

Minutes of the Council of the Town of Abingdon-on-Thames held on 25th June 2014 in the Roysse Room, Guildhall, Abingdon-on-Thames.

Present

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

In Attendance

Mr Steve Rich	Head of Service Delivery
Rev Paul Smith	Mayor's Chaplain
Mr Nigel Warner	Town Clerk

5 Members of the public at various times.

SECTION I (Open to the Public Including the Press)

C14 Prayers

The Mayor's Chaplain, Rev Paul Smith, led the meeting in prayer.

C15 Public Participation

(a) At the previous meeting Members had requested that "that a representative of the Abingdon 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." The Manager of the Foyer outlined the work undertaken and the use to which a grant would be put and a young person who was a resident of the Foyer outlined how the Foyer had helped her.

Members made a number of comments following the presentation:

- Consideration should be given to applying for funding to other parishes such as Didcot as some residents originated from that town;
- Was the grant being asked for sufficient;
- The grant applied for appeared to be for a regular need and consideration should be given to making an annual application;
- A one-off grant from this Council could trigger access to other grants.

The Mayor thanked the representatives of the Foyer for attending the meeting and stated that consideration of the grant application would be given under “Matters arising.”

(b) District Councillor Dr Jim Halliday asked Cllr Sandy Lovatt, the Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee the following two questions:

(i) Please could he itemise the total spend on external contracts for the Guildhall in FY 2010/11, FY 2011/12, FY 2012/13, FY 2013/14, and to date in FY 2014/15 in the following categories : a) repairs, renovation and maintenance, b) Professional fees (architectural, quantity surveyors), c) Professional fees (legal), d) Marketing and PR, e) Other (in this case describing the purpose of each such contract).

(ii) Please could he advise if the Council intends to consult neighbours and the general public again, before submitting any planning applications in respect of the Guildhall.

With regard to (i), Cllr Sandy Lovatt stated that this was a substantial piece of work and that he would provide a written answer.

With regard to (ii), Cllr Sandy Lovatt stated that the Guildhall Committee had been as open as it could be with its deliberations. Its meetings were held in public and neighbours had often attended. In relation to the new plans, the functionality of the scheme had not changed compared with the previous scheme. He would not guarantee a full scale consultation prior to a planning application being made. Consultation was part of the planning process and the new plans were not that much different from the previous ones. A dialogue would be kept open with Members.

C16 Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs Katie Nobes, Lorraine Oates and Andrew Todd.

C17 Declarations of Interest

Cllr Jeanette Halliday declared a non-pecuniary interest in all matters relating to the Guildhall as a nearby resident of the property.

Cllr Helen Pighills declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to the grant application by Abingdon Foyer and indicated that she would leave the meeting when that was discussed.

Following a request from a Member, the Mayor agreed that due to the warm weather, Members could take off their robes.

C18 Minutes

(a) Approval of minutes:

The Council received and considered the minutes of the Council of Abingdon-on-Thames held on 19th March 2014 and of the Annual Meeting held on 7th May 2014.

A number of amendments were proposed for accuracy:

Minutes of 19th March 2014

(i) Minute C81, penultimate paragraph, 3rd line: “Ms Manley” instead of “Mr Manley;”

(ii) Minute C85, 2nd line: “Cllr Iain Littlejohn” instead of “The Mayor, Cllr Samantha Bowring;”

(iii) Minute C85, add: “The Vale had also thanked the Town Council’s outside staff for their hard work.”

Minutes of 7th May 2014

Appendix detailing Representation on Outside Bodies:

Draft minutes read:

“Neighbourhood Action Group (North) Cllr Katie Nobes

“Neighbourhood Action Group (South) Cllr Alice Badcock”

It was pointed out that there was now one Neighbourhood Action Group for the whole town and although the list agreed at the time was as above, the intention was that the minute should read:

“Neighbourhood Action Group Cllr Katie Nobes”

Resolved to adopt and sign as a correct record the minutes of the Council of Abingdon-on-Thames held on 19th March 2014 and of the Annual Meeting held on 7th May 2014, subject to the amendments detailed above.

