

**Minutes of the Council of the Town of Abingdon-on-Thames held on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2014 in the Council Chamber, Guildhall, Abingdon-on-Thames.**

**Present**

Cllr Samantha Bowring      Mayor of Abingdon-on-Thames  
Cllr Angela Lawrence      Deputy Mayor of Abingdon-on-Thames  
Cllr Alice Badcock  
Cllr Marilyn Badcock  
Cllr Michael Badcock  
Cllr Jason Fiddaman  
Cllr Jeanette Halliday  
Cllr Iain Littlejohn  
Cllr Patrick Lonergan  
Cllr Monica Lovatt  
Cllr Sandy Lovatt  
Cllr Julie Mayhew-Archer  
Cllr Hermann Matheson  
Cllr Jan Morter  
Cllr Helen Pighills  
Cllr Alison Rooke

**In Attendance**

Mr Nigel Warner      Town Clerk  
Mr Malcolm Hill      Macebearer

SECTION I (Open to the Public Including the Press)

C80 Prayers

In the absence of the Mayor's Chaplain, the Town Clerk read a passage from scripture and led the meeting in prayer.

C81 Public Participation

(a) Open session: In accordance with Council policy the open session allowed for residents of Abingdon-on-Thames or owners/managers of businesses in Abingdon-on-Thames to ask questions of the Mayor, Chairman of Finance and General Purposes Committee and Chairman of the Planning and Highways Committee or to express views by way of making a statement.

*District Councillor Dr Jim Halliday congratulated the Council on the floral displays in the town. He commented that the website was a good website and a very useful tool. However it was not always up to date in terms of meeting agendas and papers. Therefore he asked the following question of Cllr Sandy Lovatt, the Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee:*

*"Would he agree that the website is potentially a very useful tool in informing residents of the Council decisions? If so, would he ask the Town Clerk to investigate how the agenda and all associated papers for each meeting can*

*be published on the web 5 days before each meeting, and the draft minutes of each meeting published a short while after each meeting?”*

In response Cllr Sandy Lovatt stated that he agreed that the Council website was an essential tool for communicating with the public. Although there had some times been a problem in keeping this part of the website up to date, it was now up to date and the Council would be endeavouring to ensure that this was the case in the future. He also stated that since the new website had been launched at the end of May 2013, there had been 57,000 visitors to the website and 16% of these had been from abroad. This emphasised the website's importance.

*Dr Halliday asked a second question:*

*“At the Parish meeting I learnt that a new cemetery would probably be required in about 12 years time and that up to 5 years would be required to prepare the land. Consequently, the Council will need to purchase a suitable site in the near future. I have subsequently learnt that if the Town Council runs out of burial space then the District Council would have the responsibility of finding a suitable burial site for each resident who wanted to be buried. However, the Vale Council would not have to provide a new cemetery; just advise where burials could be carried out. This could be anywhere in the Vale District. Would the Chairman of F&GP agree that Abingdon residents should be able to expect for their loved ones to be buried in or very close to Abingdon? If so, will he ask his officers to started searching for a suitable location for the new Cemetery, and agree that the funds already saved for this important project should be in an earmarked reserve.”*

Cllr Sandy Lovatt stated that disposal of the remains of the dead is a statutory duty of the District Council and that the provision of a cemetery is a power which the Town Council exercise. The Town Council keeps and maintains two good cemeteries in Abingdon and although providing a new cemetery is not a Town Council duty, it remained the Town Council's intention. The Council had been looking for sites, although this was not proving to be an easy task. It was possible that the identification of two strategic housing sites in the Local Plan may open up new possibilities. He also noted that land was not getting any cheaper.

(b) Earth Trust. Jayne Manley, Chief Executive of the Earth Trust, made a presentation regarding the work of the Earth Trust at Thrupp Lake and Wittenham Clumps, both of which were outside of the parish but which were visited by Abingdon residents.

Ms Manley reported that much had been done at Thrupp Lake in the last five years. Amongst improvements was the installation of a circular walk, which had the status of a “permissive path.” Unfortunately the “Sandals” building was dilapidated. The site provided a facility which allowed people to get exercise and therefore benefited the health and wellbeing of the local community. Latest surveys showed that there were 6,000 visitors per year making a total of 29,000 individual visits. This yielded a benefit to the local economy.

This was a small site but freely accessible and its existence was beginning to be taken for granted by the local community. The basic management costs of the facility were in the region of £28,000 per year. RWE N-Power supported the facility but there were currently no other regular income streams. They were seeking funding through grant applications, including applications to local councils.

There was then an opportunity for Members to ask questions and to make comments.

A Member asked what the Earth Trust's position was regarding the Visitor Centre, which he understood was a project which the Friends of Radley Lakes were pursuing. Ms Manley reported that the Earth Trust was not directly involved in this, as they were concentrating on short-term revenue support for the Radley Lakes.

