

Licensing Committee and Licensing Acts Committee, and left the meeting during consideration of this matter

F21 **Minutes**

Minute 4 – Declarations of Interest. It was agreed that the third paragraph be altered to state “Cllrs Angela Lawrence, Julie Mayhew-Archer and Alison Rooke declared personal interests in the item under Minute 12, Grants, in relation to the application of Abingdon Street Pastors as they are acquaintances of Revd David Fleming, Chairman of that organisation.” It was also agreed that at Minute 4, paragraph 4 the word “attends” should be changed to “attended”.

Resolved: subject to the above amendments, that the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 14th June 2011 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

F22 **Matters Arising**

It was noted that under Minute 7 (2) a question had been asked by Dr Les Clyne. Further to the referral to the County Hall Museum Management Committee, the Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee, Cllr Sandy Lovatt, responded as follows:

Dr Clyne’s outline of the position is broadly correct. The increase in the expenditure on the Museum service is a result of the following factors, which have been an integral part of the project and the Council’s success in raising significant outside funding:

1. *Entry to the Museum will continue to be free of charge.*
2. *Opening hours will remain about the same, in fact with a slight increase in hours overall.*
3. *The public will have access to more than three times the amount of building areas and displays, throughout opening hours.*
4. *Provision of changing exhibitions will remain about the same (two, smaller, exhibition spaces will each change about three times annually).*
5. *Significant museum space (with displays, information and activities) will be available to all (i.e. full wheelchair access) throughout opening hours, in the refurbished basement.*
6. *It will now be possible to display more valuable, and more vulnerable, treasures in the museum.*

The Museum has always relied on the use of volunteers, and continues to do so. When the Museum re-opens it is planned that volunteers will:

- *Be responsible for staffing the opening of the roof on Saturdays, Sundays and bank holidays from April through to October, welcoming visitors, ensuring adherence to maximum numbers and health and safety requirements.*
- *A roving volunteer will circulate around the Museum to support staff breaks, additional requirements and emergencies.*
- *Deputise for the Sessions Gallery and Second Floor Museum Assistants, as required.*
- *Help Museum Assistants with the activities mentioned in the staff role descriptions.*

- Support the paid staff with managing the collections, dealing with enquiries, setting up exhibitions and other ad hoc duties.

There has to be an appropriate balance between paid staff and volunteers. As part of the planning process for staffing the re-opened Museum, this matter has been carefully examined by the Council's team. The staffing projected, which is the equivalent of three full-time Museum Assistants, in addition to the Curator and part-time administrator, is the appropriate level of staffing for this facility and it is not recommended that this be reduced. Volunteers are an important supplement and support to the paid staff but it is not recommended that they replace the core staff.

The staff are currently working on the business plan for the improved Museum and following its consideration and approval by Members, this will be available in due course.

F23 **Statements and Questions from the Public**

The following statements from the Public were received:

Statement from Dr Les Clyne

Politics is about priorities. Levels of tax are agreed based on planned expenditure. The Liberal Democrat plans for the current term were based on four priorities as given in their manifesto namely the Guildhall, Abbey Meadow & the Open Air pool, County Hall & Museum, and Market Place events. This plan was rejected by the electorate. Note that all the priorities were in the centre of Abingdon, no local community priorities at all.

The Conservative manifesto pledged to freeze the Town Council tax and to spend money on improved snow clearance facilities, amongst other items. So where will the money come from for snow clearance for example? Should it be from the play area budget as currently proposed, or from one of the 'sacred cow' budgets from the previous administration.

The planned Liberal Democrat revenue expenditure for the County Hall & Museum after the development project is £180,000 a year, a 50% increase over the pre-development budget. Assuming an annual visit total of 20,000 this is £9 a visit, or £15 per household in Abingdon.

I hope that the new administration will start to focus more on local facilities, and less on grand buildings like the Museum which few Abingdon residents visit more than a small number of times in their life. By focus I mean change their priorities and budgets accordingly. For a start I have proposed that the Museum revenue budget after the development should be no more than £160,000 - £165,000.

Statement from Mr Michael Moon, of the Abingdon-on-Thames Chamber of Commerce

The Chamber of Commerce is working hard to re-establish Abingdon as a Fair Trade town. We are aware that the matter of Fair Trade had been referred by

the Town Council to this Committee and welcome the Council's support of Fair Trade so that the Chamber could progress its application.

The following question from a member of the public was received:

1 Question from Dr Les Clyne

Will the Finance & General Purposes Committee support the following budget changes for next financial year?

1. £15,000 reduction in next year's revenue budget for the Museum, in line with my proposals to the last F&GPC committee.

