

Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council
Draft Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held at 7.00 pm
on 13th January 2015
In the Bear Room, Guildhall, Abingdon-on-Thames.

Present

Cllr Sandy Lovatt	Chairman
Cllr Marilyn Badcock	
Cllr Mike Badcock	Chairman, Planning and Highways Committee
Cllr Angela Lawrence	Mayor, ex-officio
Cllr Iain Littlejohn	Chairman, Audit & Performance Sub- Committee
Cllr Monica Lovatt	
Cllr Patrick Lonergan	
Cllr Julie Mayhew-Archer	Chairman, County Hall Museum Management Committee
Cllr Helen Pighills	Chairman, Amenities & Recreation Committee

In Attendance

Mr Nigel Warner	Town Clerk (Clerk to the meeting)
Mr Steve Rich	Head of Services
Mrs Susan Whipp	Treasurer
One member of the public.	

SECTION I (Open to the Public Including the Press)

F39 Apologies

Apologies were received from the Vice Chairman Cllr Alison Rooke.

F40 Declarations of interest

Minute F46: Grants Sub-Committee

Cllr Iain Littlejohn declared a non-pecuniary interest in the grant application from “ATOM!” as he served on its organising committee.

Cllr Iain Littlejohn declared a non-pecuniary interest in the grant application from the “Combined Schools – Larkmead, Fitzharrys and John Mason” as he was a Governor of Larkmead School.

Cllrs Monica and Sandy Lovatt declared a non-pecuniary interest in the grant application from the Rotary Club of Abingdon Vesper as he was acquainted with one of their members, Alan Rickman.

F41 **Minutes**

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 9th September 2014.

Resolved: that subject to the agreed change to section F29 (as detailed in Matters Arising) the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 9th September 2014 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

F42 **Matters Arising**

F24 Grants Sub – Committee

It was agreed to ask the Honorary Archivist to provide a list of other buildings linked to Arthur Preston, as alternatives for the Blue Plaque.

There were no matters arising which were not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

F26 Proposal for Business Improvement District

Cllr Ian Littlejohn gave a verbal update on the progress with the BID process. He confirmed that the ballot process is currently planned for end of May / June 2015.

F28 Matters referred from other standing committees – Guildhall cinema

This was covered in confidential item 20.

F29 General Report of the Town Clerk

The minutes in Section 2. Commonwealth Day were agreed to be unintentionally misleading as they suggested that a flagpole had been purchased and was then found to be too short. This was not the case. The original flagpole was longer but was found to be rotten at the bottom. Consequently the rotten section had been removed, making the flagpole shorter. A new flagpole had been considered to be too expensive at that early stage in the Project. Members agreed to amend the minutes accordingly.

F30 National Association of Local Councils Larger Councils' Committee

The Chairman and other members of the committee congratulated Cllr Angela Lawrence on her recent re-election to the NALC Larger Councils Committee, in which she topped the poll.

F31 Abingdon Michaelmas and Runaway Fairs

Due to resourcing issues arising from staff sickness the report on security services was not yet available for the committee to consider. It was agreed that the report would instead be presented to the Amenities and Recreation Committee at the meeting in February 2015.

F35 Matters Arising

The Chairman confirmed that the review of the committee structures had now been undertaken. The report was presented to this committee at minute F53.

F43 Statements and Questions from the Public

Cllr Dr Jim Halliday asked the following 4 questions about the proposed Guildhall project:

- Q1 *Given the importance of the Guildhall site archaeologically, that the cinema project is delayed, that there is a possibility that the car park may be covered by a raft of concrete, would the Chairman agree that there is a window of opportunity to learn much more about Abingdon's past, and if so, would he be receptive to professional archaeologists carrying out an investigation of the car park site?*
- Q2 *Guildhall users are finding it very difficult to plan their future activities as they have already been told that the Guildhall will be closing on two different dates, and now understand that the closure may be postponed again. Would the Chairman agree that this uncertainty may cause users to find other venues, and if so, could he outline how he intends to minimise the risk of this happening, and to give more certainty to users?*
- Q3 *It appears that the Guildhall project is to be split into two parts - one part concentrating on the older building, and the other on the Abbey Hall and a possible new cinema building. Please could the Chairman indicate how the £1.2M received from the District Council is to be split between these two projects, and also if any monies are to be kept in reserve for ongoing maintenance costs (which was part of the original purpose of the £1.2M)?*
- Q4 *Given what is now being proposed is so different from the previous scheme (including the possibility of an external organisation being given a lease on the Abbey Hall), that the costs appear to have increased, would the Chairman agree that when the current tendering exercise is complete in February it would be appropriate to publish updated costed plans and the consequent financial implications for the council taxpayer, and to ask the people of Abingdon for their views?*

The Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee responded as below:

Cllr Halliday will be aware that the Chairman of the Guildhall Committee has been unwell and has not had the opportunity to answer his questions. As he can see, Cllr Littlejohn is present at this committee meeting and I understand that his answers are in the process of being prepared.

