

Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council

Draft Minutes of the Community Services Committee held on Tuesday 24th November 2015 at 7.00 pm in the Roysse Court Meeting Room.

Present:

Cllr Andrew Todd
Cllr Alice Badcock
Cllr Neil Fawcett
Cllr Pat Lonergan
Cllr Angela Lawrence
Cllr Sandy Lovatt
Cllr Lorraine Oates

Chairman
Vice Chairman

Chairman F & GP Ctte (ex-officio)

In Attendance:

Ms Heather Brown

Community Services Officer (Clerk to the meeting)

Mr Steve Rich

Assistant Town Clerk/ Head of Services

Mr Nigel Warner

Town Clerk

Mrs Susan Whipp

Treasurer/ Responsible Financial Officer

23. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Monica Lovatt.

24. Declarations of Interest

Cllr Neil Fawcett declared a non-pecuniary interest in Green Gym and Abingdon Drama Club, both of whom had submitted grant applications (minute 28). He did not participate in the discussions and abstained on the votes that were taken in this respect.

It was noted that all Members knew Glynne Butt in her role as Master of Christ's Hospital and therefore representing Christ's Hospital as a Freeman of Abingdon-on-Thames. Mrs Butt had put in a grant application for the Abingdon Music Festival. However Members did not consider that this was a sufficiently close relationship to warrant a Declaration of Interest.

25. Minutes of previous meeting

There were no amendments to the draft minutes of the meeting of 8th September June 2015. The Chairman signed the minutes as a correct record.

26. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising that were not covered in the main agenda.

27. Follow Up Actions: Market Report and Decisions

Follow Up Item a – the previously drafted recommendation to approve an extra market date for the Thames Valley Farmers' Market on the first Friday of each month was reviewed in the light of the communications received from two consultees during the 28 day consultation period. The Chamber of Commerce had offered a mainly positive point of view whilst the Monday Market Traders had expressed concern about impact on the Monday Market. The need to support the Monday Market was expressed and it was noted that the committee had already decided to make budget provision out of the rental income for a £600 marketing budget in 2016, as well as asking officers to work with the traders on modernising the appeal of the market. The national trend of traditional retail markets being in decline was noted as a backdrop to this discussion. Councillors pointed out that they had little in the way of evidence to evaluate the claim of the Monday Market traders and therefore it was suggested that the extra market date could be granted as a one year trial and some form of monitoring could be put in place by officers so that if it appeared that there were a major impact on other markets the committee could reconsider their decision at the end of the year. It was therefore **recommended** to the Finance and General Purposes Committee that the Council's power as local market authority be exercised to declare a market on the first Friday of every month for the year 1st April 2016 to 31st March 2017. It was **resolved** that if the Town Council approved this then the operators of Thames Valley Farmers' Market would be informed of this decision by officers and asked to operate their usual market model on these days.

Item b – in the previous meeting it had been resolved that the Town Council should no longer continue to put staff resource into running the Craft Market during the coming financial year. This twice-yearly event had been part of a pump-priming exercise to encourage town centre vitality through use of the Market Place. It was felt that the number of markets and community group events on the Market Place was now high enough during the peak periods that it was even becoming hard to book a Saturday as they are often booked up months in advance. Councillors had questioned whether putting staff resource onto this market, which could easily be organised by the community, made sense in the

light of the demands that will come from other larger events which the Town Council must take the lead on for health and safety reasons. Following this decision the Chamber of Commerce had offered to take over the running of the Craft Market as an extension of the Local Excellence Market and had specified a date for their first trial run, being Sunday 27th November 2016, the day after the 2016 Extravaganza, providing a weekend of events to kick start the Christmas shopping period in Abingdon. Councillors agreed that officers should provide the Chamber of Commerce with such information about previous stallholders as is consistent with good practice with regard to data protection and also that they encourage the Chamber of Commerce to also run a summer Craft Market if they feel able to, but that this should be framed as a suggestion not a requirement. It was **recommended to the Town Council** that their power as local market authority be exercised to declare a market on the 27th November 2016 so that the Chamber of Commerce could begin their planning for this event.

