

Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council

Minutes of the Guildhall Committee held on Thursday 2nd August 2012 at 5.30pm 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 Katie Nobes	
Cllr Alison Rooke	
Ms Heather Brown	Co-opted member

In attendance:

Mrs Laura Hawkins	Event Organiser Ltd
Mr Steve Rich	Head of Service Delivery
Mr Nigel Warner	Town Clerk (Clerk to the meeting)

27. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from the Mayor of Abingdon-on-Thames, Cllr Monica Lovatt, and Cllr Sandy Lovatt, Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

28. **Declarations of Interest**

None

29. **Minutes**

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting of the Guildhall Committee held on 3rd July 2012, be approved by the meeting as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

30. **Matters Arising**

It was reported that Adams Habermehl Environmental Design Partnership had been requested to commence work in relation to proposals for the Roysse Court Gardens, and it was intended that this be reported back to the October meeting of the Committee.

31. **Financial and usage report**

The Committee received and considered the report of Town Clerk/ Responsible Financial Officer in relation to the above. It was reported that In terms of revenue, the position during June and July 2012 had shown an improvement compared with the previous year. For both months, the combined total revenue in relation to the Guildhall was 9.6% higher than it was in the previous year, up from £13,100 to £14,361. However there was a difference between the months; the year on year increase in June was 15% but for July was 4.5%. Increased activity was also shown in terms of the room utilisation figures. For June these were up by 10.6% and for July by 9.6%. It was noted that there was not a direct correlation between revenue and room utilisation because revenue also included items such as bar income, and the

revenue arising from room usage varied according to which room had been booked and the nature of the booking.

Resolved: that the report be adopted.

32. **Guildhall Brochures**

Members considered the draft wedding brochure, leaflet for community groups and the leaflet for businesses which had been circulated with the agenda.

Ms Heather Brown stated that the intention in bringing this matter forward was to seek the Committee's approval in relation to the look and the feel of the marketing materials. She was aware that there was some further work to do in relation to these matters but needed to establish that the Committee was generally content in the formats and styling that had been adopted in the samples. She was also seeking decisions from the Committee in relation to specific matters for each of the different items.

Members considered that four items of printed marketing material should be prepared:

a. a general outer pocket folder with a relatively plain front and a history of the Guildhall on the inside plus contact information. It was resolved that the quantity required should be 5000 as this item would be used for all purposes.

b. an A4 wedding brochure with colour photos of the Guildhall (set up for weddings) along the lines of the sample presented. In terms of the brochure itself, Members felt that this was well-designed. They considered that each photograph required a note against it stating which room it was illustrating and the text should be "blocked". Members felt that the photograph of the bar should not be included and it was suggested that this be replaced by a photograph showing the Roysse Room lobby.

Optional colour schemes should be tried (yellow, ivory, dark green) before artwork is finalised. It was resolved that the quantity required should be 2000/2500.

c. an A4 information card for businesses printed both sides. The sample required further work and specifically the removal of actual price information. It was resolved that the quantity required should be 1000.

d. a DL leaflet for community groups. One member thought that the style was possibly too formal and this will be looked at. It was also felt that the time-length of a meeting session needed to be defined more clearly in the text. It was resolved that the quantity required should be 1000.

Members considered that these were aimed towards groups which were undertaking their "normal" activities rather than ticketed events. It should be made clear that for public ticketed events the group would need to talk with the Guildhall.

It was **resolved** that the above materials (Items a-d) be agreed in principle subject to final proofs coming back for approval by the Committee, and that a sum of £5,000 be allocated towards the production of all items listed above, this to be taken from the budget for marketing, which was an annual budget of £20,000 of which £3,420 had been spent to date. The Committee thanked Ms Brown for her work in putting these leaflets together.

Guildhall Website

Members had reviewed the Guildhall website which could be found at <http://www.abingdonguildhall.co.uk> It was considered that whilst there was still some work to undertake in relation to the website, it was now time for this to go live and Members **resolved** that a link be provided from the Town Council to this website.

33. Date of next meeting and calendar of meetings

Members noted that the date of the next meeting has been agreed as Wednesday 5th September at 5.30 pm.

Subsequent meetings had been arranged for:

Thursday 4th October;
Wednesday 14th November;
Tuesday 18th December;
Friday 11th January 2013;
Wednesday 6th February;
Thursday 7th March;
Wednesday 3rd April;
Tuesday 30th April.

34. 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.

