

Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on 8 September 2009 at the Old Abbey House, Abingdon.

Present:

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|--------------------------------|--|
| Councillor Peter Fulk | - Chair of Amenities & Recreation |
| Councillor Martin Smith | - Chair of Planning & Highways |
| Councillor Jim Halliday | |
| Councillor Patrick Lonergan | - Chair of Best Value Sub Committee Councillor |
| Councillor Lesley Legge | - Chair of Finance & General Purposes |
| Councillor Julie Mayhew-Archer | - Chair of Museum Management Committee |
| Councillor Alison Rooke | |

In attendance:

| | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------|
| Councillor Jan Morter | - Chair of Grants Sub Committee |
| Nigel Warner | - Town Clerk |
| Sandra Hill | - Deputy Town Clerk |

31 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from the Mayor of Abingdon, Cllr Patricia Hobby and Cllr Angela Lawrence.

32 **Declarations of interest**

Councillors Jim Halliday, Alison Rooke, Patrick Lonergan and Julie Mayhew-Archer all declared personal interests in any matters relating to the Vale of White Horse District Council as they were all elected Members of that Council.

Cllr Lesley Legge declared a personal & prejudicial interest in Item 6 Grants Sub-Committee regarding Stowford House, as she had acted as an independent referee in relation to a lottery funding application. Cllr Legge also declared a personal interest in item 25 Guild of Town Criers.

Cllrs Alison Rooke and Julie Mayhew-Archer declared personal interests Item 19 regarding the Town Council's application for the sale of alcohol on the Market Place as members of the District Council Licensing Committee.

33 **Minutes**

Resolved: *that the minutes of the meeting held on 9 June 2009 be signed as a correct record.*

34 **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

35 **Matters Referred from Other Standing Committees**

County Hall Museum Management Committee – it was reported that the Museum Friends are willing to apply for charity status with the Charity Commission.

Recommended: *That a new fundraising Trust in relation to the Abingdon County Hall Museum Access and Improvement Project not be established, but that instead fundraising from individuals be led by Abingdon Museum Friends, as an existing organisation with strong links to the Museum, subject to all necessary and proper arrangements being formalised between the Council and the Friends.*

36 **Grants Sub-Committee Meeting**

The Chair of the Grants Sub Committee informed the meeting that the Sub Committee had met on 1 September 2009.

Recommended: *that the following grants be approved:*

Cllr Lesley Legge declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the Friends of Stowford application and left the room at 7.10pm whilst this matter was being discussed.

| Name of Applicant | Reason for the grant application | Previous grants received | Grant Recommendation |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|---------------------------------------|
| Abingdon concert Band | Concert March 2010 Part of Abingdon festival. £250 | September 2007 £300 December 2008 £300 | £250 |
| The M S Therapy Centre | New chairs for use in their Oxygen Chamber £900 | None | £500 Vulnerable Young & Elderly Grant |
| Abingdon Vale Netball Club | Coaching sessions £1500 | None | £500 Specify it is for new equipment |
| Oxon Community & Voluntary Action | Volunteering Information Fair 31 st October 2009 £100 | None | £100 |
| The Kingwood Trust | Help with cost of hiring a room at the Guildhall for meetings. This application was deferred at the last meeting in June 2009. Extra information should be available at the meeting. | None | £100 |
| Friends of Stowford | Holiday home for adults with learning difficulties | None | £600 Vulnerable Young & Elderly Grant |

Resolved: *that the above applications be awarded through the grants scheme*

Resolved: *that the Town Clerk would re-send the clubs and societies letter which outlines the Town Council's financial assistance through the grant application process in relation to room hire at the Guildhall, Abingdon.*

37 **Best Value Sub-Committee**

Resolved: *that the Annual Report and Forward Plan for 2009/10 should be placed on the Town Council's website with hard copies of the document being charged in line with the Council's photocopying charges.*

Resolved: *that Working Parties should link-in with the objectives of the Best Value Review.*

Resolved. *That the Committee receive and approve the minutes of the meeting of the Best Value Sub-Committee which took place on 24 July 2009 and any recommendations therein.*

Resolved: *that the Committee endorse the Annual Report and Forward Plan 2009/10 as approved by the Best Value Sub-Committee.*

38 **Fisheries Sub-Committee**

Resolved: *that the Deputy Town Clerk should support Mr Mick Foster in the promotion of the Mayor's annual fishing competitions.*

Resolved: *that the Committee received and approved the minutes of the meeting of the Fisheries Sub-Committee which took place on 4 August 2009 and any recommendations therein.*

39 **Christmas Extravaganza Joint Committee**

Resolved: *that the Committee received and approved the minutes of the meeting of the Christmas Extravaganza Joint Committee held on 4 August 2009 and 7 September 2009 and any recommendations therein*

The Town Clerk verbally stated that the Town Council funded the 2008/2009 Extravaganza, but that financial support from the Chamber of Commerce for 2009/2010 is possibly available. It was noted that the budget for the 2009 event was £2,000 but that last year's Extravaganza cost £4,500 and the event was run at a lower cost compared with similar-sized towns. The costs of the Extravaganza were originally borne by the Chamber of Commerce and local businesses but this funding had become difficult. Members considered that the Extravaganza was an important event for the town, both in terms of town centre vitality and community involvement and linked to a number of key Council objectives.

