

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THETFORD TOWN COUNCIL,
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, KING'S HOUSE, THETFORD, ON
WEDNESDAY, 26TH MAY 2010, STARTING AT 7 P.M. WITH THE OPEN FORUM

Present:

The Mayor, Councillor Mrs P P Quadling

Councillors:

G P Balaam	D G Mortimer
R F W Brame	A Paines
M P Brindle	B J Skull
S H Chapman –Allen	Mrs P A Spencer
T J Jermy	S N H Wright
R G Kybird	

In attendance (for item 40/10):

Nicola Lambert, The Matthew Project
PC S Cochrane, Norfolk Constabulary

In attendance (for item 41/10):

Inspector A Hayes, Norfolk Constabulary

Open Forum

A request for a litter bin to be installed on the edge of Barnham Cross Common next to a dog waste bin was made by a resident of Nunsgate on her husband's behalf. The Town Clerk confirmed that this would be given the go-ahead.

32/10 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor S N H Wright declared a personal interest in item 42/10 as a Board Member of Keystone Development Trust, given that he would be making reference in his report under that item to Keystone's interest in occupying St Peter's Church on a possible 'interim' basis.

33/10 MINUTES

A.

(i) Council Meeting held on 29th April 2010

Minute 574/09

The Town Clerk reported that he had failed to make reference to three of the five capital projects, referred to by the Town Manager in her oral report; only two had been included in the unconfirmed minutes.

The other three projects were:

- Boudica Site: £26k capital funding secured
This would cover the cost of parking space provision/preparation, signage from the A11 and on-site interpretation panels
- Interpretation Panels/Signs: £16.4k funding secured
This would cover the cost of finger posts, replacement lectern crests, new lectern signs and a replacement header board in various locations around the town
- Orientation Panels: £10k capital funding secured
This would cover the cost of updating 8 existing panels and providing one new panel.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Council Meeting held on 29th April 2010, excepting those items dealt with following the exclusion of press and public (addressed under item 46/10 below) and subject to note being made of the capital project funding details set out above, be confirmed as a true record and signed/initialled by the Mayor as Chairman. Minutes 567/09 to 579/09 inclusive referred.

(ii) Council Meeting held on 12th May 2010 (= Mayor-Making)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Council Meeting held on 12th May 2010 be confirmed as a true record and signed/initialled by the Mayor as Chairman. Minutes 1/10 to 11/10 inclusive referred.

B. Correction of minute 392/09 from the 27th January 2010 Council Meeting

A typographical error had been spotted in the course of an inspection of the minute book.

RESOLVED that the minute book be corrected to show £542,175 as the Precept figure for 2010/11, as agreed by the Council, members having been reassured by the Town Clerk that the correct figure was recorded in two other places within the minute book, namely:

- in minute 355/09 from the Finance & General Purposes Committee Meeting, held on 13th January 2010;
- in the approved budget document, annexed to minute 377/09(a) from the Finance & General Purposes Committee Meeting, held on 27th January 2010.

34/10 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillors Mrs M P Chapman-Allen, J A Harding, T J Lamb and M G Spencer.

35/10 COMMITTEES

A, Membership in 2010/11

RESOLVED that the revised document, annexed hereto, be noted. The revision had resulted from Councillors R F W Brame and Mrs P A Spencer deciding since Mayor-Making to re-join/join the Personnel Committee. The Town Clerk confirmed that the copy to be annexed to the minute book would correctly show Councillor M G Spencer as the Vice-Chairman of the Planning Committee (the copy sent out to members by e-mail ahead of the meeting had been incorrect).

B. Reports

RESOLVED that the following reports be duly received and adopted:

(a) Finance & General Purposes Committee: 29th April 2010

Minutes 560/09 to 566/09 inclusive referred, including Recommendations at minutes 564/09, 565/090a, 565/09b, 565/09c, 565/09d, 565/09e.

(b) Planning Committee: 5th May 2010

Minutes 583/09 to 593/09 inclusive referred.

(c) Finance & General Purposes Committee: 19th May 2010

Minutes 12/10 to 23/10 inclusive referred, including Recommendations at minutes 18/10 and 19/10.

(d) Personnel Committee: 19th May 2010

Minute 24/10 referred.

