

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THETFORD TOWN COUNCIL, HELD IN
THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, KING'S HOUSE, THETFORD,
ON WEDNESDAY, 24TH JUNE 2009,
STARTING AT 7 P.M. WITH THE OPEN FORUM

Present:

The Mayor, Councillor Mrs P A Spencer, Chairman

Councillors:

G P Balaam	T J Lamb
R F W Brame	D G Mortimer
M Brindle	A Paines
Mrs M P Chapman-Allen	Mrs P P Quadling
S H Chapman-Allen (<i>to item 84/09 only</i>)	B J Skull
T J Jermy	S N H Wright
R G Kybird	

Open Forum

Mr Roth, resident of Sweyn Close, was critical of the way the Money Fair, held on 16th June 2009 in Breckland House to coincide with the Official Opening there of the CAB Offices, had been organised.

He was also expressed concern about the approach being taken to allocate houses in Sweyn Close, several of which were now unoccupied.

Members noted his comments, whilst acknowledging that these were not matters that the Town Council itself had jurisdiction over.

77/09 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor T J Jermy, as an employee of Keystone Development Trust, declared a personal interest in Concessions 17 and 18, addressed under item 88/09 below.

He also declared a prejudicial interest in item 93/09, addressed below the line, given that his post was part-funded by Peddars Way Housing Association. He passed comment as first speaker when this item was reached on the agenda, but was not present for the discussion that then developed or the eventual vote.

Councillor Mrs P P Quadling declared a prejudicial interest in item 92/09, addressed below the line, owing to her personal circumstances.

78/09 MINUTES

Council Meeting: 27th May 2009

The unconfirmed minutes of the above meeting had been included in the agenda papers.

Proposed by Councillor A Paines and seconded by Councillor G P Balaam, it was:

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 27th May 2009 be confirmed as a true record and signed/initialled by the Mayor as Chairman.

79/09 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors J A Harding and M G Spencer.

80/09 COMMITTEE REPORTS

(a) Allotments Committee: 26th May 2009

Proposed by Councillor Mrs P P Quadling and seconded by Councillor G P Balaam, it was:

RESOLVED that the report of the meeting of the Allotments Committee held on 26th May 2009 be received and adopted.

(b) Planning Committee: 10th June 2009

Proposed by Councillor R G Kybird and seconded by Councillor R F W Brame, it was:

RESOLVED that the report of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 10th June 2009 be received and adopted.

81/09 MAYOR'S REPORT

The Mayor, Councillor Mrs P A Spencer, first referred members to the lists of Events Attended and Forthcoming Events, included in the agenda papers.

Events attended since the last meeting

4 th June	4.00 pm	Afternoon tea in the Guildhall to welcome Town Twinning Guests and present the gift from the Town Council to the official delegates
	5.00 pm	Ancient House Museum, attended the launch of the <i>Paine of Thetford</i> exhibition
6 th June	11 00 am	<i>Tom Paine 200</i> Opening Ceremony outside King's House
	12.30 pm	Lunch in King's House Gardens
	7.30 pm	Concert in Carnegie Room with twinning delegates
	9.30 pm	Hosted a meal at Nimmi's restaurant for twinning delegates
7 th June	10.45 am	Started off the cyclists from outside King's House on their way to Saffron Walden (part of Tom Paine

		celebrations)
	11.30 am	Band Concert King's House Gardens
	2.30 pm	Battle on Castle Park
	5.30 pm	Barbeque King's House Gardens (Twinning event)
8th June	7.00 pm	Tom Paine Bicentenary Dinner in Guildhall
10 th June		Roman Day at Laburnum Grove
13 th June		Burrell Museum: Presentation of Bridge-building prizes to six primary-age children from local schools
14 th June		Civic Service and refreshments in Guildhall
21 st June		Lord Mayor's Annual Civic Service at Norwich Cathedral