The interest of the Business Improvement District (BID) was raised but it was considered that there were still other weekends before Christmas when the Market Place was available to be booked should the BID Board wish to organise a separate Christmas 2016 event.

28. Grant Applications

Grant applications from 13 groups were put forward and awards were made as follows.

These were made in pursuance of the Council's powers, as noted in column one below the name of each applicant, 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.

Grants Applied for under the Community Grants Fund			
	Budget for year	<i>(£1000 vired to Clubs and Socs day code)</i>	£22 550
	Amount already awarded YTD		£3 600
	Remaining Budget		£18 950

	Name of Applicant	Reason for the grant application	Grant approved and action points
28.1	Abingdon Artists (a)	Exhibition stands and bags	£250 (50% of requested amount) subject to written confirmation of how the rest of the money will be raised
28.2	Abingdon Concert Band (a)	New musical scores to update band's repertoire	£250 (71% of requested amount).
28.3	Abingdon Green Gym (f)	New hand tools and insurance	£250 (100% of requested amount) subject to clarification that the application is not retrospective for expenses of previous year.
28.4	Abingdon Music Festival (a)	Annual music festival	£500 (100% of requested amount). No caveats or action points.
28.5	9th Appleton Scouts	New tents	Application refused. Officers will write to explain how location affects eligibility in that by law Town Council grants can only be given to groups in the town, and advice applying to their local parish council.
28.6	Breakaway Club (f)	Minibus costs	£500 (100% of requested amount). No caveats or action points.
28.7	John Mason School Trip (b)	Contribution to accommodation & travel expenses	£660 with a caveat that money should be spent only to assist families who cannot otherwise afford the trip rather than being spread across the group
28.8	Three schools cultural exchange (b)	As above	£660 with a caveat that money should be spent only to assist families who cannot otherwise afford the trip rather than being spread across the group
28.9	Freewheeling Cycle Club (f)	Towards costs of putting on Cycling Festival in Market Place	£1000 (100% of requested amount). No caveats or action points.
28.10	Oxon Assoc for the Blind	Towards costs of running services	£250 (100% of requested amount). No caveats but officers will remind

	(b)	for the blind in Oxon	them that any future applications should relate to a specific project rather than general costs.
28.11	Church Twinning (b)	To contribute to visit costs 12-15 people from St Niklaas	£150 (50% of requested amount).
28.12	Parents and Children Together (b)	To contribute to costs of domestic abuse counselling	£1000 (100% of requested amount). No caveats or action points.
28.13	Abingdon Drama Club (a)	New carpets in clubhouse	£700 (53% of requested amount).
	Total grants recommended		£6170
	Remaining funds and percentage to total budget		£12 780 (56%)

Summary of general discussion about grant applications:

It was noted that, despite the wording of the application form, a number of applicants did not seem to have understood that they should be applying for a portion, and not the whole, of their project costs and demonstrating how they would raise the rest from other sources. Also some were applying for ongoing costs rather than for projects, although not all committee members saw this as a feature that necessarily warranted automatic disqualification. There was also a discussion about the criteria that are legally imposed on the Council and those which the Committee may wish to additionally adopt as rules and it was agreed that these need further clarification. The Chairman proposed that he liaise with officers and the Vice Chairman to draft a new set of criteria for grant approvals and that the committee could review these at the next meeting. The committee agreed unanimously that he should proceed with this plan.

29. Print Budget

Costings were presented for the elements of the print budget which the Committee had requested at the previous meeting, as follows:

Project	Timing	Cost Estimate
Abingdon Visitor Leaflet re-publication	Print April 2016 Distribute over	for print run of 7500 cost estimate is £1392

