

Minutes of a meeting of the Abingdon Town Council held on Wednesday 24 June 2009 in the Council Chamber, Guildhall, Abingdon.

Present:

- Cllr Samantha Bowring
- Cllr Duncan Brown
- Cllr Margaret Crick
- Cllr Alastair Fear
- Cllr Peter Fulk
- Cllr James Halliday
- Cllr Jeanette Halliday
- Cllr Patricia Hobby - Mayor of Abingdon
- Cllr Angela Lawrence
- Cllr Lesley Legge
- Cllr Patrick Lonergan
- Cllr Julie Mayhew-Archer
- Cllr Janet Morter
- Cllr Timothy Oates
- Cllr Martin Smith
- Cllr Audrey Tamplin
- Cllr Colin Walters

In Attendance:

- Mr Nigel Warner - Town Clerk
- Mrs Sandra Hill - Deputy Town Clerk
- Mr Steve Rich - Project & Technical Manager
- Reverend Dr Charles Miller - Mayor's Chaplain

SECTION I (Open to the Public Including the Press)

15 Prayers

Prayers were taken by the Rev Dr Charles Miller.

16 Public participation

No members of the public wishes to ask questions or make statements.

17 Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs Diana Nixon, Lorraine Oates, Alison Rooke and Lorraine Smith. It was relayed on behalf of Cllr Angela Lawrence that she would be late in joining the meeting.

Cllr Samantha Bowring joined the meeting at this point being 7.05 pm

18 Declarations of Interest

Councillors Samantha Bowring, Jim Halliday, Angela Lawrence, Patrick Lonergan, Julie Mayhew-Archer 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.

Cllr Alastair Fear declared a personal interest in the Residents' Parking Scheme as he resides within the area covered by the Scheme and is a permit holder. Cllr Julie Mayhew-Archer declared a personal interest in AbITS as she is a member of the AbITS Members' Working Party. Cllrs Jim and Jeanette Halliday declared a personal interest in the Residents' Parking Scheme Motion.

19 Minutes

Minute 109 – allotments. In response to a query it was reported that the leases were in draft and valuation advice was being taken.

Special Meeting on 20 April: it was reported that the option of storage pits in the basement is not being taken forward and the lowering of the basement floor was still being investigated. The Museum Management Committee were awaiting decisions from English Heritage regarding the lift.

Resolved that the minutes of the ordinary meeting held on 1 April, of the Special meetings held on 15th and 20th April and of the Annual Meeting held on 13th May 2009 be adopted and signed as a correct record subject to the following:

1 April – 109 - has been duplicated

13 May – 11 Mayor's Cadets: should read –The Mayor, Cllr Patricia Hobby.

Members requested that the biographies of the Mayor's Award winners be kept with the minutes and a copy provided for the Honorary Archivist.

20 Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor relayed thanks to those who has helped and assisted her during her first few weeks in office. She informed the meeting that she would be attending Rush Common Primary School 40th birthday celebrations, the Armed Forces Day on 4 July, Abingdon's Got Talent Final on 18 July and CAB AGM. Her charity quiz evening would be taking place on 20 November 2009.

21 Finance and General Purposes Committee

Choose Abingdon Partnership. The meeting were informed that an appointment has been made, subject to references, for the post of Partnership Manager.

Minute 15: subsequent to a recommendation of the Council's Finance and General Purposes Committee, the following motion was proposed by Councillor Lesley Legge and seconded by Councillor Julie Mayhew-Archer:

That Standing Order 30 (Contracts) be altered so that the threshold for requesting tenders instead of quotations be reduced from £50,000 to £25,000.

As a permanent change to Standing Orders debate on this motion was adjourned without discussion until the next meeting of the Council (Standing Order 34).

Meeting of the OALC, 8 June 2009 – It was requested that a written report from Cllr Angela Lawrence and the Town Clerk should be circulated to Members.

NALC Annual Conference and Exhibition

If it were found that a number of councillors wish to attend the conference then the final decision would rest with the Leader of the Council.

Minute 28: Queen's Jubilee Celebrations – Cllr Audrey Tamplin expressed an interest in being a member of the working party.

Resolved that the Council receive the minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting held on 9th June 2009 and approve any recommendations therein.

22 **County Hall Museum Management Committee**

Resolved that the Council receive the minutes of the Special meeting of the County Hall Museum Management Committee held on 15th April and of the ordinary meeting held on 19th May 2009 and approve any recommendations therein.

