

Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council

Draft Minutes of the Guildhall Committee held on Monday 4th March 2013 at 7.00pm in the Committee Room at the Old Abbey House, Abingdon-on-Thames

Present:

Cllr Iain Littlejohn	Chairman
Cllr Marilyn Badcock	Vice Chairman
Cllr Lesley Legge	
Cllr Alison Rooke	
Cllr Sandy Lovatt	Leader

In attendance:

Cllr Julie Mayhew-Archer	
Ms Johannah Aynsley	Guildhall Manager
Mr David Boyd	Architect
Mr Daniel Lewandowski	Architect
Mr Steve Rich	Head of Service Delivery
Mr Peter Turvey	Quantity Surveyor
Mr Nigel Warner	Town Clerk (Clerk to the meeting)

G106 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Katie Nobes.

G107 **Declarations of Interest**

None

G108 **Minutes**

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the meeting of the Guildhall Committee held on 13th February 2013.

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting of the Guildhall Committee held on 13th February 2013 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

G109 **Matters Arising**

None.

G101 **Date of next meeting and calendar of meetings.**

It was noted that the date of the next meeting had been altered, at the previous meeting of this Committee to Thursday 4th April 2013 at 5.30pm. The Chairman also stated that it may be necessary to reschedule the meeting which is currently in the diary for Tuesday 30th April 2013.

G102 **Exclusion of the Public including the Press**

The Chairman moved and it was **resolved**:

That in accordance with section 1 (2) of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 (as extended by Section 100 of the Local Government Act 1972), the public (including the press) be excluded from the meeting because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

G103 **Confidential appendix to the meeting of 13th February 2013**

The Committee received and considered the confidential appendix to the minutes of the meeting of the Guildhall Committee held on 13th February 2013.

A member requested that headers and page numbers be used on the confidential appendix.

In relation to minute 103, Guildhall Development and Improvements, a Member asked whether a projected 3D version of the plans could be e-mailed to Members. The Chairman reported that unfortunately this was unlikely to be possible as this would require a CAD (Computer Aided Design) programme which was used by the architects. However, the plans would be available at meetings.

Resolved: that the confidential appendix to the minutes of the meeting of the Guildhall Committee held on 13th February 2013 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

(Mr David Boyd and Mr Daniel Lewandowski entered the meeting during discussion of this item, it being 7.20 pm).

G104 **Guildhall Property Matters**

The Committee received and considered the confidential report of the Town Clerk in relation to Guildhall property matters. This report related to the property arrangements for Roysse Court and further details in relation to this matter, together with the Committee's recommendation are contained within the confidential appendix.

Johannah Aynsley (the Guildhall Manager) entered the meeting at this point, it being 7.33pm.

G105 **Manager's Report**

The Committee received and considered the confidential report of the Guildhall Manager.

The Manager reported that February had been a quiet month for bookings but this had always historically been the case. However, there had been a good number of enquiries during the month.

The Guildhall now had a Wi-Fi router in each room which would make the facility much more attractive to hirers and in particular groups from the business community.

The Manager reported that she was organising a number of events in the Guildhall in accordance with the wishes of the Committee. The next Comedy Club night was due to take place on Thursday 28th March with doors opening at 7.30pm for an 8.00pm start. One of the UK's most popular Beatles tribute acts the "Paperback Writers" would be performing at the Guildhall from 7.00pm on Saturday 23rd March and the following Saturday, 30th March, Rumpelstiltskin by Hiccup Theatre would be performed from 1.30pm onwards. She asked that Members give as much publicity to these events as possible.

The Manager outlined the ways in which the Guildhall and these events were being marketed but did emphasise that developing audiences would be very challenging until the Guildhall was firmly established as a venue. A Member stated that should additional resources be required to market the venue effectively, the Manager should bring this forward to a future meeting of the Committee.

The Manager outline the work which had been undertaken in relation to building maintenance and reported that the Guildhall had now taken delivery of the chair covers which transformed the look of these items of existing furniture. In relation to building and equipment maintenance issues, the Town Clerk stated that there had been a number of occasions when it had been necessary to undertake urgent works and he was anticipating that there would be further items which would be required in the future. Whilst some items could be deferred pending the planned redevelopment, other items had to be progressed and therefore he was seeking a budget from Members which could be earmarked for this purpose. The Committee considered that that a budget of £10,000 should be set aside from the Council's pooled property fund to enable any urgent building and equipment works to take place in the Guildhall. This matter was referred to the Finance and General Purposes Committee for financial implications.

The Manager reported on staffing matters and training. A computerised booking package was being trialled and this trial was proving to be very successful. The Chairman of the Committee requested that the Manager come forward at a future meeting of the Committee with examples of the standard management information reports which the package produces.

A Member stated that since the introduction of the smoking ban in public buildings there was no provision for Guildhall customers who are smokers and considered that this should be looked at. The report contained proposals for updating of the Abbey Hall's stage lighting and further details in this regard are contained within the confidential appendix.

Resolved: that the Manager's report be approved.

G106 **Guildhall Development and Improvements**

It was reported that the Council's architects, Lewandowski Willcox, had been working with the Council's project team on the architectural proposals to deliver the Council's brief for Phase Two of the Guildhall Improvements Project. The architects had been commissioned to draw up plans up to and including RIBA Level D.

The Council's architects were present at the meeting to update Members regarding their work and proposals to date and sought guidance on any specific issues in order that they can move forward on this matter until the next meeting.

The Chairman of the Committee, Cllr Iain Littlejohn, stated that the architectural plans for the Guildhall Phase Two development would be considered by the Council at its meeting on 20th March 2013. There were a number of questions for the Council to answer. The primary one was whether this was the right scheme for the Guildhall. If it was then it was likely that the scheme would need to be progressed as a phased development and therefore there was a need to have a number of options in this regards.

The architectural team, of Mr Lewandowski and Mr Boyd, talked the Committee through the changes to the plans since the last meeting.

(Mr Steve Rich left the meeting during discussion of this item, it being 8.15pm and Mr Turvey entered the meeting at this point.).

It was **recommended:**

1. That the architectural plans and associated costings in relation to the Guildhall Phase 2 project, as outlined to the Committee and to be further documented in a report to be drafted by the Council's architectural team and to be presented to the Council, be approved.
2. That the Council, at its meeting on 20th March 2013, consider which options for phasing the above work should be taken forward.
3. That subject to approval by the Council, that the architectural plans and any agreed phasing be subject to a public engagement exercise in April 2013. It should be noted that whilst the engagement would focus on the plans, there would need to be a statement over the likely funding options.
4. That authority to agree the detailed text required to support the public engagement process be delegated to the Project team, consisting of the Chairman of the Guildhall Committee, Cllr Iain Littlejohn; Cllr Alison Rooke (opposition member); the Town Clerk; and the Guildhall Manager.
5. That the plans be further evaluated by the Guildhall Committee following the public engagement exercise, and that the Committee then make recommendations in relation to phasing of the work, and proposals for funding the cost of the work.

It was noted that whilst the above recommendations are published in the open minutes, the report referred to above, including the architect's proposals, would be considered by the Council in confidential session. However any plans and options agreed by the Council would be released into the public domain as part of the public engagement exercise.

To simplify matters, the confidential report to the Council for its meeting of 20th March 2013 will include the above recommendations.

The meeting rose at 9.08 pm.