

Full Council

Title:	Reports from External Organisations Representatives
Date:	13 August 2024
Author:	Various

a) 21st Century Thame (Cllr Fickling)

[21st Century Thame Minutes from Friday 19th July 2024 from 9am - 10am.](#)

If you would like to see the accounts they are on the 21st Century Website [here](#).

b) Chinnor RFC (Cllr Bretherton)

Nothing received as at 08/08/2024

c) Citizens Advice (Cllr Dite)

Re. the announcement regarding organisational developments at Oxfordshire South & Vale Citizens Advice the follow note has been received from Debbie Watts, Chief Officer, CAB Oxfordshire South & Vale:

- Let me assure you there is no intention to move from Thame - notwithstanding our temporary move in October. Thank you for your support with that. We will be maintaining our presence and our service, not only because there is a need in Thame, but it is also strategically important to us to have a presence in your part of the County. We will be able to continue to provide you with data on numbers of clients from the area, types of issues etc.
- It is our anticipation that volunteers will be better supported by having a wider pool of both paid staff and volunteers. One of the drivers for the change is to establish a better support system for those delivering services on the front line. I am very protective of all our volunteers, as is Tricia and we are working hard to bring everyone along on this journey. While I have only communicated recently with you on this matter, we have been keeping staff and volunteers abreast of developments since April this year. Change, even the best managed change, can cause discomfort for people but we are not intending to lose anyone delivering services in this process.
- I do hope that provides some reassurance for the time being and I will of course keep you abreast of developments, once the key decision is made in September.

Issues regarding the building during the redevelopment of the public Toilet facilities starting in October.

- It will be necessary for the Thame team to vacate the building during the work (planned for 10 weeks) and we are working with the team to develop a range of options, to enable the CAB activities to be maintained. This may include the use of the downstairs conference room for pre-arranged client interviews. Plans are still being discussed.

d) Cuttle Brook Management Committee (Cllr Jones)TTC Site Visit to Cuttle Brook Nature Reserve – 26 June 2024

Overall the Reserve is in good health and enjoying lush growth following an unusually wet spring.

1. The River Thames Conservation Group in association with CBVC hopes to start work on improving the flow of the river with a long-term view to reintroduce trout and water voles. Funding is now in place. Mink monitoring is taking place to try to establish whether any remain in the Brook. If their presence is detected, they will be removed.
2. The scrape in Rycote meadow has been dug. This will be an ephemeral habitat – ranging from wet to dry as the seasons progress – but should encourage a range of wildlife. The footpath through Rycote will be lined with a stock-proof fence to prevent access by walkers and dogs to the sensitive meadow and riverbank. The Cuttle Brook scrape will connect with others along the Thames such as those at Lopmead Farm and Cheersley.
3. The meadows below the Chiltern View estate are thriving with an excellent mix of wildflowers including two large pyramidal orchid flowers and plenty of yellow rattle. Other orchids may be present but with the lush grass growth they are harder to spot.
4. The flood works are on-going but anecdotal reports from residents seem to suggest they are working. There are plans for other scrapes and ponds in the Cox's Wood vicinity which will diversify the environment in that meadow plus helping with flood drainage.
5. The dead alders on the bank of the Brook near Watkins' Bridge need removing. Sadly a black poplar as also been lost.
6. The pond continues to have good water quality.
7. CBVC continues to monitor the reserve for signs of Himalayan Balsam, an invasive non-native plant which tolerates low light levels and shades out other vegetation, gradually impoverishing habitats by killing off other plants.

e) Friends of Elms Park (Cllr Champken-Woods)

Nothing to report except Thame Concert Band will be playing in the park on the 3rd of August.

f) Music in the Park (Cllr Jones)

Music in the Park is an accessible community event that provides local schools, dance classes, choirs, singers, musicians and bands with the fantastic experience of performing on a platform supported by professional sound engineers and equipment. Every year MitP create a programme encompassing a diversity of genres of music and dance, featuring artistes of a wide range of ages and abilities.