23 **Amenities and Recreation Committee**

The meeting noted that the date should read 3 June, and that apologies were received from Cllr Jeanette Halliday and not Cllr Jim Halliday.

Minute 14: Britain in Bloom. The minute stated – *“There was some concern amongst Committee Members that the Britain in Bloom Sub Committee had recommended new street signage (town entry signs) with the wording “Abingdon by-the-Thames”. Members expressed some doubt about the choice of wording and recommended to the Council that this be fully discussed amongst all Councillors at the next Town Council Meeting.”*

It was proposed and seconded that the suggested choice of wording for new town entry signs “Abingdon-by-the Thames” should be put to the vote. There were recorded 7 votes For, 8 Against and 1 Abstention.

It was **resolved** that the town name on new town entry signs should read “Abingdon.”

Resolved that the Council receive the minutes (subject to the above alterations) of the meeting of the Amenities and Recreation Committee held on 3rd June 2009 and approve any recommendations therein.

24 **Planning and Highways Committee**

7 - Energy from Waste Incinerator at Sutton Courtenay. The meeting were informed that the Environmental Agency have asked for more information before commenting on the impact of the proposals.

It was pointed out that some addresses of planning sites were not identified in the Minutes. This was a software problem but needed to be rectified so that the record is complete.

Resolved that the Council receive the minutes of the Planning and Highways Committee meetings held on 23rd March, 14th April, 5th May and 26th May 2009 and to approve any recommendations therein – subject to the following amendment:

2 – Declarations of Interest - a full stop should be inserted between **applicant** and **who** on the 2nd line.

25 **Meeting in relation to Abingdon Integrated Strategy (AbITS)**

Resolved that the Committee receive the minutes of the AbITS meeting convened by Abingdon Town Council held on 21st April 2009 – subject to the following amendment:

Cllr Lesley Legge was present at the meeting, and confirmation whether Cllr Angela Lawrence was present at the meeting.

The Town Clerk reported that he had written to Oxfordshire County Council's Executive Member for Growth and Infrastructure and a response had been received.

It was reported that the next AbITS meeting would take place on Tuesday 14 July 2009 in the Guildhall. Members are welcome to attend as this is a public meeting.

The Council's AbITS representative, Councillor Julie Mayhew-Archer, reported that the April meeting had proved very valuable. It had enabled important items to be discussed by a number of the partners to the strategy. She re-iterated that the Town Council had convened the meeting because the last meeting of the Members' Working Group had been in November 2008, with the next not being due until July 2009. The Town Council felt this was too long between meetings as there were matters which require urgent attention. The Town Council and the Abingdon Joint Economic Forum had requested the County Council to organise an earlier meeting but this had been declined.

It was noted that when the Town Council submitted its original comments on AbITS it did make its continued involvement in the work going forward conditional upon regular public meetings taking place with Councillors, Officers and others through a steering or working group. The Council's original request was that these meetings take place four times a year; the County Council had agreed to public meetings twice a year.

The Town Council did not always feel that it was kept informed on AbITS or treated courteously. It had, for instance, taken some 18 months for a request from the Town Council AbITS representative for the A34 and a new river crossing to be put on the agenda, and in November the agenda for the meeting had only been e-mailed on the Friday before the meeting on the Monday, with paper copies only received on the day of the meeting.

It was proposed, seconded and **resolved** that the Town Clerk should write to Cllr Ian Hudspeth relaying the Town Council's above concerns.

26 **To receive Notices of Motion under Standing Order No. 8**

Cllr Alastair Fear declared a personal and prejudicial interest in this item as he resides in the area of the residents' parking scheme and is a permit holder, and left the meeting during discussion of this item. Cllrs Jim and Jeanette Halliday declared a personal interest as town centre residents.

(a) Motion proposed by Councillor Lesley Legge and seconded by Councillor Peter Fulk:

"This Council calls on the Town Clerk to invite the Oxfordshire County Council Portfolio holder for Transport, to a meeting in Abingdon to discuss the Residents' Parking Scheme. The Council is keen to discuss how the parking spaces which have been lost over the years, and in particular the redevelopment of the Co-op in West St Helen Street, can be replaced as soon as possible."

