

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THETFORD TOWN COUNCIL, HELD IN
THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, KING'S HOUSE, THETFORD,
ON WEDNESDAY 24TH SEPTEMBER 2008, STARTING AT
7.00 P.M. WITH THE OPEN FORUM

Present:

The Mayor, Councillor J A Harding, Chairman

Councillors:

G P Balaam	A Paines
Mrs M P Chapman-Allen	Mrs T I Paines
T J Jermy	P J Pearson
R G Kybird	M G Spencer
T J Lamb	Mrs P A Spencer
D G Mortimer	S N H Wright

Open Forum

There were no matters raised in the time set aside for the Open Forum.

171/08 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor R G Kybird restated his prejudicial interest in certain planning matters covered under agenda items 174/08(a) and (b). Planning Committee minutes 155/08a, 164/08b and 164/08c referred, with the reasons explained in minutes 152/08 and 161/08 respectively. Given that no discussion of these ensued, there was no need for him to absent himself from the Chamber.

Councillors G P Balaam and T J Jermy restated their prejudicial interest in certain planning matters covered under agenda item 174/08(a). Planning Committee minutes 155/08 (l) and (t) referred, with the reasons explained in minute 152/08. Given that no discussion of these ensued, there was no need for them to absent themselves from the Chamber.

Councillor T J Jermy also declared a prejudicial interest in the third Section 137 payment listed under agenda item 180/08(b) as an employee of Keystone Development Trust involved in the organisation of the event in question. He was not present for the discussion or vote.

Councillor P J Pearson, as Chairman of the Keystone Development Trust Board, declared a prejudicial interest in the third Section 137 payment listed under agenda item 180/08(b). He was not present for the discussion or vote.

Councillor S N Wright, as Chairman of the Thetford Society, declared a prejudicial interest in the second Section 137 payment listed under agenda item 180/08(b). As a Board Member of Keystone Development Trust, he also declared a prejudicial interest in the third payment. He was absent for the discussions of and votes on both payments.

172/08 MINUTES

Town Council Meeting: 30th July 2008

The unconfirmed minutes of the meeting had been included in the agenda papers. Proposed by Councillor G P Balaam and seconded by Councillor D G Mortimer, it was:

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Council Meeting held on 30th July 2008 be approved and signed/initialled by the Chairman as a true record.

173/08 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Councillors R F W Brame, S H Chapman-Allen, and Mrs P P Quadling.

174/08 COMMITTEE REPORTS

a) Allotments Committee: 16th July 2008

Receipt of the report of the meeting had been held over from the last meeting (minute 136/08b referred).

Proposed by Councillor M G Spencer and seconded by Councillor G P Balaam, it was:

RESOLVED that the report of the meeting of the Allotments Committee, held on 16th July 2008 - including the recommendations at minutes 107/08 and 108/08, but subject to a minor typographical correction of the final word of the resolution concluding minute 109/08 - be received and adopted.

b) Planning Committee: 3rd September 2008

Proposed by Councillor R G Kybird and seconded by Councillor M G Spencer, it was:

RESOLVED that the report of the meeting of the Planning Committee, held on 3rd September 2008, be received and adopted.

c) Planning Committee: 17th September 2008

Proposed by Councillor R G Kybird and seconded by Councillor Mrs P A Spencer, it was:

RESOLVED that the report of the meeting of the Planning Committee, held on 17th September 2008, be received and adopted.

175/08 MAYOR'S REPORT

The Mayor, Councillor J A Harding, first referred members to the list of Events Attended and Forthcoming Events, included in the agenda papers, commenting on some of the former.

Events attended since the last meeting

August

Friday	1st	Mayor of Haverhill At Home
Friday	8th	Opening of Pearson's new recycling premises at Wretham
Wednesday	13th	Opening of Wilkinson's store
Sunday	17 th	Breckland Band Concert Carnegie
Sunday	24 th	High Lodge Flag raising ceremony coinciding with Boris Johnson receiving the Olympic flag in Beijing (High Lodge to be a pre training camp)
Thursday	28 th	Attend Street Art project and gave Radio Norfolk live interview
Friday	29th	Riversdale Garden Party

September

Wednesday	3 rd	Women in Business Lunch
Monday	8 th	Opened Sainsbury new extension
Friday	12 th	Opening of Thetford Enterprise Park 12 noon
Friday	12 th	RAF Honington Battle of Britain cocktail party 6.30pm
Saturday	13 th	RAF Mildenhall Special Sports Day
Sunday	14 th	Band Concert performed by the Bridgham & Harling Brass Band
Monday	15 th	County Hall Battle of Britain ceremony
Friday	19 th	Council Chamber presentations of Thetford in Bloom awards
Saturday	20 th	RAF Wing street collection day time
Saturday	20 th	British Legion Dinner
Sunday	21 st	Battle of Britain Commemoration service

Deputy Mayor Councillor Robert Kybird attended on behalf of the Mayor

Friday	12 th	Thetford Grammar School Speech Day
Thursday	21 st	Guildhall Art competition prize giving

Councillor Thelma Paines represented the Mayor

Wednesday	17 th	Easton College Civic reception
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176/08 REPORTS FROM TOWN COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON OTHER BODIES

There were no reports.