Resolved: *that if additional sponsorship was not forthcoming from other sources a supplementary estimate of £2,500 be raised to fund the Extravaganza.*

40 **Environmental Impacts Working Party**

Resolved: *that the Committee receive and approve the minutes of the meeting of the Environmental Impacts Working Party held on 20 July 2009 and 7 September 2009 and any recommendations therein.*

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk as circulated with the agenda. Members' comments for the Environmental Charter were considered and noted. It was highlighted that there were two amendments on pages 2 and 3 and that further work should take place to make sure that the Environmental Charter is grammatically correct.

Resolved: *that dates for future meetings need to be arranged well in advance to correspond with Members diaries.*

Resolved: *that the Environmental Charter (as amended) be adopted.*

41 **Guildhall Working Party**

Resolved: *that the Committee receive and approve the minutes of the meeting of the Guildhall Working Party held on 23 June, 15 July and 5 August 2009 and any recommendations therein.*

42 **Town Crier Editorial Working Party**

Resolved: that a 'special' Town Crier Newsletter be produced with effect from 2010, the publication would contain the Annual Report and the business of the Council. Budgetary provision would be made in the 2009/10 estimates. The size of the extra edition would differ from the existing Town Crier Newsletter being A5, containing 16 pages – the 'special' edition being A4, containing 8 pages.

Resolved: that the Chair of the Town Crier Editorial Group and the Deputy Town Clerk would discuss the printing and delivery schedule for the 'special' edition for 2010 onwards.

Resolved. That the Committee receive and approve the minutes of the meeting of the 2009 of the Town Crier Editorial Working Party held on 3 and 27 July 2009 and any recommendations therein

43 **Minutes of Joint Economic Trust (JET)**

Resolved: that Members noted the minutes of the meeting of the JET of 19 June 2009.

44 **Choose Abingdon Partnership – Interim Board/ Board**

Resolved: that Members noted the minutes of the meeting of 13 July 2009. The Town Clerk reported that the Board Meeting of 7 September 2009 agreed to changes within the previously agreed constitution; being that Council representation on the Choose Abingdon Partnership Board would be two councillors from each Council: Abingdon Town Council, the Vale of White Horse District Council and Oxfordshire County Council and an increase in co-opted Membership from (up to) five to (up to) six.

Resolved: that the Council endorse the above changes to the Choose Abingdon Partnership constitution.

The Town Clerk further reported that the Board offered Mr James White the post of Chairperson for the Choose Abingdon Partnership Board, it has yet to be confirmed whether Mr White has accepted.

45 **Schedule of Accounts**

Resolved: that the Committee approve the Schedule of Payments for the period 1st May to 31st August 2009.

46 **Approval of revised statement of accounts for year ended 31st March 2009**

The Town Clerk gave feedback on the meeting with the auditor which took place earlier that day.

The Committee conveyed its thanks to the Town Clerk and staff for the extra work entailed.

Resolved: that the Committee approve the revised statement of accounts for the year ended 31st March 2009, as circulated with the agenda, and give authority for the Mayor and the Town Clerk to sign these accounts on behalf of the Council.

47 **Financial, Performance Monitoring and General report of the Town Clerk**

The Town Clerk highlighted that a revaluation, at the request of the District Auditor, has taken place of the Town Council's properties to account for impairment which had resulted from the recession. A revaluation of the Council's works of art and

treasures had also taken place. The Committee also noted the management accounts for the year to date, monitoring of key objectives, risk management and the update on pension issues.

Fraud and Corruption policy: As part of the audit both the Town Clerk and the Leader were requested to give assurance to the auditors regarding the Council's arrangements for the prevention of fraud and corruption. The Council should now look to have relevant policies in place. Members considered examples of such policies.

Resolved: *that the Council should approach the OALC for the creation of a Fraud and Corruption Policy. The Town Clerk reported that the policy has been requested by the District Auditor and should therefore be implemented as soon as possible*

Resolved: *that the draft Staff Code of Conduct be accepted and that a Councillor/Officer protocol be considered at the next meeting.*

Resolved: *the Committee considered and noted the Town Clerk's report as circulated with the agenda*

48 **Audit matters**

Resolved: *that a meeting of this Committee take place at 6 pm on Monday 28th September 2009 to consider the draft audit opinion, audit letter and Annual Governance report from the Audit Commission.*

Resolved: *that the Committee received and noted the Town Clerk's report as circulated with the agenda*

49 **Market Place, markets and outside events**

Councillors Alison Rooke and Julie Mayhew-Archer declared personal interests in the Town Council's application for the sale of alcohol on the Market Place as members of the District Council Licensing Committee.

