

**Minutes of the Council of the Town of Abingdon-on-Thames held in the Council Chamber, Guildhall on Wednesday 16 January 2013.**

**Present**

Cllr Monica Lovatt	Mayor of Abingdon-on-Thames
Cllr Andrew Todd	Deputy Mayor of Abingdon-on-Thames
Cllr Alice Badcock	
Cllr Marilyn Badcock	
Cllr Michael Badcock	
Cllr Samantha Bowring	
Cllr Jason Fiddaman	
Cllr Jeanette Halliday	
Cllr Angela Lawrence	
Cllr Lesley Legge	
Cllr Iain Littlejohn	
Cllr Patrick Lonergan	
Cllr Sandy Lovatt	
Cllr Julie Mayhew-Archer	
Cllr Penny McDougall	
Cllr Katie Nobes	
Cllr Helen Pighills	
Cllr Alison Rooke	

**In Attendance**

Mr Nigel Warner	Town Clerk
Mrs Sandra Hill	Deputy Town Clerk (Clerk to the Meeting)
Mr Steve Rich	Head of Service Delivery

C89 Prayers

The Rector, Rev Dr Charles Miller, led the meeting in prayers.

C90 Public Participation

No statements were made or questions asked by members of the public.

C91 Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr Peter Jones, Cllr Hermann Matheson and Cllr Aidan Melville.

C92 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of pecuniary interests.

Other interests

Cllr Jeanette Halliday declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to the Guildhall Minutes of 18 December as she lives within the vicinity of the Guildhall.

C93 Minutes

**Resolved** to adopt and sign as a correct record the minutes and the confidential appendix to minutes of the Council of Abingdon-on-Thames held on 28 November 2012 subject to the following amendments:

C78 (i) there was an amendment to the substantive motion which is not shown within the minutes. It was **resolved** that authority be delegated to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Mayor and with Cllr Samantha Bowring, to amend the minute to reflect the amendment which was agreed.

Confidential Appendix – 28 November. Cllr Michael Badcock reported that it was not recorded in the minutes that he left the meeting and did not take part in the discussion in respect of Guildhall Minute 75 (b) – Property Matters.

#### Matters Arising

C78 (i) Concern was raised that the Neighbourhood Plan has not been discussed at Planning & Highways Committee, and that there was no budget identified for the Plan.

In response the Chairman of the Planning & Highways Committee stated that the Committee were awaiting the decision of the electoral review for the Vale of White Horse before considering with the matter. Once the electoral review had been agreed then the Planning & Highways Committee would discuss and identify any budget requirements.

Disappointment was expressed that the matter had not progressed, and that other councils had applied for grants to take forward their Neighbourhood Plans.

C78 (vi) A question was raised whether the Council had received a reply from the Vale of White District Council.

The Town Clerk reported that to date a reply had not been received. It was suggested that Members who propose and second motions to the Council should get copies of letters and responses. It was **resolved** accordingly.

**Resolved** to adopt and sign as a correct record the Minutes of the Council of Abingdon-on-Thames held on 19 December 2013.

#### Matters Arising

C88 The Leader of the Council informed the meeting that a response had been received from the Boundary Commission indicating that it is unlikely that they will accept the Town Council's proposal for parish wards to be coterminous with the District Council wards.

#### C94 Mayor of Abingdon-on-Thames

The Council received and considered the schedule of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor's engagements from 21 November 2012 – 10 January 2013, as circulated with the agenda.

**Resolved** to note the above engagements.

The Mayor gave her thanks to councillors for their support at the Over 70's Christmas Party and the Mayor's Christmas Reception.

The Mayor further reported on her forthcoming events – Quiz Evening on 25 January 2013 and the Mayor's Ball on 22 February 2013; invites for the Ball are due to be sent soon.

The Mayor announced that HRH the Duke of Gloucester would preside at the official opening of the County Hall Museum on Friday 8 March 2013. It is not yet known whether this would be morning or afternoon.

C95 Councillor Peter Jones: Application for approved absence from Council duties

It was proposed and seconded to approve the non-attendance of Cllr Peter Jones at meetings until 20 March 2013 due to his ill health and ongoing recovery, and to authorise the Town Clerk to declare the seat vacant if Cllr Peter Jones has not attended a meeting by this date.

The Leader of the Council reported that Cllr Jones was progressing, but it is unlikely that he will be able to return to the Council.