(b) Matters arising

Minutes of 19th March 2014

Minute C87, Finance and General Purposes Committee, application for grant from Abingdon Foyer

It was proposed by Cllr Alison Rooke and seconded by Cllr Iain Littlejohn that a grant from the Council’s Community Fund be awarded to Abingdon Foyer, for the purposes set out in their grant application.

Members carefully considered the application and during the discussions the following points were made:

- The Foyer should look to diversify its sources of funding. Should upscale and seek out other grants too;
- If a grant is awarded this should not be considered to set a precedent for future years;
- Council should receive a written report from the Foyer in November if it wishes consideration to be given to a grant for next year;
- This is one of four larger charities which the Council supports, others being the Bridge, South and Vale Carers and the Net.
- Funding such a charity does fall to local people and is in accordance with Localism;
- There is a consensus to make a grant but the question is, how much? If the Foyer has not already done so, they should approach the Vale (new Homes Bonus) and the County Councils;
- Should also approach other parish councils such as Didcot Town Council;
- If a grant is awarded we must have feedback on the use to which the grant has been put both last year and this year. We need to know what difference has been made and whether the grant has been successful;
- All the residents of the Foyer are Abingdon residents regardless of whether they originate from.

On being put to the vote it was **Resolved (unanimously)**: that a grant from the Council's Community Fund be awarded to Abingdon Foyer, for the purposes set out in their grant application.

Minute C92: Civic Matters

Members asked that the Council's civic lists be brought up to date.

Minute C94: Calendar of meetings

The Chairman of the Summer Events Working Group, Cllr Alice Badcock, extended her thanks to all those involved in making the Fun and Music in the Park events a success, and especially to Councillors and the works team.

The Mayor, Cllr Angela Lawrence, thanked Cllr Alice Badcock for all her hard work in ensuring that the events of 7th June 2014 were such a success.

C19 Mayor of Abingdon-on-Thames

The Council noted the list of Mayor's engagements for the year to date.

The Mayor stated that the Council had received the honour of being awarded the Corporate Award for the use of heraldry by the Heraldry Society. This had been collected on behalf of the Council by the Deputy Mayor, Cllr Helen Pighills, and the Town Clerk at an awards ceremony at the College of Arms on 19th June 2014. The certificate would be on display in the Parlour after the meeting.

The Mayor asked that Members note a number of dates for their diaries including:

- Friday 14th November 2014 at 7pm: Mayor's Quiz, with Paul Mayhew-Archer, to raise funds for the Over 70s party;
- Friday 5th December 2014 at 7pm: The Mayor's Charities Christmas Concert;
- Friday 12th December 2014 at 2pm: Over 70s Christmas Party;
- Friday 13th February 2015 7pm for 7.30pm: Grand Civic Dinner.

C20 Questions under Standing Order 10

There were no questions under Standing Order 10.

C21 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 meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on 10th June 2014.

Minute F7: Grants Sub-Committee:

Cllr Julie Mayhew-Archer reported that Cllr Michael Badcock was trying to progress this matter.

Minute F8: Matters referred, the Guildhall Committee:

Cllr Jeanette Halliday declared a non-pecuniary interest in all matters relating to the Guildhall as a nearby resident of the property.

The recommendations at F8 were discussed as follows:

- (1) *That the Council approve the architectural plans and associated costings for the Guildhall phase 2 scheme (the revised core scheme), as detailed in the plans attached to these minutes and the costing document dated June 2014, as the basis to proceed.*

A Member stated that she was content that the plans included improved access but was concerned regarding costs. However another Member stated that she was disappointed that the plans did not provide for improvements to the front of the building; under the new plans the building would look more or less the same.

The Chairman of the Guildhall Committee, Cllr Iain Littlejohn, reported that the Council needed to have due regard to costs and the Council could not afford works to improve the look of the front of the building. The revised plans would allow the Council to choose those components of the scheme which it wished to progress; it was more flexible and affordable.

On being put to the vote it was **resolved** *that the Council approve the architectural plans and associated costings for the Guildhall phase 2 scheme (the revised core scheme), as detailed in the plans and the costing*

document dated June 2014, as the basis to proceed.