177/08 COUNTY COUNCILLORS' REPORTS

Bus Service 727: Concessionary Passes

County Councillor Mrs T I Paines confirmed that passes were not valid on services operating before 0830 in the morning. Unfortunately, there had been a recent instance of a bus driver refusing to accept them before 0930. The matter had eventually been resolved by the County Council's Passenger Transport Unit.

178/08 DRAFT PROPOSALS FOR UNITARY LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN NORFOLK AND SUFFOLK

The discussion that ensued was following on from the discussion held at the Planning Committee meeting on 17th September 2008 (minute 163/08 referred).

The Mayor and Chairman, Councillor J A Harding, first drew members' attention to the importance of the business to be covered under both this agenda item and the next (i.e.179/08). He wanted officers to provide quick briefings under both headings but to have no say in the discussions other than to answer questions put to them. He did not want any elected member of the Council to say in future that they had been misdirected by an officer. Elected members must remember their representative role and be motivated by a need to do the best for the townspeople.

In opening the discussion, Councillor T J Lamb lost no time in making a pro-unitary proposition, seconded by Councillor Mrs T I Paines, which ended up being the agreed resolution of the Council (see below).

Prior to any amendment being presented, Councillor Mrs M P Chapman-Allen wanted it put on record that she did not support any unitary path. She reported that, were Councillor S H Chapman-Allen present, he would be going on record in support of her view, whereupon Councillors D G Mortimer, M G Spencer and Mrs P A Spencer asked for their support of Mrs Chapman-Allen's view to be recorded in these minutes.

The Mayor invited other comments from around the table. One point of agreement between proponents and opponents of some form of unitary solutions was the perceived need for further devolved powers to Thetford. Councillor T J Lamb considered adding a rider to his original pro-unitary proposition, referring to the anticipated need to negotiate a greater degree of local responsibility.

Councillor R G Kybird failed to see any improvement in planning controls resulting from the proposed 'Economic Development Board' structure, with four Boards to cover the whole of Norfolk. In broader terms, he doubted whether residents would see, in his words, "much more democracy" resulting from a unitary system.

Councillor T J Jermy spoke at some length in support of Councillor T J Lamb, giving three reasons: efficiency, improved service provision and no democratic deficit

The discussion was concluded by Councillor Kybird's presenting a three-point amendment to Councillor Lamb's proposition:

- (i) that the posited Community Partnership Board boundaries must be robust as regards Thetford
- (ii) that Thetford Town Council did not see the degree of devolution talked of
- (iii) that until it was clear what would be delegated, no unitary proposal could be supported.

A recorded vote was requested, resulting in the following:

For the amendment
Councillor Mrs M P Chapman-Allen
Councillor R G Kybird
Councillor D G Mortimer
Councillor M G Spencer

Councillor Mrs P A Spencer

Against the amendment

Councillor G P Balaam
Councillor T J Jermy
Councillor T J Lamb
Councillor A Paines
Councillor Mrs T I Paines
Councillor P J Pearson
Councillor S N H Wright

Abstention

The Mayor, Councillor J A Harding

The Mayor duly declared the amendment lost, there being five votes for, seven against and one abstention.

Councillor T J Lamb's proposition (see below) was then put to the vote, which it was agreed to record. This resulted in:

For the proposition

Councillor G P Balaam
Councillor T J Jermy
Councillor T J Lamb
Councillor A Paines
Councillor Mrs T I Paines
Councillor P J Pearson
Councillor S N H Wright

Against the proposition

Councillor Mrs M P Chapman-Allen
Councillor R G Kybird
Councillor D G Mortimer
Councillor M G Spencer
Councillor Mrs P A Spencer

Abstention

The Mayor, Councillor J A Harding

The Mayor duly declared the proposition carried, there being seven votes for, five against and one abstention.

Therefore, the following resolution had carried:

“RESOLVED that Thetford Town Council would favour a unitary form of local government, based on the ancient county of Norfolk, and envisages, as a consequence, the disappearance of Breckland District Council.”

