

Minutes of the Council of the Town of Abingdon-on-Thames held on 28th January 2015 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 Katie Finch	
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 Lorraine Oates	
Cllr Alison Rooke	
Cllr Andrew Todd	

In Attendance

Mr Nigel Warner	Town Clerk (Clerk to the meeting)
Ms Heather Brown	Community Services Officer
Mr Malcolm Hill	Macebearer
Mrs Susan Whipp	Treasurer

8 members of the public

SECTION I (Open to the Public Including the Press)

C51 Prayers

In the absence of the Mayor's Chaplain, the Town Clerk, led the meeting in prayer.

C52 Public Participation

(a) The Council received a presentation from Cliff Marshall of the Abingdon Carbon Cutters Group. He made a presentation on Abingdon-on-Thames as a town in transition, outlining the history of the transitions towns' initiative in Abingdon and the next steps which needed to be taken. He also detailed the steps which the Council and councillors could undertake to take the initiative forward. A copy of the presentation is appended to these minutes.

The Mayor, Cllr Angela Lawrence, thanked the Carbon Cutters for their presentation. She stated that many councillors supported the initiative and she was ensuring that her own activities were in line with the principles of transition towns, for instance, she would be serving Fair Trade wine at her upcoming Civic Dinner and sourcing food locally. Cllr Michael Badcock also thanked Mr Marshall for his presentation.

C53 Apologies

All councillors being present, there were no apologies for absence.

C54 Declarations of Interest

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

Cllr Lesley Legge declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to the item relating the Old Magistrates' Court as she was a member of one of the choirs that uses the premises (minute C68).

C55 Minutes

(a) Approval of minutes:

It was noted that Cllr Jan Morter had circulated an errata in relation to the various minutes being considered, in order to save time later. Those relating to the Council minutes were approved. In relation to Committee minutes it was noted that minutes were presented to the Council as a report of the meeting and with a view to approving recommendations. Accuracy of committee minutes was a matter for the committees themselves but the various typographical errors would be corrected ahead of the respective meetings.

Resolved to adopt and sign as a correct record the minutes of the Council of Abingdon-on-Thames held on 17th September 2014, subject to the above amendments.

(b) Matters arising

Minute C35 / C21 – Finance and General Purposes Committee

Cllr Julie Mayhew-Archer stated that potential locations for new Blue Plaques in Abingdon and that she understood that these would be considered at the next Finance and General Purposes Committee.

Minute C37 Minutes – Minute C15 Public Participation

Cllr Sandy Lovatt drew members' attention to his response to the question from District Councillor Dr Jim Halliday in relation to the Guildhall. This

response was included as an appendix to the minutes of the meeting of 17th September 2014. In particular he highlighted the Council's objectives in relation to the Guildhall Project and asked that Members note these.

Minutes C38 – Mayor of Abingdon-on-Thames

The Mayor, Cllr Angela Lawrence, reported that the Mayor's Quiz had made approximately £2,000 profit for her charities and she wished that her special thanks to the Question Master, Mr Paul Mayhew-Archer be recorded.

C56 Mayor of Abingdon-on-Thames

The Mayor asked that Members refer to the list of engagements which had been tabled at the meeting as unfortunately there were a number of inaccuracies in the list of mayoral engagements which had been circulated with the agenda.

The Mayor drew attention to the Grand Civic Dinner which was due to take place on Friday 13th February 2015. So far, 57 tickets had been sold for the event and she was hoping that more than 60 be sold.

The Mayor invited all those present to join her for refreshments in the Mayor's Parlour following the meeting.

C57 Questions under Standing Order 10

There were no questions under Standing Order 10.

C58 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 25th November 2014.

In relation to Minute M29, Report of the Museum Officers, the Chairman of the Committee, Cllr Julie Mayhew-Archer, stated that the Curator was searching for John Piper prints to include in the upcoming exhibition. She was especially interested in local views, for example, of Sunningwell. She asked that if anyone had any such prints or knew of where they could be obtained to speak directly to the Curator.

Resolved that the minutes of the County Hall Museum Management Committee held on 25th November 2014, be approved.

C59 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 which took place on 26th November 2014.

Further to the attendance list at the meeting, Cllr Julie Mayhew-Archer stated that although she was in attendance, as a non-committee member, she had actually left the meeting early.

