

Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 20th April 2010 at 8.00 pm in the Committee Room at the Old Abbey House, Abingdon.

Present: Cllr Peter Fulk - Chair of Amenities & Recreation
Cllr Jim Halliday
Cllr Patrick Lonergan - Chair of Best Value Sub
Cllr Lesley Legge
Cllr Julie Mayhew-Archer - Chair CH Museum Management
Cllr Martin Smith - Chair of Planning & Highways
Mayor of Abingdon - Ex-officio

In attendance: Mr Nigel Warner - Town Clerk
Mr Steve Rich - Project & Technical Manager

135 **Apologies**

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

136 **Declarations of interest**

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

137 **Minutes**

It was noted that the draft minutes of 23rd March 2010 were produced on the day of the Council meeting, 24th March 2010, so they could be considered for that meeting. Members were appreciative of the speed with which the minutes were produced so that the Council could consider them. However this had led to a number of errors which, whilst not affecting the overall utility of the draft for the purposes of the Council, needed to be corrected at this meeting for accuracy of the record.

Members made a number of amendments and requested that the amended set of minutes then be circulated.

Resolved: that, subject to the above amendments, the minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee meetings held on 23rd March 2010, be signed as a true and correct record.

138 **Matters Arising**

Minutes 115 and 132: Fisheries Sub-Committee – the Town Clerk stated that he had no update on the matters raised at the previous meeting.

Minute 143 (2): York stone Market Place: the Projects and Technical Manager reported that he had asked the original supplier of York stone on the Market Place to give a price for replacement paving slabs.

139 **War Memorial and County Hall precincts**

Members received and considered the report of Projects and Technical Manager, as circulated with the agenda.

The Chair introduced Mr Mike Habermehl of Adams Habermehl, who are were the Council's architects for these projects. Mr Habermehl stated that the reason for the tilt of the war memorial was that it was situated on sandy soil and did not have proper foundations. As new foundations needed to be set it made sense to consider whether the memorial should be relocated within the site to allow better and more sympathetic use to be made of the area. It had also been a number of years since the area had been landscaped and the area was in need of improvement.

Mr Habermehl outlined three options which he had been working on. He stated that in looking at how to set out the area he had looked at the setting of the Square and the surrounding buildings. These were then considered by members and the following points were made.

The underground chamber, over which the War Memorial cannot be placed, is an inhibiting factor in designing this area. Could it be filled in?

The relative merits of placing seating in this area were debated. Seats would deter people from simply using the area to walk across to get to other places. However they could be a problem for the annual act of remembrance.

Would it be possible to have a hybrid option? A Member preferred option A for the trees, option B for the war memorial and option C for the flower baskets.

With regard to option B some Members liked this because of the trees and the seats; there was a symmetry and cleanness to the design. The drawings represented the trees as being far more dominant than they really would be, this is a large area. The trees could be used for Christmas lights if electrical sockets were installed. The flowers in option C could detract from the area.

Mr Habermehl suggested that there should be a similarity in design to the Market Place, for example through planning of liquid amber trees and the installation of similar street furniture. The seats which surround the trees on the Market Place consisted of two units, each of which wrapped round 180 degrees of the tree. He suggested that a single unit could surround half of each tree, but a Member stated that there would be advantages to having each tree fully surrounded as this would afford a level of protection. There was some debate on the extent to which trees and flowers should be planted in this area.

There was a discussion regarding seats, with a variety of views from Members being content to have the seating proposed to other members who worried that the seating could become over-dominant, and could unfortunately attract anti-social behaviour particularly at night. Members agreed that there would be an advantage to making the seats removable.

Members considered that the opportunity to incorporate an electrical supply into the design of this area should be explored as part of the project. Members considered it was important to ensure good drainage in this area; Mr Habermehl stated that the area would drain towards Barclays Bank.

It was noted that a meeting had already been held with the local branch of the Royal British Legion and they had welcomed the Council's moves to improve

the area. Members asked that consultation take place with the Legion on these more detailed schemes and also with the frontagers. Consultation could also be taken forward with the Friends of Abingdon, the Abingdon Joint Environmental Trust, the District Council planning department. It was also suggested that the designs be made available from the Council's reception.

(Councillor Patrick Lonergan left the meeting at this point, it being 9.00 pm).

Taking into account the relative merits of each proposed scheme, Members resolved that the Council take forward two schemes for consultation:

- a. Option C as presented in Mr Habermehl's drawings;
- b. Option C but with the addition of two removable seats as well as an electrical socket.

Mr Habermehl was requested to produce an artist's impression of the street view of both the above options, these to then go out for consultation to the organisations detailed above. Members resolved that they would then be content to allow the decision on which option to pursue to be delegated to the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chair and the Vice-Chair of this Committee.

Members further resolved that Mr Habermehl be requested to produce a project plan which outlined the timescale for the key milestones of the project.

The Chair thanked Mr Habermehl for attending the meeting and he left the meeting at this point, it being 9.15 pm.

140 **Choose Abingdon Partnership Board**

It was noted that the Council is represented on the above body and minutes of the last meetings are submitted to this Committee so that Members are kept up to date with developments.

Resolved: *that the minutes of the Choose Abingdon Partnership Board meetings of 22nd February 2010 be noted.*

141 **Financial and Performance Monitoring and General Report of the Town Clerk/ Responsible Financial Officer**

The Town Clerk stated whilst this was a special meeting, he had hoped to produce a report for Members particularly with regard to budget variances during the 2009/10. However, he had been unable to produce this for this meeting and so the matter was held over to the next meeting.

142 **Community Safety**

It was noted that the Neighbourhood Updates for Inner Abingdon for March and April 2010 were previously circulated, and are available on the Town Council's website.

143 **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.*

- *Confidential Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on 23 March 2010;*
- *Matters arising and matters referred;*
- *Works depot;*
- *Open Air Swimming Pool*
- *Freeman Badges*

Signed Date