

Minutes of the Council of the Town of Abingdon held in The Guildhall (Council Chamber), Abingdon on Wednesday 20 January 2010 at 7.00 pm.

Present: Cllr Samantha Bowring
Cllr Duncan Brown Deputy Mayor
Cllr Margaret Crick
Cllr Alastair Fear
Cllr Peter Fulk
Cllr James Halliday
Cllr Jeanette Halliday
Cllr Patricia Hobby Mayor
Cllr Angela Lawrence
Cllr Lesley Legge
Cllr Patrick Lonergan
Cllr Julie Mayhew-Archer
Cllr Diana Nixon
Cllr Lorraine Oates
Cllr Tim Oates
Cllr Martin Smith
Cllr Colin Walters

In Attendance: Mr Nigel Warner – Town Clerk
Mrs Sandra Hill – Deputy Town Clerk
Mr Steve Rich – Projects & Technical Manager

57 Prayers

Prayers were taken by the Rev Dr Charles Miller.

Members from the Fire Brigade Union outlined Oxfordshire County Council's consultation on the proposed changes in fire cover at Abingdon and Didcot Fire Stations. One of the main areas of concern is the delayed response rate which could put lives at risk. Union officials indicated that the statistical information is based on computer modelling and contained unreliable data. They also highlighted that the proposals would put more responsibility onto retained fire fighters as pumps can't leave fire stations until a sufficiently qualified crew are present, subsequently causing life threatening delays. As part of the proposals pumps would be moved around the County to back-up other stations if needed.

At this point Members were given the opportunity to ask questions:

7.10 pm Cllr Duncan Brown declared a personal & prejudicial interest and left the meeting room at 7.10pm.

Cllr Samantha Bowring joined the meeting at 7.12 pm

Members expressed concern over the computer modelling data as some of information was based on the 2007 (flood year) call-out rates, which does not relate to reality as some fire fighters had to be re-housed further away from the fire station which resulted in longer response times.

The movement of pumps around the County could subsequently create shortages at other fire stations. It was also highlighted that after dark the number of calls decrease, but the severity of the fire increases. Members questioned whether

retained fire fighters have 'special' means of getting to the fire station quicker – unfortunately, they are no different than the normal road user.

Thanks were relayed to the Union officials for coming to explain the view of the fire fighters.

7.30 pm Cllr Duncan Brown returns to the meeting room.

58 Public participation

There were no members of the public who wished to make a statement to the Council.

59 Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs Alison Rooke, Lorraine Smith and Audrey Tamplin.

60 Declarations of Interest

Cllrs Samantha Bowring, Jim Halliday, Patrick Lonergan, Julie Mayhew-Archer, and Angela Lawrence all declared personal interests in any matters concerning the Vale of White Horse District Council as they are Members of that Council, and in particular the County Hall Museum as the District Council provide an annual grant towards the Museum. Also in relation to Minute 69, change of date for Mayor Making as the District Council have booked the Abbey Hall on 5 May 2010 for a Development Control meeting.

Cllrs Jim and Jeanette Halliday, Fear and Brown declared personal and prejudicial interests in item 67 (2) as residents within the area concerned..

Cllr Duncan Brown declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the Fire Fighters' Union address and the subsequent Members' question session. He also declared a personal interest in Minute 102 (b) of the Finance & General Purposes Committee on 5 January 2010. Cllr Brown is an Oxfordshire Fire Service retained fire fighter based at Abingdon.

61 Minutes

Resolved: to adopt and sign as a correct record the minutes of the ordinary meeting held on 18 November 2009.

62 Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor relayed her thanks to those who attended her Carol Service in December. She informed the meeting that her Charity Ball is due to take place on 26 February, and the Clubs & Societies Day is on 10 April 2010. She highlighted that the High Sheriff of Oxford is presenting an award for people who work with young people. Nominations for the award should be forwarded to her.

63 Finance and General Purposes Committee

5 January 2010, Minute 84 Local Flood Action Group.
The meeting were informed that St Helen's Mill, Stert and Ock Flood Groups were registered with the District and also with the Town Council.

5 January 2010, Minute 102 (b) Oxfordshire Fire Authority Integrated Risk Management Consultation Action Plan 2010-11 and Proposed Changes to Shift Patterns at Abingdon and Didcot Fire Stations

Councillor Duncan Brown declared a personal and prejudicial interest and left the meeting room at 8.50 pm

The Leader informed the meeting that new information has come to the forth since the meeting on 5 January which would be used in the Council's response. If Members had further information that would strengthen the Council's case they should contact the Town Clerk. It was also stated that the Town Clerk should write to Oxfordshire County Council to question statistical data in relation to the year, 2007. The meeting were also informed that an invitation to visit Abingdon Fire Station is open to all Councillors.