In relation to Minute A22, Summer Events Working Group, the Chairman of the Working Group, Cllr Alice Badcock, stated that details of the Fun in the Park and Music in the Park events were now publicised on the Council's website. Sales of wristbands for Music in the Park would commence on 16th March 2015. This year there would be a larger stage which would give the Council more flexibility in relation to the activities which could take place.

Minute A20 – Matters Arising, A10 – Roysse Court Garden

Cllr Marilyn Badcock reported the Committee had recommended to the Guildhall Committee that the fountain in the Roysse Court garden be removed as it was now damaged and plants became waterlogged when they were planted in the fountain. Unfortunately this matter had not been considered by the Guildhall Committee and she asked that the recommendation now be considered directly by the Town Council. This was an important recommendation as it would enable improvements to be made and assist in the repaving works. It was advantageous to authorise this work now so that it could be undertaken before the very busy summer period. Cllr Iain Littlejohn stated that personally he had no objection to this recommendation, subject to the financial implications. The Town Clerk's opinion was asked regarding the financial implications. He responded that he was not in a position to give an accurate estimate although from his knowledge of the matter he did not consider that the removal of the fountain would cost in excess of £1,000.

Cllr Michael Badcock stated that if possible an attempt should be made to remove the fountain so that it could be sold at a later date. He also drew Members' attention to the short term refurbishment plans for the garden which would mean that the two trees, which were diseased, would be removed.

On being put to the vote, the recommendation that the fountain be removed was approved by 20 votes in favour with one abstention.

Resolved that the minutes of the Amenities and Recreation Committee, held on 26th November 2014, be approved.

C60 Planning and Highways Committee

It was proposed by Cllr Michael Badcock and seconded by Cllr Lorraine Oates that the Council receive and consider the minutes of the Planning and Highways Committee of 15th September; 6th October; 27th October; 17th November; 8th December; 22nd December 2014; and 12th January 2015.

Minutes of 17th November and 8th December 2014

Cllr Marilyn Badcock noted that the Committee had made detailed comments on the Local Plan 2031 Part 1: Strategy Sites and Policies, and proposed a vote of thanks to the Committee for all their hard work in considering the plan. This vote of thanks was agreed.

Resolved that the minutes of the Planning and Highways Committee, held on 15th September; 6th October; 27th October; 17th November; 8th December; 22nd December 2014; and 12th January 2015, be approved.

C61 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 meetings of the Guildhall Committee held on 5th November 2014 and 7th January 2015.

It was noted that a number of recommendations had been made by the Committee but had to be referred to the Finance and General Purposes Committee and therefore would be considered along with the minutes of that committee. However, in the response to a query from a Member, regarding the proposed date for the temporary closure of the Guildhall, the Chairman of the Committee, Cllr Iain Littlejohn, stated that no closure date had been announced prior to this; previously the Council had agreed a date beyond which bookings of the Hall would not be taken.

It was noted that there was an appendix to the minutes titled “Draft Response to Dr Jim Halliday from the Chairman of the Guildhall Committee, Cllr Iain Littlejohn”. The Council was informed that this was in fact the actual response to Dr Halliday rather than a draft.

Resolved that the minutes of Guildhall Committee held on 5th November 2014 and 7th January 2015 be approved.

C62 Finance and General Purposes Committee

It was proposed by Cllr Sandy Lovatt and seconded by Cllr Marilyn Badcock that the Council receive and consider the minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 13th January 2015.

Minute F43 – Statements and Questions from the Public

Cllr Jan Morter stated that the Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee, Cllr Sandy Lovatt, had not answered the second question which had been asked by Cllr Dr Jim Halliday. Cllr Marilyn Badcock reminded Members that a proposal was coming forward regarding a firm temporary closure date for the Guildhall later in the meeting.

Minute F42 – Matters Arising – Minute F30 National Association of Local Councils Larger Councils

The Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee, Cllr Sandy Lovatt, reported that Cllr Angela Lawrence had recently been re-elected to the NALC Larger Councils Committee, in which she topped the poll. Members congratulated Cllr Lawrence through a round of applause.

Minute F46 – Grants

Cllr Jan Morter, as Chairman of the Grants Sub-Committee, noted the request of the Finance and General Purposes Committee that in future minutes be extended to include a sentence on each grant application as it was considered without a full set of grants papers to hand, the information on the minutes was not sufficient. This could be arranged. She drew Members' attention to the work of the Grants Sub-Committee. She stated that some grant applications were very detailed, with one application being eight pages long. She queried whether the Finance and General Purposes Committee wanted to go through all of them in the detail which it had done at its last meeting, as the Grants Sub-Committee had been appointed to do this. She stated that the descriptions could be extended but it was not possible to include all the detail.