2. £15,000 increase in next year's budget for play areas to be spent along the lines I suggested to the Amenities Committee chair, together with the £5,000 being carried over from this year's budget.

Response

The Leader of the Council, Cllr Sandy Lovatt stated:

"We are about to start our budget planning for 2012-13. It would be irresponsible to make any commitment at this stage."

F24 Matters referred

Cllrs Marilyn Badcock, Sandy Lovatt and Peter Jones declared personal interests in (ii) (a) of this item as Members of Oxfordshire County Council which has a responsibility for highways.

(i) Town Council meeting of 29th June 2011

Members received and considered the report of the Town Clerk in relation to the above and the briefing from the Leader of the Council. It was reported that a motion in relation to Fair Trade, proposed by Cllr Samantha Bowring and seconded by Cllr Angela Lawrence, had been referred to the Finance and General Purposes Committee to assess the motion's impact on the town and the Council, and to advise the Council on the appropriate course of action to take. Members considered the briefing paper produced by the Leader of the Council and it was **recommended** that the Abingdon Town Council supports Fair Trade, and agrees to provide fair trade products in meetings, offices and other facilities operated by the Council, as a choice.

(ii) Amenities and Recreation Committee Meeting of 7th September 2011.

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk in relation to two matters referred by the Amenities and Recreation Committee.

a Salt Bins and Snow Clearance.

It was reported that at the Amenities and Recreation Committee members had discussed the establishment of a new budget for salt bins and snow clearance. This would potentially involve the purchase of 51 salt bins for the town and three snow clearers. The Council's Head of Service Delivery had submitted a report

to the Amenities and Recreation Committee outlining the proposal. There were some further investigations to undertake but the Committee was keen to put in place the ability to progress this matter.

In response to a query from a Member it was estimated that the salt bins themselves would last for approximately ten years; revenue costings being clarified in relation to the costs of grit. The Member also stated that, in her view, highways and pavements were a responsibility of Oxfordshire County Council and by undertaking this work the Town Council would be saving the County Council money. She queried whether those Members also serving on the County Council should declare both a personal and prejudicial interest in this matter. The Town Clerk stated that he was not in a position to advise at this point. However, he did advise that this was a personal interest which was covered by the interests declared by all the County Councillors at the start of the meeting. He stated that he would need to take further advice on this matter and therefore advise that it would be prudent for the Committee to refer this matter direct to the Town Council, at the meeting of which he would give further advice. It was therefore **recommended** that the Town Council take the decision on whether a sum of £15,000 should be vired from the Play Equipment Improvement Budget (code 4163, a capital budget) to a new budget head for salt bins and snow clearance, and subject to this budget virement being agreed, that authority be delegated to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Committee, to incur expenditure in accordance with the report of the Head of Service Delivery, as considered by the Amenities and Recreation Committee.

b HM the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Celebrations

The Committee considered a recommendation from the Amenities and Recreation Committee to allocate monies from the Community Fund towards the cost of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Celebrations. It was noted that such an allocation was in accordance with the summary criteria for expenditure from this fund.

In considering this matter, a Member stated that she felt that this was too large an allocation from the Community Fund and that there may be community groups who require these funds. Another Member stated that this was the fund for which the Jubilee Celebrations were intended and therefore the celebrations should be funded from this budget. In further discussion Members stated that the Council should also consider a permanent commemoration of the Jubilee, for instance, through artwork, a statue of the Queen or a bandstand. A suggestion was also put forward that the Roysse Court should also be improved and set out as a Jubilee garden. It was recommended unanimously that a sum of £25,000 be allocated from the Community Fund towards the cost of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Celebrations. (*The Mayor of Abingdon, Cllr Michael Badcock, entered the meeting at this point*).

F25 Communications Sub-Committee

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the meeting of the Communications Sub-Committee which took place on 20th July 2011.

The Leader of the Council, Cllr Sandy Lovatt, stated that the Fun in the Park Event which took place on Sunday 11th September had been a great success. He did wonder whether “Fun in the Park” was the most appropriate description for this event and noting that in 2012 it was planned for a similar event to take place as part of the Jubilee Celebrations in June 2012, he stated that the Jubilee Working Party may wish to consider re-naming the event, perhaps as one of the ancient fairs which were no longer held in the town. It was agreed that this idea should be taken forward in considering the programme for the Jubilee.

Resolved to receive the minutes of the meeting of the Communications Sub-Committee which took place on 20th July 2011.

F26 **Exclusion of the public, including the press**

At the request of the Mayor, Cllr Michael Badcock, the confidential agenda item in relation to civic matters was considered at this point and consequently it was **resolved**:

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:

Civic matters.

