

ABINGDON TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on Tuesday 14th June 2011 at 7.00pm at the Old Abbey House.

Present

Cllr Sandy Lovatt	Chairman & Chairman of Best Value Sub-Committee
Cllr Peter Jones	Chairman of Planning & Highways Committee
Cllr Julie Mayhew-Archer	Chairman of County Hall Museum Management Committee
Cllr Angela Lawrence	
Cllr Iain Littlejohn	
Cllr Monica Lovatt	
Cllr Katie Nobes	
Cllr Alison Rooke	

In attendance

Mr Nigel Warner	Town Clerk
Mr Stephen Rich	Head of Service Delivery

3 Apologies

Apologies were received from the Mayor of Abingdon, Cllr Mike Badcock and Cllr Marilyn Badcock, Vice Chairman and Chairman of Amenities & Recreation.

4 Declarations of interest

Councillors Peter Jones and Sandy Lovatt declared a personal interest in any matters relating to the Oxfordshire County Council as they are members of that authority.

Councillors Peter Jones, Angela Lawrence, Sandy Lovatt and Julie Mayhew-Archer declared a personal interest in any matters relating to the Vale of White Horse District Council as they are members of that authority.

Councillor Alison Rooke declared a personal interest in the item under Minute 12, Grants, in relation to the application by Abingdon Street Pastors as she is a friend of the Reverend David Fleming, Chairman of that organisation, and also in the grant application in relation to Heritage Open Day as she is a friend of the co-ordinator, Alastair Fear.

Councillor Iain Littlejohn declared a personal interest in Minute 12, Grant Applications, as his daughter attends the Abingdon Music Centre.

Councillor Julie Mayhew-Archer declared a personal interest in the item at Minute 12, Grant Applications, in particular the application by the Abingdon Music Centre Trust, as she is a friend of James Hines who is Chair of the Trustees, and also the application in relation to Heritage Open Day, as she is a friend of the organiser, Alastair Fear.

5 **Minutes**

Resolved: that the minutes of the meetings of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 15th March and 16th May 2011 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

6 **Matters Arising**

The Chairman, Cllr Sandy Lovatt, noted that the declarations at Minute 149 were voluminous and at the County Council a paper is attached to the relevant agenda so that the interests could be noted at the meeting. The Town Clerk stated that he would make contact with the Democratic Services Officer at the County Council to ascertain how this procedure worked; his initial advice was that if this had been operated successfully by the County Council it would be something that could be incorporated into the Town Council procedures.

7 **Statements and Questions from the Public**

The following questions from the Public were received:

1 **Question from Dr Les Clyne**

Please can the Leader confirm that the budget of £20,000 for play area improvements in 2011/2012 is still available despite the slippage of £12,000 from last financial year?

The Leader responded: Yes.

2 **Question from Dr Les Clyne**

I understand from Dr Gilmour that the £60,000 increase in running costs of the Museum after the development project can be attributed to 2 extra paid staff and maintenance of the lift. Please will the F&GPC committee ask the Museum Management Committee to investigate whether £20,000 can be saved, for example by only having one extra paid staff and make use of more voluntary staff and better use of other staff e.g. by reducing effort spent on marketing? This will allow the savings to be spent on other high priority items in the Council's remit e.g. play area improvements.

The Leader responded that the Finance and General Purposes Committee would ask the County Hall Museum Management Committee to investigate this matter. The staff were currently working on the business plan for the re-opening of the County Hall Museum and this would be made public in due course. He stated that the Council would, of course, be looking to obtain Best Value from its Museum Service.

With the permission of the Chairman, the Chairman of the County Hall Museum Management Committee, Cllr Julie Mayhew-Archer, commented that the Museum already has a good number of volunteers and relies heavily on their services.

8 **Best Value Sub-Committee**

Resolved: to receive the minutes of the meeting of the Best Value Sub-Committee

that took place on 16th May 2011.