It was proposed, seconded and agreed that the Motion should be Amended to read:

*"This Council calls on the Town Clerk to invite the Oxfordshire County Council Portfolio holder for Transport, to a meeting in Abingdon to discuss the Residents' Parking Scheme. The Council is keen to discuss how the parking spaces which have been lost over the years, and in particular **during** the redevelopment of the Co-op in West St Helen Street, can be replaced as soon as possible."*

Cllr Lesley Legge spoke to the Motion explaining the role of the Residents' Parking Wardens and the Agency Agreement with Oxfordshire County Council. The Town

Council administers the scheme according to the rules and specification set down by the County Council. In recent years the scheme had lost a number of spaces, in fact a total of twelve spaces. Councillor Legge was particularly concerned regarding the loss of spaces in West St Helen Street adjacent to the new Co-operative shop. When the new store was built a five spaces were lost, but despite assurances that these would be replaced, they never have been.

Councillor Peter Fulk seconded the motion and stated that in recent years the scheme has come under considerable pressure. There are 95 permits currently issued but many more qualifying addresses which could obtain permits if they so wished, approximately 210 properties, each of which could have two permits. There are only 44 parking spaces in the area of the town centre scheme specifically reserved for residents, although there are an additional 50 pay and display spaces which residents can park in, if not already taken. When you take into account the fact that residents are also entitled to a card which allows visitors to buy tickets then it was clear that more spaces are required.

In further discussion Members stated that over the years possibilities for new spaces have been identified but despite the Town Council repeatedly asking that new spaces be created, this has not happened. One of the reasons given is that this would require a change to the parking order, which has not been amended since 1994, and that this is held up pending decriminalisation. However the Council's view was that there was no point in waiting for decriminalisation as this work needs to be done and there is no benefit to delay. Changes to the parking order which will create new spaces and also make a number of other changes, are long overdue.

It was noted that permits for this scheme cost £100 per year, higher than other parts of Oxfordshire. This means that it is unacceptable for residents with permits to have problems finding a space. Members felt that the town centre residents' parking scheme is important for the local residents as well as town centre vitality more generally.

On being put to the vote it was **resolved** by 12 votes in favour with 4 abstentions and 0 against that the Motion be adopted.

(b) Motion proposed by Councillor Samantha Bowring and seconded by Councillor Patrick Lonergan:

"Abingdon Town Council welcomes the County Council's pledge in their 'Vision For Abingdon' manifesto to provide free parking in Abingdon Town Centre.

"It asks the Town Clerk to write to the Leader of Oxfordshire County Council and the relevant portfolio holder to ask when this will start."

Cllr Samantha Bowring spoke to the Motion. Whilst welcoming this pledge she was cautious because it was not clear how this would be achieved or paid for.

In debating this motion Members were interested as to how the County Council would seek to achieve free parking in the town centre, particularly with regard to working with the local District Council. Members felt that any changes to car parking should be part of a co-ordinated and comprehensive approach by the responsible authorities. Members are also interested in the detailed timetable in which the County Council propose implementing free parking and how this would be paid for.

On being put to the vote it was **resolved** by 15 votes in favour with 2 abstentions and 0 against that the Motion be adopted.

(c) Motion proposed by Councillor Jim Halliday and seconded by Councillor Colin Walters:

“Abingdon Town Council wishes to continue its policy of interacting positively with Oxfordshire County Council and the Vale of White Horse District Council. It therefore asks the Town Clerk to write to the four Abingdon County Councillors and invite them to attend full meetings of the Council at regular intervals to inform this Council about County Council plans for Abingdon and answer questions.”

Cllr Jim Halliday spoke to the Motion highlighting that for the first time in a number of years there were no Town Councillors who were also County Councillors. This meant that there was a risk that the Town Council could become isolated from and not be kept up to date with the plans of the County Council. The issue was not the same in relation to the District Council as six of the Town Councillors were on the District Council.

In debating this matter Members felt that good working relationships with the County Council were important, and the County had been supportive of the Museum Project. By adopting this motion good communication could be maintained with the County Council and in due course it was suggested that a similar arrangement should be considered for the District Council.

On being put to the vote it was **resolved** by 15 votes in favour with 2 abstentions and 0 against that the Motion be adopted.

27 Exclusion of the Public, Including the Press

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 as summarised below.”

SECTION II (Excluding the public and the press)

Items for Discussion:

- Confidential minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 1st April 2009;
- Confidential minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 9th June 2009;
- Confidential minutes of the Museum Management Committee held on 19th May 2009;
- Confidential minutes of the Amenities and Recreation Committee held on 3rd June 2009.

Signed Date