In addition, since its inception in 2011, MitP has provided the local community with a fun-filled family day out. They ensure that they offer a good range of food and drinks vendors, fun activities and trade stalls. They even offer a professionally run creche facility, allowing parents and carers to leave their children to participate in a range of activities while they explore the festival at their own pace.

You will see from the submitted accounts that the infrastructure costs have more than doubled in the last few years and particularly since covid. This is being felt by all small festivals and has led to the loss of local festivals such as Thame Town Music Festival, PennFest, Beacon Festival, and even Towersey.

MitP always work hard to drive the best bargains possible with the suppliers so that they can keep any increases in ticket costs to a minimum and ensure that the festival is accessible to all. Next year, more than ever, they will be relying on the good will of local business for sponsorship. They have an amazing team of volunteers who all work together to bring a great event to our community.

g) Red Kite Family Centre (Cllr Emery)

Update on financial position:

- They finished the 23/24 financial year in a much more positive position than we started it.
- The funding strategy, coupled with a well-timed grant being awarded, have delivered a steady stream of income, covering the funding shortfall following the loss of a major business donor.
- Grants have covered the largest portion of the income shortfall, yielding £85k for 2023/24.
- Business Sponsorship also offered a little under £15k towards the annual running costs for this year.
- The membership scheme has raised just over £18k for 23/24 and the aim this year is to maintain and grow this support.
- The challenge now is to reach a sustainable financial position. They need regular financial and other support from our community to keep doing what they do best.

Key financial figures:

- 2022/23 Income - £64.5k
- Budget for 2023-24 income £103k – total raised so far £135K
- The annual running costs for the Family Centre remain just over £100k.

Attendance:

- Between May and July 2024, they welcomed 170 individual families to our sessions. Currently they have 422 families registered with the centre as well. Increasing from 386 back in February.

Services & Events:

- Their aim has been to remain free at point of use and continue to achieve this. They have been part of the Thame Carnival and Parade, offering a welcome rest area for families to use in between the many other fun activities available. The plant stall at Thame Market in May helped to raise awareness of the centre and we took £500 in donations for our home-grown plants. They had their annual Easter Messy Play at the Scout hut and welcomed 137 people, of which we saw a nice balance of ages, from babies through to primary school aged children attending with their siblings.
- Normally they are term time only but during the Easter Holidays, May Half Term and now into the summer holidays, we have been able to seek out funding opportunities (particularly beneficial was linking with SOHA through the TAG group) and are offering sessions and activities in these holidays. We have welcomed Mrs Bun the Baker, a cookery class for young children, Zoolab, Creation Station, as well as our own groups such as Stay and Play, Brilliant Babies, and Lunch Club.
- Their Neurodiversity offering continues to grow in strength following the success of the Awareness Evening back in October last year. They have recently hosted a smaller, more intimate evening here at the family centre in Thame, with the focus being on building positive

relationships with professional teams. They are pleased to welcome the Autism and Mental Health lead from a local SEN school as the speaker for that evening.

Community Engagement:

- They continue to work closely with several local groups including Thame & District Round Table, Thame Pop choir and The Barns Centre. Our staff team maintain strong links with the local schools and professional teams, and as such we have received several referrals for new families from Midwifery team, Health Visitors and School early year teams.

h) Thame Barns Centre (Cllrs Baines and Dodds)

30th Anniversary – The 20th of July was a busy occasion with the celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of the Barns Centre and a large number of people attended throughout the day and for the cake cutting in the afternoon.

The AGM was held on 17th July. The two principal items for the agenda are the Trustees Report and the Financial Report. These are reported to the year ended 31st March and are subject to an Independent Examiner.

