

THETFORD TOWN COUNCIL



ANNUAL REPORT

2022/23

Copies are available at:
Thetford Town Council, The Carnegie, Cage Lane, Thetford, Norfolk,
IP24 2DS
It can also be viewed on line at:
www.thetfordtowncouncil.gov.uk



INTRODUCTION

Thetford Town Council was formed in 1974 under provisions laid down in the Local Government Act 1972.

This report covers the Mayoral Year commencing 6th May 2022 and ending on 16th May 2023 and is aimed at providing an insight into the Council's operational activities.

T Cunnell

Tina Cunnell BSc Hons
Town Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer

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ELECTED MEMBERS

A list of the sixteen elected town councillors, who represented the six town wards in the Mayoral Year 2022/23, is detailed on the following page.

There was one resignation from Boudicca Ward in May 2022 and the vacancy was filled through a by-election in July 2022.

Whilst members are entitled to claim allowances, no such request has ever been made and if it were, then the Remuneration Panel of Breckland District Council would be asked to set an appropriate level of allowance. The Town Mayor-of-the-Day receives an *ex officio* 'Mayor's Allowance' to assist with the performing of mayoral duties, the amount being set annually by the Council and included in its operating budget.

The Mayoral Year does not coincide with the Financial Year, as the latter runs from 1st April to 31st March. By tradition, the Town Mayor is elected by fellow councillors at 'Mayor Making', which takes place during the first half of May each year.

MAYOR and CHAIRMAN in 2022/23

At the start of the Financial Year 2022/23, Councillor Mike Brindle was Town Mayor and Chairman. At the Mayor-Making ceremony on 6th May 2022, Councillor Jane James took over, remaining in post for the remainder of the Financial Year. According to procedure Councillor Stuart Wright became the Deputy Mayor and will become Mayor in 2023/24 if re-elected in the 4th May 2023 elections.

The Mayor, Councillor Jane James attended 110 events during her period of office, with the Deputy Town Mayor Councillor Stuart Wright representing the Mayor on 11 occasions during the same period.

COUNCILLORS LISTED BY WARD

The following served in Financial Year 2022/23 (all elected, none co-opted):

† = also District Councillor ‡ = also County Councillor

Anne Bartholomew
Jenny Hollis

Party Affiliation
Independent

Boudicca

Dave Hodgkinson
Mac MacDonald (14/07/22)
Barbara Tullett

Labour
Conservative
Conservative

Burrell

Carla Barreto
Denis Crawford
Chris Harvey †
Terry Jermy † ‡

Independent
UKIP
Labour
Labour

Castle Ward

Roy Brame †
Stuart Wright
Jane James † ‡
Ken Parker

Conservative
Independent
Conservative
Conservative

Priory Ward

Mike Brindle †
Brenda Canham
Mark Taylor

Labour
Independent
UKIP

Vicarage Road Ward

Susan Dowling †

Labour

MEETINGS

In the course of the Mayoral Year 2022/23 (6th May 2022 to 19th May 2023 both dates inclusive) 73 meetings were held:

- 13 Meetings of the Full Council (including Mayor-Making, 2 Ceremonial Meetings and 2 Special Meetings).
- 10 Meetings of the Amenities Committee.
- 9 Meetings of the Finance Committee.
- 11 Meetings of the Planning Committee.
- 8 Meetings of the Venues, Events and Marketing Committee.
- 7 Meetings of the Personnel Committee.
- 6 Meetings of the Allotments Committee.
- 3 Meetings of the Cemetery Committee.
- 6 Meetings of the Heritage & Town Events.

MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES OF THE COUNCIL

THETFORD TOWN COUNCIL

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP 2022/23

The Town Mayor is an *ex officio* member of all Committees listed below.

Note: Membership of Committees may change during the Mayoral Year. Committee Chairman and Vice-Chairman are elected at the first meetings of the respective Committees.

Town Mayor: Councillor Jane James

(a) **Allotments**

Councillor Denis Crawford (Chair)

Councillor Chris Harvey

Councillor Barbara Tullett (Vice Chair)

Councillor David Hodgkinson (Joined 31st January 2023)

(b) **Amenities**

Councillor Carla Barreto

Councillor Roy Brame

Councillor Mike Brindle

Councillor Denis Crawford

Councillor Susan Dowling

Councillor Chris Harvey

Councillor David Hodgkinson (Vice Chair)

Councillor Terry Jermy (Chair)

Councillor Ken Parker

Councillor Barbara Tullett

Councillor Stuart Wright

(c) Cemetery

Councillor Denis Crawford (Vice Chair)

Councillor Chris Harvey

Councillor Terry Jermy (Chair)

Councillor David Hodgkinson (Joined 26th July 2022)

(d) Finance

Councillor Denis Crawford

Councillor Chris Harvey

Councillor Jane James (Chair)

Councillor Barbara Tullett (Vice Chair)

Councillor Roy Brame (Joined 26th July 2022)

Councillor Mac MacDonald (Joined 26th July 2022)