Before I give my answers to his questions I would like to remind him about the state of the facility that this council inherited. It was quite clear, when we saw what had been handed over that it had suffered from 16 years of gross neglect by the previous regime on the Vale of White Horse District Council, of which he was a leading member.

In particular I would point to the disgusting state of the kitchens and the access way between the bar and historic section, which we dubbed pigeon alley. Also the condition of the historic rooms was appalling and required a considerable amount of expenditure to improve and put right. Added to this the utilisation of the Guildhall was only 11% and the Town Council incurred an additional cost of around £150,000 per year just to operate it.

Q1. When the Abbey Hall was constructed in 1966 there would have been a considerable amount of excavation work, which would have unearthed any significant archaeological features. When the cinema block is built, it will be subject to various regulations regarding heritage sites. The Town Council will of course comply with these regulations. Since these matters are supervised by the district council, as a member of this council, Cllr Halliday may wish to refer to them for advice as to how these things are managed.

Q2. A decision will be taken by the Town Council on 28th January.

Q3. The project has always been considered in two phases:

Phase 1 was the improvement to the historical sections, on which £180,514 was used. This Phase has been completed.

Phase 2 is for the improvement of the modern part of the complex, for which the remainder of the £1.2M is earmarked.

I am surprised by his question on maintenance. The £1.2M was specifically not for maintenance but for capital improvement, and which, incidentally, has to be spent within 20 years. As one who was party to the original deal, I would have thought that he understood this.

All regular maintenance of Town Council property is paid for out of the Pooled Property Fund.

Q4. The approach to the Guildhall project has been consistent and based on a set of fundamental principles:

- a. The Guildhall is an asset of community value that has the potential to be a social and cultural centre for the Town

- b. The fundamental economic problem confronting the Town is a lack of footfall, which deters new businesses from establishing themselves and makes trading very difficult for those who do.
- c. The Guildhall is costly to operate that imposes a considerable overhead on the Town's budget.
- d. To overcome these problems we need to run it as a business, albeit not for profit.
- e. We therefore need to:
 - i. Increase its scope for utilisation, the most popular suggestion is to provide a cinema
 - ii. Improve access to all parts of the complex, including disabled access
 - iii. Improve the acoustics, ICT access and sound proofing
 - iv. Provide better amenities such as bar and cafeteria facilities
 - v. Generally enhance the aesthetic features of the complex, making it a more attractive feature of the town
- f. In all these things, not having the expertise ourselves, we have adopted a policy of exercising due diligence and consulting recognised experts in the appropriate fields.

All these principles have been arrived at by consulting the people of Abingdon on numerous occasions.

Ultimately, we have arrived at a concept of modular designed so that we can develop the Guildhall as funding and opportunities arise. The baseline is a facility that meets local needs, which can be built upon.

In all these things we will be open with the residents as and when the information becomes available.

F44 **Audit and Performance Sub-Committee**

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Performance Sub-Committee held on 16th December 2014. Cllr Iain Littlejohn gave a verbal update on the key issues in the minutes, namely the issue of a non-qualified opinion on the Council's accounts for the year ended 31st March 2015.

In relation to the service review of the Museum, the Sub-Committee had referred consideration of the Museum opening between Christmas and New Year to the County Hall Museum Management Committee, as the responsible service committee.

Resolved: that subject to amendment of the spelling mistake in section 4, the minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Performance Sub-Committee held on 16th December 2014 be approved together with the recommendations therein.

F45 **Communications Sub-Committee**

The Committee received and considered the draft minutes of the meeting of the Communications Sub-Committee held on 25th September and 9th December 2014.