All Members made it clear that they wished Cllr Jones well. In debating the matter of approved absence, some Members considered that the leave of absence had been too long and that this was to the detriment of the electors; however other Members considered that the Council had been right and had acted fairly in giving time to see if it was likely that Cllr Jones could return to his duties.

In summing-up the Leader stated that the Council had properly given leave of absence to Cllr Jones but now is the time for this above motion to come forward, which would enable any by-election to be combined with the County elections.

It was **resolved** by 10 votes in favour, 8 against and 0 abstentions that the Council:

1. approve the non-attendance of Councillor Peter Jones at meetings until 20<sup>th</sup> March 2013 due to his ill health and ongoing recovery;
2. authorise the Town Clerk to declare the seat vacant if Councillor Peter Jones has not attended a meeting by this date.

C96 Questions under Standing Order 10

There were no questions under Standing Order 10.

C97 Finance and General Purposes Committee

It was proposed and seconded that the Council receive the minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 8 January 2013, and to approve recommendations contained therein.

F69 - Financial Report including Estimates 2013/14

The Council considered its budget estimates for 2013/14.

Two amendments to the budget were moved at this point.

It was proposed by Cllr Alison Rooke and seconded by Cllr Helen Pighills that the sum in the Base Budget for Abingdon Citizens' Advice Bureau should increase by 5% from £14,000 to £14,700. This £700 should be taken from the proposed increase in the Treasures budget line. It was further stated that CAB's costs have increased due of the current economic climate and that a 5% increase was not a large amount.

The Leader of the Council outlined that the Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB) had not requested an increase in funding from the Council, and it was important that the Treasures budget is able to sustain costs for the restoration of the Town's paintings.

On being put to the vote it was **resolved** by 9 votes in favour, 9 against and 0 abstentions – the Mayor having the casting vote - voted in favour. Therefore the proposal was carried.

It was also proposed by Cllr Alison Rooke and seconded by Cllr Lesley Legge that the sum in the Base Budget for The Abingdon Bridge should increase by 5% from £4,935 to £5,181. This £264 should be taken from the proposed 400% increase in the Treasurers budget line.

The meeting were informed that The Abingdon Bridge annual funding from the Comic Relief Fund has been withdrawn. The funding was being targeted for a project to help young people with alcohol problems. The consequence of the withdrawal of funding would have an adverse effect on the success of the project - which has so far resulted in a decrease in young people with alcohol related problems within Abingdon-on-Thames.

The Leader reported that he has had a crisis meeting with The Abingdon Bridge as a result of the loss of funding. He added that the Town Council has created a £25,500 community fund to assist with community projects and they may come forward with a proposal for a grant from that fund.

On being put to the vote it was **resolved** by 17 votes in favour, 0 against and 1 abstention that the proposal be carried.

(i) It was **resolved** that the draft base revenue budget estimates for 2013/14 be approved in the sum of £1,045,137 (net expenditure), subject to the changes agreed above in relation to the budgets for Treasures, CAB grant and Abingdon Bridge grant and the transfer of £946 from the capital/larger(project-based) budget to the base budget.

(ii) Members considered estimates for capital and larger revenue (project based) items for 2013/14 as detailed below and in the sum of £289,054 and it was **resolved** that:

a Cemetery improvements £30,000 be approved.

b Play equipment

It was proposed by Cllr Alison Rooke and seconded by Cllr Samantha Bowring that the sum of £20,000 for play equipment should be increased to £25,000, this additional funding to be met by reducing the Christmas lights budget from £10,000 to £5,000.

The Chairman of the Amenities & Recreation Committee stated that the budget for play equipment had already been increased over that for 2012/13 but that last year no suggestions for improvements had been received from Councillors and consequently she and the Council Officers come forward with proposals for new equipment.

The Leader of the Council stated that the Council do a good job of maintaining the play equipment and so the capital budget was sufficient. The town's Christmas lights are good, but it would be beneficial to the town to further progress the purchase of new lights.

The Chairman of the Christmas Lights Working Group highlighted that a meeting is being arranged to progress matters.

On being put to the vote it was **resolved** by 8 votes in favour, 9 against and 1 abstention that proposal should not be carried.

Concern was also expressed regarding funding for the Science Festival and that the Community Fund was not the right place to take funding for the Science Festival. It was also pointed out that this matter had not been discussed at the Finance & General Purposes Committee.

The Leader of the Council stated that he was in favour of the Science Festival, but to date there are no indications of costs. Once the costs are known then the budget could be identified.