(e) Heritage and Town Events

Councillor Carla Barreto

Councillor Brenda Canham

Councillor Denis Crawford

Councillor Susan Dowling

Councillor Jenny Hollis

Councillor Jane James (Chair)

Councillor Ken Parker

Councillor Barbara Tullett

Councillor Stuart Wright (Vice Chair)

Councillor Mac MacDonald (Joined 26th July 2022)

(f) **Personnel**

Councillor Roy Brame

Councillor Mike Brindle

Councillor Brenda Canham (Chair)

Councillor Denis Crawford (Vice Chair)

Councillor Susan Dowling

Councillor Chris Harvey

Councillor Jenny Hollis

Councillor Barbara Tullett (Resigned 9th May 2022)

(g) **Planning**

All 16 Councillors are members.

Councillor Mark Robinson (Resigned 9th May 2022)

(h) **Venues and Communications**

Councillor Carla Barreto

Councillor Roy Brame

Councillor Mike Brindle

Councillor Brenda Canham


Councillor Denis Crawford (Vice Chair)

Councillor Chris Harvey

Councillor Jenny Hollis

Councillor Terry Jermy

Councillor Ken Parker



Councillor Mark Robinson (Resigned 9th May 2022)

Councillor Stuart Wright (Chair)

Councillor Mac MacDonald (Joined 26th July 2022)

TOWN COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES SERVING ON OTHER BODIES
IN MAYORAL YEAR 2022/23

Burrell Museum Board of Trustees

Councillor Brenda Canham

Diss, Thetford and District Citizens Advice Bureau

Mayor of the Day

Alternate: Deputy Mayor

Charles Burrell Centre Ltd Directors

Councillor Mike Brindle

Councillor Denis Crawford

Energy Power Resources Thetford

Councillor Stuart Wright

Councillor Roy Brame

Greater Thetford Partnership

Councillor Stuart Wright

Alternate: Councillor Brenda Canham

Safer Thetford Action Group

Councillor Denis Crawford

Thetford Municipal and United Charities (4-year term)

Councillor Brenda Canham

Thetford Music Project

Councillor Carla Barreto

Thetford Society

The Mayor of the Day

Thetford Tourism and Heritage Partnership

Councillor Stuart Wright

MAYOR'S REFLECTIONS 2022/23



It has been a privilege to serve as Mayor for these past 12 months. It truly has been a year of coming together following the challenges of recent times and I have loved in particular the community events that residents have invited me to that just go to show how strong Thetford's sense of community is.

Thetford showed just how strong that sense of community was when it came together to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee. That sense shone through when, just a few months later, we marked the death of Queen Elizabeth II. I would like to thank all the staff and fellow councillors who took time to support our community in their grief when we opened up the Guildhall as a Room of Reflection for our residents. We now look forward to the Coronation of King Charles III and the community coming together once more.

Part of the Mayoral privilege is to be able to support a charity or cause that is close to that individual's heart. Those who know me, know of my enthusiasm for reading, passion for learning and that I have served for a number of years as a school governor. It was these passions that led to the Norfolk Reading Project to be chosen as my Mayoral Charity of the year with the unusual objective of not raising funds but creating a volunteer army to go into our schools and support their work in raising literacy standards in the town. I'm delighted that Anne is here today to share more about the legacy that will be left in the town at the end of my mayoral year. I am incredibly grateful to all those volunteers who have come forward to support the young people of Thetford.

Councillor Jane James

ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE

Thetford has allotments at Mundford Road (including British Rail), London Road, Bury Road, Icknield Way and Magdalen Street. The sites have a high occupancy rate and there is a lengthy waiting list to take on an allotment in Thetford. To address this, the policy of the Allotments Committee has been to split full plots into two whenever they are relinquished, and this has helped us to partly reduce the waiting list.

Another initiative has been to ensure that those allotment holders that have allotments use them to cultivate produce, keep poultry and/or grow flowers. Where allotment holders have not used their allotments, we have ended the tenancy agreement, and this too has resulted in us being able to reduce the waiting list.

Our rules have been updated and implemented. The Committee is focusing on formalising its relationship with allotment representatives and the Thetford Garden and Allotment Club to help better manage the allotment sites.

Our allotment officer has recently developed maintenance plans for all of the allotment sites, and these will inform our spending in the coming years. It will also ensure that we focus on preventative maintenance to keep our sites in shape.

It would be remiss of me to not mention the possible impact on the Mundford Road allotment site of implementing the Thetford Gateway project that is focussing on redeveloping Thetford station. The Council has approved the preparation of a feasibility study that may include using some or all of the Mundford Road allotment site for the Thetford station project. We are uncertain as to when the feasibility study will be completed but we have asked that the allotment holders at Mundford Road are updated with developments so that they have a voice.

I would like to conclude by thanking my fellow committee members and the officers who support the Allotments Committee.

Councillor Denis Crawford

AMENITIES COMMITTEE

The Amenities Committee is entrusted to look after street furniture, Thetford's open spaces including playparks, town centre floral displays, the operation of public toilets and certain properties such as St Peter's Church. The Committee also administers the Council's small grant programme.