With regard to the minutes of the meeting held on 25th September 2014, Cllr Marilyn Badcock drew members' attention to the recommendation that minutes of committee meetings no longer needed to include narrative relating to debates, but should be accurate records of items considered and decisions reached. Further work would be undertaken in this area.

With regard to the minutes of the meeting held on 9th December 2014, it was agreed that the use of Facebook and Twitter be continued. The recommendation that the Guildhall and Museum committees be requested to contribute to the cost of producing the Town Crier in 2015 was also agreed.

Resolved: that the minutes of the Communications Sub-Committee held on 25th September and 9th December 2014 be approved together with the recommendations contained therein.

F46 **Grants Sub-Committee**

Cllr Iain Littlejohn declared a non-pecuniary interest in the grant application from "ATOM!" as he serves on its organising committee.

Cllr Iain Littlejohn declared a non-pecuniary interest in the grant application from the "Combined Schools – Larkmead, Fitzharrys and John Mason" as he is a Governor of Larkmead School.

Cllrs Monica and Sandy Lovatt declared a non-pecuniary interest in the grant application from the Rotary Club of Abingdon Vesper as he is acquainted with one of their members, Alan Rickman.

The Committee received and considered the draft minutes of the meeting of the Grant Sub-Committee held on 15th December 2014.

Members requested that future minutes be extended to include an additional sentence on each grant application as it was considered that without the full set of grants papers to hand, the information on the minutes was not sufficient. The Town Clerk suggested that a copy of the grant application forms could also be included with the papers for the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

The following grants were considered:

Name of Applicant	Reason for the grant application	Applied/Recommended
5.1 Rotary Club of Abingdon Vesper (d)	Abingdon Food and Drink Festival	Applied for £500 GSC recommend £500 Approved in this sum.
5.2 Friends of Stowford House (b)	Equipping outdoor room for residents to meet	Applied for £1000 GSC recommended £1000 and asked officers to provide information to the organisation about Vale grant schemes. Approved in this sum.
5.3 Trinity Learning (b)	Community Magazine Project for Children	Applied for £1000 GSC recommended £750 as proportion of grant to total cost was high. Approved in this sum.
5.4 Abingdon Freewheeling Cycle Club (d)	Abingdon Spring Cycling Festival 2015	Applied for £2000 GSC recommended £1500 as proportion of grant to total cost was high It was agreed that the Chairman Cllr Sandy Lovatt would liaise with the Chairman of the Grants Sub-Committee Cllr Jan Morter to review this grant as the minutes did not provide sufficient detail. Approval of this grant was delegated to the Town Clerk in consultation with Cllr Sandy Lovatt and Cllr Jan Morter.
5.5 ATOM! (b)	Abingdon Science Festival – cost of Guildhall hire	Applied for approx. £2000 Exact amount to be the cost of Guildhall room hires. GSC recommended underwriting hire costs to a maximum of £2000 Approved in this sum.

5.6 Combined Schools – Larkmead, Fitzharrys, John Mason (b)	French Exchange Trip	Applied for £10 per pupil. GSC recommended a total of £660 which would provide subsidy for 3 places. Approved in this sum.
5.7 Abingdon Drama Club (a)	Repair to roof of clubhouse	Applied for £410 GSC recommends £410 Approved in this sum.
5.8 Abingdon Passion Play (a)	Putting on Passion Play in 2016	Applied for £500 GSC recommended £500 members were content with the grant but asked why the grant was needed at this time rather than in 2016, when the Play was being produced. It was agreed to delegate timing of the release of the grant to the Town Clerk. Approved in this sum.
5.9 Music for Autism (b)	To put on a series of workshops in special schools and day care centres	Applied for £1200 GSC recommended £1200 Approved in this sum.

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The above grants were awarded in pursuance of the Council's powers, as noted immediately after the name of the body being awarded the grant, as follows:

- (a) Local Government Act 1972, section 145;
- (b) Local Government Act 1972, section 137;
- (c) Local Government and Rating Act 1997, part III, section 31;
- (d) Local Government Act 1972, section 144;
- (e) Local Government Act 1972, section 142 (2A);
- (f) Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, section 19.
- (g) Local Government Act 1972, section 133.