12 panel DL 130gsm full colour leaflet - design, copy and maps to be updated to provide a quality information guide suitable to give out to visitors in the Information Centre, County Hall Museum and other important locations. Will be designed to last several years so information will be general and not time specific.	next four years as required	(alternatively a print run of 5000 cost estimate is £1154 or a print run of 2500 cost estimate is £915)
Town Crier Magazine number 55 A5 format as in October/November 2015, 115gsm silk, 16pp - copy and images supplied in-house; artwork overseen in-house; design and print based on Leachprint estimate; distribution based on Distribution Unlimited estimate.	Print and distribute April 2016	Print run of 14250 of which 250 are delivered to the offices/Information Centre Design and print £2395 Distribution £980
Town Crier Magazine number 56 A5 format as in October/November 2015, 115gsm silk, 16pp - copy and images supplied in-house; artwork overseen in-house; design and print based on Leachprint estimate; distribution based on Distribution Unlimited estimate.	Print and distribute September 2016	Design and print £2395 Distribution £980
Folding Town Map Local Authority Publishing will produce a folding town map as previously at no cost to us for design and print. Their income based on advertising sales.	Print and distribute July 2016	Print run of 16 000 of which 2000 will be delivered for use at the Information Centre in the next 2 years. Distribution £1120
Round and About advertising shared with museum	Across the year as per grid in appendix 2	£1475
What's On leaflet	Jan/Feb 2017	Print run of 2500 for town centre distribution via shops and cafes £688
Total cost of above projects		£11 425

The Community Services Committee therefore **recommended to the Finance and General Purposes Committee** a print communications budget of £11425 for the next financial year noting that the increase over the current year print budget, which was £7000, was needed in order to provide a new tourism leaflet (as stocks of the old one were exhausted and the Information Centre staff have nothing to give out) and to provide two Town Crier magazines next year rather than one. The increase will be largely offset by the decrease in the electronic communications budget and therefore the total communications budget would show a modest increase of £625 year on year.

30. Electronic Communications Budget

Officers suggested there was no need to spend significant money on the website in the coming financial year as most of the practical ambitions for functionality had now been realised through the initial commissioning process and the phase 2 work which had been done during the current year. The focus for website improvements in the coming year should be on content creation, updating and adding/changing information sections, and this could all be done using in-house expertise. Therefore the only cost for the website was predicted to be the annual maintenance contract with the developer.

Project	Timing	Cost Estimate
Website Annual Maintenance Contract	across the year	£3000
Increase in use of social media to support general comms and events via hootsuite or similar free software	related to event campaigns	zero cost
Keep options open on town app and mobile website	annual payment	£200
Total cost of above projects		£3200

It was noted that therefore the combined communications budget proposal was £14 625 which was very close to this year's figure of £14 000.

31. Financial Report

The financial report of the Treasurer was adopted and budget proposals for the financial year 2016-17 were examined.

The budget plan was approved with agreed changes to the print communications budget to reflect the latest costings as given above (minute 29) and also the change implicit in the recommendation below regarding Fun and Music in the Park budgets.

A member noted that this year the Council should be looking for cost savings and that therefore budget cuts should be proposed but other members felt that the Committee should put forward budgets based on their plans for next year and that F&GP should come back to the Committee if savings were needed from their budget. The Chairman noted that this Committee controls one of the smallest expenditures in the Council, and that the Council spends very little on communications with the public which is an important part of their service, and therefore this was not a key area to look for savings.

Recommended to the Finance and General Purposes Committee that the budget estimates for 2016-17 be approved.

32. Summer Events Sub-Committee

The minutes from the last two meetings of the Summer Events Sub-Committee were reviewed and a brief update was given. It was explained that officers had been given a clear set of guidelines from the Sub-Committee to help select appropriate online ticket sales suppliers. Officers had a shortlist of six suppliers of ticketing services that they are presently talking to and would present a table of options to the Summer Events Sub Committee in February.

The Chairman of the Summer Events Sub-Committee, Cllr Alice Badcock, explained that the Sub-Committee were also looking at providing activities for teenagers on the Market Place in the afternoon so that the event had more connection with the town centre.

Two recommendations were received from the Summer Events Sub Committee as follows:

The Summer Events Sub-Committee had noted that the financial plan for Fun and Music in the Park 2016 was threatened by the loss of grant opportunities at the County Council, which accounted for £4500 of income last year, and was also challenged by the need to improve the quality and reach of the sound at the event which would cost an extra £6000+ compared with last year's costs. Due to these pressures, the Sub-Committee had increased efforts to find sponsorship and had trimmed money off the marketing budget. The Sub-Committee also felt that there was room to increase ticket prices for the evening event whilst still providing an excellent value-for-money experience for local people. Therefore the Sub-Committee had recommended that the financial planning for 2016 be based on ticket prices of £8 for an adult ticket, £3 for a 5-17 year old and zero cost for a child under 5 and that 3500 tickets are allocated for sale. (Prices include VAT).