Significant progress has been made in repairing and replacing street furniture. An inventory of all Thetford owned street furniture has been undertaken in the past year which has contributed to operational efficiency. The Council faces the challenge that Norfolk County Council and Breckland Council also have street furniture on the pieces of land that those Council's own and the inventory enables Thetford Town Council to respond timely when street furniture items require attention. We have been pleased to install numerous new items of street furniture around the town this year, responding to requests from residents as well as Councillors. Sadly, street furniture can often be the target of mindless vandalism and the committee has introduced a process whereby we record the cost of such damage.

The management of open spaces has been particularly challenging in the past year. The Council receives funding from Government to maintain these areas. The Council has identified the use of cattle and sheep to graze open space land on Barnham Common, Ford Meadow and parts of Castle Park as a sustainable way to manage these open spaces. Unfortunately, it was not possible to get Castle Park grazed in 2022/23 but the Committee is taking steps to have this in place shortly.

Another challenge has been the formalisation of the River Thet breach on land owned by the Council near Ford Meadow. Working with the Environment Agency, the Council had to formalise the breach by installing a fish pass with a notch. At the date of writing this report, this work was underway and should provide a longer-term solution to the breach as well as provide a water course for eels and fish between the River Thet and the River Ouse.

The Council's playparks are independently inspected annually to ensure that the playing equipment is safe. The Council's staff also undertake weekly inspections and undertake any minor maintenance required. The Council has spent just over £59,000 on undertaking repairs in the 2022/23 year (after spending £15,000 in 2021/22) to keep playparks safe. The Council has also budgeted to contribute £40,000 per annum in the medium term to ensure that there will be sufficient funding to keep all playparks open.

The Council spends a significant amount of money on its floral displays and entered the Anglia in Bloom competition. The Council received a silver medal in the Town Category. The Council also ran a Thetford in Bloom competition to recognise residents who had an effort to beautify their front gardens. Local businesses were also recognised as well as environmental projects and environmental champions. This is a competition that the Committee hopes to expand in future years, and we are grateful to Simon Long removals for their sponsorship.

The Committee administers a small grant programme and as Chairman I had the opportunity to meet with some of the recipients of the grant, which are charitable and community support organisations, to see what a difference the Council is making through this programme. The Council will continue to support such organisations in the coming year, and I invite local groups to liaise with the office and submit an application for up to £300.

I would like to thank the Councillors on the Amenities Committee for their support, we are a busy committee and approach challenges constructively. I would also like to thank the volunteers who help the Council manage its open spaces and whose efforts make a significant difference to our open spaces. Thanks to Deputy Town Clerk and Committee Secretary for helping the meetings run smoothly. Finally, I would like to thank the Town Team Manager and his team who support the operations of the Committee throughout the year.

Councillor Terry Jermy

CEMETERY COMMITTEE

We carried out a total of 74 interments. 38 were ashes interments. 15 were burials on the older section and 21 were burials in the cemetery extension.

HERITAGE & TOWN EVENTS COMMITTEE

The Guildhall Heritage Hub has continued to go from strength to strength with fantastic support from our Heritage and Education Officers. This means that the local knowledge and information about Thetford's Heritage is shared with the young people in our schools and will help ensure a sense of pride in our beautiful town.

As part of our Platinum Jubilee Celebrations, we welcomed visitors from our Twin Towns in France and the Netherlands. The Christmas Light Switch On was one of the biggest we have delivered with a varied programme over that weekend. There was a lot of positive feedback from residents regarding the different approach, especially the Christmas at the Movies event. The Steam Punk weekends, which complement our industrial heritage, have been well received and have drawn in visitors from across the country and look set to become a well-loved, regular occurrence on the Steam Punk community's calendar.

Looking forward to 2023/2024, the Committee has worked hard with officers to further develop a varied and exciting town events schedule as part of the budget setting process, and I look forward to the use of the Market Place expanding further with these events making it a true community venue for our town.

Finally, a significant amount of time has been focused on the development of a bid through the National Heritage Lottery Fund to enable a multi-disciplinary team to develop a cohesive Thetford Heritage Masterplan, which will be able to be used to promote Thetford's amazing heritage and assist in leveraging in additional funding for ensuring Thetford's Heritage future. We were delighted to be awarded this funding towards the end of 2022 and the successful tender is now in the process of pulling that masterplan together. Please do engage with this significant piece of work to safeguard Thetford's past for its future.

Councillor Jane James

FINANCE COMMITTEE

The Finance Committee has continued to drive overall improvement in financial management processes with progress continuing to be being made in the Finance Officer Reforms on which the Committee receive regularly updates. These improvements should continue to reflect positively in the internal and external audit reports.

The Council has faced a number of challenges from a financial perspective in recent years and the 2022/23 financial year was no different. When the budget was set for this financial year, inflation was around 3% and this was the percentage used to estimate trends in income and expenditure. Unfortunately, inflation peaked at just over 11%, which was unforeseen, meaning that cost pressures in particular have contributed to a forecast deficit of approximately £30,000 before year-end accounting entries.

