee Dillon, Paul Field,
 Richard Foster, Owen Jeffery, Mark Lillycrop, David Lister, Simon Pike,
 Christine Rice, Jennifer Walker and Keith Woodhams

In attendance: Mel Taylor (Town Clerk)
 1 Member of the Press (Newbury Weekly News)

FULL/2020/82 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Jeff Brooks.

FULL/2020/83 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Woodhams declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item number 13 (FULL/2020/94) as a West Berkshire Council appointee on the Henwick Worthy Joint Management Committee.

Councillor Cole declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item number 15 (FULL/2020/96) as Chair of Directors and a Trustee of Kennet Academy Trust.

FULL/2020/84 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No public questions had been received.

FULL/2020/85 MINUTES

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the meeting held on 28th September 2020, having been previously circulated, be signed as a correct record of the proceedings.

FULL/2020/86 REPORTS FROM THE MAYOR AND DEPUTY MAYOR

Local events had been severely affected by Coronavirus (Covid-19) with many scheduled functions being cancelled, therefore reduced activity was reported by the Mayor and Deputy Mayor.

(a) Mayor's Report

Councillor Cole reported that he was present at the entrance to West Berkshire Crematorium to see the funeral procession for former Town Councillor and Mayor's consort, Peter Ellison, arrive.
 Councillor Cole had attended several Thatcham Festival events during October, many of which were online this year, due to Covid-19, however this had engaged a new audience of residents usually unable to attend events in person. Councillor Cole also attended a Blue Plaque unveiling at the building currently occupied by Wiltshire Tyres, to commemorate local MG supremo Harry Lester, along with an event at Extrac in recognition of them receiving the Queens Award for Industry for Innovation.

¹ The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020

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Councillor Jeffery joined the meeting

FULL/2020/86 REPORTS FROM THE MAYOR AND DEPUTY MAYOR continued
Councillor Cole lead a small parade and wreath laying at Remembrance Sunday and offered thanks to the Parade Marshal, Thames Valley Police, Town Council Officers, Rev'd Mark Bennett and St. Mary's Church Choir for a reduced event which had also been live streamed. Councillor Lister commented that the online production had worked very well. Councillor Cole also attended the Royal British Legion Thatcham Branch's Armistice Day Service.

(b) Deputy Mayor's Report

Councillor Boyd reported that he had conducted interviews with BBC Radio Berkshire to promote Thatcham Festival and Remembrance Sunday. Councillor Boyd had attended the Leisure & Craft Fair on the opening Saturday of Thatcham Festival, along with Remembrance Sunday service.

FULL/2020/87 APPROVAL AND ADOPTION OF COMMITTEE MINUTES

The following Committee Minutes were presented for adoption:

a) Finance and General Purposes Committee Minutes dated 26th October 2020.

RESOLVED that the Minutes be adopted.

b) Recreation and Amenities Committee Minutes dated 16th November 2020.

RESOLVED that the Minutes be adopted.

c) Planning and Highways Committee Minutes dated 20th October 2020 and 10th November 2020.

RESOLVED that the Minutes be adopted.

d) Events Committee Minutes dated 7th October 2020 and 2nd November 2020.

RESOLVED that the Minutes be adopted.

FULL/2020/88 RECOMMENDATION FROM COMMITTEE

Council considered the following expenditure recommendations arising from the Recreation and Amenities Committee meeting held prior to this meeting:

i. That £500 be allocated to pay for a Professional Landscape design for a Dementia Friendly Garden in Brownsfield Road, in front of the Council Offices.

ii. That £2,500 be allocated to pay for remedial work on the hedgerow on the Broadway Green, by planting new hedging in the gaps.

RESOLVED to approve expenditure of £3,000 to fund the two recommendations from the Recreation and Amenities Committee meeting held on 30th November 2020, as detailed above.

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FULL/2020/89 EMERGENCY COMMITTEE

Members considered the Notes of the Emergency Committee meetings held on 4th November 2020 and 9th November 2020.

RESOLVED

to adopt the Notes of the Emergency Committee meetings held on 4th November 2020 and 9th November 2020 and to ratify the actions detailed therein.

FULL/2020/90 CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) UPDATES

Members noted the following updates relating to Council operation resulting from Covid-19 restrictions:

- The Council Offices would resume normal operating hours with effect from Wednesday 2nd December 2020
- Most hall hirers would be returning with effect from Wednesday 2nd December 2020, in accordance with previously conducted risk assessments
- The Resident Support Programme was averaging less than one resident per day in need of support with medication delivery

FULL/2020/91 INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT

Members received a progress report from the Responsible Financial Officer, on actions within recent Internal Audit reports.

