

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Town of Abingdon-on-Thames held at 8.20pm on 1 August 2013 in the Roysse Room, Guildhall, Abingdon-on-Thames.

Present

Cllr Samantha Bowring Mayor of Abingdon-on-Thames
Cllr Angela Lawrence Deputy Mayor of Abingdon-on-Thames
Cllr Marilyn Badcock
Cllr Michael Badcock
Cllr Lesley Legge
Cllr Iain Littlejohn
Cllr Patrick Lonergan
Cllr Monica Lovatt
Cllr Sandy Lovatt
Cllr Julie Mayhew-Archer
Cllr Herman Mattheson
Cllr Jan Morter
Cllr Lorraine Oates
Cllr Alison Rooke
Cllr Andrew Todd

In Attendance

Mrs Sandra Hill - Deputy Town Clerk (Clerk to the meeting)
Mr Daniel Lewandowski - Architect
Mr Nigel Warner - Town Clerk

C33 Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs Jason Fiddaman, Katie Nobes, Helen Pighills, Alice Badcock, Aidan Melville and Jeanette Halliday. Cllr Halliday had indicated that as a nearby resident of the Guildhall she would potentially have a prejudicial interest in the item at minute G36 and therefore would have had to absent herself from the meeting.

C34 Declarations of interest

Cllr Michael Badcock declared a non-pecuniary interest in the item at C36 as he is acquainted with some of the residents that live within the vicinity of the Guildhall. Although not present at the meeting, Cllr Halliday had indicated that as a nearby resident of the Guildhall she would potentially have had a prejudicial interest in the item at minute G36.

C35 Public Participation

Dr Jim Halliday a resident from Abbey Close spoke to the meeting highlighting:

He understood that the council only apply for permission for those parts which it is sure that it can fund and build in the near future.

Once planning permission has been granted, providing part of the scheme

has been built, the remainder could be built at any time without further permission.

If plans are submitted for the cinema block at the rear, this would have a severe impact on the adjacent houses.

On looking at the artist's impression for the cinema (April) it was assumed that the block would be much lower at the Checker Walk end, than the Bridge Street end.

The full scale plans have now been distributed, and it is clear that the new block is exactly the same height as the entire hall part of the Abbey Hall, and that the roof is horizontal and flat. The impact on the adjacent properties is much more severe than the residents anticipated. Even if the block was not built, the permission would still exist and would be found during a house sale. The houses could therefore be blighted by the existence of planning permission.

Dr Halliday stated that he raised the above statements at the recent meeting of the Guildhall Committee whereby the Leader of the Council advised residents to seek a time-limiting clause on the planning permission. Since being given this advice Dr Halliday has sought expert advice, and has been told that this would be unenforceable and would never be included in any planning permission notice. He reiterated that any part of a permitted development can be built at any time in the future.

Dr Halliday asked that the Guildhall Business Plan should be questioned very carefully - how is the building going to be financed? Is it totally certain that funding will be available for the cinema block? It would be unjust to those properties nearby if funding is not very secure and virtually guaranteed.

Dr Halliday further reported that at the Guildhall Committee the architects confirmed that planning costs would not be increased by splitting the application into two. Nor would any grant applications be affected. But, residents could lose thousands of pounds if permission was granted for a never to be/long time later cinema block. It would be unjust to do otherwise.

C36 **Meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee of 1st August 2013**

A. Guildhall Improvement Project - Plans

The meeting received a verbal report and considered two RECOMMENDATIONS of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held earlier in the evening:

(i) To the Approve the architectural plans and associated costings for the full Guildhall phase 2 scheme, both the 'core' scheme and the 'enhanced' scheme, as summarised in the report of the Town Clerk and the professional team, and

also as defined in the email from the Council's quantity surveyor dated 31 July 2013, copies of which were circulated to all Members, with the cinema located as in the previously approved plans (March 2013).

(ii) To delegate authority to the Guildhall Committee to apply for planning permission for either the core scheme or the enhanced scheme, the decision in this regard being subject to advice regarding a potential funding application, the advice of the local planning authority and the Council's own professional team.