A Member made the point that although the Radley Lakes were not within the town boundary, they were well-used by Abingdon residents. He suggested that the Earth Trust put together a forward plan and then talk to the Town Council. The Council had various grant funds which might be available, depending on the nature of the application and the amount applied for. It was also suggested by Councillors that an application could be made to the District Council and the Heritage Lottery Fund. The District Council had an officer who may be able to advise on potential sources of funding. A Member also stated that Radley Parish Council may also have potential grant funds available.

#### C82 Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs Lesley Legge, Aidan Melville, Katie Nobes, Lorraine Oates and Andrew Todd.

#### C83 Declarations of Interest

Cllr Alice Badcock declared non-pecuniary interests in the matters detailed at minute C98, Finance and General Purposes Committee, staffing matters as her cousin, Mr Tim Badcock, is employed by the Council. Cllrs Marilyn Badcock and Michael Badcock declared the same interest but with the relationship being that of a nephew.

Cllr Jeanette Halliday indicated that as a nearby resident of the Guildhall she could potentially have a pecuniary interest in the items at minutes C91 and C101 (Guildhall Committee) and would leave the meeting should the matter of the Guildhall Improvement Project be discussed.

#### C84 Minutes

##### (a) Accuracy:

The Council received and considered the minutes of the Council of Abingdon-on-Thames held on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2014 and the Special Meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2014.

The following corrections were **agreed**:

Minutes of 29<sup>th</sup> January 2014

Attendance list: add Cllr Helen Pighills.

Minute C67, Planning and Highways Committee, penultimate paragraph: delete sentence commencing: “It was also noted....”

Minute C69, Community Governance Review, delete paragraph 7, which commences: “The number of Councillors per ward was suggested....”

Minute C72, Finance and General Purposes Committee add to the sentence “the music areas should be soundproofed” the words “at their cost.”

**Resolved** to adopt and sign as a correct record the minutes of the Council of Abingdon-on-Thames held on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2014 and the Special Meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2014 subject to the above amendments.

(b) Matters arising

Minutes of 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2014

It was noted that subsequent to the submission of the Council’s response to the Community Governance Review (minute C79), an e-mail was received on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2014, from David Buckle, the Chief Executive of the District Council. He had undertaken an analysis of the electorate for the new wards which had been proposed and concluded: “As you will see, retaining 21 councillors and achieving an equitable distribution of electors to councillors is problematic. Nineteen or 23 councillors works better.” The Town Clerk reported that following consultation with Members, a consensus had emerged that the Council should reduce its membership to 19, to represent the following new wards: Abbey (2), Caldecott (4), Dunmore (4), Fitzharris Ock (2), Fitzharris Wildmoor (1), Northcourt (2) and Peachcroft (4). The Council noted and **endorsed** the above as the Council’s view on this matter.

C85 Mayor of Abingdon-on-Thames

The Council noted the list of Mayor’s engagements from September 2013 to March 2014. Cllr Iain Littlejohn drew attention to the Mayor’s attendance at the first ATOM Science Festival, which had been very well attended. The Annual Morris Men’s Challenge was due to take place in the King Charles Room at the King’s Head and Bell on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2014.

The Mayor thanked the outside staff for their hard work during the flooding problems earlier in the year. Members also recorded their thanks to the Vale staff who had been involved. The Vale had also thanked the Town Council’s staff for their hard work.

C86 Questions under Standing Order 10

There were no questions under Standing Order 10.

C87 Finance and General Purposes Committee

It was proposed by Cllr Sandy Lovatt, seconded by Cllr Alison Rooke that the

Council receive and consider the minutes of the special meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on 17<sup>th</sup> February 2014 and the ordinary meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2014.

#### Minute F117 (4) Application under Community Fund scheme

It was noted that the Committee had resolved that a grant application by the Foyer, in the sum of £5,000, should be determined by the Town Council.

It was proposed by Cllr Marilyn Badcock and seconded by Cllr Hermann Matheson that a grant of £2,500 be awarded to the Foyer. In making this proposal Cllr Marilyn Badcock stated that this equated to £250 per Foyer resident who had originated from Abingdon. She also pointed out that although the Foyer was based in the town, its area of benefit went beyond Abingdon and so other towns and parishes should also be contributing. She stated that the question regarding where the residents had come from should be asked of the Foyer in any future applications.

The document from the Foyer had stated that 9 residents came from the surrounding villages and Didcot; and 2 from outside of the Vale.