Resolved: *that the Deputy Town Clerk should negotiate a pitch rent with the street entertainer starting at £20. The activity would take place on a limited number of occasions per year, and would be managed by the Deputy Town Clerk.*

Resolved: *that the Christmas Craft Fair Stall Holder criteria should be: 'All produce/crafts have to be produced within a 30 mile radius of Abingdon.'*

Resolved: *that pursuant to its powers under the Food Act 1984 the Town Council formally authorise the operation of an Italian Market on the Market Place on Friday 23rd and Saturday 24th October 2009.*

Resolved: *That the Committee received and noted the report of the Deputy Town Clerk as circulated with the agenda.*

50 **Abingdon Michaelmas and Runaway Fairs**

Resolved: *that Members received and noted the report of Project and Technical Manager as circulated with the agenda.*

51 **Christmas lights**

Cllr Lesley Legge verbally reported on a meeting of the Christmas Lights Working Party which took place on 3rd September 2009 to discuss additional Christmas lights.

The Working Party proposed spending approximately £5,000 of the £7,000 budget for new lights as follows:

- Two candles in the Market Place – to complete the new display installed last year.
- High Street – the 4 drapes and balls **OR** the 4 drapes with the stars that are no longer required from the festoon lighting which is being disposed of.
- Three Stars joined together to form a motif on Coxeters and one opposite on Franklins the Solicitors.
- Cherry lights for the tree in Bath Street.

In looking towards 2010 the Working Party would be monitoring the contract for the 2009/10 season and compiling a photographic record of the displays. A meeting would also be arranged for January 2010 to take advantage of any sale offers and speak with possible funders for the lights.

Resolved: *that the actions of the Working Party be endorsed and authority be delegated to the Working Party to procure new Christmas lights within the agreed budget set by the Council.*

52 **Lifebuoy – Ock Valley Walk**

Resolved: *that missing lifebuoy will continue to be replaced, but every effort would be made to search surrounding areas in the first instance. All incidents should be reported to the police.*

Resolved: *that the Committee received and noted the report of the Town Clerk*

53 **Abingdon Information Centre**

Resolved: *that a small working party should be created to work on a review of Abingdon Information Centre.*

Recommended: *that Cllrs Jim Halliday, Lesley Legge and Julie Mayhew-Archer should form Member representation on the Abingdon Information Centre Working Party.*

Resolved: *that the Committee received and noted the Town Clerk's report as circulated with the agenda,*

54 **Non-confidential staffing matters**

The Committee relayed their appreciation to the Deputy Town Clerk for implementing NVQ training for Abingdon Town Council staff.

Resolved: *that the Committee received and considered the Deputy Town Clerk's report as circulated with the agenda*

55 **Civic Matters**

Resolved: *that the committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk as circulated with the agenda.*

Forthcoming events

It was noted that the Royal Logistic Corps at Dalton Barracks intend to exercise the Freedom of Abingdon on Wednesday 25th November 2009, the draft timetable being:

10.30 am – parade from Fire Station;

10.50 am – Mayor and Chairman of District Council take salute at County Hall;

11.00 a.m. – Service at St Helen’s Church.

Further details would be issued as known and the Council’s costs will be funded from the civic budget.

Guild of Town Criers - Cllr Lesley Legge declared a personal interest in the Guild of Town Criers. It was noted that the Guild of Town Criers provides town crying services on a voluntary-basis for the Council throughout the year. The Guild meets twice a year at the Old Abbey House and no charge is made for the room hire.

Resolved: *that it be confirmed as Council policy that no charge be made for room hire for the Guild of Town Criers.*

It was noted that the room is shared with the Citizens’ Advice Bureau, which consequently does not pay a hire charge, and it is existing Council policy, in line with other Councils, that the room is made available for meetings of political groups of the Town Council.

Regular Events

Resolved: *that the Town Clerk should look at the existing regular civic events policy, and bring forward to the next meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee on 11 November 2009.*

56 **Publicity**

Resolved: *there were no publicity items to be discussed as these have been previously done, or are in the process of being publicised.*

57 **Exclusion of the public, including the press**

The Chair will propose:

That in accordance with section 1 (2) of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 (as extended by Section 100 of the Local Government Act 1972), the public (including the press) be excluded from the meeting because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, as summarised below.

- Confidential Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on 9th June 2009;
- Matters arising;
- Guildhall Working Party – confidential minutes;
- Property matters;
- Radley Lakes.

Signed Date