(e) Planning Committee: 19th May 2010

Minutes 25/10 to 31/10 inclusive referred.

36/10 MAYOR'S REPORT

The Mayor, Councillor Mrs P P Quadling, referred members to the lists of Events Attended and Forthcoming Events, sent out with the agenda papers. The Town Clerk apologised for the omission of the 4th May 'Youth Speaks' event; this would be added to the list included in the minute book (as below).

EVENTS ATTENDED SINCE THE LAST MEETING

Mayoral Year 2009/10: Councillor Mrs Pamela Spencer

April

30th Attended Norfolk's Got Talent Celebration at Thursford in the company of Chairman of NCC, Cllr Shelagh Gurney

May

4th Formal opening of the Refectory at Norwich Cathedral by Her Majesty The Queen & the Duke of Edinburgh

4th 'Youth Speaks' in the Council Chamber (arranged by Thetford Rotary Club and the Town Council)

Mayoral Year 2010/11: Councillor Mrs Pauline Quadling

May

13th Accompanied the Mayor of Hürth, Walther Boecker, & the Vice President of the Hürth Twinning Association, Volker Kanth, on a tour of Thetford heritage sites

14th Attended the Mayor of Watton's Civic Reception (Cllr Margaret Holmes)

15th Opened the Thomas Paine exhibition at the Burrell Museum

18th Entertained 33 guests from Hürth in the Council Chamber, giving a talk on the history of the regalia

18th Attended the Chairman of Suffolk County Council's At Home Fork Buffet (Cllr Joanna Spicer DL)

20th Attended Mayor Making at St Edmundsbury

20th Attended Civic Dinner for outgoing Mayor of St Edmundsbury (Cllr Pat Warby)

23rd Attended Lions Charter Dinner at the Wereham House Hotel

Deputy Mayor 2010/11: Councillor Mrs Pamela Spencer

May

20th Attended the 60th Anniversary Supper at RAF Honington

37/10 TOWN COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON OTHER BODIES

There were no reports.

38/10 COUNTY COUNCILLORS' REPORTS

There were no reports.

39/10 RECENT EVENTS AND MEETINGS OF OTHER BODIES ATTENDED BY THE TOWN CLERK AND/OR TOWN MANAGER

The Town Clerk reported his attendance at a meeting of the Bus Interchange Steering Group in Norwich on 14th May 2010.

The next meeting of the Steering Group was scheduled for 11th June 2010. The Town Clerk confirmed that, unless instructed otherwise, he would not be indicating at that meeting any Town Council opposition to the proposed site, notwithstanding the opposition expressed by members of the public attending the Neighbourhood Forum in the Carnegie Room on 17th May 2010.

The Town Manager reported the following:

She was liaising with Norfolk County Council over the Market Place Roundabout planting; a list of possible hardy plants had been drawn up.

She was organising the removal of the row of trees in front of King's Court for the week commencing 8th June 2010.

She had hosted a meeting with military personnel to discuss the Homecoming Parade for D Squadron of the JCBRN (= *Joint Chemical Biological Radiological Nuclear*) Regiment, planned for 25th June 2010, the day before Armed Forces Day.

She had hosted a meeting of the 'Place Stakeholders Engagement Group', which was involved in preparing for the launch of the Thetford Academy. A project management company had been established to ensure that public consultation was comprehensive, meaningful and sensitive to local concerns. Various events were being organised in the first half of June 2010, with the recently postponed public meeting now re-scheduled for 17th June at Thetford Grammar School (the last of a series of consultation events).

In her role as lead officer of MTF's Thematic Group for Heritage/Culture/Tourism, she handed out copies of the scoping document, funded by EEDA and prepared by Mr Mike Loveday from HEART. The next stage would be a full feasibility study funded through MTF, the idea being to market the heritage assets of Thetford by adoption of a 'through the ages' theme.

The Town Manager reported on the following sponsorship arrangements and grants:

- Hanging baskets (Shadwell Estate plus others)
- Thetford in Bloom (Shadwell Estate)
- Teddy Bears Picnic, King's House Gardens (Arts Grant from Breckland Council)
- Replacement of old plants at St Peter's Church (Pride in Breckland Grant from Breckland Council)

40/10 DRUG USE IN PUBLIC TOILETS

Representatives from The Matthew Project and Norfolk Constabulary were in attendance for a discussion, in which the Town Council's Works Supervisor also participated.