9 **Choose Abingdon Partnership Board**

Members noted that there was a delay between the Board meetings and the minutes being available for consideration by this Committee. The Town Clerk was requested to contact the Partnership Manager with the dates of this Committee to enquire if they could be made available sooner.

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting of the 1st February and 22nd March 2011 be noted.

10 **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 Finance Officer in relation to the above as circulated with the agenda.

The Town Clerk spoke through his report and members considered the report. It was resolved:

- 1 that the Schedule of Accounts for the period March and April 2011 be approved.
- 2 that the report on the Management Accounts for the year to date be approved.
- 3 that the Bank Mandate should be amended so that members of the Finance and General Purposes Committee be appointed as cheque signatories and that, in accordance with the requirement of the Council's bankers:
 - that the Bank should continue to operate accounts in the name of the Council and that:
 - (i) the bank should pay cheques or accept other written instructions to make payments by any means (including electronically) from any of the Council's accounts, even if this causes an overdraft or increases an existing overdraft.
 - (ii) For all other purposes (without being in any way limited by paragraph (i) above), the bank may treat any written instruction, agreement or undertaking of any nature as duly given by and binding on the Council when signed by any two Councillors from list A (Members of the Finance and General Purposes Committee) and any one officer from List B (Town Clerk or Deputy Town Clerk).
 - (iii) The signatories who sign in accordance with the signing instructions above may agree and sign on the Council's behalf, any agreement or document necessary for the provision of banking services involving the giving of instructions by the Council to the Bank or the giving of information by the Bank to the Council by electronic or similar means.
 - (iv) These resolutions and the Council's mandate to the Council be completed and given to the bank, to remain in force until the bank are advised in writing to the contrary (which includes any revocation of this mandate) when signed by any two authorised signatories, as named in the Authorised Signatory Sheet(s).
 - (v) The Authorised Signatory Sheet(s) be completed and given to the bank.
- 4 That the report for the final accounts for the year ended 31st March 2011 and the audit process be noted.

- 5 That the report in relation to the Forward Plan for 2011/12 and beyond, and the Annual Report, be noted, and that the Audit and Performance Sub-Committee consider the Council's objectives and priorities and set these out in a Forward Plan, to report back to the September meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee, with a view towards adopting such a plan in the autumn.
- 6 that the following markets be created by the Council in accordance with its powers under the Food Act 1984:

French market - 22nd, 23rd and 24th September 2011;
Choose Abingdon Local Excellence Market - 29th October 2011;
Chamber of Commerce Members' Showcase Days 13th August, 8th October and 26th November 2011.

11 **Council Committee Terms of Reference, and Sub-Committees and Working Parties of the Finance and General Purposes Committee**

The Committee received and considered the attached report of the Town Clerk as circulated with the agenda.

i) **Council Committee Terms of Reference**

Members considered the Committee Terms of Reference and in particular, the division of responsibilities between the Amenities & Recreation Committee and the Finance & General Purposes Committee. It was **recommended** that the Terms of Reference of the Committees be altered and that responsibility for the following services be transferred from the Finance & General Purposes Committee to the Amenities & Recreation Committee:

The Abingdon Fisheries, Community Events (including Market Place events, the proposed events for the Diamond Jubilee of HM the Queen but excluding civic /Mayoral events) and the Christmas Lights and Extravaganza Evening.

ii) **Sub-Committees and Working Parties of the Finance and General Purposes Committee**

It was **resolved**

- a) That the Best Value Sub-Committee be re-named the Audit and Performance Sub-Committee and that its membership be increased from four to five members;
- b) That the Personnel Sub-Committee be appointed; its membership being the Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee plus four members. The Committee considered that the requirement for this sub committee should be kept under review and that subject to business, staffing matters should normally be considered by the parent committee, the Finance and General Purposes Committee;
- c) That a Personnel Appeals Panel is appointed and that three councilors serve on this Committee.
- d) That a Communications Sub-Committee be established to consider those matters previously dealt with by the Town Crier and the Website Working Parties and that this Sub-Committee consists of five members.