The income of the Barns has recovered to pre covid levels and questions are often asked as to appropriate levels. The Trustees believe in maintaining as building and equipment costs can be substantial.

i) Thame Business Forum (Cllr Dyer)

The April meeting covered updates on a wide range of subjects but in particular it highlighted concerns regarding the pending closure of Lloyds in Thame, the last commercial banking branch in the Henley & Thame constituency. Bank closures have impacted severely on independent retail and hospitality businesses with a regular need to draw or deposit cash.

The meeting planned for July unfortunately had to be postponed because the intended main agenda item, SODC's consultancy report on the visitor economy and hotel accommodation, had been further delayed and failed to materialise as expected. This will hopefully now be available for the September meeting.

j) Thame Carnival Committee (Cllr Emery)

This year's annual Carnival was undoubtedly a great success according to everyone who participated.

It started with the traditional procession with a great variety of floats from local community groups, businesses and all the local junior and nursery schools. There was no theme to this year's Carnival, all the schools choose an ecological or biodiversity topics as they placed great importance on using biodegradable or environmentally classified materials, recycling, and recovering materials and equipment for reuse.

Thame Town council were voted the winners, our theme was a celebration of 50 years of civic activities and duties to Thame. They chose to put together a spectacle of gold and blending vibrant colours making a majestic entrance.

There were two major showers at 10am and noon which impacted attendance and prevented two prime attractions, the dodgems and bouncy castle from being operated. Stand holder incomes were down due to weather and current cost of living crisis.

The road closure programme was successful under the management of Chevron traffic control. This was only made possible from funding from TTC and SODC.

The financials are currently not available. This has delayed the presentation of charity donations.

Thanks go to TTC maintenance crew, who without their continued support, it would not have been possible to have the site setup in a timely manner. The carnival team put in so much behind the scenes work throughout the year which is so much appreciated by everyone.

Next year's Carnival date is for Saturday 14th June 2025.

k) Thame Community Land Trust (Bob Austin)

1. **Full planning permission (S106) has been received** for 31 affordable homes (16 affordable rent, 15 shared ownership) aimed at occupation by Thame residents. The homes will remain affordable in perpetuity. The homes are configured as 9x3-bedroom, 18x2-bedroom and 4x1-bedroom.
2. **Amenity land for Thame residents** has been designated to the west and north-east of the site as outlined in red on the attached plan. This land will be leased by TTC for £1 and funding provided to it for future maintenance.
3. All access issues have been resolved including those relating to access during construction.
4. Pre-construction requirements have been received and being dealt with.
5. **Tenders** were expected back on June 21st but were **not received until July 5th**. This delay affected the timetable as the review requirements demanded under EU rules had still to be followed. Qualifications within the tenders have still to be finalised in terms of being negotiated out and until that occurs the winning tender cannot be identified or selected.
6. However, the tender returns show that **the Windmill Road project is viable**.
7. Legal agreements relating to the land sale and associated lease are in advanced preparation.
8. The date for the **exercise of the option to purchase** for the site has still to be finalised but will follow the conclusion of the legal agreements and the selection of the winning tender. It will be before the expiration of the option period at the end of August. Completion will take place a maximum of 20 working days after the option has been exercised.
9. TCLT's development partner, **Soha Housing, received approval at its board meeting on Thursday 25th July to purchase its lease for the site in advance of grant approval from Homes England**. The reason for this is because tender information has meant completion on site cannot be guaranteed before 31st March 2026- the end target date of the current round of applications. Normally this would not present an obstacle. However, **Soha are still waiting to hear when the next round of grants will be processed by Homes England. It is not expected until a few months' time (possibly November) owing to the delays in process implicit in a change of Government**. It was felt that this deferral should not delay purchase of the site (see above) hence Soha's decision to go ahead to ensure that the site is acquired before the option expires and that the S106 specified scheme is protected.
10. The lease contains the obligation to build only to the precise configuration specified within the S106
11. Once the Homes England grant is secured, Soha will negotiate an inflationary uplift with the successful tenderer and let the build contract. Construction will commence as soon as possible thereafter.
12. **SODC grant approval to finance the development to achieve net zero** was given at the SODC full council meeting on December 11th.