Minute 6: Funds relating to the former Joint Environmental Trust (JET)

- (i) The Sub-Committee had recommended approval of an application from the owner of 40 Victoria Road, for work to a perimeter wall and the award of a

grant of £600. There was debate over this matter. Previously the Council's Planning and Highways Committee had recommended refusal of planning permission for a wall at this property. A view was also expressed regarding whether these funds were being targeted in the correct matter. A motion to refuse this application was lost by 3 votes to 4 votes. It was then **resolved** that a grant of £600 be awarded subject to consultation with Abingdon Vale of White Horse District Council Members, in accordance with the grant fund criteria.

(ii) **Resolved** that an application from the Friends of Abingdon for work on the Chequer roof of the Abbey Buildings be approved for a grant in the sum of £1500 subject to consultation with Abingdon Vale of White Horse District Council Members, in accordance with the grant fund criteria.

It was reported that the Sub-Committee had discussed ideas for additional plaques to commemorate persons of note and had resolved that Jackie Smith be contacted to provide some suggestions of places where new plaques might be installed. The Sub-Committee had further resolved that officers look into the possibility of the Town Council running its own plaque scheme rather than relying on official blue plaques. The Committee, as parent committee which has delegated matters to the Grants Sub-Committee but retained responsibility for the same, considered that this was not the correct course of action, the organisation of such a local scheme being being an involved matter. It was proposed by Cllr Patrick Lonergan, seconded by Cllr Marilyn Badcock and **resolved** that the Council not consider a local Blue Plaques scheme.

Resolved: that the minutes of the Grants Sub-Committee held on 15th December 2014 and the grants listed above be approved (subject to the additional information required).

F47 **Personnel Sub-Committee**

The Committee received and considered the draft minutes of the meetings of the Personnel Sub-Committee held on 17th October 2014 and 12th January 2015.

The Chairman of the Sub-Committee, Cllr Marilyn Badcock thanked all council staff for coping with the high levels of staff sickness in recent weeks.

1. Matters arising: The Sub-Committee had discussed arrangements for Council services during the Christmas/ New Year period.

Resolved: That consideration of opening the Museum between Christmas and New Year be referred back to the County Hall Museum Management Committee for review for 2015. The County Hall Museum Management Committee to note that there would be residents who wish to visit the Museum

and opening should be considered, perhaps in line with office opening times. Further **resolved** that an officer report be submitted outlining this matter including comparisons with elsewhere and financial implications.

2. Macebearer

It was noted that Malcolm Hill will retire as Macebearer at the Annual Meeting in May 2015, after 12 years service in that role. The Committee stated that the Council had been very well served by Mr Hill. It was noted that three people had expressed an interest in the position from the advertisement in the Town Crier.

Resolved:

(1) That a Job Description for the Macebearer be drafted by the Town Clerk to include all current job tasks plus reinstating attendance at all ordinary Council meetings. This would then be e-mailed to all members of the Personnel Sub-Committee giving a week for comments.

(2) Honorarium to increase from £160 to £200 to recognise increased expenses as Council meeting attendance required.

(3) All interested parties to be requested to send C.V. Interviewing panel to consist of Cllrs Marilyn Badcock, Angela Lawrence and Julie Mayhew-Archer, to interview in February 2015 and delegated the power to appoint.

(4) Uniform to consist of dark green suit, black shoes and sock, white shirt and town tie. An allowance to be given to purchase suit, up to £200.

Resolved: that the minutes of the Personnel Sub-Committee held on 17th October 2014 and 12th January 2015 be approved.

F48 Choose Abingdon Partnership (ChAPs)

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the Choose Abingdon Partnership Board meetings from 22nd July, 9th September and 14th October 2014.

Cllr Iain Littlejohn explained there had been a further meeting of ChAPs but no minutes were available yet.

Resolved: that the minutes of the Choose Abingdon Partnership Board meetings of 22nd July, 9th September and 14th October 2014 be noted by the Committee.

F49 **Matters referred from other standing committees**

The committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk.

Guildhall Committee 7th January 2015

Recommended: 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. Whilst the two Projects would 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;

Resolved that the Museum Curator be requested to prepare a proposal on how to take the Heritage project funding forward, and this proposal be presented to the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting on 13th January 2015.

F50 **Financial Report and Estimates 2015/16**

The Committee received and considered the reports of the Town Clerk / Responsible Finance Officer and the Treasurer.

Resolved: that reports the schedule of accounts for the period August to November 2014 and the management accounts for Council cost centres for the financial year to date, be approved.

The proposed revenue budget for 2015/16 was discussed in detail together with the capital bids.