(b)	Play Equipment £20,000	Approved
(c).	Council paths and pavements £6,500	Approved
(d)	New Cemetery Fund £75,000	Approved
(e)	New and replacement Christmas lights £10,000	Approved
(f)	Noticeboards/ Street Furniture £10,000	Approved
(e)	Summer events £3,000	Approved
(h)	Pooled equipment fund £30,000	Approved
(i)	Community Fund £11,500	Approved
(j).	Treasures £4,054	Approved
(k)	Acquisitions £1,000	Approved
(l)	Pooled property fund/ reserve £88,000	Approved

- (iii) A Member stated that the Council should not transfer funds from the general reserve as they may need the money in the future.

The Leader of the Council stated that it was projected that the general reserve (as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013) would have increased by £13,446 from last year and this was net of a £20,000 prudential contingency. The Council therefore had sufficient funds in its general reserves.

Further concern was expressed, although acknowledging that the reserves were respectable, there may be less room for manoeuvre in the future as there are big pressures ahead, so the Council should acknowledge and prepare for this.

It was therefore proposed by Cllr Angela Lawrence that the Council increase the Council Tax by 0.1%, from £106.01 to £106.11 for a Band D property. Cllr Michael Badcock made clear that whilst not agreeing with the proposal, he would second it for the purposes of debate.

Concern was expressed that economically it was not the right time to increase council tax. The Council has saved over the years and now has good reserves. The budget was flexible, with a good revenue account.

On being put to the vote it was **resolved** by 1 vote in favour and 17 against that the proposal should not be carried.

It was subsequently **resolved** by 9 votes in favour, 1 against and 8 abstentions that total net spending provided within the revenue estimates for 2013/14 amounting to £1,334,191 should be funded as follows:

a. Precept	£1,227,649
b. Grant from Central Government in accordance with the draft Local Government settlement	£101,396
c. Transfer from the general reserve	£5,146

- (iv) It was **resolved** by 17 votes in favour, 0 against and 1 abstention that following the review of Council reserves, that the general reserve, taking into account the transfer detailed above, 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 31 March 2013 be approved.
- (v) It was **resolved** by 18 votes in favour, 0 against and 0 abstentions that the Council's reserves be further reviewed when considering the final accounts for the year ending 31 March 2013.
- (vi) It was **resolved** by 10 votes in favour, 0 against and 8 abstentions that Cemetery fees and charges (with the exception of these in relation to Sanctum 2000 ashes interment fees) be increased by 5% by 1 April 2013.

#### Guildhall

It was **resolved** by 18 votes for, 0 against and 0 abstentions that there should be no change to fees and charges in relation to Guildhall services at 1 April 2013, but that matters should be reviewed by the Guildhall Committee in June 2013.

#### Markets

It was **resolved** by 18 votes for, 0 against and 0 abstentions that tolls for the Monday Retail Market be set at £10.30 per 10 feet pitch (2012/13 - £10.00) and for the Farmers' Market £8.75 per stall (2012/13 - £8.50), this representing an increase on 2012/13 in line with the Retail Prices Index at November 2012.

#### Other Matters

- (ix) Apportionment of administrative costs. The view was expressed that the Council's current system of apportioning administrative costs should be retained in order to accurately reflect the costs of services, to assist with budget planning and help inform priorities.

The Leader of the Council pointed out that the outside staff overheads would continue to be apportioned, but the current practice in relation to the administrative staff was expensive, unnecessary and the split of costs was very difficult to make with any accuracy.

On being put to the vote, there were 9 votes in favour, 9 votes against and 0 abstentions. The Mayor of Abingdon-on-Thames therefore had the casting vote, voting in favour. It was

**resolved** (on the Mayor's casting vote, the votes in favour and against being tied 9 votes to 9 votes) by 9 votes that apportionments in relation to administrative overheads should not be made with effect from 1 April 2013, and that these costs (both budgeted and actual) be retained within cost centre 601, Central Services.

- (x) On being put to the vote it was **resolved** by 18 votes for, 0 against and 0 abstentions that responsibility for street furniture and the base budget detailed in cost centre 309, together with any capital and any revenue project budget relating to these items, be transferred under the Council's Terms of Reference for Standing Committees, from the responsibility and control of the Finance and General Purposes Committee to that of the Amenities and Recreation Committee.
- (xi) On being put to the vote it was **resolved** by 18 votes for, 0 against and 0 abstentions that enquiries should be made of the District Council to establish whether they are content for the Joint Economic Forum reserve to be extinguished, and its balances transferred to those of the Choose Abingdon Partnership; and that if the District Council are content, that this should be undertaken on 1 April 2013.