Cllr Lesley Legge stated that the point of setting up the Sub-Committee was to ease the load on the Finance and General Purposes Committee. Grants were given very careful consideration by the Sub-Committee and all of their recommendations were reasonable. If Members were concerned about a specific grant application they could attend the Sub-Committee and say so. However it was a waste of time to discuss the grants all over again at the Finance and General Purposes Committee. Either the Council should have a Grants Sub-Committee, the recommendations of which were normally accepted, or it should not.

The Mayor, Cllr Angela Lawrence, stated that there had been some uncertainty in relation to the details of some of the grants which had been recommended for payment and it would have been helpful to have had a member of the Grants Sub-Committee who had attended that meeting, to be present at the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

Cllr Monica Lovatt reported that she is a member of the Grants Sub-Committee but had been unable to attend that particular meeting of the Sub-Committee and unfortunately Cllr Julie Mayhew-Archer, who was also on both the Grants Sub-Committee and the Finance and General Purposes Committee, had also not been at the Grants Sub-Committee. However, she quite understood the query which had been raised at the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

Cllr Patrick Lonergan said that a set of terms of reference for the Grants Sub-Committee may help in this regard.

Cllr Alice Badcock stated that she supported Cllr Jan Morter's suggestion of adding a few lines to the description of the grant application within the Sub-Committee minutes.

Cllr Hermann Matheson stated that there was a difficult balance to be struck between supplying too much and too little information.

Cllr Sandy Lovatt stated that the Grants Sub-Committee had considered an application by the Abingdon Freewheel Cycling Club. However the detail

within the recommendation had been very sketchy and consequently the payment of a grant of £1,500 had been delegated to the Town Clerk in consultation with himself and Cllr Jan Morter. He had now discussed the matter with both Cllr Morter and the Town Clerk and they had come to the conclusion that this was a grant for an event which would be very good for the town. The grant would support cycling and bring people into the town and also allow for training and instruction in the skills needed by cyclists. Consequently, the grant had been approved.

In response to a question regarding a grant towards a French exchange trip for the combined schools Larkmead, Fitzharrys and John Mason, Cllr Jan Morter reported that the rationale behind the grant of £660 was based on a notional allocation of £10 support per pupil. The grant provided would in reality provide a subsidy for three individual places.

Cllr Angela Lawrence emphasised that discussion in relation to these grants was not a criticism of the Grants Sub-Committee.

Minute F48 – Choose Abingdon Partnership (ChAPs)

Cllr Alison Rooke stated that the Choose Abingdon Loyalty Card was not working and this had elicited some comment. She had heard that shops did not know that the card would no longer work and whilst she had a card and was on a mailing list from ChAPS, and had received mailings, she did not recall receiving an email regarding changes to the Loyalty Card. She asked what was happening.

Cllr Iain Littlejohn, as one of the Council representatives on the ChAPs Board stated that he was not in a position to answer all her queries. However, he had understood at the December board meeting that the company running the scheme was no longer in the position to support the product. Therefore the Board had voted funds to set up a replacement scheme but there had been little response from the shops. He understood that information had gone out informing card holders of the situation. This was a slightly uncomfortable situation but unfortunately matters were beyond the control of ChAPs.

Heather Brown, in her role as ChAPs Manager, stated that the company supporting the Choose Abingdon Loyalty Card, Savvy UK, had for some time been trying to persuade ChAPs to move to a new system but retailers had been keen to remain with the existing system. The licence for the machines which read the cards expired every two years and Savvy's relationship with the company issuing the licences had changed and consequently, as of 31st December 2014, the cards had ceased to work in the machines. However she stressed that it was still possible to find out the number of points held on each card; what the machines could no longer do would be to add or take points off. Consequently, shoppers should not lose out. She confirmed that all retailers had been informed of the situation prior to 31st December 2014 by Savvy UK. As far as cardholders were concerned, she had wanted to be sure of the facts of the situation after 31st December and when this became clear she then included a notification in the email newsletter which was despatched on 6th January 2015. However, if cardholders had unsubscribed from the email newsletters they would not have been informed directly. There had

been no discussions regarding the cost of the card which had cost shoppers £3 each. The Choose Abingdon Partnership Board had decided to go ahead with a new Abingdon app as an alternative to the card and this would be available from mid to late February. This would be free for retailers to operate but would require the shopper to have a smart phone.