An amendment to this proposal, to increase the grant awarded to £500 per resident originating from Abingdon (i.e. a total of £5,000), was proposed by Cllr Alison Rooke and seconded by Cllr Patrick Lonergan. In proposing the amendment, Cllr Alison Rooke argued that the original proposal was penurious, the Foyer was attempting to get young people “back on their feet” and it was wrong to give half of what had been requested. The Town Council had contributed £5,000 for a number of years and so even this amount was a “real terms” cut. The proposer of the original motion, Cllr Marilyn Badcock, opposed the amendment arguing that this was not a cut, no grant had been requested for some years, and she was concerned that no other parishes were contributing to the Foyer; it should not all be down to the Town Council to support the Foyer.

In debating the amendment, the following points were made:

- £5,000 was reasonable. The Foyer received a grant in this amount for some years. It is not always clear as where all the beneficiaries live when grants are made. In any case, all the residents of the Foyer are now Abingdon residents, it does not matter where they have come from.
- The Foyer had been in a “state of flux.” Many of the residents had come from very difficult backgrounds, including abusive ones and the Foyer will help them lead fulfilled lives.
- There are plenty of examples of Abingdon services by visitors from beyond the town, for instance the Museum. This is a substantial town and we should lead.
- The Foyer does an excellent job. The original proposal was fair; 50% of the residents originate from Abingdon. This Council has a good record in working with groups such as the Bridge and South & Vale Carers. The Foyer must show they can come forward with a balanced funding arrangement.

- As the money for grants comes from the Abingdon Council tax payer, it is only right that we are interested in where residents originate. After all, the question is posed on the grants application form.
- The original proposal for £2,500 was carefully considered; half the residents are from Abingdon originally so half the costs should be funded.
- A Member asked how much was contributed by Didcot Town Council as this Council could look to match this. The Town Clerk responded that according to the application form, the Foyer had not received a grant from Didcot Town Council.

On being put to the vote, the amendment was lost by 6 votes in favour, 7 against and 3 abstentions.

Following discussion amongst Members a consensus emerged that the Town Council should give a grant and the debate was over the amount. Members considered that a presentation from the Foyer may assist in considering the matter further. Therefore the proposal to award a grant of £5,000 was withdrawn by the proposer and the seconder and it was **resolved** and agreed (with one abstention):

1. That a representative of the Foyer be invited to the next ordinary Council meeting to make a presentation on the work of the Foyer and the use to which any grant would be put.
2. That the grant application by the Foyer be determined at the next ordinary meeting of the Council.

#### Abingdon Rugby Club

It was noted that a total grant of up to £10,000 had been awarded by the Council to the Rugby Club for urgent ground works to their pitches. A Member stated that this was a very welcome grant but the Club still needed to raise £14,000. Another Member stated that this grant would benefit a large number of people, with the Club having 200 young people and 75 adults in its number.

#### C88 County Hall Museum Management Committee

It was proposed by Cllr Julie Mayhew-Archer and seconded by Cllr Jason Fiddaman that the Council receive and consider the minutes of the County Hall Museum Management Committee held on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2014.

**Resolved** that the minutes of the County Hall Museum Management Committee held on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2014 together with any recommendations therein, be approved.

C89 Amenities and Recreation Committee

It was proposed by Cllr Helen Pighills and seconded by Cllr Marilyn Badcock that the Council receive and consider the minutes of the Amenities and Recreation Committee held 12<sup>th</sup> February 2014

**Resolved** that the minutes of the Amenities & Recreation Committee Management Committee held on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2014 together with any recommendations therein, be approved.

C90 Planning and Highways Committee

It was proposed by Cllr Michael Badcock and seconded by Cllr Alice Badcock that the Council receive and consider the minutes of the Planning and Highways Committee meetings held on 3<sup>rd</sup> February; 24<sup>th</sup> February; and 10<sup>th</sup> March 2014.

It was noted that the Planning and Highways Committee on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014 would consider the Council's response to the latest part of the Local Plan consultation. All Members were invited to this meeting, which would start at 6.30pm.

**Resolved** that the minutes of the Planning and Highways Committee meetings held on 3<sup>rd</sup> February; 24<sup>th</sup> February; and 10<sup>th</sup> March 2014 together with any recommendations therein, be approved

C91 Guildhall Committee

It was proposed by Cllr Iain Littlejohn and seconded by Cllr Alison Rooke that the Council receive and consider the minutes of the Guildhall Committee meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2014.

Minute 101 (2): There was a typographical error; the word "Guildhall" in the second paragraph needed to be replaced by the words "Guildhall Manager."

A Member stated that when googling the Guildhall, the old website still appears. The Chairman of the Committee, Cllr Iain Littlejohn, stated that there were some issues in relation to "buffering" and the transfer of the website from the host.

Minute 102 – Manager's report In relation to communications issues, the Chairman of the Communications Sub-Committee, Cllr Marilyn Badcock, reported that the officers had used their initiative to reduce marketing costs but these matters did need to go through the Communications Sub-Committee. a meeting would be held to work through these issues.