It was **recommended** that at its meeting on 29th June 2011 the Council appoints the following members:

- a) One additional member to the Audit and Performance Sub-Committee, noting that this committee is the successor to the Best Value Sub-Committee which had already four members appointed by the Town Council.
- b) Four members to the Personnel Sub-Committee, in addition to the Chairman of Finance and General Purposes Committee.
- c) Five members to the Communications Sub-Committee

The Committee noted that it was recommended that Fisheries would be the responsibility of the Amenities and Recreation Committee and that the siting and location of bus shelters was a matter for the Planning and Highways Committee. Consequently consideration of the need for sub committees to deal with these matters would be referred to these Committees.

There was discussion regarding the Environmental Impact Working Party. Members concluded that the responsibilities for the business of this Working Party spread across a number of committees, including Planning & Highways Committee, where development issues were considered, and the Amenities & Recreation Committee where direct council services were involved. It was therefore considered that these matters should be referred direct to those committees.

It was noted that both the Christmas Lights and Extravaganza, and the Diamond Jubilee, were to become responsibilities of the Amenities and Recreation Committee, which had met on 8th June 2011. Whilst acknowledging that it would now be the responsibility for that Committee to set any appropriate working parties in motion, the Finance and General Purposes Committee considered that working parties should be formed for both these matters. In relation to the Christmas Extravaganza, the Council supported the Chamber of Commerce and plans for the Extravaganza would need to be made over the coming months. In relation to the Diamond Jubilee, plans would need to be made in readiness for June 2012. The Committee therefore **recommended** that:

- a) The Council appoints a Christmas Extravaganza and Lights Working Party to report directly to the Amenities and Recreation Committee and that the membership of this working party consists of the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor and a past Mayor, the latter to be appointed by the Town Council.
- b) That a Diamond Jubilee Working Group be appointed by the Town Council to consist of five Councillors.

A member stated that she was concerned that the Guildhall Committee, which reported direct to the Town Council, did not have enough members, and that the number on the Committee should be increased from three to five members. It was **recommended** that this matter be considered by the Town Council at its meeting on 29th June 2011.

iii) Environmental Project grants

It was noted that the Abingdon Joint Environmental Trust (JET) had been dissolved as of 31st March 2011 although the District Council had allocated a budget for 2011/12, a sum of £5,000, towards environmental projects. This had

been matched by the Town Council, making a total sum of £10,000. The Council had previously agreed to take on the functions of the JET and to administer this through a sub-committee, which could include members co-opted from the District Council and outside bodies. The Council had now also received a Service Level Agreement from the District Council to govern the release of its contribution towards environmental projects. It was **resolved**:

- 1 The Town Clerk sign the Service Level Agreement with the District Council in relation to that Council's funding for environmental projects in the town, together with the criteria under which any grants given from these funds would be allocated.
- 2 That it be noted that general criteria (4) as proposed by the District Council states: "where appropriate, the council may require an applicant to agree to erect a small plaque bearing the council's name to commemorate the contribution and that the Town Council wish to alter this to state "where appropriate, the council may require an applicant to agree to erect a small plaque bearing the name of both the District and Town Councils to commemorate the contribution."
- 3 That the Town Council forms a Grants Sub-Committee of seven members, reporting to the Town Council. The Terms of Reference of this Grants Sub-Committee, would be the same as the previous Grants Sub-Committee, i.e. to make recommendations in relation to grants to be allocated from the Council's general funds, its fund for organisations supporting vulnerable, elderly and young people, and Twinning Grants, and that in addition the Grants Sub-Committee would consider applications towards environmental projects funded from the £5,000 in the Service Level Agreement (District Council and the matching sum from the Town Council).
- 4 That in accordance with the Service Level Agreement, District Councillors be consulted on the grants towards environmental projects by the Town Council writing to all Abingdon District Councillors (by email) two weeks ahead of the agenda dispatch date, giving details of the grants to be considered in relation to environmental projects, and that the Grants Sub-Committee consider any representations made by District Councillors as a result of this consultation.