The other challenge that the Council has faced is that certain activities have not recovered since the pre-COVID period. Whereas a number of similar sized large Councils are mainly reliant on precept income levied on residents, Thetford has focussed on generating other income to lessen the precept burden on residents. However, the Council's ability to generate this income has been impacted adversely by changed behaviours emanating from COVID as well as the economic downturn. An indicator of this is once-off hire bookings which have significantly contributed to this income source being projected to be 28% lower in the 2022/23 financial year compared to the year prior to COVID.

The Council entered into long-term energy contracts in 2020 and thus has been protected from the price shocks that higher electricity and gas prices have caused. Unfortunately, these contracts end in September 2023, and this has contributed to the need to increase the precept in the 2023/24 financial year. The Council has an equity investment portfolio of nearly £1 million which has been set aside to finance reserves. This continues to perform favourably and has provided an income stream of approximately £35,000 in recent years. The ability of the Council to retain this level of investment is going to be challenging as there is going to be more cash flow pressures on the Council arising from increased costs.

I would like to thank my fellow committee members for their support and participation. I would like to also thank the Town Clerk and the Finance Officer for their efforts in supporting the work of the Committee.

Councillor Jane James

VENUES EVENTS & MARKETING COMMITTEE

The Venues & Communications Committee deals with the running of the Council's venues, The Guildhall and The Carnegie, the Market Place and its bi-weekly markets and St Peter's Church. The Committee is also responsible for how the Council communicates with the public at large.

We continue to value our Tuesday and Saturday markets and appreciate the competition posed by the trend to discount retailing and internet shopping. We seek to encourage new vendors and to offer a wider variety of stalls. The market fees remain competitive with other markets in the area and the fees were frozen once again. The lack of footfall to Thetford market has often been cited by stallholders as the major reason new traders are unable to commit to our market rather than fees charged. Some of the new events being held on the Market Place have helped in this respect. Pop-up gazebos continue to be made available to traders in order to help during periods of adverse weather, or for new traders wishing to try the market for the first time.

The closure of the Market Place to vehicles has allowed the area to become more pedestrian friendly providing a safe access for those using the adjoining businesses and The Guildhall which has now been licenced as a wedding venue. New planters and hedging have been provided along Guildhall Street and more recently new planters are improving the aesthetic appeal of the area between the Shambles and the Guildhall. A long awaited new electrical supply has been provided on the Market Place which will allow greater flexibility for stall holders and those delivering events on the area. Further improvements to lighting are in the pipeline and bespoke iron gates for the Guildhall Street entrance are being procured. During the year, The Red Lion was granted a licence to use an outside seating area that did not impact upon the existing market stallholders.

The National Lottery Heritage Funded Guildhall Heritage Hub project has allowed new accessible toilets and ramps to be provided inside the building and new steps and access ramp to the exterior have been added. These improvements have allowed the building to be more accessible and to be used by a wider variety of users an end of project report has demonstrated the increase in footfall using the building as a result of the project and is worth a read. The old Council Chamber is still earmarked as a Sikh themed room to cater for the ever-growing number of Sikh visitors to the town. The funding has allowed for a Heritage Officer and an Education Officer to be employed to deliver events and educational visits to the Guildhall which have proved popular to schools not only in Thetford but from around Norfolk and Suffolk.

As members of the public will have noticed, the window above the entrance porch has been removed pending a similar replacement being made in keeping with the listed building. The clock has been decommissioned whilst we await the removal of the clock tower which is in a bad state of repair. Due to the unique design, a new structure will need to be made and reinstated once complete. It is envisaged that the building will be without the iconic clock tower for at least a year. Elsewhere in the complex, The Dad's Army Museum continues to pay a rent on its lease of the lower floor of The Guildhall.

Moving on to The Carnegie, works to the roof have made the building watertight once more and improved insulation should help with energy consumption. 2022

saw a large amount of external hirers booking to put on shows and events and it is pleasing to see a number of these promoters returning to helping to develop The Carnegie as a regional entertainment venue. I hope the public will continue to support these events so that a wider entertainment offer for the town can be provided. The Committee remains mindful of the desire for affordable facilities for the use of the townspeople and the setting of rates of hire are reviewed on a periodic basis to ensure that these remain competitive.

St Peter's Church continues to be mothballed and is on the Historic England at risk register. The project development stage of a Historic England Repair Grants for Heritage at Risk grant has been completed, and holding repairs under that grant will be carried out when a suitable project has been identified. It is hoped that the Heritage Masterplan will allow funding to be forthcoming to bring the building back into use. The clock was repaired during the year.

The management of the venues has been carried out by David Brooks and his team. Further sessional staffing is required to cater for demand, and I would like on behalf of the Committee, to thank our existing team of sessional caretakers and bar staff for their flexible approach to enable bookings to be fulfilled.