Councillor Duncan Brown returned to the meeting room at 8.57 pm

12 January, 108 – Budget Estimates 2010/11

The Chair outlined that the Town Council have scrutinised and held discussions around the budget for next year and have aimed to keep the base core budget as low as possible as well as considering the future needs of the town, its community, vitality and historic buildings for which the Council has responsibility.

Page 23 Item 108: savings have been made where possible and the programmes of maintenance and improvements are being kept within budget. The Council has a reduced income this year from the reduction of bank interest and other matters outside its control, and are aware that there will be a knock on affect on all parish councils from the acute financial situation which principal authorities are facing. Abingdon is one of the larger towns in Oxfordshire, and the Vale, therefore pressure on resources would be greater.

Page 24 Balances and Reserves: the general balances for the Council are maintained at a modest level, and it was not recommended that this be drawn on. The capital receipt is very modest and is kept for unexpected large capital expenditure, and that the earmarked reserves are for specific projects already in hand such as, the County Hall Improvement and Access Project; the project is progressing steadily and within budget.

The immediate future needs of the Town are pressing. The first is the War Memorial, which is leaning due to weak foundations, and the paved area around it. The Town has seen a high level of public support for the servicemen and women not only on Remembrance Days but also at Homecoming Events. Work needs to be undertaken on the War Memorial and the area around to ensure it is a fitting tribute to the fallen.

The other important matter which has arisen this year is the future of the Guildhall. The Town Council has a great interest in the Guildhall, many parish councils own their community centres and it is only a historic quirk which put the Vale in charge of the Guildhall under the Local Government Act 1974 re-organisation. The Guildhall complex is both an important central community facility and houses the large, valuable and varied collection of town treasures which have always been the Town Council's pride and responsibility. The Town Council feels it is important to ensure that the facilities continue and improve and discussions have taken place with the Vale of White Horse District Council, to explore options available to ensure that the facility is not lost. As part of those options the Council is exploring the opportunities for better use of the space and the work needed to attract more bookings for the Guildhall complex. The Town Council has looked long and hard at how progress might be achieved within its resources - both financial and human, and how they need to address them to find a satisfactory outcome. To enable the Town Council to proceed with discussions and negotiations there needs to be a budget available.

For a Parish Council, the Heritage Lottery funded County Hall Improvement and Access Project has been a huge undertaking, but it ensures the future of the County Hall and the Museum for the next fifty years. The Project is on track and remains within budget. The Council had not expected to consider another large project at the same time, but there has been no choice as the Guildhall needs to be augmented to ensure its vitality is renewed, and re-energised.

Based on these major issues which also include identifying, and later acquiring land, for a new cemetery which would be needed within ten years, and the other bullet points in Property Matters laid out on Pages 23/24 of the agenda the Council then **resolved:**

1. That a pooled property and capital works reserve be created.
2. That the draft budget estimates for 2010/11, as circulated in the report of the Town Clerk, and incorporating both revenue and capital schemes, be approved in the sum of £1,090,354 (net expenditure) and that an additional £245,525 be allowed in the budget towards the pooled property and capital works reserve.
3. That the total net spending provided in the estimates for amounting to 2010/11 £1,335,879 be funded by way of the precept and that the Council request the District Council to levy a precept, for Town Council purposes, amounting to £1,335,879 for the financial year 2010/11.
4. That reserve movements at 31st March 2010 be approved as follows:
 - (a) A sum of £6,393 be transferred to the Vehicle Repair and Renewal Fund.
 - (b) The capital receipts reserve be utilised in accordance with the medium-term financial strategy.
 - (c) That any unspent sums in relation to capital/special revenue projects budgeted for during 209/10 be reviewed by the Finance and General Purposes Committee at its next meeting.

The Chair formally recorded her thanks to the Town Clerk for his hard work in keeping the base budget to a minimum, and the work needed to produce the budget for 2010/11.

Resolved: to receive the minutes of the budget meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee of 8 December 2009 and 5 January 2010 and the reconvened meeting held on 12 January 2010, and approve any recommendations contained therein - subject to the following amendment:

5 January 2010, Minute 102 (b) line 13 should read:
that it was of great concern that the proposals **be** adversely affecting the service

64 **County Hall Museum Management Committee**

The Chair of the County Hall Museum Management Committee stated that Minute 37, 7th line in the draft minutes of 1 December should read:

“explain why English Heritage had taken the decision not to accept the principal of”

Resolved: to receive the minutes of the meeting of the County Hall Museum Management Committee held on 1 December 2009, and to approve any recommendations therein.

65 Amenities and Recreation Committee

Resolved: to receive the minutes of the meeting of the Amenities and Recreation Committee held on 2 December 2009 and to approve any recommendations therein.