The background to the discussion was minute 557/09 from the Amenities Committee meeting held on 21st April 2010. When this had been received by the Council on 29th April under minute 570/09b, it had been made clear that councillors wished to have an opportunity to discuss the situation with other agencies before considering any action that might result in a reduced service.

The good news was that the overall situation had not become any worse, in the sense that there had not been any further incidents of drug use-related paraphernalia being left for vulnerable toilet users to come across.

However, that was not to suggest that drug use in and around the toilets had necessarily diminished. There had been a serious incident earlier in the month at the Cage Lane facility. Thanks to the alertness of the Council's toilet cleaner, a life-threatening situation had been averted, with paramedics called to the scene in a timely fashion. Whilst this was greatly to the toilet cleaner's credit, the Works Supervisor remained concerned about staff safety in such circumstances.

The Matthew Project representative could understand this concern but was keen to point out that the association/link between drug use and toilets would not readily be broken. Whilst clear misuse of disabled toilet facilities could not be condoned, the fact remained that needle disposal bins were attached to both the Cage Lane and Bus Station facilities. What was vital was educating drug users in safe methods of disposal. The Matthew Project was doing its best to assist those who sought its help, but did not claim to have made effective contact with all drug users in Thetford.

The Works Supervisor acknowledged that, through his own discussions with both the local police and The Matthew Project, he had learned that any attempt at 'summary enforcement' would perhaps never succeed to the extent that some might wish. A telling point made by the police representative was that, once a drug user had injected a given drug, it was not possible then to prove that any illegal act had taken place; any evidence that might then be to hand would be purely circumstantial.

He went on to describe the measures that would be taken in the immediate-to-short term:

- Affixing to toilet frontages disposal bin 'direction finders' in the form of signage
- Rendering Radar locks more secure through introduction of protective plates
- Training of staff in 'Sharps Awareness', to be provided by a specialist nurse, trained in substance misuse

Members were satisfied that the overall situation could at least be better 'managed' through such measures and were reassured that no drastic action needed to be considered at this time.

Those taking part in the discussion were thanked for their attendance.

RESOLVED that the situation be noted and support expressed for the measures proposed.

41/10 ANY OTHER POLICING ISSUES

Inspector Adam Hayes of Norfolk Constabulary's Thetford Local Delivery Unit was in attendance to raise with members any matters of topical interest and listen to any local concerns.

One of the main topics covered was the Community Speedwatch scheme, which Inspector Hayes brought up in response to a specific concern about speeding along Millers Lane. He was confident there a good way of addressing such an issue was the establishment of a Speed Awareness Message (= SAM) Team, comprising community volunteers. A useful role to be played by the Town Council would be extending its insurance cover to include any speed measuring equipment used by volunteers and loaned out by the police free of charge. It was agreed that the Council's Works Supervisor would liaise with Inspector Hayes, with a view to becoming fully briefed on SAMs and their role.

RESOLVED that the Road Safety Committee be advised of the Council's interest in launching a speed awareness campaign, aimed at reducing vehicle speeds in certain town locations.

When the role of the Safer Thetford Action Group (= STAG) was touched upon, Inspector Hayes spent some time articulating his views on the need to improve 'community involvement', by which he meant specifically the need to make existing community action groups more representative and dynamic. He looked upon the following as prerequisites:

- a Youth Council voice within each group
- encouraging the participation and involvement of representatives from the Portuguese, Latvian and Lithuanian communities.

He was pleased that the current Chairs of the community action groups in the town would be meeting soon to review the overall position.

Members expressed their appreciation of Inspector Hayes' comments and the following resolution resulted.

RESOLVED that, in order to increase mutual understanding, Norfolk Constabulary be invited to make regular presentations at Town Council meetings on a suggested quarterly basis.

42/10 ST PETER'S CHURCH STEERING GROUP

Councillor S N H Wright reported on the inaugural meeting of the Steering Group (*Note: inaccurately referred to on the agenda as a 'Working Party'*), which had taken place the previous day in the King's House Council Chamber and resulted in his appointment as Chair. The Mayor, Councillor Mrs P P

Quadling, and Councillors R F W Brame and R G Kybird had also attended, as had the Town Manager.