Cllr Lesley Legge reported that she had been told by one retailer that she had lost her points. She asked that Choose Abingdon consider talking to retailers directly to avoid misunderstandings or ill feeling.

Minute F49 – Matters referred from other Standing Committees: Guildhall Committee of 7th January 2015

It was **resolved**:

That the Guildhall improvement and cinema project now be formally split into two separate projects, one being a heritage based project and the other being the entertainment based project.

It was noted that the rationale behind this was that whilst the two Projects would still be related, they could proceed independently in terms of timescale etc. External grant fund raising could then be concentrated on the Heritage project where there are prospects to obtain such funds.

Minute F50 – Financial Report and Estimates 2015/16

Civic matters: Cllr Alison Rooke spoke to the recommendation that *“the budget provide an additional £500 within the civic functions budget (code 4040/4303), this to allow for the attendance of the Mayor at various functions in the county but to defer consideration as to whether this budget should be utilised to the incoming Council.”* She stated that she was very unhappy about this recommendation. The Council had undertaken a full review of the Mayor’s Allowance a few years’ ago. She appreciated that performing the role of Mayor was a considerable financial commitment for any Member but could not support this.

Cllr Samantha Bowring wondered whether this £500 proposal would be a separate budget.

Cllr Michael Badcock stated that he had made this proposal due to his experience as a Mayor. There was a considerable cost in attending events on behalf of the town and he noted that the Deputy Mayor did not receive any allowance. Having this sum within the budget would allow the new Council to properly consider matters.

Cllr Hermann Matheson stated that finances are tight but that the Mayoral Allowance must be sufficient to cover the cost of undertaking the role. Being able to be the Mayor should not be restricted to those in well paid jobs.

Cllr Sandy Lovatt stated that he felt there was an argument for an increase in the Mayor’s Allowance in order to cover the costs of undertaking the role.

Allowing a sum of £500 within the civic budget for the new Council to decide on was a relatively modest measure.

Cllr Marilyn Badcock argued that this recommendation should be approved. It was appropriate for this to go into the civic fund. The Mayor should be seen to represent the town and she noted that the Deputy Mayor did not receive an allowance.

Cllr Lesley Legge stated that she had some sympathy with the recommendation but did not feel that this was the time to put this budget in place. She felt that the current Mayor's allowance was reasonable but accepted it would not necessarily cover the costs of attending every function.

The Mayor, Cllr Angela Lawrence, stated that the Mayoralty was of great benefit to the town. She always prioritised Abingdon functions. She was in the position of being able to choose to attend all functions which she wished to but considered that there should be funds available to a Mayor if needed.

Cllr Patrick Lonergan stated that attending various functions in the county was optional for a mayor. There are a number of functions, for instance attendance at the Dorchester Abbey event, which do not cost money.

Cllr Jeanette Halliday considered that the Mayor's Allowance was generous but that the Council should consider amending the recommendation so that it read "to allow for the attendance of the Deputy Mayor at various functions in the county". However Cllr Michael Badcock stated that legally the Council could not allocate an allowance to the Deputy Mayor.

Cllr Samantha Bowring stated that the Mayoral Allowance of approximately £3,000 did enable members to be mayor. They would be able to undertake all their Abingdon duties and she did not think that, taking into account the level of the Mayor's Allowance, that an individual's income was an obstacle to being a Mayor of the town. However Cllr Michael Badcock emphasised that he wanted to make sure that any elected member would have sufficient funds in order to undertake the role of Mayor.

On being put to the vote, the recommendation was lost by six votes in favour, with nine against and five abstentions.

CCTV/ security: Cllr Sandy Lovatt drew the attention of Members to the recommendation that the grant for CCTV showing against code 411/4254 in the sum of £1,650 should be transferred to Guildhall Security. This was agreed by the Council.

Property funds: There was a discussion regarding the capital sum to be reserved against the new cemetery project. Cllr Sandy Lovatt reported that the Finance and General Purposes Committee had received a request from the Amenities and Recreation Committee that this be increased to £100,000 next year, from £75,000 in the current year. However, the Committee had taken the view that it was not necessary to increase this budget at this stage and therefore proposed that it remain at £75,000. He reminded Members that with a contribution of £75,000 during 2015/16, the amount held within that

reserve would amount to £525, 412 as at 31st March 2016. He then stated that, as reported in the minutes, Cllr Marilyn Badcock had proposed and the Committee recommended that the budget for the Pooled Property Fund be increased by £25,000 and that this be allocated specifically for the Guildhall Improvement Project. This would mean that the budget bid for that Fund would be £138,250.

