

Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council

**Draft Minutes of the Community Services Committee held on
Tuesday 12 January 2021 at 7.00 pm**

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this meeting was held online in accordance with the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 (“the 2020 Regulations”)

Present:

Cllr Neil Fawcett	Chair
Cllr Lorraine Oates	Vice-Chair
Cllr Andrew Coveney	
Cllr Andy Foulsham	
Cllr Alex Greenaway	
Cllr Jim Halliday	
Cllr Charlie Birks	Mayor of Abingdon-on-Thames (Ex-officio)
Cllr Samantha Bowring	Chair of F & G P Committee (Ex-officio)

In Attendance:

Louise Brown	Communications, Marketing and Events Officer
Andy Crick	Committee Clerk (Clerk to the meeting)
Susan Whipp	Deputy Town Clerk / RFO

CS39. Apologies for Absence

Cllr Rob Maddison

CS40. Declarations of Interest

Cllr Andy Foulsham declared a non-pecuniary interest as he is a volunteer with Archway Foundation.

Cllr Andrew Coveney joined the meeting at 7.03pm

CS41. Statements and Questions from the Public

DAMASCUS: Rita Atkinson and Roxy Elford, senior youth worker, joined the meeting along with Olly, youth ambassador.

Roxy Elford introduced the work of DAMASCUS. This is a grassroots project which engages with young people in their community and works with other agencies. The charity undertakes educational workshops around issues such as child exploitation, healthy relationships, gangs, guiding a new generation. Since the pandemic began, the charity has moved its work online, engaging with young people via video call to make sure they are okay, running workshops on mental health, relationships and social media. This has been a very useful learning experience for the team. As restrictions were lifted, face to face sessions were reintroduced.

Since the latest lockdown began, youth workers have been identified as keyworkers but there has still been an impact on the ability to connect with young people, reducing the numbers who have been able to attend sessions. This has meant that the number of engagement sessions has doubled from two to four. These sessions enable the team to check on young people, why they are out, if they are abiding by restrictions and if they are safe at home.

Olly spoke about his work with the charity under the youth ambassador programme. Roxy Elford commented that young people are more likely to listen to other young people, which was described as positive peer pressure. She mentioned new projects which will be coming forward shortly.

Rita Atkinson asked the committee to continue to support the charity. They hope to employ an extra person during the pandemic to deliver the support needed. Ms Atkinson thanked Cllr Bowring for including DAMASCUS in her work to develop a holistic approach to youth work in Abingdon.

Cllr Oates commended Olly for his work and Cllr Fawcett thanked the attendees for their work in the community.

Roxy Elford and Olly left the meeting at 7.26pm.

CS42. **Minutes**

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the meeting held on 3 November 2020.

*It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Community Services Committee held on 3 November 2020 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.*

CS43. Matters Arising

Cllr Halliday asked about work on the new website. The Communications, Marketing and Events Officer advised that the Town Council has now given notice to the current provider and they are working with the new provider to develop the new website. The transfer is in progress and is expected to be finished in the next few weeks.

Cllr Foulsham had undertaken at the last meeting to develop a spreadsheet on grant scoring. He continues to work on this and would welcome comments from others on how the aims and objectives of the Town Council can be worked into the grants process. Cllr Foulsham will then translate that into a scoring matrix which will enable councillors to assess grant applications. He noted the help of Cllr Coveney in the development of the spreadsheet.

CS44. Grants criteria

A verbal update from Cllr Foulsham was provided under item CS43.

CS45. Social Media Policies for staff and members

The Communications, Marketing and Events Officer introduced two new social media policies for consideration by the committee, one for the use of Town Council media and one for personal use as a member of staff or councillor. The policies were developed with the assistance of Valeria Cambule, Senior Museum Assistant, in consultation with the Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk / RFO.

Cllr Bowring asked if the Town Council social media policy could be amended to allow for non-Town Council businesses, events or products to be promoted without delay if it was in the interests of Abingdon. The Communications, Marketing and Events Officer commented that Town Council staff would be proactive in promoting all such items.

Cllr Halliday noted that appendix B stated that no personal reference should be made to staff, councillors or others in images and suggested that there would be occasions when it would be sensible to promote individuals, groups or acts and noted that local groups may welcome publicity. The Communications, Marketing and Events Officer would amend the wording of the policy to make it clear that images could be posted with the permission of the people in them.

Cllr Greenaway asked if images from large events could be posted. Cllr Fawcett said that this would be allowed, the only restriction is on naming individuals. Cllr Fawcett noted that there were separate rules for children, for whom the permission of a parent or guardian would be required.

It was RESOLVED to adopt the policies, taking into account the comments which have been noted above.

CS46. Grant Applications

Councillors considered four grant applications.