The Town Clerk drew attention to section 3.3 of the report (page 89). It was agreed that if a loan was required during 2015/16 for the Guildhall Improvement Project, then the loan repayments would be met through savings elsewhere in the revenue budget without impacting on the level of Council Tax.

The Committee considered the overall budget proposal and its financing.

It was noted that the budget did not include any provision for an increase on the Mayor's Allowance. The Mayor's Allowance covered a proportion of the costs of performing the role of Mayor and there was a debate about its adequacy. It was proposed by Cllr Michael Badcock, seconded and **recommended** that the budget provide an additional sum of £500 within the Civic Functions budget (code 404/4303) to allow for 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.

Cllr Iain Littlejohn noted that the small grants budget showed a year to date expenditure of £10,433 against a budget of £23,550 and stated that the grants budget was often under spent. Consequently he proposed that the budget be reduced to £20,000 for 2015/16. Following some discussion this was not seconded or moved to the vote.

Cllr Marilyn Badcock asked about the grant for CCTV shown against code 411/4254. The Town Clerk stated that this sum had been paid to the District Council for many years but that there was not a formal agreement in place for the grant and no application was received. Cllr Marilyn Badcock proposed, it was seconded and **recommended** that the above budget sum be transferred to the Guildhall security budget.

There was a discussion regarding the capital sum to be reserved against the new cemetery project, with a proposal coming forward from the Amenities and Recreation Committee that this be increased to £100,000, from £75,000. The Committee noted that the earmarked reserve for this Project, estimated at 31st March 2015, was £450,412. Cllr Sandy Lovatt noted that there was a Working Group looking at the new cemetery and that a priority now should be to produce some draft costings to firm up on the estimates already given. The Head of Services quoted a cost of approximately £1.5 million in this regard. Cllr Sandy Lovatt proposed that the additional £25,000 be transferred to the general pooled property fund (code 499/4864). Cllr Marilyn Badcock proposed that this sum of £25,000 then be set aside within the pooled fund for the Guildhall Improvement Project. The Committee **recommended** accordingly.

The Committee noted that the cost of a new flagpole was considerable. It included not only the cost of the flagpole, but the costs of taking it to the top of the Museum and then its installation, which would involve disturbing the lead roofing and the need for scaffolding. It was also considered that the £15,000 bid shown for this item should also be transferred into the general pooled property fund (code 499/4864) and that this sum then be set aside within the fund for the purpose of a new flagpole. The Committee **recommended** accordingly. It was noted that the recommendation going forward to the Council in relation to the Pooled Property Fund was in the sum of £138,250, of which £40,000 was set aside for specific purposes.

A proposal was made by Cllr Iain Littlejohn and seconded by Cllr Michael Badcock to reduce the capital bids by £22,332 (to be taken from the pooled property fund), which would then allow the Council to retain a Band D tax at £108.34 i.e. no increase for 2015/16 but retaining a balanced budget. This proposal was lost by 2 votes in favour and 6 against.

A proposal was made by Cllr Sandy Lovatt and seconded by Cllr Marilyn Badcock that the Council approve a budget for 2015/16 with a net expenditure requirement in the sum of £1,364,871 funded by way of grant and precept, which would result in a Band D Council Tax of £110.23, an increase of 1.74% over 2014/15. On being put to the vote there were 6 votes in favour, 2 abstentions and 0 against.

Overall budget, precept and reserves

It was recommended:

(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).

(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

(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 from Central Government	£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.

(iv) That following the review of Council reserves, that the general reserve be deemed to be appropriate 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, that the capital receipts reserve be noted 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.

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

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 these required further review at this stage. The Committee endorsed the recommendation of the Amenities and Recreation Committee and recommended:

- (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.

Guildhall

With the likelihood of development during 2015/16 it was recommended:

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

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 recommended:

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

Loan for capital

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

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: that subject to the above, that the joint report of the Town Clerk and of the Treasurer be approved.

(Note: the Committee adjourned during consideration of this item, from 9.10 until 9.20pm).

F51 **Archivist's Report**

The Committee received and considered the annual report 2013-14 of the Archivist.

Members asked that the Archivist be thanked for her report and to express their gratitude for all the hard work which she undertook with diligence, loyalty and expertise.

Resolved that the report of the Archivist be noted.

F52 **General Report of the Town Clerk**

The Committee received and considered the verbal report of the Town Clerk.