Cllr Helen Pighills stated that she did not feel that it was appropriate to sub-divide the pooled property fund in this way, as the whole point was that the fund was a pooled fund. Consequently, she therefore proposed an amendment “*that £25,000 not be earmarked for the Guildhall Improvement Project from within the Pooled Property Fund,*” it being noted that the proposed amount within the Fund would remain the same; this was seconded by Cllr Lesley Legge.

Cllr Patrick Lonergan stated that it was for the Finance and General Purposes Committee to decide in any case on the priority for projects within the pooled property fund.

Cllr Marilyn Badcock stated that she had requested that the Council allow within its budget a sum for the Guildhall Improvement Project. This was the largest project being undertaken by the Council at the moment and was also seen by the town as a major project. It was necessary for the Town Council to put something into the budget. This could be used for a specific purpose, for example towards retractable tiered seating, cinema equipment or soundproofing. At a time when the Council was looking to raise funds from elsewhere she considered that it would be very short sighted not to allocate something from the Council's budget towards the project. Otherwise the sum would be consumed within the pooled fund.

(Cllr Iain Littlejohn left the meeting at this point, it being 8.50pm).

Cllr Samantha Bowring made the point that when the Council sets money aside for specific projects, for example the new cemetery fund, it would be misleading if it were then used for another purpose.

Cllr Lesley Legge stated that the Council had not finalised its plans in relation to the Guildhall. The whole rationale of a pooled property fund is that it is there to drawn on if it is needed. She pointed out that the Council did have a substantial capital improvement sum and it would be more sensible not to earmark this £25,000 within the pooled property fund. It was not irresponsible not to do so.

Cllr Alison Rooke stated that she considered the Council was getting into a muddle in relation to this matter. The question was should the £25,000 go into the pooled property fund or should it be specifically be earmarked for the Guildhall. She considered that the sum of £25,000 was somewhat arbitrary as the Council could, for instance, require £50,000. Including the sum within the pooled property sum was not stopping or precluding the Guildhall drawing on the fund.

Cllr Michael Badcock made the point that the Council was currently not providing a good service for people with disabilities and it was very important that this matter be addressed.

On moving to the vote and the amendment “*that £25,000 not be earmarked for the Guildhall Improvement Project from within the Pooled Property Fund,*” there were nine votes in favour, nine votes against and one abstention. The Mayor then cast her vote against the amendment, stating that she wished to support the status quo position which she deemed to be the Committee’s recommendation.

The Council then moved to the recommendation in relation to the Pooled Property Fund and that it be set for 2015/16 in the sum of £138,250, including the in fund earmarking detailed in the minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee. The Council voted 14 in favour and none against, with six abstentions and **resolved** accordingly.

Cllr Sandy Lovatt proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Alison Rooke and agreed that the Council now proceed to a vote in relation to the overall budget, precept and reserves.

The Council then considered its **overall budget, precept and reserves**. It was **resolved**:

- (i) That the **draft base revenue budget estimates** for 2015/16, as circulated in the joint report of the Town Clerk and the Treasurer and subject to the amendments set out above, be approved in the sum of £1,022,621 (net expenditure).

(Resolved unanimously)

- (ii) That the **estimates for capital and larger revenue (project based)** items for 2015/16 as detailed below and in the sum of £342,250 be approved:

a.	Cemetery improvements	£27,000
b.	Play equipment	£30,000
c.	Council paths and pavements	£6,500
d.	New Cemetery Fund	£75,000
e.	New Christmas lights	£8,000
f.	New Street Furniture	£5,000
g.	Allotments	£6,000
h.	Pooled equipment fund	£30,000
i.	Community Fund	£11,500
j.	Treasures	£4,000
k.	Acquisitions	£1,000
l.	Pooled property fund/ reserve	£138,250

(Resolved with 18 votes in favour and two abstentions)

Total net expenditure requirement: In relation to the grant which was stated as coming from central government, in the sum of £59,772, the point was made that in fact this grant was from the District Council, allocated from

government funding which had been provided to district councils in order to ameliorate the impact of changes to council tax benefit. Cllr Sandy Lovatt explained that the grant is allocated as part of the localisation of Council Tax Support. The grant had been introduced to ease the burden on councils who had to find additional funds to pay for council tax benefits within their areas. It was reducing by approximately 20% each year and eventually would disappear completely. It was paid to the District Council who then passed on a share to the Town Council.