Cllr Jeanette Halliday requested that her abstention in relation to this matter be recorded.

- (2) *The Committee further recommended that the core scheme include an external lift for DDA access to the historic rooms and the work outlined in options 2 (enhancement of lower ground floor to form bar and café area and convert 2nd floor areas) and options 3 (opening up of the historic face of the Bear Room) and 4 (enclosed link through existing service area), noting that the cost range estimate for this work is £3,500,000 to £4,000,000. In considering these options it was noted that different parts of the proposed scheme were subject to different potential funding streams and the completion of the scheme in its totality, as outlined above, would be subject to successful funding applications.*

A Member expressed concern over the affordability of the project with the estimates as above. However she stressed her view that the access issues were important and should be retained. She was also concerned about risk areas which could lead to increased costs, such as the kitchens.

Another Member stated that the Council needed a schedule of how the scheme would be financed. In that regard the Chairman of the Guildhall Committee, Cllr Iain Littlejohn, stated that exploratory meetings were due to be held, without commitment, with potential cinema operators, during the summer months.

A Member stated that he supported the Guildhall Committee's recommendation. These plans had been presented in a "modular" way and would enable the Council to choose what it was able to do according to funding. It was important to agree the plans as this enabled the Council to approach potential funders with a firm set of proposals. The Member stated that disabled access was a priority and if adopted these plans would go a long way to achieving this although the Council Chamber would still have some steps up to it.

It was **resolved** by 15 votes in favour with 3 abstentions that:

That the core scheme include an external lift for DDA access to the historic rooms and the work outlined in options 2 (enhancement of lower ground floor to form bar and café area and convert 2nd floor areas) and options 3 (opening up of the historic face of the Bear Room) and 4 (enclosed link through existing service area), noting that the cost range estimate for this work is £3,500,000 to £4,000,000. In considering these options it was noted that different parts of the proposed scheme were subject to different potential funding streams and the completion of the scheme in its totality, as outlined above, would be subject to successful funding applications.

Cllr Jeanette Halliday requested that her abstention be recorded.

The Mayor's Chaplain, Rev Paul Smith, left the meeting at this point, it being 8.23pm.

- (3) *That an additional sum of £25,000 be released from the Council's pooled property fund for professional fees to enable the plans to be further developed, authority to incur expenditure from this budget to be delegated to the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of both the Guildhall committee (as the spending Committee) and Finance and General Purposes (as the finance committee). It was further recommended that, as sums are released, all Members be informed of the allocation of these sums.*

A Member asked the Chairman of the Guildhall Committee how much had been spent on the Project to date. Cllr Iain Littlejohn stated that expenditure was approximately £60,000.

The Chairman of the Guildhall Committee, Cllr Iain Littlejohn, stated that the Committee received a regular update in this regard and that expenditure was carefully monitored. It was important that the Council took proper advice and this was going to cost money.

A Member raised the issue of the system in place for the hard of hearing. A The Member stated that arrangements for those with hearing problems should be taken into account and that the current system should be looked at to see if it could be made to work properly.

It was proposed by Cllr Michael Badcock, seconded by Cllr Alice Badcock and **resolved** that the project allow for a sound/ loop system and that the current system be examined to see how it could work ahead of major works.

It was **resolved** by 16 votes in favour with 2 abstentions: *That an additional sum of £25,000 be released from the Council's pooled property fund for professional fees to enable the plans to be further developed, authority to incur expenditure from this budget to be delegated to the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of both the Guildhall committee (as the spending Committee) and Finance and General Purposes (as committee as the finance committee). It was further resolved that, as sums are released, all Members be informed of the allocation of these sums.*

Cllr Jeanette Halliday requested that her abstention be recorded.

In relation to the copy of the Monks Map, a Member expressed her discontent that this had taken such a long time to progress and asked that this be noted. The Chairman of the County Hall Museum Management Committee apologised for the delay but the funding had been subject to Heritage Lottery Fund approval and the work was now happening.

A Member suggested that when the Council is presented with works of art by local clubs and societies or twin towns, it could be displayed in a particular place for a certain period of time.

