

## ABINGDON TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a Special Meeting of the Council of the Town of Abingdon held on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> August 2009, at 8.27 p.m. in the Committee Room, the Old Abbey House.

Present: Councillor Patricia Hobby - Mayor of Abingdon  
Councillor Julie Mayhew-Archer  
Councillor Lesley Legge  
Councillor Alison Rooke  
Councillor Lorraine Oates  
Councillor Peter Fulk  
Councillor Martin Smith  
Councillor Colin Walters  
Councillor Audrey Tamplin  
Councillor Jim Halliday  
Councillor Tim Oates  
Councillor Margaret Crick

In Attendance: Mrs Carol Anderson – Museum Services Manager (OCC)  
Mr James Carter- Brown – Project Manager (Ridge & Partners)  
Mr Nigel Warner – Town Clerk  
Dr Lauren Gilmour – Curator, Abingdon CH Museum

### 27 **Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from were received from Councillors Samantha Bowring, Duncan Brown, Alistair Fear , Jeanette Halliday, Angela Lawrence, Patrick Lonergan, Jan Morter, Diana Nixon and Lorraine Smith.

### 28 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillors Jim Halliday, Julie Mayhew- Archer and Alison Rooke declared personal interests in the item relating to County Hall and Museum Access and Improvement Project – Application for Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent as Members of the Vale of White Horse District Council, who support the Museum for the provision of grant aid.

### 29 **Exclusion of the Public, Including the Press**

It was RESOLVED:

*“That in accordance with section 1 (2) of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, the public, including the press, be excluded from the meeting because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.”*

### 30 **County Hall Museum Management Committee**

This matter was discussed in confidential session at the meeting on the grounds that some of the content and ensuing discussion on options could prejudice the future course of action. Following the Council’s decision the Council required the opportunity, as a matter of courtesy, to brief its funding partners before this matter

becomes public. This has now been done and as agreed the recommendation itself has now been moved into the open session.

It was RESOLVED:

1. *That the planning application and application for listed building consent in relation to the Improvement and Access Project to Abingdon County Hall Museum, as submitted to the Vale of White Horse District Council on 11<sup>th</sup> May 2009, be amended by the removal of the external lift and tower, and that the Council's consultants be advised accordingly.*
2. *That a letter be written to English Heritage expressing the Council's disappointment at English Heritage's decision to recommend refusal of the planning application and application for listed building consent which included an external lift and tower, and the process by which this decision was taken. That the letter also ask for confirmation of the verbal commitments given by English Heritage at their meeting with representatives of the Town Council held on 6<sup>th</sup> August 2009 at which they agreed to support amendments to the planning application and application for listed building consent which would allow disabled access to the basement.*
3. *That authority be delegated to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the County Hall Museum Management Committee, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee, the Curator and the Project Board to instruct the Council's architects and other professional advisors, to design an alternative scheme for disabled access to the basement, and amend the application for planning permission and listed building consent and to advise all Councillors as to what has been submitted.  
(It should be noted any decision to exercise this delegation would depend upon advice given from both HLF and EH).*
4. *That the authority be delegated to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the County Hall Museum Management Committee, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee and the Curator to approve any other amendments to any aspects of the Planning Application and Listed Building Consent, provided that such amendments are, in his opinion, not material to the overall objectives and finances of the project.*
5. *That the Town Clerk and Chair of the County Hall Museum Management Committee prepare appropriate press statements prior to the revised planning application being submitted.*
6. *That authority be delegated to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the County Hall Museum Management Committee and the Curator to seek an extension on submitting the stage 2 HLF application if necessary.*
7. *That a further public consultation meeting be organised for early November 2009, subject to the availability of the Guildhall and the regional director of English Heritage.*

**31 Re-instatement of open session**

The Council RESOLVED to move the meeting back into open session.

**32 Annual Governance Report, Statement of Accounts for 2008/09, representation letter and audit action plan**

The Town Clerk reported that the audit of the Council's accounts was ongoing and that following the audit there were likely to be some changes to the Council's accounts for 2008/09. It was noted that these were scheduled to be considered by the Finance and General Purposes Committee at its meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2009

together with documents which will be issued following audit, specifically the Annual Governance Report, issued by the Audit Commission; the representation letter on behalf of the Council, as required by the Audit Commission before issuing their opinion, conclusion and certificate; and the proposed action plan issued by the Audit Commission.

In normal circumstances the Finance and General Purposes Committee would recommend approval of these various documents (subject to any amendments it wished) to the meeting of the Town Council on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2009. However, following discussions with the auditor it had been ascertained that this does not comply with statutory requirements that the Council approve these documents by 30<sup>th</sup> September 2009. He was therefore suggesting that a delegation be given to the Finance and General Purposes to approve any amendments to the accounts, any letter of representation and the Council's response to the Annual Governance Report and action plan from the Audit Commission.

A Member expressed concern over this suggestion and considered it important that these matters be considered by the Council as recommendations from the Finance and General Purposes Committee. The Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee stated that she had spoken with the auditor and he has stated that this matter needed to be resolved before 30<sup>th</sup> September in order to meet the statutory deadlines. Consequently, unless a Special Council meeting was convened this was the best way to meet the statutory deadlines.

RESOLVED:

*that authority be delegated by the Town Council to the Finance and General Purposes Committee to:*

- *Consider any matters raised in the Annual Governance Report, issued by the Audit Commission;*
- *Agree a revised Statement of Accounts for 2008/09, including the adjustments set out in the Auditor's recommendations;*
- *Approve the representation letter on behalf of the Council, as required by the Audit Commission before issuing their opinion, conclusion and certificate;*
- *Agree the proposed action plan issued by the Audit Commission.*

The meeting rose at 8.38 pm.

Signed ..... Date .....