Reversion to Public Session

Following the consideration of the confidential item, the meeting reverted to open session and the Mayor left the meeting at this point.

F27 **Grants Sub-Committee**

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the Grants Sub-Committee of 5th September 2011.

There was some discussion with regard to the recommendation at Minute 8 of the Sub-Committee minutes, that the General Fund, the Fund for Organisations supporting Vulnerable, Elderly and Young People, and the Twinning Grant Fund should be amalgamated to form one fund. The Chairman of the Sub-Committee, Cllr Monica Lovatt, explained that the rationale of the Sub-Committee was that by combining these funds, which had a combined value of £23,550, it would be much easier to ensure that funds are allocated where the greatest need had been demonstrated. A number of Members supported this view but an alternative view was expressed that the Fund for Organisations supporting Vulnerable, Elderly and Young People, had been established to earmark significant funds towards these groups and this could be undermined by combining the funds. A Member suggested that these concerns could be overcome by the Committee setting some priorities between key groups and then monitoring these as grants are allocated. This suggestion found favour with Members and following an amendment to the recommendation of the Grants Sub-Committee, it was **resolved**:

- 1 that the General Grants Fund, the Fund for Organisations supporting Vulnerable, Elderly and Young People, and the Twinning Grants Fund be combined into one budget head in relation to grants.
- 2 that the Grants Sub-Committee set priorities for the targeting of grants,

expressed through percentages between key groups to be decided by the Grants Sub-Committee, and that these percentages be monitored against grants allocated following each meeting.

The Committee then proceeded to consider the recommendations of the Grants Sub-Committee in relation to grants to be allocated.

3 that the following grants be awarded:

<u>Name of organisation</u>	<u>Grant awarded</u>
Abbey Brass	£500
Abingdon Jazz Club	£100 (club to be advised to apply to District Council for remainder of requested sum)
Abingdon Rowing Club	£234
St Edmund's Football Club	£300
Sunningwell School of Art	£200
Trinity Church	£300
South and Vale Carers Centre	£500
Abingdon Marathon	£400

It was noted that the application from the South Abingdon Community Led Plan had been deferred to the Finance and General Purposes Committee for decision.

The Leader of the Council, Cllr Sandy Lovatt, reported that he, together with the Chairman of the Grants Sub-Committee, Cllr Monica Lovatt, and the Town Clerk had met with Mr Neil Boston, Chairman of the South Abingdon Residents' Plan Group to discuss their application for grant funding. Members considered that this was a worthwhile community project which the Council should engage in. It was noted that potentially this could represent supplementary planning guidance under the Local Plan. It was noted that the sum requested by the group was £3,358. Members considered that at this stage a lesser sum should be allocated but that the group be informed that they could apply to the Grants sub-committee with a request for further funds. It was **resolved** that a sum of £1,000 be allocated towards the South Abingdon Community Led Plan, subject to the Town Council receiving copies of all minutes, agendas and documents produced in relation to this work, including accounts of the organisation, and that the support of the Town Council should be acknowledged by the group.

It was also noted that the application in relation to the Abingdon Good Neighbour Scheme had also been referred by the Grants Sub-Committee to the Finance and General Purposes Committee; however, the group had requested that this application be deferred for now.

F28 **Choose Abingdon Partnership Board**

It was noted that the minutes of the Board had not been received by the Town Council for inclusion on the agenda. The Chairman of the Committee, Cllr Sandy Lovatt, suggested that it would perhaps be more appropriate for these minutes to be referred directly to the Town Council and it was resolved accordingly.

Cllr Iain Littlejohn, as one of the Town Council's representatives on the Board, gave a verbal report of proceedings. Over the past few months the Board had looked at its priorities going forward with a view to taking a more strategic approach to its work. The

Partnership had looked at the various stakeholders, identified their needs and priorities and how these were met in Abingdon. This had identified gaps in provision for these groups and in taking the work forward, the Board would now be looking at the many and varied projects and work that had been put forward to see how the needs of the various stakeholders in the town could be met.

F29 **Payment Schedule, Financial and Performance Monitoring and General Report of the Town Clerk / Responsible Financial Officer**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk / Responsible Financial Officer in relation to the above. In considering the payment schedule, a Member raised an issue of the Mayor's allowance which had been paid under cheque number 16694. She stated that her understanding was that the allowance had been set to take account of having to meet half the cost of the Mayor Making Supper, and as this had not taken place, she had questioned whether part of the allowance should be returned. The Town Clerk stated that the Mayor's Allowance was set by the Council as an allowance and had quite properly been paid over in accordance with the Council's resolution. (Cllr Marilyn Badcock declared a personal and prejudicial interest in this item as her husband is Cllr Michael Badcock, the Mayor of Abingdon, and left the meeting during discussion of this matter).