Minute F11: First World War Commemoration

It was noted that Cllr Michael Badcock had been appointed by the Finance

and General Purposes Committee and it was **resolved** that a Working Group be established to take matters forward and that this consist of Cllr Michael Badcock, Cllr Angela Lawrence (as Mayor) and Cllr Patrick Lonergan.

Cllr Michael Badcock updated Members on progress on the commemorations, which would take place on the evening of Monday 4th August 2014, the 100th Anniversary of the declaration of war. The recommendations would take the form of the reading, in St Helen's Church, of all the names of those Abingdonians who had served in the war. There were approximately 1,400 names. He was seeking publicity through the media for people from the town to be involved in the reading of the names. This would be followed by a service at the War Memorial. Meetings had or would be held with the Rector and the Royal British Legion and the Head of Service Delivery was taking the officer lead. Members indicated that they were content with the arrangements.

Resolved: that the minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on 10th June 2014 together with the recommendations therein, be approved.

C22 Approval of Annual Return and Financial Statements

The Council received and considered the report of the Town Clerk together with the Financial Statements for the year ended 31st March 2014 and the Annual Return for the year. The Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee, Cllr Sandy Lovatt, introduced this item and stated that the accounts showed that the Council was in a good financial position and that its finances were well managed.

In response to a question from a member regarding the expenditure on maintenance and development items, the Town Clerk stated that queries such as this were more readily answerable by reference to the management accounts, which are regularly presented to the Finance and General Purposes Committee, and show line items by cost centre. The financial accounts were structured in a different way and produced in line with FRSSE (Financial Reporting Standard for Smaller Entities).

The Town Clerk stated that it is a statutory responsibility of the Council to complete an Annual Return for the year and this was subject to audit by the Council's auditors, BDO.

It was **resolved:**

1. that the Accounting Statements (section 1 of the Annual Return) for the year ended 31st March 2014 be approved and signed on behalf of the Council by the Mayor and the Town Clerk;
2. that the Annual Governance Statement (section 2 of the Annual Return), with questions 1-8 answered "yes" and question 9 "not applicable" be approved and signed on behalf of the Council by the Mayor and the Town Clerk;

3. that the Financial Statements for the year ended 31st March 2014 (unaudited) be approved and signed on behalf of the Council by the Mayor and the Town Clerk, subject to the amendments which had been marked on the drafts which had been circulated..

It was noted that Section 3: External auditor's certificate and opinion, would be completed by the auditor following the audit.

The meeting adjourned for a short break at 8.50 pm and re-convened at 8.58pm.

C23 County Hall Museum Management Committee

It was proposed by Cllr Julie Mayhew-Archer and seconded by Cllr Monica Lovatt that the Council receive and consider the minutes of the County Hall Museum Management Committee held on 20th May 2014.

A Member queried the statement at M7 that: "A Member suggested that the Museum may wish to talk to the same consultant that the Guildhall had used re Charitable Status" and what this meant. The Chairman of the Committee, Cllr Julie Mayhew-Archer, stated that the minute was somewhat unintentionally misleading. The Committee had been discussing a grant which the Curator had obtained so that advice could be obtained in to the Value-Added tax (VAT) implications of potential new income streams for the Museum and it had been suggested that the Curator might approach the consultant who the Guildhall service had used to look at VAT issues at the Guildhall in so far as they could be affected by charitable status. The matter of charitable status for the Museum, which had previously been discussed and not taken forward, was not under discussion.

At minute M7 a Member also noted that copies of the book by Bob Frampton had been circulated to Members of the County Hall Museum Management Committee. However she had not seen this draft and stated that this should have come to each Councillor. Furthermore, she had seen no budget brought forward for this matter and this should have appeared in the minutes. It appeared that the matter had been approved by the Friends of the Museum and not the Council. The Chairman of the Committee, Cllr Julie Mayhew-Archer, responded by saying that the expenditure involved, approximately £600 for printing of 200 copies plus registration of an ISBN (International Standard Book number) was being met from £400 from the Friends and the remainder from the Museum budget. When sold the book would generate an income. This was not a large project in financial terms.