The Committee also oversees the communications aspect of the Town Council. A new website for the Council is still planned. Events at Council venues are publicised on noticeboards at The Carnegie. Posters about Thetford events are displayed in the rotunda and a newsletter about upcoming events is now being produced which is sent to all on the Council Database. We regularly review our engagement on social media and a Marketing Report is given each month with a view to reaching out to a wider audience about the Council's activities. External paid advertising has also been used during the year.

Councillor Stuart Wright

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

As we started to move out of the pandemic staff vacancies were filled however this year with the new economic crisis it has meant that the Council need to move forward under establishment to balance the budget.

Staff welfare is a priority with staff working with posts empty in their team for extended periods, but the latest staff review shows that staff are in general positive about the future and the stability of the council although understandably concerns remain about future job losses. The Council continues to offer an employee assistance programme to all staff, councillors and their families to support their well-being.

The Committee continued to further the environmental strategy with the main project being the refurbishment and insulating of The Carnegie roof, which has been completed and is able to house solar panels should the Council move forward with that project.

The Committee brought forward the Council signing the respect and civility pledge to uphold high behavioural standards up the Council through mutual respect, training, robust processes and striving for continuous improvement through vehicles such as the Local Council Awards Scheme.

The Committee successfully piloted the use of the Decisions programme to link our agendas and minutes with workflow, which has now been integrated into all the other committees.

Councillor Brenda Canham

PLANNING COMMITTEE

All Town Councillors are members of the Planning Committee which meets on a monthly basis to consider Thetford planning applications submitted. Breckland Council is the planning authority, and the Town Council is a consultee and has no powers to determine applications, although one hopes that the views of the Town Council are considered by Breckland in reaching their decision. However, there is still a public perception that the Town Council has decision making powers. To clarify this issue, Town Council Planning Agendas are being amended to state this fact.

We are also asked to comment on applications of adjoining parishes and examples of this are the new Kingsfleet development in Croxton and Kilverstone and the proposed quarry in Barnham. In respect of this latter matter, the Town Council has major concerns about the proposed HGV traffic that will be routed through Thetford along the Bury Road. The matter has been before Suffolk County Council and was approved in December 2022, but approval was subsequently withdrawn in February 2023. The Town Council continues to oppose the project.

With regards to Kingsfleet, numerous applications have been considered during the last 12 months relating to amendments to the initial plans and detailed plans for the different phases as they progress. As has been mentioned, this development is not within the Thetford parish boundary although from 4th May 2023 the new houses that are being built will transfer to Thetford as part of a new Iceni Ward, although this will not include any development Kilverstone side of Norwich Road. Our key concerns continue to be the connectivity to the town, the mix of different types of housing within the developments and the provision of amenities.

All applications are considered by the Councillors present and we attempt to suggest improvements to schemes or valid planning reasons to oppose those not felt to be appropriate.

Whilst most applications during the year are uncontentious, a number relate to high profile sites and heritage buildings. Increasingly, we are seeing more infill developments which can change the character of the existing area and put extra parking pressure on the neighbourhood. We welcome attendance by members of the public to engage with the planning process and help inform Councillors of their concerns. I am pleased to report that there have been numerous occasions when our deliberations have been aided by the attendance of concerned citizens.

We continue to press Breckland Council to give greater respect to the conservation area and to get involved with applicants to put forward quality designs that improve the appearance of the buildings on the area, especially within the historic core of the town. Unfortunately, there is still a great amount to do in this respect.

Breckland has started work on a district-wide design guide which may help a little in this matter and we are also hopeful that a Conservation Area

Management Plan will be commissioned by Breckland as their contribution to the Heritage Masterplan Project.

An updated Breckland Local Plan is being developed and consultation on the first draft is expected in the Autumn of 2023.

The Committee also submits suggestions for the Parish Partnership Scheme whereby matched funding is obtained from Norfolk County Council for small scale footway improvements and the like. Another role of the Committee is to refer items to the Greater Thetford Partnership which need to be considered at a more strategic level.

I would like to thank the officers for their administrative support and those Councillors who have attended the planning meetings during the year.

Councillor Stuart Wright

Guildhall Heritage Hub Report

Now we are more than a year into the Guildhall Heritage Hub project, this is just a brief document of what we have been achieving and to also share with you some positive quotes and testimonials, here a few things that have been happening over the last year:

- Wednesday morning Craft Group, 2 projects down, over 100 people have attended or worked on things at home or community groups. Runs every Wednesday morning 11am -12.30pm
- Writers Group – meets once a month, creates new writing, poetry, short stories, plays. Has specialist guests come and give talks. Sharing's to audiences. They have written new writing about The Guildhall History and also teamed up with BFER to create some new writing about our rivers and the Brecks.
- Community Choir, meets every other Monday to sing, have been guests and performers to many events in Thetford and are now working towards their first musical theatre concert.
- The development and commission of a Holmes and Kable play - performed on the Market Place September 21 and 22 for our Assizes fair weekend and now tours schools in Norfolk and Suffolk and is a key part of our education packs.
- New displays in the tearoom, corridor, and Large Court about the history of The Guildhall and Thetford.
- Specialist summer markets and entertainment.
- Tales of the Assizes - re telling the tales from our assizes court history with re-enactments of the original manuscripts – these shows have been selling out.
- Assizes fair weekend – Market Place filled with live music and specialist stalls, stocks and gallows outside with over 10 costumed characters (our heritage ambassadors) telling people the history of The Guildhall Assizes courts and giving walking tours to The Old Gaol, the Stocks and Gallows Hill. On the Sunday the play of Holmes and Kable revised – over 250 people came onto the Market Place to watch.
- Shadows of Thetford - in house production about the history of Thetford. Sold out audiences, some wonderful reviews below. All the rooms in The Guildhall were brought to life with stories, performers and lighting and sound to tell lots of different tales form Thetford's past. we then took this idea and made it bigger and better to sell out audiences in Thetford Dungeons for Halloween Weekend.
- Extensive schools' Heritage Schools Project – four education packs have gone into primary schools in Thetford over the last year and we have organised trips and plays to go with these. (The packs also include trips to Charles Burrell Museum, King's House and Ancient House Museum, we have been facilitating and helping with these as well) They have been so successful, and the feedback has been incredible. These along with our events have seen the footfall rise dramatically. Schools in Bury St Edmunds are now interested. We have also written a few bespoke sessions and projects for some Upper Schools, Colleges and 6th Forms and this work is continuing and ever

growing. So far, we have worked with over 1189 young people this month alone.

- Tearoom is more successful every week, with fabulous reviews and footfall increasing. Even now offering bespoke afternoon teas.
- Hirers have increased in the building. We now have a Theatre School Hire, Drag Nights, Weddings, and Funerals as well as Conferences to name but a few.
- Latest figures show increased footfall since the assizes fair and the Jubilee. The schools visits are also meaning we are seeing parents of the children that attend our trips are coming in as their children what them to see where they went on their school trip and what they learnt.
- Had successful school holiday clubs offering free activities for families, which include, theatre, crafts and history activities.
- Successful heritage open day weeks, especially with our last one that was a Steam Punk Weekend, we had over 600 people from all over the UK coming together to celebrate everything Steam Punk, from plays, tea duelling, live music, talks, stalls and more. We also teamed up with the Charles Burrell Museum on this to see their beautiful steam engines on the Market Place.
- Tearoom figures get better and better each month, footfall has increased and continues to do so.
- This has become not just a Heritage Hub but a community hub.
- Just completed the first interim report.

Looking to the future

- Education packs continue to develop and grow, along with outreach work and development of Heritage hero scheme.
- Large Market Place events planned included World War II Weekend, another Steam Punk Weekend and Assizes Weekend, Seaside Special and food and drinks markets.
- Continuing our inhouse productions.
- Heritage Tours.
- Holiday programs for families.
- More displays are to be added and the Market Place will be hopefully re-laid, and gates and electric points installed.

Quotes and testimonials

' I like My history and live in a Georgian house. I love that this building has been restored and is proving such positive services to the community with its central location. The crowds that built up for the Holmes and Kable performance gave a real feel of market town community that has slipped away from life today.'

' I live 40 Minutes away and the impression I've had of Thetford prior to visiting over recent months was not great just through reputation, but through various visits I've learned of a load of fascinating heritage and facts that have completely changed my view. The Guildhall can be a real showcase for the good side of Thetford'

Trip advisor review - 'Saw the historic Holmes and Kable play on the Market place and was blown away! a free event as well, I we were told of many

others that are coming up. Lovely to see the new steps and that the tearoom is open again.'

'A very welcoming and friendly place, with a huge sense of history that's not been lost. Food etc in the tearoom is lovely. Toilets clean and well lit.'

'Thanks so much for Monday! The children absolutely loved the Holmes and Kable and seemed to get so much out of it.'

Can this please be passed on to all those involved in the magical arranging of Father Christmas, Mrs Christmas & elves that we were magically treated to seeing them all at the Guildhall, Thetford today. My two grandsons Henry & George didn't stop talking about it all the way home! Even their mum & I were transported to into their magical world of believing in Santa! This was a lovely experience & just want to pass on our season greeting to all those involved' Welcoming Atmosphere, Service in tearoom was Excellent service, we are visiting from Canada, and it satisfied my need for the ultimate eleven's experience.'

Friendly and So mush History, looking forward to visiting for more history with tales of the assizes, love the rogue display, a great talking point.

Maybe if the market square stop being used as a carpark, outside tables could be used.

We saw Tales from the Assizes in Thetford last night and it was brilliant! The transcripts and actions from the trial were perfect. An added bonus for me was to be asked to be one of the jury - even though I got the verdict wrong! A fabulous evening brought to us by consummate professionals '

'The Tales of the Assizes event by Magic Floor Productions was excellent and we thoroughly enjoyed the reconstruction of the court proceedings. It was also good to have audience participation'

'We thoroughly enjoyed the play. In fact, it was excellent. Acting superb. Got emotionally involved. We saw the Xmas Carol and decided we wanted to see another production of yours. We come from Letchworth Garden city. Hope to see more in the future. Good luck. Charlene Ives'

Came in with my son, he had been here on a school trip, he told me all about the story of Holmes and Cable. It was a lovely place to have tea and cake. It made me smile how excited my son was to bring me here.'