Councillor R F W Brame had been appointed Vice-Chair.

Agreement had been reached on the Chair's first task, namely, requesting that the Town Council fund the cost of asbestos removal, as detailed in the Asbestos Survey provided by R L Insulation, who had been engaged by J P Chick & Partners Ltd on the Council's behalf, having been one of three firms asked to quote. The removal cost would total £3,937.00 plus VAT.

The Steering Group had agreed that the Town Manager should be instructed to:

- have an electrical safety check carried out;
- have a specialist lead roofing company inspect the north aisle roof and quote for carrying out a temporary repair to stop the leaking;
- speak to the Chief Executive of Keystone Development Trust about convening a meeting with the Steering Group to discuss Keystone's request to rent the building for 6-12 months for their Green Venture scheme.

The Town Manager reported on her discussions with the Heritage Lottery Officer, who had confirmed that, whilst Lottery funds could not be allocated for building repairs, English Heritage might be in a position to make funding available. The Lottery Officer had suggested that the Heritage Lottery would want to see an application for a fully worked-up scheme for the alterations and proposed uses of the building. He had also indicated that many applications failed owing to schemes not being demonstrably viable, once the funding stream ceased.

The Steering Group had agreed that a meeting needed to be called, inviting all those groups and clubs, who had expressed through the questionnaire a potential interest in making use of the building. Arising out of such a meeting, it might be possible for the Steering Group to form a view on how long-term running costs might be met.

The Group had then gone on to pay a visit to the Church, given that some members had not been inside the building and wanted to view its size and potential. Whilst there, it was agreed that it would be a good idea, following removal of the asbestos, to carry out a thorough clean of the building, move the pews to the perimeter of the interior and possibly give the walls a coat of paint. It was thought that, if a public meeting were held in the building to discuss options for its future use, then community interest could be generated and a fund-raising impetus created

The Town Clerk reported that the Council had to date covered the cost both of J P Chick's December 2008 Structural Survey (£1,250 plus VAT) and R L Insulation's December 2009 Type 3 Asbestos Survey (£644.25 plus VAT). J P Chick had now, in April 2010, completed a Structural Investigation at a cost of £2,750 plus VAT. He wondered whether the Council would be seeking to recover this cost at some point in the future, subject to other funding sources materialising, or whether this too could be met from Council funds.

At the end of a brief discussion, the following Resolution resulted:

RESOLVED that the Town Council cover the cost of both the Structural Investigation and asbestos removal. It was agreed to instruct the Town Manager to act on the points agreed by the Group, as set out above.

Afternote from Town Clerk:

The Council has since been advised that public use of the building will be conditional upon any electrical safety requirements having first been met.

43/10 DOCUMENTS TO NOTE AND/OR COMMENT ON

(a) Thank-you letter from the Citizens Advice Bureau

RESOLVED that the contents of the letter, dated 28th April 2010, acknowledging receipt of 2009/10 funding support, be noted.

(b) Cricket Club Letter

RESOLVED that the contents of the undated letter, addressed by the Chair of Thetford Cricket Club to Breckland Leisure, a copy of which had been received by the Town Council on 5th May 2010, be noted. It was agreed to extend invitations to both Breckland Leisure and Breckland Council's Sports Officer, requesting their attendance at the next scheduled Council Meeting (= 30th June 2010) for a discussion.

(c) Response from Norfolk County Council on Swimming Pool Provision

RESOLVED that the contents of the response letter from the Director of Children's Services, dated 5th May 2010, be noted.

44/10 FINANCIAL MATTERS

(a) 2010/11 Financial Report for Month Ended 30th April 2010

As referred to under minute 35/10B(c) above, it was agreed to receive the Report in line with the Recommendation from the Chairman of the Finance & General Purposes Committee, as agreed at its meeting on 9th May 2010 under minute 18/10.

(b) Any Other Recommendations from the F&GP Committee

Minute 35/10B(c) above referred.

45/10 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 item 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.

46/10 MINUTES

Council Meeting: 29th April 2010 – items addressed following the exclusion of press and public

RESOLVED that the minutes of these items be confirmed as a true record and signed/initialled by the Mayor as Chairman. Minutes 580/09 to 582/09* inclusive referred.

Chairman