A member stated that an Abingdon in Bloom Sub-Committee had not been appointed by the Amenities and Recreation Committee. It was noted that this should be raised when the Amenities and Recreation Committee minutes were brought to Council for consideration.

It was **recommended** that the Town Council appoints seven members to the Grants Sub-Committee at its meeting of 29th June 2011.

12 **Grants**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk as circulated with the agenda.

Resolved that the following grants be awarded:

- i) General Fund (budget £11,550)

Name of Applicant	Grant Awarded
Sophie Dudhill	£100
Age UK Oxfordshire	£850
Vitalise	£430
WRVS Darby & Joan	£300
Abingdon Music Centre Trust	£250

Total awarded £1,930; total remaining budget £9,630)

ii) Vulnerable, Elderly & Young People Grants (budget £10,500)

Name of Applicant	Grant Awarded
Abingdon Street Pastors	£1,000
Nasio Trust	£675
Vale of White Horse Foyer	£5,000

Total awarded £6,675; total remaining budget £3,875)

iii) Environmental Project Grants (budget £10,000)

Name of Applicant	Grant Awarded
Heritage Open Day	£500

Total awarded £500; total remaining budget £9,500).

13 **Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils (OALC)**

It was noted that nominations had been invited for the Executive Committee of OALC for the period 2011 to 2015. It was noted that Cllr Angela Lawrence of this Council currently served as the member representing the Vale area.

It was proposed, seconded and **resolved** that Cllr Angela Lawrence be nominated to the Executive Committee of OALC for the period 2011 to 2015.

13 **PCSO Neighbourhood Report**

The Committee noted the PCSO Neighbourhood newsletter was circulated to all Councillors via email.

14 **Publicity**

Resolved: that a press release be issued in relation to grants awarded by the Council and also Guildhall Improvements.

15 **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, as summarised below:

16 **Confidential Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on 15 March 2011**

Resolved: that the confidential minutes of the meetings of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 15th March and 16th May 2011 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

17 **Guildhall**

The Committee received and considered the confidential report of the Town Council, as circulated with the agenda.

A Member requested that the Guildhall Committee consider the possibility of the Museum making use of space in modern part of the Guildhall for storage of Museum items currently stored at the Museum Resources centre, Standlake.

Recommended:

- 1 That the Town Council releases a sum of £140,000 towards capital improvements in the historic part of the Guildhall and for the improvement of services. This to be known as Phase 1 of the Guildhall Improvement Project. It was further recommended that approval of the specification for the improvements of this part of the building be delegated to the Guildhall Committee, and that this phase proceeds in the near future. It was noted that in addition a further £100,000 (approximately) of improvements would be recommended to be carried out in this area over the next ten years.
- 2 That the Town Council releases a sum towards comprehensive improvements to the kitchens, and that any urgent works are funded from revenue, and funded from the sum set aside by the Vale of White Horse District Council towards building repairs and renewals. It was noted that a further report was due on this matter and would be reported to the Council.
- 3 That the Council earmark a sum of £225,000 towards the Guildhall Refresh Scheme to undertake works to the Abbey Hall, excluding the foyer area, the scope of these improvements to be examined by the Guildhall Sub-Committee for a report to come back to the Council before proceeding with major works. It was further recommended that this, Phase 2 of the improvements, be scheduled for early 2012.
- 4 That the Council develop plans in relation to the foyer area of the Guildhall which would involve the potential for rebuilding of the space and possible inclusion of office accommodation.

It was **resolved** that the recommendations being made by this Committee in relation to the above should be moved into the public domain and that the recommendations be considered by the meeting of the Town Council which will be held on 29th June 2011.

The meeting rose at 9.35 pm.