Great performance and wonderful venue'

'Fantastic evening! This is the 2nd trial I have seen here, can't wait for the next. Gemma from Norwich '

I just wanted to email and say thank you for today. The children thoroughly enjoyed it and whilst we were walking back to school they couldn't stop talking about their favourite scenes. Thank you again so much. They're so excited to learn the next part of the story of Holmes and Kable.

I thoroughly enjoyed the production Shadows of Thetford. The cast were brilliant as they completely immersed themselves in the characters bringing to life some of the darker history of Thetford. I loved the way the whole building was used with each room providing a different atmosphere for each tale and enhancing the storytelling. I've lived in Thetford for nearly 50 years and up until last year the Guildhall was just that old building on the market square.

Now it is a place I feel welcomed and appreciate for its history and showcasing Thetford's past. I am looking forward to further productions. An excellent performance, simply excellent. – Thank you, Bob
I come here when I can, food is good and fresh, Staff Pleasant 10/10

‘Absolutely fabulous! All the rooms were so well done, my favourite was the murder in the priory, can't wait for the next one’ – shadows of Thetford.
‘Wonderful evening learnt a lot about Thetford so thank you, cannot wait to see more, we will be back – the days from red lodge’ - Shadows of Thetford
‘Writers group sharing was so inspirational.’

What a fabulous weekend we had at Thetford Assizes weekend, so much to see and do and all costumed characters on the marketplace where full of information and Knowledge about the town I have lived in for so many years. Everyone was friendly and we joined in with the events on Saturday on the marketplace and into the evening with the Assizes court retelling, this is the first one I have been to, and I hope to come again, it was brilliant. We then came back and watched the incredibly clever performance of Holmes and Kable on the Sunday! What a packed weekend, thank you, such a team effort by the guildhall and town council.

The children absolutely loved it, and I too was pleased that they also took an interest in the theatrical aspects. We loved having you in and I thought it was impressive how quickly you utilised all the entry and exit points. The children were so taken back with the show and the history of the town and guildhall, they have written letters which I will be sure to pass on. Thank you so much for bringing the history of Thetford to life.

Had the best panini, I have ever had, it was good. Took a while to come out but it was well worth the wait. Ham and cheese panini, crisps, coleslaw and salad, really good, will come again, 10 out of 10 thank you.

I have been meaning to email to say how good the play was last week. It was brilliant! Nina Hart and I – both from the Business department went and found it both very well done and interesting. Thank you for enabling us to go.

Holmes and Cable

The performance of Holmes and Cable was engaging and emotive. The love story had particular resonance and meaning in that it actually happened within our locality over 200 years ago. The potentially tragic story, at times, had the hairs on my arms standing on end! The carefully crafted narration helped to contextualise the historical detail of the letters and documents which were read, verbatim, from original, authentic prose. The performance brought local history to life in a very human and sensitive way, transcending the barriers of time and culture.

Tales from the Assizes

The court case of Thomas Sell was delivered authentically with attention to detail regarding the costume and dialect of each character. The performance served to highlight the progress we have made as a society with the penal system over the last 2 centuries. The play drew the viewers into the experience through audience participation whereby the viewers also served

as the jury. The play was particularly resonant given the age of the accused and the final outcome. To think that scenario was historically played out in that very same courtroom gave further resonance to the performance.
Louise Gridley - Abbygate 6th form college





THETFORD HERITAGE-LED MASTERPLANNING

Thetford Town Council is delighted to have been awarded a grant of £239,000 from The National Heritage Lottery Fund to appoint a multi-disciplinary heritage team, who with the Councils' partners will develop a town-wide heritage masterplan.

Thetford Town Council is proud to be working with their partners Ancient House Museum, Charles Burrell Museum, English Heritage, Historic England, Pigeon Land Management, and the G.W Staniforth Trust on developing this plan. We are excited to unite the town's history and bring communities together.

Our partners are also excited about this amazing opportunity, Oliver Bone Curator of The Ancient House Museum says "*Thetford has a fascinating history and an impressive heritage. We look forward to working with the Town Council and partners to work up plans for making more of these heritage assets for the benefit of the town.*"

We are thrilled that funding has been agreed to develop a Heritage Master Plan for Thetford. This will produce a clear and recognisable narrative and brand for Thetford, alongside a workable delivery plan that will incorporate all the relevant parts of the town's offer and bring together all the quality research, planning, strategy and implementation that has already been done, to ensure an overarching cohesive, accessible and well-implemented plan that will make the most of Thetford's remarkable heritage assets to generate future sustainability, inclusion, opportunity and wellbeing for locals and visitors alike". Cllr Jane James Mayor of Thetford

We are delighted to learn that funding has been agreed for the multidisciplinary team to work up a Heritage Masterplan for Thetford which will see King's House and its Gardens feature as a significant component of the full bid. It is hoped that the full bid will allow King's House to be restored and refurbished making it suitable for future use and allow the Staniforth collection to be stored in an appropriate environment. The house and gardens have been a key site in Thetford's history over the centuries and it is hoped that this project will allow greater appreciation of the site for Thetford residents and visitors." Stuart Wright Chair of the G.W Staniforth Trust

We are also pleased once again to be working with Tricolor Associates Heritage Development and design who have been appointed as the multi-disciplinary team to develop the projects and business plans through

consultation and research with all the partners. Having worked with them on our previous heritage project we know they will be up for the challenge of such a big project.