The council will be informed as soon as the option to purchase the site has been exercised.

Attached to this report is a further report and diagrams on the Phoenix Trail crossing provision, as requested.

l) Thame Football Partnership (TFP) (Cllr Dyer)

Last season was one of team building following the departure of some players, but Thame United maintained their place in Southern Central Division One and are ready for the new season. Their women's and youth teams are thriving and the 'one club' ethos of culture change continues to gather strength. Financially, takings were up year-on-year and will have been further boosted by the annual Festival of Football at the end of June, but planned ground maintenance in the closed season at a cost of around £ 30k may end the year with a small deficit.

m) Thame Good Neighbour Scheme (Cllr Dollman)

Since April the requests for Good Neighbours have increased with the average of 10 requests a month. All requests are mainly transport needed to and from the doctors/hospital.

Other requests we have had since April include 2 X Befriending requests, 1 x Helping with shopping and another one to help with walking once a week. TGNS have only had 1 new volunteer sign up and another one leave. We are looking at promoting it more on all the social platforms for more volunteers as the number clients we have registered hugely outweigh the number of volunteers. We currently have 328 clients with only a handful of volunteers.

n) Thame Museum Trust (Cllrs Cowell & Emery)

- Museum roof work due to start @28th August, it is hoped this will provide a permanent solution.
- The AGM was held in June, attendance was sufficient for a quorum, it has been recognised this is becoming more difficult.
- Adrian Dite was elected as Chairman, Michael Parsons was elected as Treasurer, David McBrien was elected as Secretary.
- Ace Week with LWS was a success, although scheduling was very tight for time.
- The Museum is now 3 months into its new 3 year Forward Plan, including a website update, a new online sales platform.
- Rationalisation of the collection is ongoing.
- Accreditation is expected to be around the middle of 2025.
- Redesign of the internal main gallery planning has been initiated.
- A more coordinated approach to exhibitions will be in place going forward, with 2 major exhibitions each year.
- A review of the Constitution will be undertaken, with input from other Museums.
- A new electronic donation station is to be purchased.

o) Thame Remembers (Cllrs Bretherton & Dyer)

June 11th finally saw the culmination of the Thame Remembers project when the Duke of Gloucester visited Thame to unveil three new plaques, commemorating an additional thirty men, on the recently refurbished town war memorial. The event was attended by about 75 invited guests and dignitaries, has been well-documented in Council reports, was featured on BBC South TV, and attracted wide coverage in print media and on local radio. TTC also commissioned video of the entire event, which will hopefully be made accessible to the community in the near future. Thame

Remembers thank the many Council Officers involved, both in planning the event and in making sure that it ran smoothly despite incidents on the day.

Working towards that event rather took eyes off the roll-out of House Plaques though another six were installed in April and a fresh drive towards completing the project is now under way. We have also released an update leaflet, including a map indicating the locations of all the plaques installed to date, and this is available from the Town Hall and from Thame Museum.

p) Thame Senior Friendship Centre (Cllr Champken-Woods)

As previously mentioned, the Covid pandemic has had a significant impact on our members mobility and a negative impact on their medical conditions.

We have recently had some new members joining but our numbers remain lower than we would like to help maintain sustainability.

We have a new Deputy Manager who started with us in January, although retired remains on the register for qualified nurses. This has made a substantial difference to TSFC, and she now runs the dementia café on a Monday morning

Memories Café

Memories Café has on average 8-10 people attending each session.

Next Monday 29th July, Stephen Chandler, Executive Director People, from OCC will attend the dementia café.

TSFC continues to be a member of BOB VCSE Ageing Well subgroup and Communities of Practice for South Oxfordshire. We also continue to get regular updates from Oxfordshire Association of Care Providers which includes safeguarding.

Recently, we have appointed 4 new Trustees who have reduced the average age of the Board of Trustees. We have a very busy year ahead.