A Member requested that Abingdon-on-Thames Chamber of Commerce should be made aware of the resolution within (xi).

#### Minute 77: Property Matters

On being put to the vote it was **resolved** by 18 votes, 0 against and 0 abstentions that in accordance with the Council's statutory powers and its agreement with the District Council, that the budget estimates for 2013/14 provide for a grant of £43,570 to the Vale of White Horse District Council towards the costs of the Abbey Meadow Open Air Swimming Pool.

**Resolved:** that, subject to the above, the Council receive the minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting of 8<sup>th</sup> January 2013 and approve the recommendations contained therein.

#### C97 County Hall Museum Management Committee

It was proposed, seconded and **resolved** to receive the minutes and the confidential appendix to the minutes of the meeting of the County Hall Museum Management Committee held on 3 January 2013.

#### C98 Amenities and Recreation Committee

A73 – Christmas Lights Working Group.

It pointed out that there appeared to be a problem with the lights on the small Christmas trees attached to lampposts.

The Chairman of Amenities & Recreation Committee explained that the installation company did not install the solar panels correctly which resulted in the Christmas tree solar lights not working. The invoice for the trees would not be paid until the Council has spoken to the company concerned.

A78 – Green Gym – Ock Valley Walk

The Chairman of the Amenities & Recreation Committee explained that she would be meeting the representatives from Green Gym at the Council offices. She is currently waiting for a response for a suitable meeting date.

It was proposed, seconded and **resolved** to receive the minutes of the meeting of the Amenities and Recreation Committee held on 2 January 2013.

C99 Planning and Highways Committee

It was proposed, seconded and **resolved** to receive the minutes of the Planning and Highways Committee meetings held on 3 December, 17 December 2012 and 7 January 2013.

Minutes of 7 January 2013 – P12/V2476/A. In relation to the replacement of the public house sign by Greene King it was **resolved** that the Council should write to Greene King outlining its concern over the replacement of the Victorian pub signs stating that not only are they of historical interest, but also a means of assisting those with reading difficulties, sight problems and foreigners. This would be copied to the Oxon Branch of CAMRA.

C100 Guildhall Committee

It was proposed, seconded and **resolved** to receive the minutes of the Guildhall Committee meetings held on 18 December 2012.

*Cllr Jeanette Halliday declared a non-pecuniary interest as she lives within the vicinity of the Guildhall.*

It was pointed out that under 78 – Other interests, 2<sup>nd</sup> line last word should read lodge and not lodges. Also under 82, it should read Monday 4 March, and not Thursday 7 March, to reflect the change of date of the meeting.

The Chairman of the Guildhall Committee reported that a briefing for all councillors would take place at 7pm on Wednesday 30 January 2013 to inform them of the proposals and recommendations for the Guildhall project.

It was proposed, seconded and **resolved** to receive the minutes and confidential appendix to the minutes of the Guildhall Committee meeting held on 18 December 2012, and any recommendations contained therein.

The Mayor of Abingdon-on-Thames informed the meeting that the open minutes and confidential appendix to minutes from the meeting held on 9 January 2013 were not available due to the close proximity of the meeting and the Town Council meeting. There were no recommendations from this meeting, and the minutes would be taken to the next meeting of the Town Council on 20 March 2013.

C101 Exclusion of the Public, Including the Press

The Mayor moved and it was **resolved**

*“That in accordance with section 1 (2) of the Public Bodies (admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, the public, including the press, be excluded from the meeting because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted as summarised below.”*

C102 Confidential appendix to the minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on 8 January 2013

**Resolved:** that the Council receive the confidential appendix to the minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting of 8<sup>th</sup> January 2013 and approve the recommendations contained therein.

C103 Confidential appendix to the minutes of the County Hall Museum Management Committee.

**Resolved:** that the Council receive the confidential appendix to the minutes of the County Hall Museum Management Committee held on 3 January 2013.

C104 Confidential appendix to the minutes of the Guildhall Committee.

**Resolved:** that the Council receive the confidential appendix to the minutes of the Guildhall Committee held on 18 December 2012.

The meeting rose at 9.35pm