The successful funding of the Thetford Heritage Masterplan is testament to placemaking not just being for large urban centres. Heritage brings communities together, can build successful futures for people both socially and economically, and provide amazing resources for future generations. Tricolor are spearheading this approach, putting people first in terms of heritage regeneration, and are delighted to be working with Thetford on this fantastic project.”

Sarah Dowd

Managing Director Tricolor

The project will last for 12 months and will have a series of consultations and events that the public can engage with to shape the towns heritage moving forward.

Supported through The National Lottery Heritage Fund one of the main projects being developed is the meanwhile use of St Peter's Church as an educational space providing courses workshops and apprenticeships for heritage skills in the future.

THETFORD CONSERVATION GROUP

The Thetford Conservation group has grown in numbers since the Autumn of 2022 with past members becoming active again and new members joining. The increase has been a result of new members who have seen the publicity of the group in the Town Council Newsletter and fliers being distributed in various town locations including the rotunda.

The group has undertaken weekly tasks to promote and maintain the wide and varied habitats that Thetford and its surrounding area has and is very privileged to have. These tasks have included gorse clearance at Barnham Cross Common and vegetation management in St Frederick's Wood and Maine Street Wood. Work has been done to promote the habitat of Creeping Marsh Wort along the riverside, a very rare plant with Thetford being one of the few locations in the country where it has been discovered.

The group has done Butterfly Surveys to provide information to national bodies and is currently getting involved with Frog and Toad Spawn Surveys following workshops provided as part of the Brecks Fen Edge Landscape and Rivers Partnership Scheme (BFER). Through the BFER, workshops members gained new skills with a wild crafts technique workshop over two sessions and an upcoming butterfly identification full day event to assist with the 2023 annual survey.

A Christmas wreath-making activity was arranged as the final activity of 2022 to thank the conservation group members for their efforts in 2022.

The group also took part in the BFER Volunteer Celebration Event prior to Christmas with a stand displaying the groups work and information about various species and habitats in the area.

Supported by BFER the first of a series of events called "Wild about Thetford" starts in the Spring. The public will be able to see the range of different flora and fauna on their doorstep, taking part in activities to support our wild birds with bird box and feeder making. There will also be Easter activities including egg painting.

We will also be promoting the opportunities available to get involved with the Thetford Conservation Group and other volunteer groups who will be attending.

David Pentin Organiser

More about the Thetford Conservation Group

Thetford Conservation Group is a project, helping you to become healthier and find out more about your local environment by taking part in nature conservation activities, such as:

- ✓ Hedge planting
- ✓ Woodland management
- ✓ Identifying wildlife

✓ Restoring ponds

✓ Making benches

As well as reducing stress levels, you can meet new people, learn new skills and become more self-confident as you explore beautiful green spaces as part of a friendly organised group. There is also the satisfaction of making a positive contribution to your local environment. Activities take place in short sessions, meaning that they can fit within your day.

All the sites are within Thetford town, making them accessible for those without their own transport.

Can anyone join?

Anyone over 18 can join in. You don't have to turn up every week, come when you can.

Do I need to be physically fit?

No, not at all. We usually have a range of tasks to do so that there is something that everyone can usefully do. We welcome people with a wide range of health conditions and disabilities. You can join in for just an hour, or for up to 3 hours twice a week, working at your own pace. Some sessions focus on learning and fun, whilst others include opportunities to try gentle or more challenging physical tasks.

Do I need to know how to do anything?

No experience is necessary, our leaders will give you all the training you need.

Do I need to bring anything with me?

Please wear outdoor clothes and reasonably sturdy boots or shoes if you have them. Bring along your own snack if you wish. If you need to take medication, please bring it along with you.

We provide:

✓ An experienced, trained, DBS-checked leader.

✓ All the tools and equipment needed for each task, including suitable work gloves.

✓ Tea & coffee for the mid-session break time.

✓ First Aid cover.

✓ Public liability insurance.

Where will I be working?

The group will be working at a number of different sites, including:

- Barnham Cross Common, a Site of Special Scientific Interest for its beautiful breckland flora.
- Fredericks and Maine St, two very different woodlands.
- Ford and Lady Gentle Meadows, both idyllic stretches of riverside.
- Castle Mound, a scheduled ancient monument with Norman and Iron Age features.
- Our cemetery, allotments and community green spaces