It was proposed by Cllr Sandy Lovatt and seconded by Cllr Iain Littlejohn that the Council accept recommendations (i) and (ii).

It was proposed by Cllr Lesley Legge and seconded by Cllr Patrick Lonergan that there should be an **amendment** to recommendation (ii) to read:

(ii) That the Guildhall Committee bring a proposal to move to a full planning application to the next appropriate Full Council Meeting or a Special Council Meeting once the details, including the details of funding, are in place.

Members considered the amendment. It was suggested that the Heritage Lottery Funding (HLF) may wish to have input prior to grant of planning permission. The matter of funding was raised as a concern and it was put forward that the funding should be in place before planning permission is sought. It was suggested that the project was too big for the Guildhall Committee and should go before Full Council. It was also raised that some details were not included in the plans.

On the amendment being put to the vote it was 4 in Favour, 7 Against with 4 Abstentions. The amendment was therefore **lost**.

A **further amendment** was proposed by Cllr Iain Littlejohn and duly seconded to add at the end of recommendation (ii) the sentence:

Subject to a condition on this delegation that the Guildhall Committee refer the matter back to the Town Council should there be any substantial changes to the plans as a result of this process.

On being put to the **vote** were recorded 13 votes in Favour, 0 Against with 2 Abstentions. The amendment was therefore **adopted**.

A **further amendment** was proposed by Cllr Julie Mayhew-Archer and duly seconded in relation to recommendation (ii) that planning permission should be submitted in two parts; for the full proposals, excluding the new build cinema; and for the new build cinema.

The meeting considered the amendment. Some Members argued that the scheme needed to be considered in its entirety. Other Members considered that it would be safer if planning permission were submitted in two parts as the most contentious part was the cinema. Concern was expressed that the cinema has

a disabled access was dependent on improvements in the existing build and the scheme would not work if developed in parts. It was argued that the public's opinion at the recent public engagement was "get it done now, and do it in full." It was also argued that if the cinema is built as a separate entity then there would be considerable costs – the project has always been a single entity.

On being put to the vote there was 4 in Favour of the amendment, 8 against and 3 Abstentions. The amendment was therefore **lost**.

The Mayor stated that she considered the recommendation to be in duplex and therefore would take the vote in two parts.

It was **resolved** by 7 votes in favour and 8 abstentions:

To the Approve the architectural plans and associated costings for the full Guildhall phase 2 scheme, both the 'core' scheme and the 'enhanced' scheme, as summarised in the report of the Town Clerk and the professional team, and also as defined in the email from the Council's quantity surveyor dated 31 July 2013, copies of which were circulated to all Members, with the cinema located as in the previously approved plans (March 2013).

It was **resolved** by 9 votes in favour, with 2 against and 4 abstentions

To delegate authority to the Guildhall Committee to apply for planning permission for either the core scheme or the enhanced scheme, the decision in this regard being subject to advice regarding a potential funding application, the advice of the local planning authority and the Council's own professional team. Subject to a condition on this delegation that the Guildhall Committee refer the matter back to the Town Council should there be any substantial changes to the plans as a result of this process

B. Guildhall Improvement Project - Funding

The meeting received a verbal report and considered two RECOMMENDATIONS of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held earlier in the evening

It was proposed by Cllr Sandy Lovatt, seconded by Cllr Alison Rooke and **resolved** by 13 votes in favour and 2 abstentions:

(i) that an additional £250,000 from the Guildhall Capital Improvement sum (deferred grant) be allocated to the Guildhall Phase 2 Project rather than to the Roysse Court project, it being noted that if approved the total allocated to the Guildhall Phase 2 Project would amount to £1,000,000.

(ii) that an allocation of £244,666 be used from the Capital Receipts Reserve to fund the Roysse Court office improvements, with an additional £5,334 then allocated from the general property reserve for that project.

The meeting rose at 9.17pm.