Although, based on selling out as in previous years, the financial plan was for break-even, for the purposes of budget setting the Sub-Committee had recommended that a prudent approach be taken and that it be assumed that expenditure could outweigh income by £5000 as this gave room for a shortfall in ticket sales due to bad weather or for other unforeseen circumstances.

The Community Services Committee approved both recommendations and they were consequently referred to the Finance and General Purposes Committee for consideration as part of the budget deliberations.

33. Other Events

It was noted that Clubs and Societies Day had been confirmed for the 23rd April 2016 and would take place at the Abbey Buildings which had been booked and a deposit paid.

As the Community Services Team already had plans to send out a mail merge to all community groups on the subject of Fun in the Park, it was likely that additional information about the Clubs and Societies Day would also be put in the same email. Therefore the information and booking forms would be going out earlier a month than originally planned, in December 2015.

34. Next Meeting

The next meeting would take place on 23rd February 2015. The main business of this meeting would be:

- to receive and discuss an officer report on use of the Market Place by community groups;
- to receive and discuss an officer report on the Google analytics for the website;
- to consider the content list for the Spring 2016 Town Crier magazine;
- to consider any aspects of Clubs and Societies Day planning which officers may require committee guidance on;
- to receive and discuss a list of grant approval criteria drafted by the Chairman, in consultation with the Vice Chairman and officers.

35. Publicity Items

No items were particularly noted by Members as all events for the season were already on the website and posters up on the noticeboards.

36. Exclusion of the public, including the press

The resolution to exclude the public was approved 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) was approved.

37. Arrangements for celebrating HM the Queen's 90th Birthday

(The Town Clerk joined the meeting at this point).

It was reported that the Full Council had asked the Committee to formulate plans for the weekend of 11th/12th June which had been designated by Buckingham Palace as the celebration weekend for the Queen's 90th Birthday.

A Bun-Throwing could be held: the Town Clerk pointed out that the event had become increasingly popular in recent years. The crowd at the event created potential issues because of the activity itself (running and jumping to catch the buns) and the Town Clerk felt that this combined with the large crowd numbers meant that the Council should now take professional health and safety advice on the subject of managing the crowd. He anticipated that a more extensive road closure would be necessary than had previously been the case. Therefore it would be a consideration that the timing of the event avoided rush hour because the impact on the traffic in the wider area could be significant. For this reason the Committee felt that holding the Bun Throwing on a Friday evening might not be advisable. It was therefore likely that the Bun Throwing would be on Saturday and an open air party held on the Sunday, reflecting the events on the Mall in London as had been requested by Buckingham Palace.

The open-air party could take the form of a street party with groups invited to book space and bring their own tables, chairs and food, following the format used at the Jubilee. Closing Ock Street to hold the party was potentially problematic again with regard to traffic and another suggestion was made for using the circular road in Albert Park, which could be closed with only limited impact on local traffic. Cllr Andrew Todd agreed to raise this with the Christ's Hospital governors at their meeting early in December. The residents would also have to be consulted. It was considered this would be an opportunity to raise the profile of the Park.

The budget proposal from the committee to F&GP included a net cost of £5 000 for the weekend events, and it was felt that this could be achieved if funding were received from the District Council. The Summer Events Sub Committee (SESC) were asked to formulate a proposal to be taken to the Vale Cabinet in January and therefore a special meeting of the SESC, under

delegation from the Community Services Committee, would be held in December to consider what this proposal should include. Officers would convene this meeting as soon as possible.

Officers asked the Committee to take note of the pressure that this would put on staff as it will mean that four major events are to be organised taking place just one week apart as Fun and Music in the Park were on 4th June 2015. The Town Clerk said that he would like to arrange the meeting cycle so that there are no meetings around this period of time.

The meeting closed at 9.15pm.

DRAFT