35. Confidential Appendix

It was **resolved** that the confidential appendix of the Guildhall Committee held on 3rd July 2012 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

36. Guildhall Improvement Programme Phase Two

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

1. Draft design brief

Members reviewed the draft design brief and requested that in relation to the selection criteria there should be a statement that “design should take into account the Council’s desire for quality design and build, to reduce future maintenance liabilities so that the building design reduces management costs, and to reduce the Guildhall’s ‘carbon footprint’.”

It was **resolved**:

- (a) To approve the brief, as attached to these minutes;
- (b) Following approval, to move the brief out of the confidential papers;
- (c) To publish the brief following this meeting and reviewing comments received and the brief at the next meeting, prior to its issue to architects.

The Committee **recommended** that a sum of between £500,000 and £750,000 is provisionally allocated from the Guildhall Capital Improvements Sum which the Council has in relation to the Guildhall. It was noted that this sum is the initial guidance sum and would be reviewed following production of architects' plans to RIBA Stage D (excluding planning permission).

2. Appointment of architect – taking the process forward

Members considered the relative merits of an architectural competition. It was **resolved** that a competition not take place in the way in which it was originally envisaged and that the Council should proceed to recruit through a process which would commence with advertisement and invitations to complete an initial PQQ (Pre-qualification questionnaire). From this a number of architects would be invited to tender. The Council would retain an element of the “design competition” by inviting shortlisted architects to tour the building and then produce a brief of their ideas which could include sketch plans. An architect would then be selected following submission of tenders and an interview process.

It was **resolved** that the following draft timetable be adopted in relation to the architectural work to the end of September, for which funding was already in place:

2nd August 2012: Guildhall Committee. Approval of architect's brief as per section 1 above, including publication of the brief.

August 2012: Appointment of professional to manage the PQQ and tender process and advise on other matters as contained in this report.

5th September 2012: Guildhall Committee to review matters prior to a recommendation to the Council, which will involve agreement of funding from the Capital Improvement Sum to fund the architect's work through to completion of RIBA C or D (but not planning permission) and agreement in principal to the process outlined in timetable (below) though to completion. In accordance with the transfer agreement, consent will also be required from the District Council for use of the Capital Improvement Sum. This would also include the delegations to be in place for each stage of the process through to the end of March 2013.

September 2012: Advertise for architects and submission of PQQs.

Project timetable from October 2012 It was noted that additional Council authorisation would be required to release additional funds towards the Project and the following timetable from October 2012 to project completion was then **recommended**, accepting that this was subject to change as the Project commenced, and that approvals would be required at key stages to proceed and release funding:

12th October 2012: Date for submission of PQQs, followed by evaluation.

26th October 2012: Tenders to be sent out. Unsuccessful PQQ applicants informed.

Noon 16th November 2012: date for receipt and opening of tenders, followed by tender evaluation.

23rd November 2012: back stop date for shortlisting of architects (provisionally 3) to be informed. Unsuccessful applicants informed.

October/ November: Project Manager and Quantity Surveyor to be appointed.

w/c 26th November 2012: shortlisted architects to be interviewed. Process to include a technical interview by small number of members, Town Clerk and professional advisors, and also opportunity for Committee/ Council to attend a presentation by those shortlisted, to take place during the evening or on a Saturday. There would be a requirement that the architect undertaking the work would attend for interview, rather than another person in their practice.

7th December 2012: backstop date for appointment of architect.

31st March 2013: architect's submission up to agreed RIBA level to be submitted to Council.

Followed by consultation on the scheme going forward, a decision to proceed and develop the plans, appointment of architect to take plans to RIBA G (tender documentation), appointment of all other professional disciplines, obtaining necessary permissions etc.

Autumn 2013: procurement stage for building contract.

January 2014: Abbey Hall and newer parts of Guildhall to close. Building work to commence.

Autumn 2014: re-opening of the improved areas of the Guildhall, with a major qualification that this date may change as the process develops.

Appointment of project/ procurement manager The Town Clerk stated that it was necessary to appoint a professional to manage the process of recruiting an architect. This would include drafting and sending out the PQQ, analysing and reporting on the PQQs returned, making recommendations in relation to those architects to proceed to tender stage, analysing and reporting on the tenders returned and assisting with the selection of the architect. In accordance with his report and as provided for within the Council's Standing Orders it was **resolved that** authority be delegated to the Town Clerk to approach PT Projects to undertake this work and to make an appointment within the budget outlined in his report, this being funded from the sum already released by the Council towards the stage 2 Project.