66 Planning and Highways Committee

11 January, 5 Your Vale – Your Future Consultation

Cllr Lesley Legge, Leader of the Council, stated that in future she considered that large consultations should be referred to Town Council as a recommendation. Cllr Legge and the Town Clerk visited the recent exhibition on the proposed redevelopment of the Charter and Abbey Centre. They spoke with exhibition personnel expressing the need for Abingdon Town Council to meet with the District Council and Scottish Widows to discuss the proposed redevelopment.

The meeting were informed that S106 training has been arranged from 1 February 2010.

Resolved: to receive the minutes of the Planning and Highways Committee meetings held on 9 and 30 November 2009, 21 December 2009 and 11 January 2010, and to approve any recommendations therein.

67 To receive Notices of Motion under Standing Order No. 8 as follows:

(1) Motion proposed by Cllr Julie Mayhew-Archer and seconded by Cllr Colin Walters.

Abingdon Town Council has long believed in the benefit to Abingdon of a full diamond interchange on the A34 at Lodge Hill.

The Halcrow report for Oxfordshire County Council on the impact of a full interchange demonstrates changes which would offer environmental benefits to Abingdon, to the peripheral road, to traffic flow and air quality, without overloading the A34.

The Town Council therefore calls on the County Council Highways Department to place the project high on its list of priorities for the Local Transport Plan currently under consultation and ensure that this necessary improvement is achieved.

In moving the Motion Cllr Julie Mayhew-Archer reported that the Halcrow report stated that opening of the full diamond interchange would benefit Dunmore Road, ease traffic on the Marcham Road and would not be detrimental in overloading the A34, the overall impact would greatly benefit Abingdon. She highlighted that an Oxfordshire County Council meeting, to discuss the report, is due to take place on 21 January 2010. The Town Council had requested to observe at the meeting, but unfortunately Oxfordshire County Council refused the request. The Town Council have been campaigning for a long time, and have Abingdon residents' support for the opening of a full diamond interchange on the A34 at Lodge Hill.

Resolved: that the Motion be accepted, and that a press release should be composed outlining the Council's Motion.

(2) Motion proposed by Cllr Martin Smith and seconded by Cllr Lesley Legge:

Cllrs Jim Halliday, Jeanette Halliday, Duncan Brown and Alastair Fear declared a personal and prejudicial interest, and left the meeting room at 8.25 pm

The Town Council notes that the County Council has published a proposal to introduce a 20 mph speed limit for the town centre streets. Whilst it accepts the

proposal, it is concerned that should the scheme go ahead that the County Council work with Thames Valley Police to ensure that the new limit is effectively enforced – particularly at times when there is less traffic in the town i.e. evenings and weekends. It therefore instructs the Town Clerk to formally submit this comment to the ongoing consultation.”

In moving the Motion Cllr Martin Smith expressed concerns that if the Police cannot enforce the speed limit, its rationale must be queried.

Members raised several amendments - the 20 mph limit would be more difficult to enforce at the weekends and evenings whereby traffic would be moving more freely and faster through the town. The County Council should work with the Police to ensure that the speed limit is enforced effectively, especially during the weekends and evenings . If the police choose not to enforce the 20 mph limit, then the County Council should reconsider whether the 20 mph limit is still necessary in order to achieve its safety objective. Other areas of reducing the flow of traffic could be used such as, traffic calming. The Council would consider supporting the 20 mph limit if it were imposed around schools.

Taking into account the above amendments it was agreed that the Motion should now read:

The Town Council notes that the County Council has published a proposal to introduce a 20 mph speed limit for the town centre streets. Whilst it notes the proposal, it is concerned that should the scheme go ahead that the County Council work with Thames Valley Police to ensure that the new limit is effectively enforced – particularly at times when there is less traffic in the town i.e. evenings and weekends. If the Police are not able to enforce the limit the County Council should reconsider whether a 20 mph speed limit is still necessary to achieve its safety objective. It therefore instructs the Town Clerk to formally submit this comment to the ongoing consultation.”

Resolved: that the motion be accepted in full with amendments.

68 Motion under Standing Order No.34, to permanently vary the Council's Standing Orders

The Finance and General Purposes Committee has recommended at minute 100 that Standing Order 31 be amended in relation to payment and cheque procedures (see minute 100(1) page 20).

This is brought as a motion to Council, proposed by Councillor Lesley Legge (Chair of Finance and General Purposes Committee) and seconded by Councillor Julie Mayhew-Archer (Vice-Chair), subsequent to a recommendation of the Finance and General Purposes Committee. This motion, having been moved and seconded, will then stand adjourned without discussion until the next meeting of the Council.

69 Meeting dates

Mayor Making and Annual Council meeting, Wednesday 12 May 2010

Resolved: that the date for the Annual Meeting of the Council be changed from the published 5 May 2010 to 12 May 2010.