The Mayor, Cllr Angela Lawrence, stated that not all district councils passed on the money on which they had received from government to their parish councils.

Cllr Monica Lovatt stated that the Council had been most fortunate in being able to cope with loss of income from the precept over the last three years and still being able to balance the budget. This had been due to the hard work of Members and in particular the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee, Cllr Sandy Lovatt and Cllr Alison Rooke, together with the work of the Officers, specifically the Town Clerk and the Treasurer, in managing the budget prudently.

In response to a question from Cllr Lesley Legge, Cllr Sandy Lovatt stated that there were two more years left of the current grant arrangement.

Cllr Patrick Lonergan reminded members that this meant that the Council would need to find savings of £30,000 during each of the next two years in order to balance its budget. It was **resolved**:

- (iii) That the **total net expenditure requirement** (i.e. gross expenditure less income from sources other than the precept/ central government grant) provided in the estimates for 2015/16 of £1,364,871 be funded as follows:

- | | |
|---|------------|
| a. Precept | £1,305,099 |
| b. Grant in relation to Council Tax support | £59,772 |

and that the Town Clerk be authorised to serve a **precept notice** on the Vale of White District Council in the sum of £1,305,099, noting that this would result in a Band D Council Tax of £110.23, an increase of 1.74% on the current year.

(Resolved by 18 votes in favour with two abstentions)

- (iv) That following the **review of Council reserves**, that the general reserve be deemed to be appropriate in relation to the annual expenditure of the Council, that the earmarked reserves be considered to be reasonable and sufficient in relation to known and potential liabilities and commitments of the Council and that the projected reserve movements at 31st March 2015 be approved as detailed in Appendix 3 of the joint report of the Town Clerk and of the Treasurer.

(Resolved unanimously)

- (v) That the Council's **reserves** be further reviewed when considering the final accounts for the year ending 31st March 2015.

(Resolved unanimously)

Fees and Charges

Cemetery

The Amenities and Recreation Committee had noted that comparisons with other local authorities had revealed that the Council's fees in relation to the Cemetery were lower than the average. The service was a subsidised service and the Committee considered that the Council should continue to move in the direction of reducing the subsidy whilst having regard to having a desire to limit increases in fees. However the Amenities and Recreation Committee did not consider that the Sanctum 2000 ashes section required further review at this stage. It was **resolved**

- (vi) That Cemetery fees and charges (with the exception of these in relation to Sanctum 2000 ashes interment fees) be increased by 5% at 1st April 2015.

(Resolved by 19 votes in favour to two against)

Guildhall

With the likelihood of development during 2015/16 it was **resolved**

- (vii) That there be no change to fees and charges in relation to Guildhall services for 2015/16.

(Resolved unanimously)

Markets

The Committee noted that fees and charges in relation to market tolls were very reasonable but considered that any increase needed to be kept modest as trading conditions were not easy for market traders. It was **resolved** that

- (viii) Tolls for the Monday retail market increase from £10.60 to £10.80 per ten feet pitch and for the Farmers' Market from £9.00 to £9.20 per stall.

(Resolved unanimously)

Loan for capital

The Committee had considered that the Council may require a loan towards the proposed works at the Guildhall. The need for this could not be established at this stage but it was **resolved**

That should the Council require a loan to be taken out to part fund capital improvements at the Guildhall, that the loan repayments should be accommodated within the existing Council budget and not result in any increase in the Band D Council Tax.

(Resolved by 20 votes in favour with one abstention)

In relation to Minute F53 Council Committee / Democratic Services structure, the Mayor, Cllr Angela Lawrence, drew Members' attention to the paper which had been circulated as a report of the working group. It was not intended that this paper be discussed at the meeting but it would be referred to Finance and General Purposes Committee, which had established the Working Group. It was also noted that those proposals which required a change to Standing Order were reflected in a motion being moved at Minute C63.

Minute F58 – Matters referred from other Committees, Guildhall Committee

The Committee discussed the recommendation *“that the Guildhall be closed from 31st August 2015 for development, the period of closure expected to be no less than 12 months and likely to be 18 months. It is further recommended that the Guildhall be fully closed to all bookings during this period but for the avoidance of doubt it should be emphasised that the proposed closure of the Guildhall is on a temporary and not a permanent basis.”*

In speaking to this recommendation, Cllr Michael Badcock stated that the Council should wait until it had received tenders back from potential cinema operators before making a decision on the temporary closure date. However, Cllr Iain Littlejohn stated that the Council had reached the point where there was a small number of options open for the development and it was important that the Council gives certainty to its users regarding this matter.