Damascus Youth Project

Cllr Halliday considered the application to be well written and impressive. The charity requested £2,500 out of a total cost of £13,260. He noted that DAMASCUS helps around 60 people as well as around 240 people who attend schools in the town. Cllr Halliday moved that the sum requested is awarded. Cllr Fawcett supported the application. Cllr Foulsham was impressed with the written presentation and the comments from the representatives who had spoken to the meeting. He noted that this is relatively small funding for high impact service which impacts a large number of young people across Abingdon. Cllr Foulsham offered full support.

Cothill House School year 8

Cllr Bowring noted that the school was not in Abingdon and unless they were able to demonstrate that students come from Abingdon they would not be eligible. Cllr Halliday queried the figures quoted on the application, which were not correct. He noted that the proposed project would be run by students and teachers at the school but it was not clear who the beneficiaries would be. The project was not within the scope of the grant programme of the Town Council. Cllr Halliday commended the students for preparing the application but suggested that the application might contain more information.

Cllr Fawcett proposed responding to say that the application could not be considered with the information supplied and the Town Council would need more information. The applicants would also need to set out how this would benefit schools and children in Abingdon.

Oxfordshire Play Association

Cllr Fawcett questioned whether the proposed event would be able to proceed in July given the current pandemic situation. Cllr Bowring was concerned that the application does not set out alternative plans if the event cannot go ahead. The committee would need to know what the possible alternatives would be. Cllr Bowring also noted that Oxfordshire Play Association (OPA) has applied for a grant for several years and has been asked to provide details of how the event helps families with identified needs in Abingdon but this information has not been provided.

Cllr Coveney left the meeting at 7.35pm

Councillors noted that this is a good event which takes place in an area where not many events take place but they had concerns about whether it would be able to happen this year. The Town Council should request more information and ask OPA at what point they will make a decision about whether to go ahead with the event or not and when they would need to commit cash. The committee could agree a provisional figure at this meeting and await further information from OPA.

Archway Foundation

The charity had requested a grant towards producing and distributing a newsletter. Cllr Foulsham is a volunteer with the charity and provided further information on its activities. The Archway Foundation targets support at chronically lonely, isolated, sometimes housebound residents. Some of those supported are elderly, some have mental health conditions and some who may have felt isolated in normal circumstances may be feeling even more isolated due to the pandemic lockdown. The newsletter was introduced to replace fortnightly meetings. The costings look high but the newsletter enables volunteers to check on the welfare of clients when they deliver it. The activity is quite volunteer- and staff-intensive. If it was just printing the cost would be high but an additional level of service is provided.

The application was for six months to cover the first lockdown. The cost of producing the newsletter in the third lockdown will be proportionately less and it is expected that these costs can be met by existing funding. Cllr Greenaway commented that the project seems very much Covid-dependent and may have been considered by the Covid Response Working Group, which may have been able to make a determination on support more rapidly.

Cllr Fawcett noted that there had actually been far fewer applications for grants this year due to the current situation which had stopped many activities going ahead. There is therefore a larger budget available.

Grant determinations

Following discussion regarding the various applications it was **resolved** that the grant applications be determined as follows:

	Name of Applicant	Purpose of grant, as summarised in the grant application	Grant awarded
1	Cothill House School	Virtual sandbox	£0 – the project did not set out how it would benefit schools in Abingdon
2	Oxfordshire Play Association (b)	Event in Abingdon, 3 July 2021	£1,000 – provisional on confirmation that the event would proceed.
3	Abingdon DAMASCUS Youth Project (b)	Youth work in Abingdon	£2,500
4	The Archway Foundation (b)	6 months of designing, printing and posting The Bright Side Newsletter to 66 Abingdon residents	£2,500

Note that the above grants were made in pursuance of the Council's powers, as noted in column one, as follows (resolved accordingly):

- (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;
- (h) Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, section 19.

Rita Atkinson thanked the committee for the grant and Cllr Fawcett thanked her for all the work of DAMASCUS.

CS47. Forward Plan

The Town Clerk provided an update on the Forward plan.

Cllr Bowring noted that the report does not include 'Fun and Music in the Park' for this year, which is understandable but she would like it included for further years so that there is no clash with other events being organised. This will be added by the Town Clerk. It was **RESOLVED** to not proceed with the event as planned for this year and to consider at the next meeting whether to proceed with the event later in the year in a more limited format.

Cllr Halliday asked that the draft master action plan attached to the report include more detail for future event planning, referring in particular to the Platinum Jubilee and 'Fun and Music in the Park'. Cllr Bowring would bring a paper to the next meeting with plans for the Platinum Jubilee, in consultation with the Communications, Marketing and Events Officer and Cllr Oates.