Other professional support The Town Clerk suggested that running co-terminously with the tender process for the architect, the Council should also appoint a project manager and quantity surveyor. The project management role requires professional expertise from a person who is an architect or chartered surveyor, and would not be a role which could be fulfilled "in-house" and is one that he recommended should be fulfilled under a contract for services rather than by a direct employee. This person needed to be recruited at an early stage, and appointed through to project completion. A similar principle applied to the quantity surveyor; he considered that it was important that the Council directly employs this person so that they can work with the architect but provide costing advice directly to the Council so that the Council has an accurate and independent estimate of any schemes being proposed. In relation to both these appointments I will report on this further in terms of process and budget, at the September meeting. This would enable a proposal to release funding to go

forward to the September Council meeting. It was **resolved** that this be agreed in principle. Members considered that whilst the scope for attracting grant funding may be limited, it would be necessary to undertake work on this co-terminously with the architectural work. It was also considered that the feasibility and costs of removing the stage would be a major consideration.

A member queried the market research which had been undertaken in relation to the possibility of a cinema in Abingdon. The Chairman, Cllr Iain Littlejohn, stated that the report by Mayfield Arts had been thorough and had come to the conclusion that there was a market for cinema in Abingdon and that the appropriate amount of work had been undertaken in relation to this matter.

3. Mayfield Arts

The additional work undertaken by Ron Inglis of Mayfield Arts was received and noted by the Committee.

4. Charitable Trust Status and VAT (Value-Added Tax)

Members received the letter from the Council's retained accountants in relation to the above and it was **resolved** to make the enquiries of HM Customs and Excise as detailed in the letter.

5. Corridor from reception to the Mayor's Parlour

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

Minute 21 of the previous meeting stated "*Members agreed that the potential for widening the corridor which runs from reception, passed the robing cupboard, to the Mayor's Parlour, should be explored.*"

A Member queried whether this work should be undertaken at this stage, or deferred to the Phase 2 Improvements; there was also a discussion regarding the impact of widening the corridor, on the door from reception.

Should the work proceed, it was considered that replacement carpeting would be required along the corridor and that an estimate should be obtained for this before the work was approved. However Members agreed this in principle.

36. Guildhall Pricing Packages and Marketing

Members received and considered the confidential reports headed "Proposal Package for Inclusions", "Comparison Chart of Guildhall Booking Packages / Rate Card", and "Guildhall All-Inclusive Wedding Package Costings". Members noted that all the different packages assumed a discount for hirers. It was **resolved**:

1. That the reports be noted
2. The packages proposed in relation to weddings, occasions, business use and community group hire, be approved including the proposal in relation to the use of the rate card

3. That the rates for the different packages is detailed in the spreadsheet headed “Comparison Chart Guildhall Booking Packages / Rate Card” be adopted
4. That the different charges be rounded to the nearest five or zero
5. That the new pricing packages and rates be introduced with effect from 1st October 2012.

37. **Equipment**

Members received and considered the confidential report of “Event Organiser” together with price estimates. It was **resolved** that 25 royal Blue tablecloths to fit rectangular tables (90” by 90”) and 3 white tablecloths to fit rectangular tables (70” by 70”) be purchased. Members also **resolved** that an entrance mat for the front door be purchased (without a logo; approximate budget cost £270) and that a dark blue stage drape be acquired to cover the chairs stored beneath the stage.

The following items were **approved** for purchase as required:

Two Portable projector (estimate £470);
Two portable screens (estimate £520);
500 Conference pads (estimate £390);
Corporate branded pens (estimate £155);
i pod docking station (no estimate).

Members received and considered the report of the Head of Service Delivery in relation to chairs. Comments in relation to the oak chairs were noted and Members requested that the Archivist be asked to look into their history. Further discussion was deferred to a future meeting.

Members considered that the replacement of chairs in the Abbey Hall should be deferred pending the phase 2 improvements.

Members **resolved**:

1. That 99 of the blue banqueting chairs with the black backing bar be permanently placed in the Roysse Room. A further 98 chairs of similar design but with a gold backing bar also be permanently placed in the Council Chamber. It was considered that these chairs are well suited to the two rooms and whilst not in use will, unless the room is required to be laid out otherwise, these rooms should be set out in a public meeting format.
2. That the blue and red backed chairs continue to be used in the Abbey Hall.

38. **Property Matters: Old Magistrates Court and Roysse Court**

Members received and considered the confidential report of the Town Clerk in relation to the above. It was **resolved** that the recommendations contained within this report be adopted, as further detailed in the confidential appendix to these minutes.

The meeting rose at 7.25pm.