It was **resolved**:

- 1 that the report be noted.
- 2 that the Schedule of Accounts for the period May-July 2011 be approved by the Council.
- 3 that the financial position as detailed in the summary management accounts for the financial year to date be noted by the Council.
- 4 that it be noted that an annual review of the Council's business risk assessments would take place during the next financial quarter (period to 31st December 2011) and that authority be delegated to the Town Clerk to undertake these risk assessments and take such measures as are necessary to reduce any risks identified.

The Town Clerk reported that he had on 8th September received an e-mail communication from the District Council stating that "due to necessary changes to the District Council's 2012/13 budget setting process, in order to incorporate newly imposed and revised timescales, the timetable for next year's pre-set setting has had to be brought forward by four weeks." The Town Council was now being requested to precept by Friday 6th January 2012, whereas the Council's final budget meeting was scheduled for 25th January 2012. The Town Clerk would report further in this regard.

F30 **Guildhall**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk in relation to the above. It was **resolved** that the above report be noted and approved and **recommended** that the Council release the sum of £30,000 from the reserve earmarked for the Guildhall towards necessary feasibility and technical studies in relation to the property and specifically the Phase 2 and 3 Works, the spending of this budget to be delegated to the Guildhall Committee.

F31 **Democratic Matters – Agenda distribution (methods) and representation on outside bodies**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk in relation to the above.

a) **Distribution of agendas**

The Committee considered the current Council policy and the proposal made by Cllr Iain Littlejohn in relation to this policy. Members considered that it was important that Members be given a choice in receiving any or all papers in hard copy format. It was **recommended**:

- 1 All Members to receive an electronic and a paper copy of the agenda for meetings of the full Town Council.
- 2 Agendas and papers relating to Committees, Sub-Committees, Working Parties and groups be distributed electronically to all Members of the Council.
- 3 A small number of paper copies of the papers referred to in paragraph 2 be made available at these meetings.
- 4 Individual Councillors can request that papers be sent to their homes on an “opt-in” basis for Committees, Sub-Committees, Working Parties and groups.

b) **Representation on Outside Bodies**

Members considered the issues surrounding the membership of outside bodies and it was **resolved**:

- 1 That a survey of outside bodies to which representatives are appointed is undertaken in accordance with the report outlined by the Town Clerk.
- 2 That as part of the survey, the outside bodies be requested to consider whether or not they would wish for an additional Town Council representative to serve on that body.
- 3 That as part of this review, a policy on conflicts of interest should be drafted.
- 4 That the Town Clerk should give advice to Members regarding their membership of outside bodies although ultimately the decision regarding their membership is one for the Member themselves.
- 5 That should a Member consider they no longer wish to serve on an outside body, this matter would be referred to the Town Council for the appointment of a new Member. However, should the Member resign from the appointment due to concerns regarding the finances or the management of the outside body, or for any other reason which the Member or the Town Clerk considered gave cause for concern, continued representation should then be referred to the Finance and General Purposes Committee, which would be requested to make a recommendation to the Town Council.

F32 **New electoral arrangements for Oxfordshire County Council**

The Committee received and considered the report to the Town Clerk in relation to the above, together with the draft recommendation which have been received from the Local Government Boundary Commission for England. The Chairman of the Committee, Cllr Sandy Lovatt, reported that proposals in relation to the parliamentary constituencies had been published by the Commission within the last few days.

Resolved:

That the report of the Town Clerk and the draft recommendations be noted.

F33 **Publicity**

Members considered that the ongoing progress in relation the HLF funded County Hall Improvement and Access Project should be given publicity.

F34 **Exclusion of the public, including the press**

Resolved:

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.

F35 **Minutes**

Resolved: that the confidential minutes of the meetings of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 14th June 2011 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

F36 **Market Place – premises licence**

The Committee received and considered the confidential report of the Deputy Town Clerk in relation to the above. **Resolved:** that the above report and the recommendations contained therein be approved, and that consideration be given to additional staff undertaking the Responsible Persons Course at an appropriate point in the future.

(Cllrs Marilyn Badcock, Peter Jones and Julie Mayhew-Archer declared a personal and prejudicial interest in relation to this matter as Members of the Vale of White Horse District Council General Licensing Committee and Licensing Acts Committee, and left the meeting during consideration of this matter).

The meeting rose at 9.25 pm.