

Press release, for immediate publication

Exciting plans for the Guildhall

As the next stage of the Guildhall Improvement Scheme, Abingdon Town Council have commissioned a high level investigation and study as to the commercial viability of various options for the Guildhall, focusing on the Abbey Hall. Options that will be explored will include studio cinema, live entertainment events, weddings/celebrations, conferences and exhibitions.

The development of the Guildhall is one of the key projects ATC will work on over the coming years. It is critical that the right choices are made now to ensure the development will both encourage much greater usage of the facility by the people of Abingdon, and significantly reduce the current level of subsidy which is not sustainable in the long term.

Mayfield Arts have been engaged to lead the study, which will take place between now and Christmas. They are a specialist firm involved in the development of studio arts venues and community cinemas around the UK. Ron Inglis will be leading the study and he personally has over twenty years of experience in this sector. There are some very interesting examples of projects Mayfield have been engaged in which can be viewed on their website (www.mayfieldarts.co.uk).

A full public consultation will take place in the new year when some more specific options have been worked up. However, in the meantime anyone who has specific views or ideas on potential uses for the Abbey Hall which may be relevant to the study, they are invited to email Ron Inglis directly at: iri@mayfieldarts.co.uk.

In parallel with this activity on the Abbey Hall, work continues on phase 1 of the Guildhall Improvement Scheme, the improvement of the rooms in the historic part of the Guildhall. It is anticipated that a contractor will be appointed shortly, with a view to work commencing in January. The work is estimated to take 11 weeks, achieving completion in early Spring.

Cllr Sandy Lovatt, Leader of the Council and Chairman of the Guildhall Committee said "The Abingdon Town Council has hit the ground running on this project and set in train a programme to make the Guildhall a viable community facility as quickly as possible. The Guildhall will be a fine and versatile facility for the Town's residents and other organisations. It will reflect Abingdon's status as a modern and historic market town."

Nigel Warner, Town Clerk said "The Town Council is committed to the development of the Guildhall. The work which will be undertaken by Mayfield Arts will be important in helping the Council come to the right decisions in taking the Guildhall forward over the coming years."

Abingdon Town Council
28th November 2011.