Cllr Lesley Legge stated that this matter had been discussed at the Guildhall Committee. She agreed that this was the appropriate moment to temporarily close the Guildhall but it was important that the Council decide on the final project quickly.

Cllr Alison Rooke drew members' attention to that part of the question where the Leader had been asked to consider the risk of losing hirers and them not coming back and stated that this needed further consideration.

Cllr Samantha Bowring stated that the Council needed a very clear idea of how long the Guildhall was likely to be shut for as there were concerns being expressed in the media and on various blog sites regarding this matter.

Cllr Sandy Lovatt referred the Council to his response to Cllr Dr Jim Halliday's fourth question which he had answered at the Committee. He stated that the

Council must remember the principles on which it was basing its plans. The Guildhall Committee had come forward with this recommendation and he considered that the Council should approve it. Following temporary closure on 31st August 2015 there would be much work to do to empty the building. The Council had approximately £1 million in terms of a capital improvement sum and it was important to start work on the project to overcome issues such as the problems on access, improving the Abbey Hall and bringing cinema back to Abingdon. The Guildhall needed to be transformed into a usable building. He also noted that the current designs were of a modular format and therefore the baseline concept could be built upon as the Council progressed. There remained an uncertainty in relation to funding but it was important to progress matters.

Cllr Patrick Lonergan stated that it was important that people be informed that the building would be closed for at least 12 months. Cllr Iain Littlejohn agreed with Cllr Patrick Lonergan and stated that he could not see that the building would be closed for less than 12 months and also stated that it was highly unlikely that a contractor would be on site before the New Year. On being put to the vote it was **resolved**, with 19 votes in favour, one against and one abstention that:

That the Guildhall be closed from 31st August 2015 for development, the period of closure expected to be no less than 12 months and likely to be 18 months. It is further recommended that the Guildhall be fully closed to all bookings during this period but for the avoidance of doubt it should be emphasised that the proposed closure of the Guildhall is on a temporary and not a permanent basis.

Resolved that the minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee, held on 13th January 2015, be approved.

C63 Motions

- a) Motion under Standing Order 8:
Cllr Jeanette Halliday stated that she was not moving the motion detailed on the order paper in her name and would be seeking its consideration at the next Council Meeting.
- b) Motion under Standing Order 38 to permanently change Standing Orders.

It was proposed by Cllr Marilyn Badcock, seconded by Cllr Helen Pighills:

- A. To delete Standing Order 32 and replace with the following:

Code of conduct. All councillors shall observe the code of conduct adopted by the Council.

B. To delete the Standing Order 38 and replace with the following:

COMMITTEES

38 List of Committees

(1) *The following committees shall be the Standing Committees of the Council and shall consist of the number of members stated below each committee:*

(a) *Finance and General Purposes*

Chairmen of the five other Standing Committees plus five other members. The Chairman of Finance and General Purposes Committee cannot be Chairman of any other Standing Committee. The Chairman of Finance and General Purposes Committee shall also act as Leader of the Council.

(b) *Planning and Highways*

Nine members

Where a member is unable to attend a meeting of this Committee they may nominate a substitute member provided that the nominating member informs the office of the Town Clerk prior to the commencement of the meeting.

(c) *Amenities and Recreation*

Seven members.

(d) *Community Services*

Seven members.

(d) *County Hall Museum Management*

Seven members.

(e) *Guildhall*

Seven members.

Membership of Committees and Sub-Committees shall take into account the spirit of the provision of Section 15 (4) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, concerning the allocation of places between representatives of any political groups.

(2) *Chairman*

If any Chairman is unable to attend any particular meeting of the committee he/she may be represented at the meeting by his/her Vice-Chairman.

(3) *Mayor*

The Mayor shall be an ex-officio voting member of every Standing Committee. The Mayor shall be an ex-officio non-voting member of all other Sub-Committees and Working Parties appointed by the Council.

(4) *Chairman of Finance and General Purposes Committee*

The Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee shall be an ex-officio voting member of every Standing Committee. The Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee shall be an ex-officio non-voting member of all other Sub-Committees and Working Parties/ Groups appointed by the Council.