Deputy-Mayor: Councillor John Harding

21 st June		Wreath-laying at the Annual Reunion of the Desert Rats at High Ash Memorial Site
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82/09 TOWN COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON OTHER BODIES

Diss, Thetford & District Citizens Advice Bureau

Councillor Mrs M P Chapman-Allen reported on the Official Opening by the Leader of Breckland Council of the new CAB Offices in Breckland House. She described this as a very successful event, tied to an all-day Thetford Money Fair, which had enabled not only the CAB but also some other agencies – including the Anglia Revenues Partnership, Kickstart and Breckland Council's housing team – to steer members of the public in the right direction and/or make future appointments for them.

Afternote by Town Clerk: There was a comment passed by Councillor T J Jermy at this point in the meeting, in the course of which he referred to the Anglia Revenues Partnership's responsibility for maintenance of the Housing Register. Councillor Mrs Chapman-Allen took issue with this statement but, subsequent to the meeting, realised that Councillor Jermy had indeed made a correct reference. She will address this at the July 2009 Council meeting.

For the record: responsibility for maintenance of the Breckland Housing Register has passed from Breckland Council's Housing Team to the Anglia Revenues Partnership (Breckland Council being one of the partner organisations).

Moving Thetford Forward Board

Councillor R G Kybird reported that, owing to the cancellation of a scheduled Board meeting, the further discussion on the Bus Station project had been deferred.

Upstairs in the Guildhall (Thetford Art Gallery)

Councillor G P Balaam reported that Miss M Ince was acting as temporary Chairman until September 2009.

83/09 COUNTY COUNCILLORS' REPORTS

None

84/09 REVIEW OF COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Town Clerk asked for final nominations and the document annexed hereto resulted. Rather than create a Health & Safety Committee, it was agreed to establish a Health & Safety Working Party (see following item for more on this).

RESOLVED that the revised document, annexed hereto, be confirmed as putting on record Committee Membership for Mayoral Year 2009/10.

85/09 HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY

Having received a recommendation from the Finance & General Purposes Committee, it was:

RESOLVED that

- (a) the Mayor and Town Clerk be authorised to sign the Policy document, subject to further consideration being given to having a 'Health & Safety Working Party' rather than a 'Health & Safety Committee'. (*Note: Once the document was duly signed in its final form, it would be presented to the Council at its July 2009 meeting for formal approval and annexation to the minutes.*)
- (b) an amount of up to £5k be made available from Council funds to cover the cost of further Health & Safety Consultancy support in 2009/10.

86/09 THETFORD FORUM: MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Having had a recent briefing from some of 'key players' in the Forum Project, including the nominated architect, who was very keen to incorporate the right 'community venue' within the complex, the Town Council was now being asked to agree the terms of and approve for signature a Memorandum of Understanding, which would involve its making a commitment, together with Norfolk County Council (hereinafter 'NCC') and Breckland District Council (hereinafter 'BDC') as the other signatories, to honour, quote, "arrangements as to the funding of abortive costs" (endquote). Clause 5.3a of the document was a specific commitment by the Town Council to underwrite the first £20,000 of 'Refundable Project Costs' in the event of these proving due, which would be in the following circumstances, quote:

“In the event that Learning and Skills Council Funding is not received by the Longstop Date (*Note= 31st March 2010*) or when BDC or NCC request that this Memorandum of Understanding be ended...” (endquote)

The Finance & General Purposes Committee, earlier in the evening under its agenda item 75/09, had looked at the financial consequences for the Council in the event of that particular clause being invoked and concluded that, whilst there might at this point be a degree of uncertainty when it came to specifying how the Town Council would ‘source the funds’, this was not the same as saying that the Council would be taking a financial risk by signing the Memorandum of Understanding, given the overall level of financial reserves it held currently. It was simply a case of not being able to confirm precisely which of the existing, earmarked reserves might prove to be the source.