Noting the comment on Museum advertising, a Member stated that the matter of brown tourist signs needed to be pursued by the Council. Another Member stated that the Council had made efforts in the past to do this but that the whole matter had proved to be very difficult.

Resolved that the minutes of the County Hall Museum Management Committee held on 20th May 2014 together with any recommendations therein, be approved.

C24 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 28th May 2014.

In relation to minute A4/A11, Cemetery Working Group, the Council clarified that the terms of reference of this Group were to consider arrangements for larger funerals and that its terms of reference did not extend to other cemetery matters, which remained under direct consideration of the Committee.

At minute A4/A55 the Chairman of the Christmas Lights Working Group, Cllr Alice Badcock, reported that it was necessary to undertake refurbishment work to the candle displays in the Market Place but that the indications were that this could prove expensive and it may be more cost effective to replace them. Work would be ongoing in this area.

At A9 the Council considered the proposal to establish a Working Group in relation to a New Cemetery and it was **resolved** that the following Members be appointed: Cllrs Alice Badcock, Marilyn Badcock, Samantha Bowring, Jeanette Halliday, Lesley Legge and Hermann Matheson. Terms of reference would need to be drafted and presented to the first meeting of that Group.

At minute A11 a Member stated that allotment associations should be encouraged to offer allotments which would be suitable for disabled people i.e. with raised beds and perhaps smaller sized allotments.

Resolved that the minutes of the Amenities & Recreation Committee Management Committee held on 28th May 2014 together with any recommendations therein, be approved.

C25 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 31st March; 22nd April; 12th May; and 2nd June 2014.

In relation to minute 7 of the meeting of 2nd June 2014 a Member stated that the District Council had approved the nomination of the Old Abbey House as a Community Asset and that this now gave a six month period for a bid to come forward for a community use in relation to the property.

Resolved that the minutes of the Planning and Highways Committee meetings held on 31st March; 22nd April; 12th May; and 2nd June 2014, together with any recommendations therein, be approved.

C26 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 3rd June 2014.

It is noted that much of the business of this Committee had been covered earlier in the meeting under the Finance and General Purposes Committee minutes.

A Member stated that there were a number of Members of the Council who worked during the daytime and therefore asked that where possible, depending on the membership of Working Groups etc, meetings should be held in the evenings, especially if all Members were being invited to attend. The Chairman of the Guildhall Committee, Cllr Iain Littlejohn, agreed.

Resolved that the minutes of the Guildhall Committee meeting held on 3rd June 2014 together with any recommendations therein, be approved.

C27 Representation on Outside Bodies

Members received and considered the report of the Town Clerk in relation to the above.

It was proposed by Cllr Alison Rooke and seconded by Cllr Sandy Lovatt and **Resolved** that Cllr Angela Lawrence be appointed to serve as Council Representative on the Stakeholders Group at Abingdon Foyer.

C28 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)

C29 Confidential appendix to the minutes of the Council of Abingdon-on-Thames

The Committee received and considered the confidential appendix to the minutes of the Council of Abingdon-on-Thames held on 19th March 2014.

Resolved to adopt the confidential appendix to the minutes of the Town Council held on 19th March 2014 and that they be signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

C30 Confidential appendix to the minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee

The Committee received and considered the confidential appendix to the minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 10th June 2014. The appendix referred to staffing matters which have to be treated as

confidential. Please see confidential appendix in relation to the recommendations in relation to staffing matters.

Resolved: that confidential appendix to the minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on 10th June 2014 be approved subject to the matters outlined in the confidential appendix.

C31 Confidential appendix to the minutes of the County Hall Museum Management Committee

The Committee received and considered the confidential appendix to the minutes of the County Hall Museum Management Committee held on 20th May 2014.

Resolved that the confidential appendix to the minutes of the County Hall Museum Management Committee held on 20th May 2014, be approved.

C32 Confidential appendix to the minutes of the Guildhall Committee

The Committee received and considered the confidential appendix to the minutes of the Guildhall Committee held on 3rd June 2014.

Resolved that the confidential appendix to the minutes of the Guildhall Committee held on 3rd June 2014 be approved.

The meeting rose at 10.20 pm.