(5) *The Council may make a scheme for the terms of reference and delegation to Council committees, sub-committees and working groups/ parties.*

In accordance with Standing Order 34 (3) the Motion stood adjourned without discussion until the meeting of the Town Council on 25th March 2015.

C64 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)

C65 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 17th September 2014.

Resolved to adopt the confidential appendix to the minutes of the Town Council held on 17th September 2014 and that they be signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

C66 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 25th November 2014.

Resolved that the confidential appendix to the minutes of the County Hall Museum Management Committee held on 25th November 2014, be approved.

C67 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 5th November 2014 and 7th January 2015.

Resolved: that confidential appendix to the minutes of the Guildhall Committee held on 5th November 2014 and 7th January 2015 be approved.

C68 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 13th January 2015.

Cllr Lesley Legge declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to the item relating the Old Magistrates' Court as she was a member of one of the choirs that uses the premises.

Minute F58: Matters referred from other committees
Guildhall Committee 7th January 2015 - Minute G48: Property matters

(a) Council Chamber Chairs

Resolved:

(i) that a sum of £3,790 be allocated from the Treasures budget to refurbish the Council Chamber chairs as detailed in the report of the Town Clerk, specifically the large chairs with arms (3 no), the crested chairs (6 no) and the ordinary chairs which simply require revival of the polish/ waxing (17 no), making a total of 26 chairs in all;

(ii) That the remaining 25 chairs, which have not been used for many years, be disposed of, that advice be taken of the Council's valuer and the matter reported back to the Guildhall Committee for consideration regarding manner of disposal.

(b) Other items for potential disposal

Resolved:

(i) that the mahogany late George III style dining table and a set of eighteen 1950s beech chairs, which were formerly in the Bear Room and are now in storage within the building and are surplus to requirements be disposed of, that advice be taken of the Council's valuer and the matter reported back to the Guildhall Committee for consideration regarding manner of disposal.

(ii) that the chair detailed in the report of the Town Clerk, which the Rotary Club lay claim to as being their property, be released to that organisation, noting its value (low) and the work which is necessary to undertake as considerable.

Note: the Town Clerk declared an interest in this matter, as a member of the Rotary Club of Abingdon, and took no part in the discussion.

(c) Soundproofing – Old Magistrates Court

See confidential appendix.

The Council considered the report from the Finance and General Purposes Committee and the further report from the Museum Curator.

It was **resolved** by 12 votes in favour, 8 against and 1 abstention that this matter be deferred and considered further in the next cycle of meetings.

Minute F60 Personnel Sub-Committee

Cllr Michael Badcock paid tribute to Mr Malcolm Hill for his outstanding service as the Council's Honorary Macebearer. The Mayor, Cllr Angela Lawrence, stated that for the Annual Meeting the changeover of Macebearer would be marked by Mr Hill escorting the outgoing Mayor into the Annual Meeting and the transition to the new Macebearer then being made at the meeting, with the new appointee then escorting the newly elected Mayor out of the meeting.

Minute F61 (b) – Property matters

It was noted that Dr Peter Durrant, the Berkshire County Archivist, had retired at 31st December 2014. Both the Town Archivist Jackie Smith and the Town Clerk considered that the Council had benefited from his wise and expert counsel since 1987. The Council had been fortunate to retain this link with the Berkshire Record office, it being very helpful as one of the few parish councils who had retained their historic archives. It was **resolved** that the Council officially thank Dr Peter Durrant for his valuable assistance over the years.

Further to the minutes of the meeting and the further report of the Town Clerk, the Council **resolved** that that the sum detailed in the confidential appendix be allocated from the Council's property funds and drawn firstly from the earmarked reserve from cemetery chapels, then the property earmarked

reserve and finally the 2015/16 budget for the Pooled Property Fund, for works to cemetery properties.

It was noted that the sum was confidential at this stage due to commercial sensitivity of this information ahead of the tender process.

It was noted that all the cemetery properties were making exempt supplies for the purposes of Value-Added Tax (VAT), with the exception of the consecrated chapel, the hire charges for which were standard-rated. Further to the Town Clerk's report it was **resolved** that the Council now opt to tax the non-consecrated chapel in accordance with VAT Notice 742 and that authority be delegated to the Town Clerk to notify HM Customs and Excise of the Council's intention to opt to tax the non-consecrated chapel and serve a notice 1614A.

The meeting rose at 10.35pm.

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Mayor of Abingdon-on-Thames