The Memorandum of Understanding was not intended to establish a contractual relationship between its three parties, but would be entered into, quote, “in good faith and in the spirit of cooperation”.

In the discussion concluding with the resolution below, there was a variety of views expressed. Councillor M Brindle was disappointed that further efforts had not yet been made to persuade more local people of the merits of the Forum proposal, making reference to the Carnegie Room replacement project, the status of which now appeared very uncertain. Was a commitment now to underwriting the Forum not a premature move? Councillor D G Mortimer countered that, by making this underwriting commitment, the Town Council was not effectively ruling out any prospect of a separate development on the Carnegie Room site.

As the debate continued, there was general recognition and acceptance that the Town Council’s specific interest in the provision of quality performance space by no means meant that it had no view on the need to increase the educational ‘offer’ in the town. Indeed, for some members, that was much more important, although they continued to have major reservations over the choice of venue, which to many members now seemed to be a ‘given’.

When it was finally agreed to call for a vote, the following resulted. With 13 members present and the Mayor not voting, it was

RESOLVED, by 11 votes for to 1 against, to support the signing by the Town Council of the Memorandum of Understanding.

87/09 FINANCIAL MATTERS

In light of recommendations received from the Finance & General Purposes Committee, it was:

(a) Annual Return for Year Ended 31st March 2009

RESOLVED that the Mayor as Chairman and Town Clerk as Responsible Financial Officer be authorised to sign Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Return for the Year Ended 31st March 2009, thereby confirming the Council’s approval of the figures shown and statements made therein. (*Note: A copy of the Return is annexed to the minutes of the F & GP Committee Meeting held earlier that evening.*)

(b) Monthly Financial Report for Two Months Ended 31st May 2009

RESOLVED that the Two-Month Report be received. (*Note: A copy of the Report is annexed to the minutes of the F & GP Committee Meeting held earlier that evening.*)

(c) Financial Risk Assessment

RESOLVED that the document headed 'Financial Management Risk Assessment 2008/9' be adopted. (*Note: A copy of this Risk Assessment is annexed to the minutes of the F & GP Committee Meeting held earlier that evening.*)

88/09 GUILDHALL COMPLEX CONCESSIONS

RESOLVED that the following three concessions be ratified:

- i) Eastern Angles Theatre Company (Prom Play: 17th July 2009)
- ii) Keystone Development Trust (Volunteer Fayre: 27th October 2009)
- iii) Keystone Development Trust (Coffee Morning: 28th July 2009)

89/09 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT:
DISS, THETFORD & DISTRICT CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU

RESOLVED that the letter, dated 15th June 2009, received from the Bureau Manager, be noted.

90/09 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.

91/09 MINUTES

(a) Council Meeting: 27th May 2009

Proposed by Councillor A Paines and seconded by Councillor G P Balaam, it was:

RESOLVED that the minutes of those items dealt with at the Council meeting held on 27th May 2009 following the exclusion of press and public be confirmed as a true record and signed/initialled by the Mayor as Chairman.

(b) Finance & General Purposes Committee: 27th May 2009

RESOLVED that it be confirmed that the meeting had proved inquorate.

92/09 PERSONNEL COMMITTEE: REPORT ON DISCUSSIONS ON 1ST MAY

Declaration of Interest

Councillor Mrs P P Quadling declared a prejudicial interest in this item for previously declared reasons and was not present for the discussion or vote.

Note:

Consideration of 92/09 was actually 'held over' until after 93/09 had been dealt with; it is minuted here in order to respect the agenda numbering sequence.

RESOLVED that the report from the Town Clerk, dated 23rd June 2009, be deemed an adequate summary of two discussions held that day, being:

- (a) Meeting of Personnel Committee members with available Council staff
- (b) Discussion held under agenda item 490/08 at the Committee meeting that followed on from (a). The Town Clerk had not reported in any detail on the discussion in his minute 490/08.

93/09 FLAGSHIP HOUSING GROUP PROPOSAL

Chairman