

Draft Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on Tuesday 14 January 2014 in the Committee Room, Old Abbey House, Abingdon-on-Thames.

Present

Cllr Sandy Lovatt	Chairman
Cllr Alison Rooke	Vice Chairman
Cllr Iain Littlejohn	Chairman of Audit & Performance Committee
Cllr Monica Lovatt	
Cllr Julie Mayhew-Archer	Chairman of County Hall Museum Management Committee
Cllr Patrick Lonergan	
Cllr Helen Pighills	Chairman of Amenities & Recreation Committee

In Attendance

Mrs Sandra Hill	Deputy Town Clerk and Clerk to the Meeting
Mrs Susan Whipp	Treasurer

SECTION I (Open to the Public Including the Press)

F90 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from the Mayor of Abingdon-on-Thames Cllr Samantha Bowring and Cllrs Michael and Marilyn Badcock.

*The Chairman highlighted that there would be an agenda change in relation to item 14 - **Staffing Matters**. He further explained that the staffing report had yet to be completed, therefore the item would be removed from the agenda and deferred to the next Meeting of the Finance & Purposes Committee – which may have to be a Special Meeting.*

F91 **Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest from Members in relation to any items to be considered, in accordance with the Local Code of Conduct.

F92 **Minutes**

Resolved to sign as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 3 December 2013.

F93 **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

F94 **Statements and Questions from the Public**

Mr Jim Hines, Chair of Trustees of the Abingdon Music Centre Education Trust addressed the committee in relation to agenda item 11 - Property Matters.

Mr Hines relayed that he would like to reinforce what was presented in the Trust's tender submission for the Old Magistrate's Court lease. He highlighted

the Trust's strong partnership with the community which has significantly increased over the last few years. He stated that their logo '*Music for All*' is totally encompassed by those who are involved in the Trust. The Trust is also supported by a significant number of volunteers and could not function without a base. He concluded by stating that they wish to continue with the lease.

F95 **Estimates 2014/15**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk / Responsible Financial Officer.

The Chairman explained that this report was initially considered at the previous Finance & General Purposes Committee on 3 December 2013, but decisions were deferred until information on the level of precept grant was released by the Vale of White Horse District Council. This information has now been received, and the precept grant for 2014/15 has been set at £79,463 (£101,396 in 2013/14).

It was noted that the precept grant may not continue indefinitely, therefore significant savings may need to be found in future years to cover the resulting deficit in funding. The council tax base for 2014/15 has been set at 11,703.20 (11,580.50 in 2013/14).

Members discussed the proposed revenue and capital estimates for 2014/15. The proposed net expenditure figure of £1,359,097 represents a 1.4% increase compared to 2013/14 (£1,339,791 in 2013/14). It was agreed by all that this was an acceptable budget.

Members further considered the four different proposals for setting of Band D Council Tax. These scenarios were:

1. No increase in Council Tax Band D – savings of approximately £39,000.
2. An increase of 2.2% in Council Tax Band D – savings of approximately £12,000.
3. An increase of 3.14% in Council Tax Band D – this would meet the net expenditure figure of £1,359,097 with no additional savings being required.
4. An increase of 9.55% in Council Tax Band D – this would meet the net expenditure figure of £1,359,097 with no additional savings being required, nor making use of the precept grant.

The Chairman explained that the Treasurer and Town Clerk have undertaken work to identify potential savings and he was confident that savings of £12,000 could be made.

It was agreed that an increase of 2.2% was the preferred option. This was no higher than CPI.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that the following be presented to Full Council on Wednesday 29 January 2014 for adoption:

- (i) that the proposed net expenditure should be £1,359,097;
- (ii) that option 2 - Band D Council Tax for 2014/15 be set at £108.34;
- (iii) that the total net spending provided in the estimates for 2014/15 of £1,359,097 be funded as follows:

a. Precept	£1,267,925
b. Grant from Central Government in accordance with the draft Local Government settlement	£ 79,463
c. additional savings	£11,709

F96 **Publicity**

There were no items for future publicity.

SECTION II (Excluding the public and the press)

F97 **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.

F98 **Confidential appendix for the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on 3 December 2013.**

As the confidential appendix minutes were not available, it was **resolved** that this item would be deferred to the next meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee.

F99 **Matters arising**

There were no matters arising.

F100 **Property matters**

Old Magistrate's Court, Abingdon-on-Thames

Members considered the confidential report of the Town Clerk along with the supporting papers from the Council's valuers, Lambert Smith Hampton, and **RECOMMEND** that the lease should be awarded to organisation A as listed in option 2. See confidential appendix.

It was also **resolved** that the Deputy Town Clerk should inform those who have submitted tenders of the Committee's recommendation as soon as possible on Wednesday 15 January 2014.

Cleaning of external stonework – Guildhall/St Nicolas' Church

The Chairman reported that the Town Clerk has received quotes for the cleaning of the stonework for the historic parts of the Guildhall and St Nicolas' Church. The cost of the proposed work would prove be very expensive.

F101 Open Air Swimming Pool

Members received and considered the confidential report of the Town Clerk, and it was **RECOMMENDED** by 6 votes in favour, 1 against and 0 abstentions that:

- (a) the Town Council should continue with the grant towards the Abbey Meadow Open Air Pool for the 2014 season, in accordance with the Agreed Heads of Terms for the Abbey Meadow Swimming Pool and pursuant to its powers under section 19 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976;
- (b) this would be subject to no further expenditure to the Council for maintenance, repairs, renewal and operation of the pool and its surrounding areas - this includes prior to the pool's opening date to the public, and during its opening to the public.

F102 Choose Abingdon Partnership

Cllr Ian Littlejohn reported that the notes of the last Choose Abingdon Partnership Board Meeting were not available for consideration by the Finance & General Purposes Committee. These would therefore be deferred to the next meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee.

Cllr Iain Littlejohn spoke on behalf of the Choose Abingdon Partnership regarding future plans for the Partnership. Further details, together with a recommendation, are contained within the confidential appendix to these minutes.

F103 Staffing Matters

The Chairman outlined at the commencement of the meeting, that this item would be deferred to the next meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee.

The meeting rose at 8.17pm