**Resolved** that the minutes of the Guildhall Committee meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2014 together with any recommendations therein, be approved.

C92 Civic Matters

The Council received and considered the report of the Town Clerk in relation to the above. The report detailed two applications which had been received and which required consideration and approval (if desired) by Members.

It was **resolved**:

1. That the Council accept the offer of the Rotary Club of Abingdon (Vesper) that the Mayor be appointed an Honorary Member, subject to this involving no financial commitment on behalf of the Mayor or the Council.
2. That the Council approve the use of the Town Shield by the Abingdon Speakers Club (formerly Ridgeway Speakers Club) as part of their logo.
3. That for future applications for use of the Town Shield, authority be delegated to the Town Clerk in consultation with the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor to determine the application.

It was noted that the Mayor was an honorary member of a number of Abingdon clubs and societies and Members requested that a list of such appointments be compiled for the record.

C93 Internal Control and the Management of Risk

The Town Clerk stated that there had not been time to produce a report in relation to the above. However the business risk assessment produced in March 2013 was considered sufficient for the Council's purposes. It had been reviewed by the Council's officers and due to the date of its drafting it largely related to 2013/14. Members **approved** the use of the March 2013 business risk assessments and **agreed** that these should be reviewed when resources permitted and circulated and then presented to a future meeting.

C94 Calendar of Meetings

The Council received and considered the draft calendar of meetings for 2013/14.

It was noted that the Planning and Highways Committee of 6<sup>th</sup> October 2014 would be on the same evening as the Michaelmas Fair, but Members were content with this.

There were two additions to the calendar: Amenities and Recreation Committee on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2015 and the Annual Parish Meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2015. The Leader of the Council, Cllr sandy Lovatt, was thanked for his work in drafting the calendar of meetings.

Members agreed to change the date of one of the Grants Sub-Committee meetings from Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> May to Monday 1<sup>st</sup> June 2015.

It was noted that Fun and Music in the park were due to take place on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> June 2014; the date of the Civic Service was to be confirmed (subsequently agreed as Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2014).

It was noted from the minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee that it was likely that there would be a commemoration of the centenary of the start of the First World War during the first week of August 2014.

A Member enquired regarding the hearing loop system in the Guildhall. The Chairman of the Guildhall Committee, Cllr Iain Littlejohn, reported that there was a loop in the rooms but that these required microphones to be booked and used at meetings.

**Resolved:** that the calendar of meetings for 2013/14 be approved, subject to the amendments outlined above.

C95 Election of Mayor

It was proposed by Cllr Julie Mayhew-Archer and seconded by Cllr Patrick Lonergan that Cllr Angela Lawrence be nominated as Mayor of Abingdon-on-Thames for the 2014/2015 civic year.

**Resolved** that this nomination be put forward at the Annual Meeting of the Council on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2014.

*(It was noted, for the avoidance of doubt, that by statute the appointment of the Mayor was wholly within the power of the Annual Meeting, including the power of that meeting to consider any other nominations).*

C96 Election of Deputy Mayor

It was proposed by Cllr Alison Rooke and seconded by Cllr Julie Mayhew-Archer that Cllr Helen Pighills be nominated as Deputy Mayor of Abingdon-on-Thames for the 2014/2015 civic year.

**Resolved** that this nomination be put forward at the Annual Meeting of the Council on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2014.

*(It was noted, for the avoidance of doubt, that by statute the appointment of the Deputy Mayor was wholly within the power of the Annual Meeting, including the power of that meeting to consider any other nominations).*

C97 Exclusion of the Public, Including the Press

The Mayor moved and 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 as summarised below.”*

SECTION II (Excluding the public and the press)

C98 Confidential appendix to the minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee

**Resolved** to adopt and sign the confidential appendix to the minutes of the Town Council held on 17<sup>th</sup> February 2014 (Special Meeting) and 4<sup>th</sup> March 2014.

C99 Confidential appendix to the minutes of the County Hall Museum Management Committee

**Resolved** to adopt and sign the confidential appendix to the minutes of the County Hall Museum Management Committee held on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2014, and approve any recommendations therein.

C100 Confidential appendix to the minutes of the Amenities and Recreation Committee

**Resolved** to adopt and sign the confidential appendix to the minutes of the Amenities and Recreation Committee held on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2014, and approve any recommendations therein.

C101 Confidential appendix to the minutes of the Guildhall Committee

It was noted, with regret, that the grant application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for an award under the Enterprise Fund had not been successful. The Council delegated authority to the Town Clerk, the Chairman of the Guildhall Committee and the Vice-Chairman of the Guildhall Committee to draft and publish a press release on this matter.

**Resolved** to receive and consider the confidential appendix to the minutes of the Guildhall Committee held on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2014.

The meeting rose at 9.30pm.