We have recently had new leaflets and flyers printed for both services which better reflect what we offer.

We have recently moved the hosting of our website to Pentangle and in the coming months this will need to be updated to reflect what TSFC can offer.

q) Thame Shed (Cllr Cowell)

Nothing to report, need to make contact

r) Thame Sinaia Friendship Association (Cllr Bretherton)

Nothing received as at 08/08/2024

s) Thame Sports Club (Cllr Jones)

Thame Sports Club incorporating the Bowls and Tennis Clubs celebrated their centenary this Summer.

They've contributed lots of memorabilia for the Active Thame display at Thame Museum.

The Bowls Club held an Open Morning on 13th July with a turn out that exceeded expectations.

The bar in the new club house is being named the Bozier Bar in recognition of all the work the late Peter Bozier did to bring about the building of the new facility.

Also, the Sports Club is investigating the viability of installing solar panels.

t) Thame Town Cricket Club (Cllr Champken-Woods)

The club continues to do well.

The two big events so far this year was the 3 day match held at Church Meadow between Oxfordshire and Cheshire which Oxfordshire won and a one day match against Middlesex which unfortunately Middlesex won.

u) Thame Welfare Trust (Cllr Champken-Woods)

Surprisingly considering the current Cost of Living Crisis there were no call for grants at the last meeting.

v) Thame Youth Memorial Trust (Cllr Dyer)

The Youth Memorial renovation project, principally to replace the tiling and re-engrave the commemorative tiles, was successfully completed during May. The memorial garden has now re-opened and is looking splendid. The website has also been greatly improved and will be re-launched in early August.

w) Thame Youth Projects Group (Cllr Bretherton)

Nothing received as at 08/08/2024

x) Transport Representative (Cllr Bretherton)

There have not been any PTR meetings recently.

Route Changes:

- Red Rose 121 Town Bus. Revised route now includes Haddenham and railway station. Initial indications are that the route is more popular than previous 121 service.
- Arriva Service X8. Thame to Oxford stopped running on 1 July
- Oxford Bus Co Service 280. Thame to Oxford runs since early July 2024
- Arriva Service X7. Oxford – Aylesbury via Thame still operates but Arriva have given notice of possible/probable closure of their Aylesbury Depot.
- Redline Service X20. Oxford – Aylesbury via Thame (but not calling at Haddenham or Wheatley) still operates.

Attached Oxfordshire Bus Service Improvement Plan 2024.

y) Twinning Association (Cllr Emery)

Our hugely successful 3rd to 5th May weekend spent in the company of our lovely friends from Montesson. Everything went to plan and even the rain stopped and the sun came out for the duration of their visit! At precisely 6pm the coach pulled up and we welcomed our 28 guests in style at the Town Hall. Old friendships were renewed, and new acquaintances made, and we were very

pleased that the outgoing Mayor, Adrian Dite was able to attend to declare the weekend officially "open". After a very brief welcome drink everyone retired to spend the evening catching up or getting to know someone new. Indeed, there were 7 people on their first visit to Thame, all of whom seemed delighted with their stay. On Saturday, we arranged for the French party to spend the day at Waddesdon Manor.

On their return to Thame there was just time for a bit of shopping, a cup of tea and possibly a rest before heading to Towersey Manor for our "party", 60 people attended. The Barn looked splendid with its twinkling lights and twinning themed decorations and certainly had the wow factor as everyone arrived in the early evening sunshine

Speeches over, the entertainment part of the evening could finally begin. We are very lucky to count Sue and Phil Boyle amongst our number and they treated us to a brilliant bi-lingual quiz which caused a fair amount of bewildered amusement to the French who hadn't quite understood the bingo concept!

Sunday morning, we waved good-bye after a hearty breakfast with their hosts family.

Successful fund raising; quiz night, Thame Carnival, Market Stall and Xmas Party.

September visit to Montesson travel by Euro Star; Masons Coach too expensive.