1. There was a government consultation on extending the principals of Council Tax capping/ referendum on excessive Council tax rises, to
2. End of Council term dinner. This was a dinner which traditionally took place in the Guildhall at the end of the four year term of the Council which Members paid for should they wish to attend. It was agreed that a date for this would be suggested at the Council meeting on 28th January 2015.

F53 **Council Committee / Democratic Services Structure**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk and the report of Chris Rolley Associates, "the democratic structure for Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council" in relation to the above.

The Committee drew attention to a number of errors were identified in the report by Chris Rolley.

On page 58:

- The Guildhall Committee has 5 members not 7;
- The Communications Sub-Committee reports to F&GP not A&R.

On page 59, Charitable Status Working Group, this should read that the Council had taken “the decision not to proceed with charitable status at this point.”

It was also considered that in a number of areas the suggested terms of reference for Committees did not reflect the current responsibilities of the council’s sections specifically fairs, Christmas lights and Information Centre.

Section 4.4 of the report suggested the County Hall Museum Management Committee and the Guildhall Committee be merged into a single committee. Members agreed with the principal of this but did not consider that this was the time to do this, with the Guildhall Improvement Project ongoing.

It was noted that any change to the Council’s Standing Committee would require a change to Standing Orders, which would have to take place over two Council meetings, the motion being moved (but not debated) at the first and then debated and voted on at the second. The Committee considered that any change in Standing Committees needed to have been made so that the incoming Council could make committee appointments at the Council’s Annual Meeting in May 2015.

The Committee were not content to adopt the proposed structure at this point but in view of the timescale outlined above it was

Resolved that a Working Group consisting of Cllrs Marilyn Badcock, Iain Littlejohn, Julie Mayhew-Archer and Helen Pighills be convened to consider the report by Chris Rolley Associates “the democratic structure for Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council” and that this Group then bring any proposals for a permanent change to Standing Orders directly to the Council at its meeting of 28th January 2015.

F54 **Publicity**

There were no matters for which additional publicity was to be sought.

SECTION II (Excluding the public and the press)

F55 Exclusion of the public, including the press

Resolved that the Chairman move:

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.

F56 Confidential Appendix

The confidential appendix to the minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 9th September 2014 were considered.

Resolved that the confidential appendix of the meeting of 9th September 2014 be approved as a correct record.

F57 Matters Arising

None.

F58 Matters referred from other committees

Guildhall Committee 7th January 2015

Minute G44: Guildhall Phase 2 Build Working Group

Recommended: 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.

Report of the Museum Curator

The committee expressed their thanks to the Museum Curator for an excellent report.

F59 **Audit and Performance Sub-Committee**

The Committee received and considered the confidential appendix to the minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Performance Sub-Committee held on 16th December 2014.

Resolved: that subject to the confidential appendix to the minutes of the Audit and Performance Sub-Committee held on 16th December 2014 be approved.

F60 **Personnel Sub-Committee**

The Committee received and considered the confidential appendix to the minutes of the meetings of the Personnel Sub-Committee held on 17th October 2014 and 12th January 2015.

Resolved: that subject to the confidential appendix to the minutes of the Personnel Sub-Committee held on 17th October 2014 and 12th January 2015 be approved.

F61 **Property Matters**

The Committee received and considered the confidential reports of:

- (i) The Town Clerk
- (ii) The Head of Services

Resolved: that the reports of the Town Clerk and the Head of Services be approved.

F62 **Residents' Parking Scheme**

This item was deferred to the Full Council Meeting on 28th January 2015.

F63 **Police Community Support Officer**

The Committee received and considered the confidential report of the Town Clerk.

It was noted that since April 2006 the Town Council had part-funded a town centre-based Police Community Support Officer. This was originally under a Home Office scheme whereby 50% of the costs of employment (salary plus all related and on-costs) are borne by the Town Council and 50% by the Home Office. The current Memorandum of Understanding agreement ended at 31st March 2015 and the Thames Valley Police had written to invite the Town Council to renew the agreement.

Resolved:

- (i) that the report of the Town Clerk be approved.

(ii) the Town Council enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with Thames Valley Police for a period of three years from 1st April 2015, as detailed on the report of the Town Clerk, subject to budgetary provision being made by the Council noting that there is provision in the draft budget for continuing this funding in the sum of £16,697 for 2015/16

The meeting rose at 10:58 pm.