CS48. Flag policy

Cllr Birks introduced a draft policy. Cllr Halliday suggested some changes:

- Item 3.2: change 'services' to 'service';
- Item 4.1: add the words 'subject to royal command'. Cllr Birks asked if this was necessary as it was not clear if the Town Council could go ahead without royal command;
- Item 4.1.5: change to 'on other occasions by royal command';

The requirements in item 4.1 are governed by the fact that the Town Council is subject to the rules of the College of Arms and queries must go to the 'Officer in Waiting' for approval. The Town Council is designated as local government and can make its own decisions up to a point.

- Item 4.1: refers to the Abingdon Town flag;
- Item 4.2.3: the following wording should be added - 'as it is not clear whose funeral on the day of the funeral of a serving councillor, freemen and former mayor, should the occasion arise'.

Cllr Bowring referred to the working group which may be designated with agreeing this policy.

- Cllr Bowring asked if it was necessary to commit to fly the armed forces flag on a specific day or frequency if the armed forces base was leaving the town.

- Cllr Bowring asked if the Town Council would need to vote to fly a flag if it is on the agreed list. Cllr Halliday responded that a decision on agreed flags can be taken by a majority vote of the leader, Town Clerk and Mayor.
- Cllr Bowring welcomed the flying of guest flags in item 3.8 and would like the policy to reflect a willingness to fly any reasonable, non-commercial flag for organisations or clubs in the town.
- Cllr Bowring asked for the policy of flying the flag at half-mast for deceased sitting councillors and freemen/women to include serving members of staff.

Cllr Birks said that the Town Council was still obliged to refer to the College of Arms for a description of which flags can be flown, how and why.

It was RESOLVED that the meeting accept the proposed new policy.

Cllr Birks was asked to amend the document and present it to the flags working group. The policy will then need to be agreed by the Finance and General Purposes Committee and to go to full council for approval.

CS49. Actions Register

Cllr Halliday asked if future versions could include a key to the initials of the councillors and staff mentioned in the report.

Cllr Bowring is the lead councillor on youth policy. The Abingdon Bridge and DAMASCUS are developing this and it is hoped that there will be a report for full council.

Cllr Fawcett thanked the Communications, Marketing and Events Officer for the update.

CS50. Finance report

The Deputy Town Clerk / RFO introduced the report in two sections:

- Management accounts for the period ended 30 November 2020 to be approved and
- Consideration of fees and charges for 2021-22 which must be presented to full council as a formal recommendation.

Cllr Bowring referred to the policy agreed at the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting in January 2020 to give market traders a financial incentive to cut single-use plastics. This policy has been suspended

as the current situation meant that reusable items were discouraged. Cllr Bowring would like this to be considered for introduction in the coming year if possible as it would be good to report to residents that this policy has been agreed.

Members RESOLVED to approve the management accounts for the period 1st April 2020 to 30th November 2020.

Fees and charges

The Deputy Town Clerk / RFO advised that the committee could agree to keep charges the same given current circumstances. It would be possible to review these charges through the year if appropriate. Cllr Halliday suggested that electricity charges could be increased slightly as energy prices would continue to rise. Cllr Halliday suggested that a charge of £13 could be agreed, an increase from £12.60. **This was proposed and agreed.**

The committee RECOMMENDED to Full Council that the following fees and charges for 2021-22 be set.

Category	2020-21	2021-22
Regular Monday market	£11.70 per 10-foot stall (no VAT)	No change
Farmers' market	£12.50 per stall (no VAT)	No change
Use of electricity	£12.60 (inc. VAT) per day	£13.00 (inc. VAT) per day
Permission to sell alcohol at a market event where the organiser provides a personal licence holder	£12.50 (inc. VAT) per day	No change
Permission to sell alcohol at a market event where the organiser does not provide a personal licence holder	£105.00 (inc. VAT) per day	No change

CS51. Environmental Implications

Cllr Bowring noted that differential charging for market traders discussed under item CS50 is environmental.

Cllr Bowring would also like to consider what foods are provided look at future Town Council events, as some have a higher carbon footprint. Cllr Greenaway referred to similar discussions in the Green Advisory and Scrutiny Committee.

Cllr Foulsham mentioned 'Fun and Music in the Park' and the fireworks at the end and suggested that they might be reviewed to make them less noisy. Cllr Fawcett commented that the subject could be discussed but not at this meeting as this agenda item is for those items already on this agenda. He suggested that the Green Advisory and Scrutiny Committee might consider this and make a recommendation.

CS52. Publicity

Cllr Fawcett would like to publicise support for the two groups which have been awarded grants. Publicity about the grants could be handled individually for each charity and could include information on the groups benefiting and help them to advertise their services.

CS53. Date of next meeting

It was resolved that the date of the next meeting is:

9th March 2021

CS54. Exclusion of the public, including the press

The committee received and considered the confidential appendix to the minutes of the meeting of the Community Services Committee of 3 November 2020. It was resolved that the confidential appendix was a correct record and should be signed by the chair.

The meeting rose at 8.49pm.

Signed.....

Date.....