RESOLVED

to note the progress report.

FULL/2020/92 CONCLUSION OF EXTERNAL AUDIT 2019/20

Members received the External Auditors Report for the year ended 31st March 2020, which concluded that, on the basis of their review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR), in their opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the AGAR was in accordance with Proper Practices and no other matters had come to their attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements had not been met.

RESOLVED

to note this information.

FULL/2020/93 FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

On behalf of the Standing Orders Working Party, Councillor Cole presented draft, revised Financial Regulations. Having been proposed and seconded for adoption, the revised Financial Regulations would now stand adjourned without discussion until the next scheduled meeting of Council on 25th January 2021.

FULL/2020/94 APPOINTEES TO OUTSIDE BODIES

Notification had been received from Councillor Woodhams of his resignation as Town Council representative on Henwick Worthy Joint Management Committee.

RESOLVED

to appoint Councillor Pike to the Henwick Worthy Joint Management Committee and to appoint Councillor Lister as a substitute, replacing Councillor Pike.

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FULL/2020/95 STAFF SALARY BENCHMARKING

Councillor Jeffery left the meeting during the following item

Members received a report from the Town Clerk regarding staff salary benchmarking, as requested by Councillor Ardagh-Walter (FULL/2020/70). The Town Clerk's research showed that, nationally, the percentage of staff salaries compared to total budget, averaged 30 – 40%. Thatcham Town Council's salary to budget for 2021/22 [pending adoption] would be 33%. Councillor Ardagh-Walter requested further information with regard to numbers of staff and services offered.

RESOLVED to refer this matter to the Finance and General Purposes Committee, pending receipt of a clearly defined request from Councillor Ardagh-Walter.

FULL/2020/96 CONSULTATION – PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT OF ADDITIONAL RESOURCED PROVISION IN WEST BERKSHIRE

Members considered a consultation from West Berkshire Council on the proposed development of additional resourced provision in West Berkshire. As part of its Special Educational Needs and Disability Strategy 2018-2023, West Berkshire Council was proposing to develop additional local educational provision for children and young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan in respect of Social, Emotional and Mental Health, who may also have a diagnosis of Autism.

RESOLVED that the Mayor would respond to the consultation in support of the proposal but to seek assurance that this additional provision would be funded from additional funds from Central Government and not from existing budgets.

Councillor Walker left the meeting

FULL/2020/97 REPORTS

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

Members noted a report from Council Surgery carried out by Councillors J Cottam and Rice on Saturday 3rd October 2020.

(b) Reports from West Berkshire District Councillors

Councillor Ardagh-Walter reported that: (i) following a safety audit, the orcas installed on the cycle lane on the A4 would be replaced with smaller, more reflective orcas, spaced further apart; and (ii) 100% Active Travel Funding had been secured for development of the first phase of the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan which would include continuation of cycle lane work on the A4 east from the Robin Hood Roundabout, plus Lawrences Lane proposed cycling and walking route. Discussions continued regarding a proposed leisure cycle route and fundraising was underway for improvements to the western stretch of the canal tow path.

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FULL/2020/97 REPORTS continued

(b) Reports from West Berkshire District Councillors continued

Councillor Dillon reported that West Berkshire Council had received 81 letters of support with regard to the Tree Preservation Order on The Plantation (FULL/2020/76), a 102 page petition and 1 letter of objection relating to the technicality [process] of dealing with trees. The Order would now be presented to West Berkshire Council Legal department for ratification. Councillor Dillon thanked the Town Council for its support in this regard.

Councillor Dillon also advised that the West Berkshire Local Plan was due to be published soon and that West Berkshire Council's Forward Plan executive meeting in December would receive the Administration's response to the Safer Schools motion, which sought traffic calming, speed restrictions etc at all schools across the district.

(c) Reports by Town Council Appointees to Outside Bodies

Lady Frances Winchcombe's Thatcham Foundation

Councillor L Cottam reported that the Foundation was meeting that night. No grants had been issued during Covid-19 and their investments had fallen.

Thatcham Relief in Need Charity and Thatcham Parochial Charities

Councillor Cole reported that Thatcham Relief in Need Charity was still receiving, and processing, requests for financial support.

There being no further business the Mayor declared the meeting closed at 8.17pm.

Signed: _____ Date: _____