The Town Clerk was instructed to report the result of the vote and the decision reached to the Boundary Committee by the comment deadline of 26th September 2008.

179/08 CARNEGIE ROOM: FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

This agenda item had resulted from a question posed during the Open Forum at the 30th July 2008 meeting. The questioner had asked whether the Council was minded to 'resurrect' the idea of holding an architectural competition for the design of a replacement Carnegie Room.

The Town Manager had prepared a report, which had been included in the agenda papers. The Mayor, for the benefit of the members of the public present - including the questioner - asked her to read this out.

The key points were:

Advice had been received by the Town Council from an adviser engaged through Inspire East's Enabling Service that the provision of a new entertainment facility was likely to be a very risky proposition, given that most such facilities require significant subsidy. At the same time, it was acknowledged that it would be unusual for a town of in excess of 30,000 people not to have one.

The further advice had been that the way forward might well be to discuss the conclusions of the Demands & Needs Study with Breckland Council. The Town Council should not itself have to bear the cost of replacing the Carnegie Room.

A meeting with Breckland Council representatives had taken place in March 2008, in the course of which it had become evident that work and studies relating both to future town centre development and the overall 'local development framework' had better be completed first before the issue of replacing the Carnegie Room could be addressed.

Following the recent success of Easton College / West Suffolk College / Charles Burrell High School / Rosemary Musker High School in bidding for LSC (Learning & Skills Council) funding, the realisation of a new sixth form college in Thetford was now 'on the agenda'.

In discussion, support emerged for Councillor R G Kybird's proposition that the aspiration should be a landmark building, achieved through working in partnership with other organisations. Whilst some were prepared to acknowledge that the previous Thetford Town Council-led approach had now been overtaken by events, Councillor T J Lamb lamented what he perceived to be yet more procrastination. Councillor S N H Wright was minded to establish as a first step whether the college proposal could tie in with what the community perceived as being needed by way of a community facility. With that in mind, it was:

RESOLVED that Councillors D G Mortimer, Mrs T I Paines and Mrs P S Spencer meet as soon as reasonably possible with the Easton College Principal for an exploratory discussion.

180/08 CIVIC LINKS WORKING PARTY

The report from the Working Party's inaugural meeting, held on 10th September 2008, had been included in the agenda papers.

Funding Support for Chess Club's Annual Tournament

In line with the Working Party's recommendation, it was:

RESOLVED that a £100 donation be made.

The other points covered in the report were noted.

181/08 FINANCIAL MATTERS

In line with recommendations received from the Chairman of the Finance & General Purposes Committee, Councillor R G Kybird, the following decisions were arrived at:

a) Monthly Financial Report for the Five Months Ending 31st August 2008
RESOLVED to receive the report (copy annexed hereto)

b) Approval of Section 137 payments:

RESOLVED to make the following payments:

- £100 to Chess Club (item 180/08 above refers)
- £115.50 to Thetford Society for Heritage Day insurance cover for St Peter's Church
- £500 to Keystone Development Trust (Town Council contribution to Market Place Artwork Event).

182/08 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED that, pursuant to the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public be excluded for the remaining items of business on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be discussed.

183/08 MINUTES

(a) Finance & General Purposes Committee: 30th July 2008

Proposed by Councillor R G Kybird and seconded by Councillor Mrs T I Paines, it was:

RESOLVED that the report of the meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee, held on 30th July 2008, be received and adopted.

(b) Council Meeting: 30th July 2008

The unconfirmed minutes of those items dealt with following the exclusion of press and public had been included in the agenda papers. Proposed by Councillor D G Mortimer and seconded by Councillor A Paines, it was:

RESOLVED that the minutes of confidential items dealt with at the Council Meeting held on 30th July 2008 be approved and signed/initialled by the Chairman as a true record.

(c) Special Meeting of Personnel Committee: 2nd September 2008

Proposed by Councillor P J Pearson and seconded by Councillor D G Mortimer, it was:

RESOLVED that the report of the Special Meeting of the Personnel Committee, held on 2nd September 2008, including the recommendation at minute 150/08, be received and adopted.

184/08 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

The Town Clerk tabled copies of the unconfirmed minutes from the Special Meeting held the previous evening.

Proposed by Councillor P J Pearson and seconded by Councillor D G Mortimer, it was:

RESOLVED that the report of the Special Meeting of the Personnel Committee, held on 23rd September 2008, which included no recommendations, be received and adopted.

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185/08 PAYMENT TO CONSULTANT

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Chairman